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Wozzeck by Alban Berg
correlations between text and music in opera

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Abstract

This thesis is about the opera *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg and how this second Viennese school composer creates correlations between text and music. To provide a background on which to stand, I have supplied my reader with the historical context for Alban Berg and his opera *Wozzeck*. I have as well included the historical context of the play on which the opera is based, *Woyzeck*, as well as the life and times of its playwright, Georg Büchner.

I have found leitmotifs, atonal and tonal contrasts, and musical foreshadowing. As well, I have examined the varied vocal techniques used throughout the opera such as *sprechstimme*, *sprechgesang* and pure operatic singing. These musical elements have been put in correlation with the text to make the discoveries within Alban Berg's opera.

In this thesis I have used two methods for collecting data. Both of these methods are phenomenological methods as they stem from personal experiences of the material at hand. The first of the two methods involved participating observation while the second involved a qualitative interview. These are presented as an interview with Hanna Dóra Sturludottir as well as a look at each individual scene of the opera and what is happening, with the previously mentioned elements in mind. At the end I discuss the legitimacy of my thesis and the research I have done.

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1. Introduction

In the introduction of my thesis, I will start with a personal experience I have had with my subject and the background for why I chose it. Secondly, I will introduce my subject and question. After, I will limit my thesis to a specific performance as well as an edition of my chosen material.

1.1 Background for the study

During the autumn season of 2017, the Norwegian Opera in Oslo decided to put up *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg. I was thrilled to see it on the program and secured tickets for the last performance on the 18th of December. The curtain went up and the iconic oboe melody that initiates the opera sounded throughout the vast room. The dramatic story unveiled before my eyes and both Norwegian and international opera stars took to the stage to embody their interpretation of the characters Wozzeck, Marie, Herr Hauptmann and others. After one and a half hour of intense drama and intrigue, the conductor lowered his hands and the actors come out for their applause. At this point I could not contain my excitement. I burst out of my chair to show them my appreciation through applause and bravos. To my surprise, however, I appeared to be alone in my enthusiasm and was amongst one of the only people in the theatre who was standing. Granted, the rest of the audience was clapping, but it was short and people were hurrying for the door the second the light went on. This was a strong contrast to when I watched the play in its original form, *Woyzeck* on the Norwegian Theater in 2014, which was well received by the audience.

I am, of course, aware that my personal experience is not how these pieces will be received in every setting it is performed in, but in my eyes this spectacular production did not deserve such a halfhearted applause. After this experience, I started to look more into the intricacies in the music of *Wozzeck* and why the world it creates is so different from other worlds in the opera repertoire. For me, *Wozzeck* brings out emotions that one cannot experience in more traditional operas, and I attribute this greatly to the expressiveness of the music. This might be hard for a fresh listener of the Second Viennese School's music to grasp.

1.2 Subject and Thesis

For my final thesis at Listaháskóli Íslands, I have chosen to write about the opera *Wozzeck* by Alban Berg and how it draws from the literate drama *Woyzeck* by Georg Büchner. I have chosen this subject because I, myself, am an aspiring opera singer and *Wozzeck* is one of my favorite operas of all time. I also hope that writing about this opera will further increase my knowledge on the subject. The Second Viennese School is another subject of great interest to me, and being able to combine the likes of opera and atonal music is an exciting yet daunting opportunity. Büchner's *Woyzeck* (1837) falls into the pre-expressionistic style, while Berg's *Wozzeck* (1914-1922) is defined as purely expressionistic¹. They both consciously wrote in what were considered new and revolutionary styles for their time. With an emphasis on text in music, I want to take a look at how the literate drama was adapted into a musical drama, while also looking at how expressive/atonal music can be used to further bring forth elements in an already expressive text. My main question for this thesis will be:

«How does Alban Berg create correlations between text and music in the opera *Wozzeck*?»

Sub-questions I will further use to answer this are:

«How does Alban Berg use leitmotifs in *Wozzeck*?»

«How does Alban Berg create contrasts through the use of tonal and atonal music?»

«How does Alban Berg use foreshadowing in music?»

«How are different vocal techniques like, *sprechgesang*, *sprechstimme* and operatic singing used to emphasize the text?»

1.3 Limiting the subject

The works we witness on stage, such as operas and plays, reach us with the help of not just our eyes, but through the combined work of our senses. Working with more than just our sight, they reel us in and make us believe in entirely new worlds. The text shall be brought to

¹ Brunvik, 2000

life through an interaction between actors/singers and audience members². Therefore it is not only enough to read the score and libretto. I have to base my observation on a concrete performance of the piece.

My first task was to choose a production of the opera. I have selected a performance from March 1987 with the Wiener Stadt Oper performed in the opera house of Vienna. In this production, the producer is Adolf Dresen, Claudio Abbado is conducting and Franz Grundheber is playing the lead role of Wozzeck. I have chosen this version, because it is both a classic rendition of the opera and it is also very easily accessible online.

The score I am using is the H.E Apostel revised Universal Edition from 1955.

In the performance I chose to focus mainly on the script, libretto, partiture and the music. Costumes, lighting, acting and scenography are elements I have chosen to cut out as they are irrelevant to my approach on the subject.

Although I thoroughly enjoyed the production I referred to in my preface, I could not find a recording of it making it hard to do research on.

² Dahl, 2008

2. Historical context and background

In this main section I will take a look at the history of the play and opera as well as their creators. I will give a brief historical context to the life of Georg Büchner and Alban Berg and how their masterpieces *Woyzeck* and *Wozzeck* came to be created.

2.1 Georg Büchner and the literate drama *Woyzeck*

Germany in the years before the revolution of 1848 was filled with discontent. A divide was continually growing between the people. The Germans on one side of the dispute wanted to rebel, protesting their own misery. Radical forces demanded a united, free and democratic Germany, while the militaristic ruling still dominated the country³. Karl Georg Büchner (1813 – 1837) was one of the radical voices fighting for freedom at this time. He was originally a student of medicine, but spent much of his time outside of his studies writing. His literature became an important part of his fight for freedom, as he used it to express his own as well as others' despair and suffering. Büchner founded a revolutionary group called Society for Human Rights (*Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte*). After many members of his group were arrested, he was forced to flee to Darmstadt where he wrote *Danton's Death*, signalling the end of the revolution⁴.

In 1821, a peculiar incident in Leipzig inspired Büchner to write a new dramatic play. Johann Christian *Woyzeck* was sentenced to death by beheading after being accused of murdering his lover. *Woyzeck* showed clear signs of mental illnesses, bringing up the question of whether or not he could be judged guilty in his trial. This story serves as the foundation of the tragic drama *Woyzeck*, which Büchner began to write in 1836. Unfortunately, the drama was never to be finished, as Büchner died of typhus the year after at the age of 24. The unfinished ending and the unstructured play which Büchner never arranged in a set order, makes this piece a fragmented theatrical play. The pages contained no numbers and the acts showed no clear form of continuity. The script has therefore been adapted in many different ways as

³ Europas historie, 2015

⁴ Jansen, 1972

there is no real answer for how it should be performed⁵. Even though the play has some comical sequences, like where Woyzeck eats peas in exchange for payment, the play is not a comedy. On the contrary, it is a very serious tragedy where the main character's mental health slowly decays. In the end, he is left confused and consumed by rage, brutally murdering his screaming lover.

2.2 Alban Berg and the opera *Wozzeck*

Alban Maria Johannes Berg (1885 – 1935) was an Austrian composer interested in music and contemporary literature, as well as the psychologist Sigmund Freud's studies⁶. Berg is among one of the three composers of the Second Viennese School who broke off from traditional harmony practice and took music in their own expressionistic direction. His music is heavily influenced by Arnold Schönberg's twel-tone technique⁷, as Berg was Schönberg's student for many years.

Based on Büchners drama, *Woyzeck*, Berg started writing his first opera with the same name in 1914. The written spelling of *Wozzeck* instead of *Woyzeck* is a direct result of Büchners horrible handwriting. Büchners script was so hard to read when it was to be published in 1879, that the publisher read the name as *Wozzeck*. Berg chose this way of spelling in his adaptation to create an opera he could call his own⁸.

Berg wrote the libretto for *Wozzeck* himself. Since the time of Wagner, this had become more and more the norm for opera composition⁹. Berg felt the need to give Büchners fragmented play a strict structure so the opera would not suffer from having its chronology change every time. Structure and strict forms are elements the Second Viennese School upheld as important parts of their composition style¹⁰. Berg structured the text in a way he deemed fitting and made a libretto consisting of fifteen scenes divided into three acts. This meant writing lines from Büchners play into phrases for singing. Some sections of the play remained untouched, while some were cut out entirely. Other lines were reworked by either

⁵ Jansen, 1972

⁶ Brunvik, 2000

⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica, 2015

⁸ Perle, 1985

⁹ Brunvik, 2000

¹⁰ Brunvik, 2000

cutting or extending them¹¹. Berg's opera distinguishes itself from the play by being a shorter, yet structured adaptation.

2.3 The General Story of Wozzeck/Woyzeck

The superficial story is the same in both the play and opera. The soldier, Wozzeck, and his girlfriend, Marie, have a child together. They are very poor, so to earn a little extra, Wozzeck takes on all kinds of small jobs on the side. Among these are shaving the major of his corps every morning and volunteering for the army doctor's bizarre human experiments. Though it doesn't appear so clearly in the opera, the experiment is based on feeding Wozzeck only peas for months to see how it affects his psyche. The doctor clearly sees the negative effects on him, but rather than helping he wants to see how far he can push it and keeps paying the poor soldier for his services.

Wozzeck's girlfriend, Marie, ends up cheating on him with a higher ranking military official, the Drum Major. She is tempted with jewelry and a promise of luxury that never becomes fulfilled as the Drum Major only wants to use her for his own selfish desires. When Wozzeck realizes what has happened, his mind has been so warped, that the only reasonable thing he sees fit is to kill her with a knife and drown himself in the nearby lake¹².

In theatrical productions the ending is often interpreted differently. In some version it appears the Wozzeck drowns himself, while in others he gets put on trial and sentenced to death. In the versions I base this thesis upon, Fjernsyns Teateret from 1964 and Adolf Dresens opera of 1987, Wozzeck drowns himself and his child gets put in an orphanage and eventually gets taken care of by the Madman. A deranged character appearing throughout the play.

¹¹ Perle, 1985

¹² Andersen, 2001

3. Theory

3.1 Leitmotifs

In *Wozzeck*, Alban Berg chose to use the shift between tonal and atonal music as a defining feature to bring forth different elements in the text such as feelings, auras, and contrasts¹³. Being a composer of his time Berg could extract the exact feelings he saw fit for the text using the techniques of the Second Viennese School.

Throughout the entirety of the opera, leitmotifs can be found. These leitmotifs are motifs that are connected to certain important objects, characters or feelings which can be heard when that certain element is mentioned or is the main focus of the action. Drawing from Wagner, who frequently used leitmotifs in his operas, Berg pushes the envelope by giving motifs not only his characters, but to feelings and reoccurring scenarios¹⁴. Every major character has a leitmotif connected to the mention or entrance of them and they are often quite clear and easy to hear. More hidden are the motifs connected to the feelings such as fear, anxiety and rage as well as scenarios such as death and abuse¹⁵.

Leitmotifs from Wozzeck (Brunvik, 2000)

¹³ Perle, 1985

¹⁴ Bruhn, 1998

¹⁵ Perle, 1985

A motif frequently used in *Wozzeck* is the «Wir arme Leut»-motif which is used to represent Wozzeck and other character's despair in different situations¹⁶. The translation to english would be “Us poor people”, a phrase only uttered by the characters of the lower social status. The motif, a minor-maj7th chord, can be frequently heard in both the orchestra and the vocal lines. It is first heard in the opening of the opera during the conversation between Herr Hauptmann and Wozzeck.



Wir ar-me Leut! Wir arme Leut motif (Berg, 1925)

The barber scene is the first scene in question. The scene opens with Herr Hauptmann's leitmotif. Herr Hauptmann is getting shaved by Wozzeck and is talking loosely about life's big questions. It is mostly Herr Hauptmann who is talking as Wozzeck idly listens and interjects occasionally with his standard response «Jawohl, herr Hauptmann» to everything the major says. This monotone rhythmical motif becomes very characteristic of *Wozzeck* and is a response he comes with whenever someone of higher social status tries to step on him¹⁷. It is sung very mechanically and completely without feeling as if the words have lost any meaning at all. Herr Hauptmann mocks Wozzeck, saying he has no morals and calling him stupid. In the end, however, it is the major himself who comes off as stupid when he says that «Moral, to have moral, that means to be moral.» Berg puts a free rhythm and melodic, as if spoken, character to Herr Hauptmann's talk, giving insignificant text an insignificant melody¹⁸.



Herr Hauptmann's Leitmotif (Berg, 1925)

¹⁶ Bruhn, 1998

¹⁷ Perle, 1985

¹⁸ Perle, 1985

The contrast between the atonal and harmonic in parallel to the absurd and logical, clearly appears in the second scene of the opera where Wozzeck and a fellow soldier, Andres are collecting branches in the reeds. Andres is singing some German folk song, while Wozzeck is hallucinating and talks about hearing voices from the forest. He sees what he believes to be symbols drawn in the grass and scary revelations coming from the sky. Andres' folk song is written out like a traditional melody with descending and ascending lines and phrases²². Sometimes it appears to be in the key of a-minor or C-major, but Berg adds accidentals so the melodies are not entirely diatonic. In the orchestra you can find these melodies accompanied by traditional chords²³. Andres appears to symbolize the sanity and logic in this scene while Wozzeck, on the other hand, symbolizes madness. Wozzeck's lines are completely atonal with irregular, large leaps and a lot of chromatic movement, while he is shouting about the end of the world²⁴.

3.4 Sprechstimme, sprechgesang and operatic singing

Alban Berg requires the performers to use three different styles of vocal production in his opera *Wozzeck*. Sprechstimme, sprechgesang and operatic singing are used to emphasize different feelings as well as different tonal material in the opera. Sprechstimme is used when no pitches or notes are notated, just the text, this is to be said in a theatrical way. Traditional operatic singing is used when no other instruction is given or the score says it is to be sung. Sprechgesang is defined as a rhythmic dictation emphasising the note values more than the pitch written, this is a middle ground between operatic singing and sprechstimme. One is supposed to slide between the notes with the ease of speaking while not breaking off the operatic sound.

Sprechgesang is used to assist the absurd text that is being uttered and the disturbing scenarios that unveil. This extended singing technique is used in many of the expressionist pieces written in the second Viennese School, perhaps becoming most famous through

²² Bruhn, 1998

²³ Bruhn, 1998

²⁴ Bruhn, 1998

Pierrot Lunaire by Arnold Schönberg²⁵. Alban Berg used this technique in both his operas Wozzeck and Lulu²⁶.

In this video «How does Berg use Sprechgesang in Wozzeck?» made by The Royal Opera, you can get a demonstration of the entire spectrum between pure speaking and pure operatic singing and in which degree you find sprechgesang²⁷.

Examples of how the different techniques are notated in the score:

Operatic Singing (Berg, 1925)

(Marie:) daß man sie für zwei Knöpf' verkaufen kömmt'. Margret: Was Sie, Sie „Frau Jungfer!“ Ich bin eine
perhaps they'll be bright enough for two buttons, How dare you, you 'madam'! I'm an

Sprechstimme (Berg, 1925)

Sprechgesang (Berg, 1925)

Berg is trying to connect to his audience by playing on feelings that are familiar to them. In contrast to romantic music where accompaniment and melodies symbolize something concrete and artificially represented, Berg tries rather to create natural moods²⁸. These moods are created with traditional and atonal music, building up melodic lines that represent the text, the familiarity of the leitmotifs and through the use of sprechgesang, pure traditional singing and speech.

²⁵ Brunvik, 2000

²⁶ Molde, 2000

²⁷ The Royal Opera, 2013

²⁸ Bruhn, 1998

4. Method

To find an answer to my thesis question: «How does Alban Berg create correlations between text and music in the opera *Wozzeck*?» I employed the methodological approach of research design. Research design is an overarching plan for how one goes about solving a problem²⁹.

A correlation approach is used when one wishes to say something to the degree of connection between two things without assuming something about the cause of the things in question. Attention is paid just to the elements that are similar and those that vary between the two things³⁰.

There are two models of the correlational approach; the explanation model and the prediction model³¹. I have chosen to work with the explanation model which is used to research to which degree two variables, such as text and music, are connected. This model can also be used to show if change in one variable can be reflected in the other and then to analyse how this pattern behaves.

To collect data for this musical analysis, I chose to use two phenomenological methods. Phenomenology is a qualitative study of phenomena and how they appear for us from a first person perspective³². The advantage of using two different methods for data collection is that the results can be more trustworthy.

The first method was participating observation, where I study the opera and its partiture. There, I observed the opera recording with the score by my side. I have described and analysed the information gathered from this in chapter 5.

The second data collecting method was a qualitative interview with an opera singer, which I recorded and later transcribed, analysed, and edited for clarity. The interview guide was semi-structured, with some prepared questions for guidance, while still leaving it open for her own comments regarding the subject material³³. This makes for chapter 6 of this thesis.

²⁹ Jacobsen, 2005

³⁰ Jacobsen, 2005

³¹ Jacobsen, 2005

³² Ruud, 2016

³³ Jacobsen, 2005

5. Empirical data: The opera scenes

In this part I will write about the individual scenes and what correlation happens between the actions, language and music.

5.1 Act 1

Act 1 Scene 1: Wozzeck is shaving his superior, Herr Hauptmann. The scene opens with Herr Hauptmann's leitmotif and Wozzeck's motif following shortly after. The text in the scene is identical to that in the play and the dialogue flows as freely as if it were spoken. Operatic singing is the technique most frequently used and falsetto is there to emphasise certain moments. The *Wir Arme Leut* motif is sung as a part of Wozzeck's aria. His accompaniment is heavy and loud, with brass and percussion playing an important role, but is interrupted by Herr Hauptmann. Herr Hauptmann's accompaniment in the orchestra is lighter and reflects his simple way of thinking. Wozzeck's interrupted heavy phrases are to show off the hidden rage he is building up by being stepped on³⁴.

Act 1 Scene 2: Wozzeck and his fellow soldier and friend Andres are picking branches in the reeds. The text in this scene has been extended by Berg himself, adding multiple lines to enhance Wozzeck's delusional state³⁵. One can hear a contrast in orchestration between the two characters. Wozzeck cuts the reeds with a knife introducing *The Knife Motif*. Andres with his folk tune has more traditional tonal elements with a lighter orchestration consisting of string and woodwind while Wozzeck is once again accompanied by brass and heavy percussion. The character Andres uses operatic singing in his lines while Wozzeck only uses *sprechgesang*. The leitmotifs of Wozzeck's despair is contrasted by Andreses *Hunting Song* motif.

Act 1 Scene 3: Marie, Wozzeck's girlfriend, and the neighbour lady Margret are talking about the passing military parade. The dialog between Marie and Margaret is almost purely spoken, only written down as words in the score. Marie's lullaby to her boy is the first aria of the piece. It uses tonal chords but is constantly sequencing the melody around, establishing no

³⁴ Nelson, 1960

³⁵ Perle, 1985

certain key. Marie sings the Wir Arme Leut motif referring to her situation in life. After the boy falls asleep a whole tone centered scale is heard in the orchestra symbolizing night and tranquility. This is interrupted by the entrance of Wozzeck's motif and the fade of tonality.

Act 1 Scene 4: Wozzeck visits the doctor who checks up on his experiment and health in exchange for money. The Doctor leitmotif gets introduced. This scene is done purely in sprechgesang and a talking-duet between the Doctor and Wozzeck is established as they talk over one another. The scene starts with a funny light feeling, but quickly changes as the Doctor's dark intentions are revealed. The contrast here is not in tonality, but in the orchestration and dynamics. The scene goes from a very woodwind and strings focused piano to a brass and percussion focused forte.

Act 1 Scene 5: The Drum Major has noticed Marie's lustful looks and tries to seduce her. The flirting motif is introduced. He becomes too physical and Marie has to push him away. She suddenly turns numb and careless and lets the Drum Major have his way. The scene is filled with cluster chords gradually building up and then fading away, repeatedly increasing the tension of the scene. The Drum Major is a Helden Tenor who always sings in his full operatic voice to emphasise his dominance on stage.

5.2 Act 2

Act 2 Scene 1: Marie is admiring the earrings she received as a present from The Drum Major. The Wir Arme Leut motif is sung by Marie as she realises she is still among the poor. As Wozzeck enters the room a strong cluster can be heard from the string section, followed by his entrance motif. When Wozzeck hands Marie his money a clear pianissimo C-major chord is heard from the viola and violins. Wozzeck loves his girlfriend and this scene represent how she is the only point of stability in his life filled with madness. The clear major chord finds an unlikely home in this atonal world. Wozzeck goes from sprechgesang to light singing to get make the tonal melody clearer. As Wozzeck leaves behind a guilt stricken Marie, tonality slowly fades away.

Act 2 Scene 2: Herr Hauptmann is trying to catch up to the Doctor on the street, they catch Wozzeck walking by. The Doctor is diagnosing Herr Hauptmann with various diseases and

while this happens, the roles of tenor and bass swap. Herr Hauptmann is using the lower tenor range and the Doctor, bass, is singing above him showing who is in control of the conversation³⁶. Herr Hauptmann only starts using his higher range when he yells at the doctor to stop. The Doctor is singing while Herr Hauptmann uses sprechgesang. A funeral march can be heard while Herr Hauptmann describes his own death. Hauptmann fearing for his life emphasizes the death pitch B. His leitmotif is being played by the strings a minor second apart, making it sound twisted and out of place. When the Doctor and Hauptmann are teasing Wozzeck, it all starts off with some playful rhythmic focused music, but soon devolves into a more serious heavier louder cluster focused sound.

Act 2 Scene 3: The scene starts with a chamber orchestra being placed on stage. Wozzeck comes to confront his girlfriend about the rumours he has heard. Wozzeck gets worked up and is about to hit Marie, but Marie yells out that she would rather be stabbed than have a hand laid on her. The knife motif is heard. The scene is divided into two musical aspects. The chamber orchestra on stage accompanies Wozzeck as he becomes angry and accuses Marie of cheating. The chamber orchestra can be interpreted in different ways. One idea is that they may be on stage to represent the elephant in the room, Marie's cheating³⁷. Another is that they represent Marie's guilt and regret³⁸. When Marie defends herself the rest of the orchestra is used for accompanying her calming words.

Act 2 Scene 4: A dance is taking place at a tavern. In this scene, like the previous, you have two separate orchestras, one in the pit and one chamber orchestra on stage. There are a lot of elements in this scene that are just there for entertainment's sake. These include the drunks' duet and aria as well as Andres folk song choir, and they are generally accompanied by the main orchestra with no special context. The waltz is mostly tonal with tonal melodies, but the tonality fades as Wozzeck enters the scene, and his motif can be heard from the chamber group. When Wozzeck watches and becomes more provoked, the musical colour of previous moments of madness returns. As the Madman enters the stage he is mainly accompanied by the accordion, a guitar and one violin. The change of musical colour is very unexpected and

³⁶ Nelson, 1960

³⁷ Nelson, 1960

³⁸ Perle, 1985

has a peculiar character as the music is also minor scale based. The death pitch B is emphasized when he says he smells blood. The scene then devolves into atonality as Wozzeck starts his manic rant.

Act 2 Scene 5: The soldiers are sleeping in the barracks. In the beginning of the scene as the soldiers are sleeping you get to hear a snoring choir. The sound is breathy and rhythmically written to resemble snoring. The scene has a very light character, like in a dream. When the Drum Major is beating Wozzeck, the militaristic march motif of the Drum Major is heard in the background. The contrast between the singing of the Drum Major helden tenor and Wozzeck's baritone sprechgesang is vast as Wozzeck stands no chance against him.

5.3 Act 3

Act 3 Scene 1: Marie sits in her home reading from the bible. When Marie is reading, the orchestra plays a minor-scale based part with a clear melody being repeated from a solo violin. The bible prayer is sprechgesang, rhythmically precise. Between the chapters, when she weeps, the harmony fades away and more of the orchestra joins introducing a prayer motif.

Act 3 Scene 2: Wozzeck and Marie are walking by a lake. Marie is uncomfortable and wants to leave, but Wozzeck insists on them staying. As a blood red moon rises, Wozzeck stabs Marie and she falls dead on the ground. Even though there are many lighter sounding instruments in the beginning of the scene, like violins and woodwinds, there is a low B coming from the double bass as Wozzeck speaks. B being the tone of death in the opera. In this scene, there is a long break of pure silence, building up the tension of the scene even further. As Wozzeck pulls out the knife, its motif can be clearly heard in xylophone, clarinet and strings. Marie's last sound is a scream for help leaping from B5 to B3 verifying her death.

Act 3 Scene 3: Wozzeck is at a dance and enjoys himself. Before the scene opens a big crescendo starting with the strings is played on one note, then it comes a second time with the full orchestra to create the biggest soundscape of the opera so far. After the climax is over, an out of tune piano placed on the stage starts playing a rhythmic, fast yet atonal dance melody. When Margaret sings the piano plays a tonal accompaniment to her tune, yet the tune itself

has very loose rhythms and no clear tonality, as if sung by a drunk. As Wozzeck interrupts her song, the brass and percussion sections join him to create the same rage filled soundscape heard throughout the opera.

Act 3 Scene 4: Wozzeck returns to the scene of the murder to get rid of the knife. Herr Hauptmann and the Doctor walks by and hear that someone is drowning and hurry away. This scene is filled with ascending lines and chromatic motifs. Wozzeck's madness is played by chromatic lines from the brass section and the light of the betraying moon is an odd ascending scale played by the harp³⁹. When Wozzeck drowns, a long chromatic line is played starting in the strings section, with a B, and then continued by the other instrument groups, creating an ever ascending line. The chromatic line continues as Herr Hauptmann and the Doctor are listening to Wozzeck's death, but it slows down gradually and is interrupted by the harp repeating its scale, this time descending before everything goes quiet. The ascending scales here symbolizes death, the slow death of drowning.

Act 3 Scene 5: While the curtain is down before the final scene the orchestra repeats sections and motifs heard throughout the opera bringing it all together in this last coda section. Motifs being heard include Herr Hauptmann's motif, Wir Arme Leut, Drum Majors march, the Knife Motif chords as well as others.

When the curtain raises Wozzeck and Marie's child is seen in an orphanage. Two kids appear and reveal that Maria is found dead. The other children leaves and Wozzeck's child is left alone on stage as the music gradually fades out. Sprechstimme is used by the children in the scene.

³⁹ Perle, 1985

6. Empirical data: Interview

To get a better understanding of how it is to be a part of this performance, I asked mezzo-soprano, Hanna Dóra Sturludottir, who played Marie in Neustrelitz in 2000 conducted by Jürgen Weisser and directed by Urs Leicht, to share her insights.

How do you feel sprechgesang, singing and voice is used in Wozzeck? And how did you integrate all of these three techniques together when performing it?

It was a big challenge to do this in such a big scale. I discussed with the conductor, while also listening to other singers, trying to make sense of this. It ended with me speaking as much as possible when the opportunity was there. In the higher register I just followed the melody. When she is reading from the bible in the last bit I was just using my speaking voice. It took a long time to get into the piece, but once I first did, a lot of the technique and choices just came with the expression and interpretation. There were places where you integrate singing and speaking with each other to create some grey zones on this spectrum. Berg was very specific and accurate about what he wanted and I tried to follow that, but mostly it just came with the feeling.

What kind of character is Marie? What motivates and drives her?

She is a young woman trying her best, but gets on the wrong path. She is poor with an absent husband who is very off. They are in love, but it must be a terrible life. No money, a child, loneliness and a mentally unstable husband. I understood when the Drum Major comes and gives her the earrings. It's difficult not to go for something so exciting. Although I do not think she meant to hurt Wozzeck. The Drum Major was not some love. She is just tempted by this different life. She cheated in a moment of weakness. I always felt so uncomfortable with this scene because I feel this is not a part of her life. I think she is a good person, but very frustrated. She is trying to be strong and standing up for herself. In the scenes with Wozzeck I tried to show that there was something there. Her only chance of marriage, but she is also afraid of him because he is unpredictable. A very demanding emotional spectrum you have to get into. The music does a lot for you here.

Wozzeck, an opera filled with resenting and disgusting characters, has many uncomfortable scenes. Which scene/character (including your own) do you feel is the most unpleasant/resentful?

I always felt so uncomfortable with Wozzeck being with Herr Hauptmann. I hated that character. When he sees Wozzeck drowning and does not do anything, act 3 scene 4, a terrible moment. Also the scene when she is fighting with Margaret (act 1 scene 3) is very uncomfortable. And when she dances with the Drum Major (act 2 scene 4) and knows everyone is watching, I always asked why is she doing this. Trying to convince herself this could possibly be her life. I felt sorry for Wozzeck and the kid the entire play, but not sorry for myself.

In contrast to this which scene/character do you find the most pleasant?

Actually Marie, I liked her the most. In the scene where she sings “soldaten, soldaten”, scene 1 act 3, she is sort of in a happy mood. And also when she is dancing she is happy, but the setting is bad for her. My favorite part is when I have been killed by Wozzeck, and I am laying in the reed and I just get to experience the sound of the orchestra surround me, it takes you away.

How did you feel the orchestral parts helped you depict the mood and character of Marie?

It did everything. I didn't really get that much into character study at this time, I read the play, but it is all in the music. And when you allow yourself to just get taken away by this music it speaks for you. At first I hated it, but after a while I couldn't stop loving it.

What do you think is the main difference between the play and the opera?

There is always going to be a difference. What the play writes, the music gives. It might not be as thorough on the surface as the play, but the music is there to add this depth. I liked the opera more. I think it's fantastic that the main things are worked out without them being said in words because it is said in the music.

7. Conclusion

In my thesis about Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* I have tried to answer the question: How does Alban Berg create correlations between text and music in the opera *Wozzeck*? I have done this by mainly focusing at the musical material consisting of Leitmotifs, tonal contrast, musical foreshadowing, and vocal use.

7.1 How does Alban Berg use leitmotifs in *Wozzeck*?

Berg has created numerous leitmotifs that can be heard through the opera. One in particular that is connected to text is the *Wir Arme Leut* motif that is repeated with the same interval structure and rhythm with those specific words. It symbolizes despair of the poor and is heard mostly from *Wozzeck* and Marie. This is a motif that is easy to recognize and when it is played in the orchestra without the words Berg tries to recreate the same feeling of despair without the use of words. The other leitmotifs also create moods and moments by being used with specific scenarios. The *Hunting Song* for instance is heard during moments of joy and celebration while the *Marching theme of the Drum Major* is heard during moments of cheating and violence. This supports Hanna Dóra Sturludottir claim about what is not being said in words is being said in the music.

7.2 How does Alban Berg create contrasts by the use of tonal and atonal music?

As the opera is mostly atonal, the moments where a clear tonality is formed will stand out. When Berg chooses to form a feeling of tonality in *Wozzeck*, it is to emphasise the importance of the dialog going on between the characters. A simple clean major chord can be used to create a strong moment between the characters and make their feelings and words more believable. The use of sudden contrast between atonal and tonal music is one of the ways Berg makes the text more alive and important. Hanna Dóra refers to the same thing in her interview about how the orchestration and harmony helps the performer bring forth feelings without having to do much yourself. It is all there in the music.

7.3 How does Alban Berg use foreshadowing in music?

Throughout the opera Berg uses foreshadowing in his music when certain words are said or certain objects are being used. These are hard for listeners to catch on to, but one with a steady ear might sense something coming after a few scenes. The leitmotif of The Knife is repeated whenever there is a mention of a knife or stabbing or there simply is a knife on stage. This motif of cluster chords not meant to be heard, but rather experienced visually on the score is one of Berg's ways to bind together text, objects and music.

Closely related to the knife motif is the death pitch B. When a character is talking about death, is threatened or when dying, this note is emphasized. It is the pitch Herr Hauptmann sings when he is scared to die after being teased by the doctor, it is the pitch the Madman emphasises when he says he smells blood and it is the clearest pitch in act 3 scene 2 when Wozzeck murders Marie.

7.4 How are different vocal techniques like, sprechgesang, sprechstimme and operatic singing used to emphasize the text ?

Alban Berg's use of three different vocal techniques also helps with binding the text and music together. Sprechstimme, singing and sprechgesang are being used to bring the text to life in different ways. The most uncommon is the sprechstimme, regular talking, which is used to create the sensation of regular chatter such as that between Marie and Margret in act 1 scene 3. The text in spoken scenes is there to create the sense of something casual and familiar. Hanna Dóra Sturludottir chose to just read/say the lines from the bible act 3 scene 1 even though it is written as sprechgesang. Classic operatic singing is the most used technique in the opera and is used almost in every scene. When a character is singing, the text is not necessarily the most important part of what is going, but the action happening while it is sung. Sprechgesang is used when text of particular importance is used. The rhythmic declamation of sprechgesang makes the text clear and easy to bring emotions into which is why it is used with care throughout Berg's opera. As Hanna Dóra says the music often gives an indication of which character and voice technique one is to use at the time. The grey zones between pure speaking and singing are up to the performer to interpret.

8. How good are my conclusions and what comes next?

In this part I am going to look at the validity and reliability of my conclusions.

Validity and reliability in qualitative studies are about being critical of the data and discussing to what extent the data obtained can be trusted ⁴⁰.

It is not possible for me to say that my data would be found as valid to other people than myself. It's a phenomenological study and therefore, it is my subjective analysis that I have described. The purpose of a qualitative study, such as this, is generally not to find and transfer results from one small selection of people to a larger one⁴¹.

I have used an interview with a woman that has her own experience of the opera, and I found that some of her experiences are in line with what I have discovered through my analysis of the piece. This does not mean that everyone will experience this in the exact same way. In my introduction, I began with the story from the opera in Norway where I was the only person who seemed moved by the performance that had been put on. This goes to show that people experience things very differently. An opera, such as this, can have a very different and even much stronger effect on someone, such as myself, who studies classical singing and is more immersed in the musical world than the average person. Our backgrounds can heavily influence how we react to such subjective material as art.

A possible way to further validate my findings and studies could be to discuss it with the person that I interviewed or with a group of people that have studied the same opera. This is something that would be interesting to do later as a way to go even further in depth with this study.

However, I have used theory from literature to support my studies, and my conclusions will, as a result, be colored by this. The question of whether I have used the right or the best sources for my research of course stands. Given more time to go deeper into this subject, I believe I would research further and strive for better sources from which to pull my information.

⁴⁰ Jacobsen, 2012

⁴¹ Jacobsen, 2012

In this opera, there are many different elements, but with the time and within the constraints of this study, I was limited as to what I could do, and had to pick some of the most essential parts to focus on. In the future, get a broader picture of the work, I would decide to go deeper into more of these elements.

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10. Attachments

Attachment 1

Interview Guide

<p>How do you feel sprechgesang, singing and voice is used in Wozzeck? And how did you integrate all of these three techniques together when performing it?</p>	
<p>What kind of character is Marie? What motivates and drives her?</p>	
<p>Wozzeck, an opera filled with resenting and disgusting characters, have many uncomfortable scenes. Which scene/character (including your own) do you feel is the most unpleasant/resentful?</p>	
<p>In contrast to this, which scene/character do you find the most pleasant?</p>	
<p>How did you feel the orchestral parts helped you depict the mood and character of Marie?</p>	

Attachment 2

Verification of interview use from Hanna Dóra Sturludóttir

From: Hanna Dóra Sturludóttir <hannas@lhi.is>

Sent: Tuesday, December 17, 2019 7:58 PM

To: Eirik Waldeland <eirik18@lhi.is>

Subject: Re: Interview, Final Thesis

Hi Eirik,

you are welcome to use this. I hope it works out well for you.

All the best,

Hanna

Frá: Eirik Waldeland <eirik18@lhi.is>

Sent: þriðjudagur, 17. desember 2019 15:41

Til: Hanna Dóra Sturludóttir <hannas@lhi.is>

Efni: Interview, Final Thesis

Greetings,

I would really appreciate if you could verify and give me a statement saying that I could use this interview and your name in my thesis. I had to rewrite and cut it down a little to fit with the 6000 words limit of my thesis. Hope you approve.

Best regards

Eirik Waldeland