SOUNDS OF LOVE AND DEATH

SONIC RETELLINGS OF SHAKESPEARE’S ROMEO AND JULIET

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ABSTRACT

This paper catalogues the significative techniques used by Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev to represent love and death in their respective *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations. In particular, this analysis focuses on the Balcony and Tomb Scenes; the pivotal scenes of the play in which the concepts of love and death are fully developed. The author draws from semiotics, topic theory, and traditional forms of music analysis in order to construct a comprehensive study of these composers representational devices.

There are incontrovertible commonalities amid the signification paradigms deployed by these composers; there are numerous semic and topical crossovers, instrumentation is often used to signify dramatis personae, and all of the composers utilize letimotif. These commonalities point toward a potential archetype for the portrayal of love and death.

Whilst these semes and topics apply to tonal music, they are less congruous with the atonal idiom. Tonality itself, is arguably a precondition for the efficacy of these signs, particularly with regards to signs of love. Amongst these composers the representation of love consistently depends upon consonances and tonal harmony, however, death is less dependent upon the tonal tradition and is frequently signified through dissonances and chromaticism. This paper suggests that whilst an entirely atonal *Romeo and Juliet* is injudicious, an amalgamation of tonal and atonal idioms could yield an effective and compelling adaptation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

I. Introduction

Love and death are pivotal facets of the human narrative. They are inimitable features of individual bias, constantly changing through the subjectivity of their attestant. As quintessential aspects of human life, love and death have yielded a profound ubiquity in the arts. This paper will examine, as a case study of this theme, the depiction of love and death by Shakespeare in Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare’s play is perhaps the most readily recognized work of art to address these themes. Shakespeare draws formidable connections amid love and death; they are espoused in tragic union; love is consummated through death. This particular treatment of these themes has inspired artists of all forms; however, the following paper is principally concerned with music.

Composers have historically demonstrated an unflagging approbation for the story of the star-crossed lovers. Copious adaptations of the play have been composed for all manner of musical form including ballet, opera and symphony, of which some are amongst the most notable and celebrated works in the Western art music repertory. This paper will recount the means by which three composers—Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, and Prokofiev—have approached the conveyance of love and death in their respective Romeo and Juliet adaptations. This analysis will focus on the instrumental music constituting the Balcony and Tomb scenes where the concepts of love and death are at their fullest development.
II. Literature Review

Arthur Graham, author of *Shakespeare in Opera, Ballet, Orchestral Music and Song*, provides a concise introduction to the topic of Shakespeare and musical adaptation. In his discussion of *Romeo and Juliet*, Graham singles out the adaptations of Berlioz, Gounod, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev, stressing their significance and rank amongst the copious adaptations of this play.¹ This paper is concerned with 3 of the 4 listed adaptations; Gounod’s operatic rendering of the story does not fall within the purview of this paper which is essentially concerned with the communication of extramusical concepts through purely instrumental procedures. Although Berlioz’s *Romeo et Juliette* includes vocal forces, the music that comprises both the Balcony and Tomb Scenes is instrumental, and so it has been included in this study. Graham’s introduction is synoptic whilst covering a wide variety of aesthetic concerns. Although he refers to aspects of signification throughout his conjectures, his coverage is relatively brief and limited. Nevertheless, Graham’s observations on thematic assignation and characterization through instrumentation offer a critical point of departure for further investigation.

Other than Graham’s compendiary account, few sources attempt a comparative study of all three adaptations. A survey of the literature indicates a strong predilection for Berlioz’s adaptation and a surprising deficiency in literature addressing those by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev.

Julian Rushton, author of *Berlioz: Romeo et Juliette*, provides a comprehensive analysis of the significative processes involved in Berlioz’s adaptation. Rushton devotes attention to the *Scène d'amour* and *Romeo au tombeau* (Balcony and Tomb scenes). His findings substantively connect gestures to specific programmatic aspects, revealing a complex structure of significations. Vera Micznik’s findings are similar to those of Ruston’s; however, Micznik qualifies these findings in terms of topics, an elaboration of semiotic theory:

... [Berlioz] invokes complex recognizable signs, or figures, which communicate the general ideas conventionally associated with particular, musical formations. The domains and qualities he identifies as representable by music, and the

conditions under which that representation can take place, can be referred to a category of musical signs often described today as 'topics'.

The general semiotic classification of musical units is particularly useful when comparing the conveyance of love and death across all three adaptations. Semiotic practices are becoming increasingly popular in this field of enquiry.

Malgorzata Pawłowska offers a compelling narratological analysis of Romeo and Juliet as adapted by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. Pawłowska's narratological model is interdisciplinary; like Micznik, Pawłowska applies semiotics; however, she does so in conjunction with broader linguistic theory. Although Pawłowska's analysis reveals valuable insights regarding the portrayal of narrative, her discussion of Tchaikovsky's love theme is surprisingly laconic; and her treatment of death, terse and nonsubstantive. The transformation of the love theme in the Tomb Scene is a critical significative process that is deprived of due attention. Contrarily, Julie Sanders, author of Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings traces the impact of Tchaikovsky's transformational device in detail, pointing out holdovers in popular culture. Whilst Sanders' survey of the prevalence of this device is comprehensive, the themes themselves are denied any discussion.

Sanders identifies a systematic assignation of themes and extramusical concepts throughout Tchaikovsky's adaptation.

Most recognizable, perhaps, is the 'love theme' that attaches to Romeo and Juliet, first bringing them together at the ball, but also representing their later encounters on the balcony, in Juliet's bedroom, and, ultimately, in the tomb.

Furthermore, Sanders likens this kind of thematic association with Wagnerian leitmotif and divulges a similar practice in Prokofiev's subsequent adaptation. Pawłowska refers to this treatment as mimesis:

Characters and situations have corresponding musical themes which, in the course of the narrative, are subject to transformations, deformations, appear in various contexts, are interrupted, developed, summed up etc. In that way

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Prokofiev expressed by means of music not only the development of action but also a minuscule morphology of feelings, experiences and thoughts of characters.\(^5\)

In lieu of the brevity of her discussion about Tchaikovsky, Pawłowska’s section on Prokofiev is particularly discerning. Pawłowska classifies musical material according to an amalgam of semiotic paradigms. She draws upon Ratner’s taxonomy of topics and Greimas’ isotopy categories. Semiotic accounts such as Pawłowska’s demonstrate how basic thematic units interact to create new levels of meaning. They also demonstrate signification through the use of musical gestures that are rooted in a rich history of socio-cultural practice. Unfortunately, Pawłowska does not apply this paradigm to Tchaikovsky’s adaptation and consequently denies a comparison of the two. In justification of this deprival, Pawłowska states that Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev’s works are so disparate ‘that it is impossible to compare them.’\(^6\) However, in contradiction of this statement, Pawłowska proceeds to draw a basic similarity between the love themes of Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev; ‘generally speaking the topics of love are characterized by a fluent and harmonious movement.’\(^7\)

Apart from Pawłowska’s analysis of Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev, there is little literature that attempts to address extramusical signification in their respective adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* and so this paper will analyze the significative processes of Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Berlioz in a previously unattempted comparative examination of love and death as depicted in the Balcony and Tomb Scenes.

**III. Aims and Methodology**

The purpose of this paper is to divulge the potential means by which a composer may convey the kind of love and death as depicted in the Balcony and Tomb Scenes of Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet.

1. How do Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, and Prokofiev signify love and death in the Balcony and Tomb Scenes of their respective *Romeo and Juliet* adaptation?

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\(^{5}\) Pawłowska, ‘The Story of Romeo and Juliet’, 178.

\(^{6}\) ibid., 185.

\(^{7}\) ibid.
2. Are there commonalities between these composers’ approaches?

3. What potential is there for these concepts to be signified using the atonal idiom?

The following analysis is bipartite, constituting (1) an individual analysis of each work, followed by (2) a comparative analysis of these findings:

(1) Analysis of the Balcony and Tomb Scenes of each adaption in terms of general musical characteristics: tempo, rhythm, dynamics, tonality, melody, harmony, timbre, orchestration, structure, texture, etc.,

(2) Findings of (1) are compared and surveyed for commonalities.

This analytical model is an interdisciplinary amalgam of conventional musical analysis, linguistics and semiotics. Semiotic analyses often borrow concepts and vocabulary from various schools within the broad and sometimes contradictory field of musical semiotics. The current methodology is predicated on the basic axioms of semiotics as set forth by Saussure and Peirce: it adopts the sign categories of icon, index and symbol from Peirce, and the concept of *topoi* from Ratner.

### i. Music as Language

Similarly to the playwright and his use of language, composers draw upon certain musical gestures and employ them syntactically to construct meaning. The analogy of music as language is a popular strategy. Deryck Cooke and Leonard B. Meyer pioneered contemporary aesthetic enquiry into music and meaning and both predicated their respective work on the analogy of music as language; ‘the former talks of music as like language in having a quasi-vocabulary; the latter analyses music as possessing syntax. Their use of these notions suggests that music is, if not a full-blown language, a special, limited language.’ Cooke’s seminal treatise, *The Language of Music* (1959), is a contentious study of extramusical signification wherein the author attempts to compile a lexicon of music terms. Cooke’s approach is comparable to that of semiotics; ‘he

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9 See Appendix C: Glossary of Semiotic Terminology for clarification of unfamiliar phrases.

10 There are two kinds of meaning, that which is intra-musical and that which is extramusical; the former category delineates the intellectual meanings that are implicitly formed through relationships within the music and the latter refers to where music means something other than itself. This paper is principally concerned with extramusical meaning.

segments musical utterances according to meaning... and then constructs paradigms.' However, Cooke conceives the meaning of his 'terms' as intrinsic properties rather than extrinsic, culturally assigned properties, and so his research differs fundamentally from semiotics.

While simplistic claims of universalism are untenable today... it may be that the conventionalized signs of Western tonal music have evolved out of earlier simple signs that did indeed have an indexical or iconic relationship to their referents. Nonetheless, Cooke's research provides a critical point of departure for the following analysis.

ii. Semiotics: Basic Axioms

Language is a sign system and so the analogy of music as language appropriates the application of semiotic analysis. Semiotics is what Eero Tarasti (regularly cited as the founder of musical semiotics) describes as 'a discourse in flux, a science under construction'; it is yet to be (if possible) formally systematized. A rudimentary definition of semiotics is the study of signs. Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce—regarded as the pioneers of semiotics—set forth similar analytic paradigms that form the basis of semiotic philosophy. Saussure's bipartite model consists of a signifier and signified; Peirce's tripartite model consists of a representamen (signifier), an object, and an interpretant. Peircean semiotics comprises numerous trichotomies, an in-depth survey of which is irrelevant to the following analysis. Other than Peirce's tripartite signification model, the trichotomy most relevant to this paper is his basic typology of signs:

- **icons**: a sign that interrelates with its semiotic object by virtue of some resemblance or similarity with it.
- **indices**: a sign that interrelates with its semiotic object through some actual or physical or imagined causal connection.

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symbols: a linguistic sign whose interrelation with its semiotic object is conventional.'\(^{17}\)

Another trichotomy that frames the above semiotic taxonomy, is borrowed from linguistics where signs are consigned to the dimensions of semantics, syntactics and pragmatics.

The dimensions of semantics concerns the relations of signs to their contexts and to what they signify. The kinds of sign, their ordering, and their relations to one another are the dimension of syntactics. And the dimension of pragmatics treats the relations of signs to their interpreters.\(^{18}\)

The semantic dimension corresponds to the larger aesthetic goal of this analysis; the syntactic dimension comprises the aforementioned typology of signs and so demonstrates the processes that produce a semantic result; and the dimension of pragmatics divulges critical socio-cultural influences of signification.

### iii. Semiotics: Topic Theory

In addition to the aforementioned aspects of semiotics, the current analysis will refer to Leonard Ratner's topic theory. The concept of topoi was formalized in Ratner's *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (1980), in which he defines topics as 'subjects of musical discourse'\(^{19}\). Topics are themselves signs, similarly consisting of a signifier and a signified\(^{20}\) and so their deployment alongside semiotics is conventional. Kofi Agawu, an adherent of Ratner's topic theory, posits that the usefulness of topoi is that they 'provide a framework for discussing various kinds and levels of associative signification in eighteenth-century music.'\(^{21}\) Ratner and his succeeding advocates, such as Kofi Agawu and Raymond Monelle, have collated a lexicon of musical topics. It is imperative to acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive lexis and that with the exception of such preliminary attempts as Janice Dickensheets's *The Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century*, a comprehensive lexicon of post eighteenth-century topics is

\(^{17}\) ibid., 31.  
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 19.
yet to be submitted. In lieu of this, the current list of eighteenth and nineteenth century topics will provide a point of reference for the following analyses.22

**Figure 1: Provisional Lexicon of Topoi**23

| 1. alla breve                        | 27. sensibility (*Empfindsamkeit*) |
| 2. alla zoppa (syncopated)          | 28. sigh motif (*Seufzer*)         |
| 3. amorous                          | 29. singing style                 |
| 4. aria                             | 30. *Sturm und Drang*             |
| 5. bourree                           | 31. Turkish music                 |
| 6. brilliant style                  | 32. singing style                 |
| 7. cadenza                          | 33. lied style                    |
| 8. *coup d’archet*                  | 34. nocturne style                |
| 9. fanfare                          | 35. stile appassionato            |
| 10. fantasy                         | 36. virtuosic style               |
| 11. French overture                 | 37. declamatory style             |
| 12. gavotte                         | 38. Biedermeier style             |
| 13. horn call (horn fifths)         | 39. tempest style                 |
| 14. horse                           | 40. heroic style                  |
| 15. hunt style                      | 41. demonic style                 |
| 16. lament                           | 42. fairy music                   |
| 17. learned style                   | 43. stile antico                  |
| 18. Mannheim rocket                 | 44. chivalric style               |
| 19. march                           | 45. bardic style                  |
| 20. minuet                          | 46. exotic dialects              |
| 21. musette                         | 47. Landler                      |
| 22. ombra                           | 48. Viennese waltz                |
| 23. opera buffa                     | 49. funeral march                 |
| 24. pastoral                        |                                  |
| 25. recitative                      |                                  |
| 26. sarabande                       |                                  |

**iv. Closing Notes on Methodology**

There are numerous methodologies designed to explicate extroversive signification in music. Naturally, each of these carries its own unique advantages and shortcomings and so the author has chosen to amalgamate aspects of various methodologies in order to ensure a thorough analysis. At no point does the author purport that the methodology in use, is semiotic; aspects of semiotics, such as the philosophical underpinnings of the discipline, and its typologies, have been adopted here as a means of structuring the analysis of these works. Semiotics does not

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22 Evidence of these topics may be found in works post-dating the 18th and 19th centuries.

predominate in this analysis, but instead assists in the classification and comprehension of significative gestures.

v. Structure of Paper

The works in question will be examined in chronological sequence; beginning with Berlioz and followed by Tchaikovsky and then Prokofiev. A chapter has been devoted to each of these analyses. A subsequent chapter is dedicated to the comparison of these analyses and the divulging of potential commonalities that suggest a love/death archetype or topic. This shall be followed by an examination of tonality as an expressive device and the significative potentiality of the atonal idiom. Final notes about the relevance of this study to the contemporary composer will be included in the coda.
Chapter 2: Berlioz

The Scène d’amour and Roméo au tombeau des Capulets, are frequently cited as amongst Hector Berlioz’s most affecting and profound music; the composer himself considered the Scène d’amour to be his finest achievement.24 These two movements are the Balcony and Tomb Scenes of Roméo et Juliette (1839). Since its premiere, the ‘Symphonie dramatique’ has bisected critics into diametrically opposed factions. Controversy was centred around the genre of the work for which there was no express precedent. The free alternation of vocal and instrumental music that characterizes the uniqueness of the piece raises critical aesthetic questions to do with program vs. absolute music, vocal vs. instrumental music.25

The unique advantage of vocal music is the presence of sung text which directly informs the audience of the action. In Roméo et Juliette, Berlioz exploits this advantage in some sections yet refrains from incorporating sung text during the focal sections of the work, the Scène d’amour and Roméo au tombeau. Berlioz considers such complex concepts as love and death to be linguistically ineffable and so exploits the indefiniteness of music to explore such ideas. Berlioz asserts that the instrumental language is "richer . . . less precise, and, by virtue of its very vagueness, incomparably more powerful," and therefore, it is the most direct language.26

Berlioz was particularly faithful to David Garrick’s version of Shakespeare’s play which deviates from the original in several ways, most notably in the Tomb Scene where Juliet alternatively awakens before Romeo dies.27 Berlioz departs from formal conventions, opting for structural concessions in order to facilitate a more direct and faithful engagement with the play. The Scène d’amour is therefore arranged in four continuous (unspecified) sections that corresponds to the quadriptych structure of

26 Ibid., 30.
27 Sanders, Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings, 45.
Shakespeare's Balcony Scene; however, these sections are formally unconventional.28 *Roméo au Tombeau* is similarly conceived in sections, however, unlike the *Scène d'amour*, these are deliberately demarcated by the following designations: 'Invocation','Réveil de Juliette', and 'Joie délirante, désespoir, dernières angoisses et mort de deux amants'. Neither the *Scène d'amour* or *Roméo au tombeau* fit any conventional formal structure; they are free forms that have come about due to the demands of *Romeo and Juliet*’s narrative structure.

I. Scène d’amour

The *Scène d'amour* is structured in four parts pertaining to the four sections of Shakespeare’s Balcony Scene:29

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<tr>
<td>Relation to scene</td>
<td>Romeo appears below Juliet’s balcony, and is apprehensive about confessing his love for her until she avows her own feelings, thereupon Romeo declares his love</td>
<td>Juliet’s emotional asides and Romeo’s attempts to reassure her</td>
<td>Juliet’s consternation</td>
<td>Love scene proper; union and parting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first section opens with a slow 6/8 pianissimo introduction in A major. A sense of anxiousness is signified through obsessive rhythmic figures in the lower string section and portentous gestures in the second violins.30 A bird-call referent, characterized by an adorned ascending line in the first violins, rests above these structures, enriching the contrapuntal tapestry of the prelude. Sustained horns and bassoons rise and rescind

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30 Ibid., 36-37.
below an apprehensive song shared by cor anglais and clarinet in octaves.\footnote{Julian Rushton, Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 37.} At the \textit{pochissimo animato}, Berlioz introduces, albeit fleetingly, a breathless gesture that he would later develop into a signifier for the apprehensive passion of the protagonists. Following this quick interjection is the \textbf{first subject (S1)} (fig. 3), introduced by horn and cello.

Assuming that Berlioz followed the conventional gender/instrument associations, this trope pertains to Romeo, perhaps his 'declaration of love'.\footnote{Ibid., 38.} The association of femininity and masculinity with high and low ranging instruments is an iconic form of signification, whereby the signifier is similar to the signified in terms of range of register. S1 draws from the singing style topic; it is characterized by moderate tempo, major tonality, generally soft dynamics, cantilena melody, harmonic suspensions, and a preference for warm instrumental timbres such as horn, cello and \textit{con sordino} strings. The opening material is then revisited followed by a more extensive statement of the 'breathless trope'. S1 is now expanded to a full orchestral forte in the altered mediant of C major. This iteration of the theme is assertive and confident as if Romeo (possibly joined by Juliet - cor anglais) has overcome his apprehension and openly declares his love to Juliet.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure3.png}
\caption{S1 - Romeo's Theme/Love Theme}
\end{figure}

The \textbf{second section} is dominated by two ideas in quasi dialogue (fig. 4). This is suggested through alternations of fixed gesture, register and instrumental associations. The opening of section 2 begins with a feminine sigh-like motif played by doubling flute and oboe; this signifies Juliet.\footnote{Ibid., 39.} This is followed by an instrumental recitative played by

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\footnote{Julian Rushton, Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 37.}
\footnote{Ibid., 38.}
\footnote{Ibid., 39.}
the cellos; this represents Romeo. Juliet’s motif is fragmentary and short conveying her uncertainty and practicality. Romeo’s is contrastingly long, direct and reassuring.

Figure 4: Section 2 - Romeo and Juliet’s Dialogue (Recitative Topic)

The third section signifies Juliet’s consternation. A sobering topical affect is achieved through the return of the 6/8 Adagio, but now in the submediant key of F-
sharp minor. Juliet’s theme, the second subject (S2) (fig. 5), is similar to S1 in that it is characterized by the same semes, and uses rhythms and adornments akin to Romeo’s theme. However, S2 is conveyed by the octave coupling of flute and cor anglais in the soprano register. Juliet’s soliloquy gradually unfolds until it ultimately descends into S1.

In the fourth and final section, the love duet proper finally plays out. The third subject (fig. 6) is an amalgam of S1 and S2. Kemp purports that the constructive/conjugative relationship of S1 and S2 has the effect of ‘fulfillment rather than resolution.’ Thus, S3 is an iconic sign of love. The final section is a musical excursus, that Daniel Albright describes as ‘a series of swooning arcs, as if Romeo and Juliet were kissing, unkissing and kissing again.’ The development of this section is slightly hesitant; an initial full orchestral statement of S3 gradually gives way to a series of caesuras. Various forms of recall and variation are regularly punctuated with abeyances until finally S3 is restated.

The final bars are particularly fragmented, pervaded with numerous fermata and small abstractions of the theme as if to signify the reluctance of the lovers parting. The texture and dynamics condense until reaching the same open fifth (A-E) that the Scène d’amour began with.

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35 Micznik, ‘Of Ways of Telling, Intertextuality, and Historical Evidence in Berlioz’s “Romeo et Juliette”’, 40-41.
II. Roméo au tombeau

The Roméo au tombeau was particularly criticized for its unapologetic disregard for convention; the prescribed formal scheme was unprecedented, the musical language, ahead of its time; and the style and character of the section, constantly fluctuating between polarized states. However, these characteristics are arguably what render this section so programmatically effective. Albright aptly describes the movement as a "bundle of clonic gestures"... that records the spasms and contortions of Romeo and Juliet so precisely that it cannot help but dispense with musical form and grammar.\textsuperscript{38} Furthermore, Berlioz’s forms of signification were criticized; in particular for the literalism of his depiction of dramatic acts.\textsuperscript{39} Despite this initial controversy, today, the Roméo au tombeau is critically lauded.

The Scène d’amour and Roméo au tombeau have an antithetical relationship; the former develops fragments into themes and the latter dissolves these very themes.\textsuperscript{40} The two movements have inverse formal processes. Their respective constructive and destructive thematic procedures appositely correspond to their programmatic associations: the realization of love and its subsequent fatalistic destruction. Berlioz’s use of thematic recall is a potent significative device, whereby the composer is able to allegorize the destruction of the lovers through the literal destruction of their themes. In the ‘Reveil de Juliette’, a clarinet failingly attempts to deliver Juliet’s hesitant love-theme, and in the ‘Joie delirante’, the orchestra delivers a version of the canto appassionata assai in a conflictingly fast tempo;

In the first instance, the theme is eaten away by long pauses and by sinister runs in the strings...; in the second example..., the theme attempts to escape from time by compressing itself into a single moment of peak intensity: if the canto appassionata assai were any more rapid, it would be the flicker of a chord, not a melody at all.\textsuperscript{41}

Thus, the Roméo au tombeau ‘not only reverses the Scène d’amour, but destroys it.’\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{41} Albright, Musicking Shakespeare: A Conflict of Theatres, 111.
\textsuperscript{42} Rodgers, 'Music Smashed to Pieces’, 66.
Although Berlioz divided the movement into four clearly marked sections, the structure is akin to that of six:

Figure 7: Structure of Berlioz’s Roméo au tombeau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>1-33</td>
<td>34-47</td>
<td>48-73</td>
<td>74-89</td>
<td>90-157</td>
<td>158-227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo Marking</td>
<td>Allegro agitato (minum = 144)</td>
<td>Largo (quaver = 132)</td>
<td>Allegro vivace (minum = 144)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonality</td>
<td>E minor</td>
<td>V of C-sharp minor</td>
<td>C-sharp minor</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>A major</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to scene</td>
<td>Romeo’s agitation</td>
<td>Romeo beholds the tomb</td>
<td>Romeo speaks to Juliet (Invocation) takes poison</td>
<td>Juliet’s awakening (Juliet’s awakening)</td>
<td>Lover reunite, poison takes hold (Delirious joy, despair)</td>
<td>Lovers die (Last agony and death of the lovers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first section evokes Romeo’s malaise and discomposure. The irresolute aggression that characterizes the opening of this scene is achieved through metric contrariety;

Measures 11-13 project two measures of 3/2 meter rather than three measures of the notated two-two time signature . . . resulting in a 'grouping' or 'hemiolatype' dissonance, where two metric layers of different periodicities are in conflict.44

Rapid ascending scalar passages heighten the intensity. The dynamics progress from mf to ff with dramatic contrasts of soft to loud upon its approach. The rising melodic motif supported by dramatic crescendi in bars 18 - 28 etc., generates impulsion and emphasizes the volatility of this section. Together with the refractory tonal plan, these characteristics signify Romeo’s state of mind.45

The second section comprises a series of G-sharp minor chords that alternate with increasingly unrelated harmonies; these statements are separated by bare bars. The bars of this section are marked with fermatas that signify the suspension of time. This pertains to Romeo’s discountenance as he surveys the tomb.46 The alternating chord sequence progresses until a half-diminished seventh chord is reached in bar 44. The oboe sustains the B# of the diminished chord across the otherwise bare bar before

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43 Ibid., Adapted from Rodgers formal overview.
44 Ibid., 47.
45 Rushton, Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette, 52.
finding finality in the dominant of C-sharp (G-sharp minor). The finality is strengthened by a minor ninth in the flute in the following bar.\footnote{Rushton, \textit{Berlioz: Roméo et Juliette}, 52-53.}

A combination of cor anglais, four bassoons and horn in unison deliver Romeo's wordless 'aria' (fig. 8), the focal point of the \textbf{third section} (or 'Invocation').

The melody, articulate even in despair, falls into a complex but clear periodization, and is drawn through some potentially remote regions before falling, with a climactic D major chord, to a [C-sharp] minor cadence.\footnote{Ibid., 53-4.}

At bar 71, the melody subsides to a descending chromatic figure played by tremolo cellos that signifies Romeo's ingestion of poison (fig. 9).

\textbf{Figure 8: Romeo's Aria}

\textbf{Figure 9: Vial of Poison}

The \textbf{fourth section} (fig. 10) features solo clarinet and low strings in alternation. The clarinet emerges from \textit{pppp} with various melodic fragments derivative of Juliet's theme from the \textit{Scène d'amour}. These iterations become more extensive—the melody reaches higher and higher and the dynamics become louder—signifying Juliet's awakening. The contrasting string material is a continuation of that which depicted Romeo drinking the vial of poison (fig. 9).

The \textbf{fifth section} violently shifts from \textit{p} to \textit{f} dynamics, thin textures to an orchestral tutti and almost doubles in tempo. This portents the section Berlioz designated 'delirious, joy, despair'. The music here returns to A major, and when motives define themselves after the change to 6/8 they are clearly recognizable as 'Romeo's declaration' from the \textit{Scène d'amour}. This version of Romeo's theme is
significantly faster than its original form; the inappropriate tempo of the theme implies an outthought delirium. The theme anticipates a cadential resolution in bar 148, however this is subverted by a hiatal section of music that signifies the poison taking hold of Romeo; the tritone in bar 154 acts as an indexical sign for this (fig. 11).

The opening of Section 6 is metrically and harmonically ambiguous. Berlioz superimposes different metres—2/2 in the clarinet part, 3/4 in the remaining winds, and 6/8 in the trombone—so that the resulting effect is ametricity. The metereless pulsing rhythms signify Romeo’s waning heartbeat. The frequent occurrence of dissonances and general indistinct harmonic language of this section bears on atonality. This material gives way to a texturally sparse section of music comprising alternations of a string gesture—derived from Romeo’s Theme—with abrupt orchestral chords. At bar 187 a chromatic figure played by double bass signifies Romeo’s death (fig. 12). Juliet’s suicide is subsequently depicted by the fortissimo diminished seventh chord in bar 211 (fig. 13).
Figure 10: Section 4 - Juliet's Awakening

un peu retenu
dolcissimo
solo

mème mouvement

Clarinet (in A)

Timpani

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Cl.

Timp.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

84

Cl.

Timp.

Vla.

Vc.

Db.

pp< mf
Figure 11: Poison Takes Hold

Figure 12: Death of Romeo

Figure 13: Juliet's Suicide (Reduction)
Chapter 3: Tchaikovsky

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky’s symphonic overture had an arduous nascency; the original 1869 version premiered in 1870 and was declared a critical failure, compelling Tchaikovsky to produce another two versions; the second, later in 1870; and the third and final version, a decade later in 1880.\(^\text{49}\) For the present purpose, the following discussion will refer solely to the reputable final version.

| Figure 14: Structure of Tchaikovsky’s Romeo and Juliet |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Section**     | **Introduction** | **Exposition**  | **Development** | **Recapitulation** | **Coda**       |
| **Bars**        | 1-111           | 112-264         | 265-352         | 353-484           | 485-end        |
| **Tempo**       | Andante non tanto quasi Moderato | Allegro giusto |                | Moderato assai     |
| **Marking**     |                |                |                |                  |
| **Tonality**    | F-sharp minor   | B minor -> D-flat major | A minor?       | B minor -> D major | B major       |
| **Relation to scene** | ?               | Balcony Scene? (from m. 172) | ?               | Balcony Scene? (from m. 387) | Tomb Scene |

The formal conventions active during the time that Romeo and Juliet was conceived, required Tchaikovsky to structure the piece in sonata form; however, this is intrinsically incongruous with the narrative structure of the play.\(^\text{50}\) For that reason, Tchaikovsky described his Romeo and Juliet as a ‘fantasy-overture’, a designation that subverts some of the restrictive criteria of sonata form. This permitted him some freedom to alter the form according to narrative demands apparent from his inclusion of an introduction and coda as well as the omission of the second subject in the development section. Although this formal expansion facilitated Tchaikovsky’s recount of Shakespeare’s play, the piece does not delineate specific narrative events in an episodic manner, nor does it attempt to. Instead, ‘Shakespearean plot is... decomposed. Tchaikovsky extracts and abstracts basic narrative units’\(^\text{51}\) in order to convey the


\(^{50}\) Pawłowska, ‘The Story of Romeo and Juliet’, 165

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
The general plot of *Romeo and Juliet*, and so, aspects of the narrative including themes of love and death are plainly distinguishable.

I. The 'Love Theme'

The *Love theme* from Tchaikovsky's 'Romeo and Juliet' is one of the most readily recognized musical representations of its kind. In popular culture, the *Love Theme* (fig. 15) is so archetypal that it is commonly regarded as a cliché and often deployed parodistically in film and television. The pervasiveness of Tchaikovsky's *Love Theme* attests to its authority as a symbol of love in contemporary society; a sign or perhaps even a topic, in its own right. The *Love Theme* is attached to Romeo and Juliet and is serially stated in adjusted forms to represent the lovers at various points in the play, including the Balcony, and in the Tomb. There are three principal statements of the theme; the first, as the second subject of the exposition; the second, in the recapitulation; and the third, in the coda.

Thematic assignation is a compelling device that through sequential processes of alteration, signify the peregrination of Romeo and Juliet. Its initial statement for instance, is fairly tentative and reserved when compared to its subsequent deployment in the recapitulation. Tchaikovsky presents the initial statement in the distant key of D-flat major rather than the conventional key of D major. This harmonic irresolution is prolonged until the recapitulation where it is stated finally in the key of D major. This harmonic irregularity is a significative subterfuge that reflects the lovers constraint and hesitancy. In the recapitulation, 'the expression is intensified--the texture becomes denser, instrumentation becomes more massive and dynamics rises.'\(^{52}\) This statement is a resolution of the previous statement; it represents resignation and the apogee of romantic fulfillment. The general effect of this contrast of statements is an iconically signified accretion of the protagonists sentiments as they navigate their way to the Tomb.

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\(^{52}\) Ibid., 171.
Tchaikovsky's *Love Theme* is comprised two distinct ideas (fig. 15) in the following structure abA; a and A pertaining to Romeo (the famous melody of the *Love Theme*) and b to Juliet (the 'oscillating section'):53

(a) The distinctive melody of the *Love Theme* draws upon the singing style and amoroso topics. It is presented in a major key, slow tempo and quiet dynamics, and is characterized by long note values arranged in a cantilena-like melody with open phrases and regular use of suspensions.54

(b) Theme b, referred to as the 'oscillating section,' comprises a succession of regularly alternating augmented triad and minor seventh chords.55 The restlessness of this sequence is conducive to Juliet's uncertainty. It is 'definitely more feminine and delicate' than the Romeo section of this theme group.56

(A) This section is directly derived from (a); however, the orchestration is now richer and references to the oscillating section are adopted. This literal union of thematic material signifies the union of the lovers.

If we associate individual sections of the theme of love with particular actors, Romeo will appear as an active and acting figure (the distinctiveness of the melody, expressivity of a wide amplitude) while Juliet will seem to be a more passive and reacting figure (reserved . . . dynamics, oscillating between an augmented triad and a minor seventh).57

The first statement of the *Love Theme* consists of the entire theme group. Orchestration is thin and dynamics are reserved. In (a) there is a predilection for soft and warm instrumental timbres such as the cor anglais, *con sordino* strings and harp. In (b) material is confined to *con sordino* strings with a small dynamic scope. In (A) the theme is presented '. . . in flutes and oboes [and so] one understands well that Juliet has left her mark on him,'58 Instrumentation plays a huge part in the conveyance of extramusical concepts here. Like Berlioz, Tchaikovsky consolidates dramatis personae by gendering the sections through his deployment of instrumentation as iconic signs; Romeo is represented by cor anglais and Juliet by flutes.

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53 Ibid., 166.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
The second statement completely omits the first section (a), beginning instead with (b). The oscillating chords are now presented by oboe, clarinet and horn accompanied by rapid continuous semiquavers in violins. This material is gradually expanded across the remaining woodwind, horns and strings. (A) orchestration is richer and the theme is presented by piccolo and strings with Juliet’s countermelody in horn against pulsing triplet figures in the woodwind and sustained harmonies in the brass. The dynamic scope is expanded to ff. This is suggestive of the stile appassionato topic, 'often associated with love or desire... Operatically derived melodies are often written in octaves (although a single soaring line can create the same effect) and are underscored by throbbing, repeated chords—most frequently in eight-note or triplet patterns—that represent the pounding heartbeat of barely suppressed passion.'

II. The 'Love Theme' as Death Theme

The final statement deployed in the coda (fig. 16) is profoundly different in its affect than its positive deployment in the exposition and recapitulation; this final statement involves the transfiguration (or perhaps disfiguration) of the Love Theme into the Death Theme. Preceded by a fateful timpani roll, the 'love theme' is now presented as a slower B minor transposition; the theme is fragmentary and broken, appearing in Romeo's register in the bassoon and strings against a rhythmically monotonous funereal ostinato played softly by timpani; these are semes of the funeral topic. The funereal pedal b is reinforced by sustained tuba and a pizzicato double bass line that accents the beat, emphasizing the tedium and heaviness of this section.

After a brief hymnodic repose resembling the oscillating section associated with Juliet (again on woodwinds), the Love Theme returns, this time spread across the higher strings and now restored to the major key (fig. 17). However, the sanctity of the Love Theme is diluted by portents of death; a repeating descending chromatic line (lament topic) in the low strings underpins the dispositional change. Furthermore, the syncopated harmonies in the woodwinds subvert the certitude of the theme. After a tremendous timpani roll, the entire orchestra delivers a ff tutti of B major chords, a kind of sonic apotheosis that heralds the transcendence of Romeo and Juliet's love; ‘it

outgrew death and tragedy. This differs substantially from the unrelenting tragedy that characterizes the ending Berlioz's adaptation. The literal disfigurement of the *Love Theme* is a compelling allegory for the death of Romeo and Juliet; and the capacious influence of this device continues untiringly.

### III. Holdovers in Popular Culture

Tchaikovsky's designation of the *Love Theme* to the protagonists, is a potent significative technique that has penetrated subsequent adaptations of this play. Prokofiev's balletic adaptation applies this technique at length. It has also found a critical place in popular culture:

It is a technique for identifying the lovers that has become much repeated, influencing Nino-Rota's development of a love theme... in Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film version of the play and Baz Luhrmann's designation of a similar role to Des'ree's 'Kissing You' in his screen interpretation.

Although the use of thematic association is a seemingly obvious common thread amid these compositions, the transformative use of the love theme as death theme is uniquely potent, intensifying the pathos of the scene through the nostalgic recollection of love. The theme is tarnished and distorted; the literal destruction of the love theme allegorizes the destruction of the protagonists. This form of iconic signification has been repeated by both Rota and Des'ree.

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60 Pawłowska, 'The Story of Romeo and Juliet', 171.
Figure 15: Love Theme (a and b)
Figure 16: *Love Theme* in the Tomb Scene

### Moderato assai

- **Piccolo**: 
- **Flute**: 
- **Oboe**: 
- **Cor Anglais**: 
- **Clarinet in A**: 
- **Bassoon**: 
- **Horn in F**: 
- **Trumpet in E**: 
- **Trombone**: 
- **Tuba**: 
- **Timpani**: 

**Violin I**: 

**Violin II**: 

**Viola**: 

**Violoncello**: 

**Double Bass**: 

*Pizz.*
Figure 17: Transcending the Love Theme
Chapter 4: Prokofiev

Sergei Prokofiev's balletic rendering of *Romeo and Juliet* is a staple of the classical repertoire; and yet, like Tchaikovsky's symphonic rendition, Prokofiev's ballet had a problematic birth. The artistic director of the Leningrad State Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet (known as the Kirov Theatre during the Soviet era, and today known as the Mariinsky Theatre), Sergey Radlov, approached Prokofiev with the idea in December of 1934. However, numerous circumstances prevented any performances. The original version of the ballet aroused immense controversy over its alternative ending. Instead of the protagonists' tragic deaths, Prokofiev decided upon a happy ending wherein Romeo finds Juliet alive. Prokofiev's patrons found this to be a profane reduction of pathos to bathos and so it was dropped. Consequently, Prokofiev reversed his decision to alter the ending; the final version discussed here is true to Shakespeare's denouement. *Romeo and Juliet* was premiered in December 1938 in Brno, Czechoslovakia. It was subsequently taken up by the Bolshoi in 1940; however it was dropped again due to claims that the music was too avant garde to choreograph. The Kirov, however, decided to renege its previous discountenance, and performed *Romeo and Juliet* to Leonid Lavrovski's choreography with Galina Ulanova as the lead. This is perhaps the best-known earlier performances of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. Although originally intended for ballet, the work on its own is remarkably affecting and concert versions are frequently performed.

The overall structure of the ballet is four acts and a total of 52 musical numbers. The current paper is concerned with 19, 20 and 21 which comprise the Balcony Scene as well as 51 and 52 which constitute the Tomb Scene.

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63 Ibid., 313.
64 Ibid.
65 Pawłowska, 'The Story of Romeo and Juliet', 173.
I. Prokofiev's System of Thematic Assignation

Like the aforementioned composers, Prokofiev applies what Sanders describes as a 'sub-Wagnerian structure of repetition and refrain.' However, Prokofiev's use of thematic assignation is far more extensive than that of Berlioz or Tchaikovsky; this level of melodic representation was first utilized by Wagner in his music-dramas and is commonly referred to as leitmotiv. The composer assigns themes and particular instrumental groups to dramatis personae and situations. Again, Juliet is typically signified through high woodwinds, solo flute in particular, and Romeo by cor anglais and cello. These themes are transfigured, disfigured, developed and deployed according to the course of the narrative. Because Prokofiev's thematic system is so considerable, additive and particular, the current author has chosen to defer to the system of labels proposed by Karen Bennett.

II. Balcony Scene

Although number 19 is designated by title of 'Balcony Scene', the complete Balcony Scene is actually spread across three numbers (19, 20 & 21). Prokofiev has given the direction attacca at the end of each number substantiating their analysis as a collective Balcony Scene. Five themes constitute these numbers: the R&J Theme B, Romeo's Theme, Juliet's Theme B, as well as the Love Theme A and B. Of these themes, the R&J Theme B, Love Theme, and A Love Theme B are the central thematic ideas and serve the express purpose of signifying love. These themes are constructed from the following semes of love: lyricism, legato articulation, cantilena style, consonances, a predilection for winds and strings, expression marks such as dolce, espressivo, and

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 68.
69 Pawłowska, 'The Story of Romeo and Juliet', 178.
70 Several of these thematic titles are assigned categorical letters. The R&J theme B and Juliet's theme B are discussed here without reference to their preceding versions (A). This is due to their absence in the sections in focus. The designation of B has been maintained.
This is the same classeme and topical use as that which is deployed in both Berlioz and Tchaikovsky.

i. 19. Balcony Scene

Figure 18: Structure of Prokofiev's Balcony Scene

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1-18</td>
<td>19-35</td>
<td>36-50</td>
<td>51-end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo Marking</td>
<td>Larghetto (crotchet = 144)</td>
<td>Inquieto (crotchet = 112)</td>
<td>Andante (crotchet = 84)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonality</td>
<td>?? Major, inconsistent</td>
<td>A-flat major</td>
<td>F minor/A-flat major</td>
<td>G Major - C Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to Scene</td>
<td>Opens scene</td>
<td>Juliet's evening prayers</td>
<td>Romeo approaching Juliet's balcony</td>
<td>Declaration of love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opening of the Balcony Scene is remarkably akin to that of Berlioz and Tchaikovsky. The tempo is slow, dynamics reserved, orchestra is condensed, and there is once again a predilection for warm timbres such as flute, clarinet, harp and con sordino strings. The opening gesture resembles that of Juliet's 'oscillating section' in Tchaikovsky's version and the 'breathless trope' in Berlioz's version; it bears a similar aural effect and as such, a similar significative effect. This alternation of major triad inversions is changed into an arpeggio accompaniment (bar 5) upon which sits a lyrical melody played by violins. Programmatically, this opening represents Romeo alone and outside Juliet's balcony. Following from here, at bar 19, an organ and string solo present a version of *Romeo's Theme* (fig.19). The perforce religious connotations of the organ and the polyphony that characterizes this particular version of *Romeo's Theme*, are exploited here, perhaps to signify Juliet's evening prayers or the spiritual nature of Romeo and Juliet's love. Following this, fragments of *Juliet's Theme B* (fig. 20) are successively presented by solo flute and solo violin, punctuated by threatening *sul ponticello* string gestures ([136] to [137]). The threatening quality of these gestures lessens as articulations shift from *staccato* to *tenuto*, and the tonality slowly moves from minor to major, ending with a perfect cadence in the new key of G major. Perhaps this

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72 Bennet labels this the *Madrigal Theme*. For present purposes, the current author has chosen to refer to this theme by its originating title, *Romeo's Theme*.

73 Bennett, *Star-cross'd Lovers*, 320.
signifies Romeo’s clandestine approach towards Juliet’s balcony; the transfiguration of the string gesture, in particular, the resolution provided by the perfect cadence in the major mode, suggests Romeo’s arrival at Juliet’s balcony and his conviction about declaring his love for her. The declaration of love is represented by the broad and sanguine \textit{R&J Theme B} (fig. 21) played by cor anglais and cellos (bar 54). This statement is then repeated, this time with the addition of the soprano register, as if to suggest Juliet’s submission to Romeo’s avowal. The theme is presented predominately by violins, viola and clarinet with various other instruments joining in fleetingly as offering commentary.

\textbf{Figure 19: Romeo’s Theme}
Figure 20: Juliet Theme B - (ragmented)

Inquieto $\nu = 112$

Flute

Violin I Solo

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

poco rit.  a tempo
ii. 20. Romeo’s Variation

Figure 22: Structure of Prokofiev’s *Romeo’s Variation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>1-15</td>
<td>16-33</td>
<td>34-end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>Allegretto amoroso (crotchet = 144)</td>
<td>Meno mosso</td>
<td>Allegro amoroso (crotchet = 144)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking</td>
<td>B-flat Major</td>
<td>E-flat Major</td>
<td>C Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonality</td>
<td>B-flat Major</td>
<td>E-flat Major</td>
<td>C Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to scene</td>
<td>Romeo’s solo, celebrating his declaration of love for Juliet and her subsequent reciprication.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As suggested by the title, Romeo’s Variation is a solo dance section wherein Romeo rejoices over their declaration of love. The number centres around *Romeo’s Theme* (fig. 23)—which comments on the *R&J Theme B*—and features foretelling aspects of the *Love Theme A* (fig. 24). This variation is nearly unrecognizable; the transformation of his theme is an analogue for the transformation of his character. The number is in a simple ternary form with the *Romeo Theme* presented in A and the *Love Theme A* presented in B. The tempo is fast and the metre in 3/4 with a vamping accompaniment, while the orchestration is more rich and dense than the preceding number; although the proclivity for the instrumental timbres of strings and winds remains.

Figure 23: Romeo’s Theme

Figure 24: Love Theme A
### iii. 21. Love Dance

**Figure 25: Structure of Prokofiev’s Love Dance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bars</td>
<td>1-56</td>
<td>57-92</td>
<td>93-end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo Marking</td>
<td>Andante</td>
<td>Piu mosso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonality</td>
<td>C Major</td>
<td>E-flat Major → E Major → B-flat → E</td>
<td>B-flat Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation to scene</td>
<td>Love duet</td>
<td>Romeo and Juliet separate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This pas de deux is the love duet proper, the very apogee of Romeo and Juliet’s romance. The Love Dance has a binary structure protracted by a coda. The *Love Theme A* and *B* preponderate these first two sections respectively, the coda is a refrain that recalls the *R&J Theme B* as stated in the opening of the Balcony Scene. The Love Dance commences with a sudden and dense tapestry of arching gestures that are suffused with hints of *Love Theme A*. This texture is sustained for some time before the full statement of *Love Theme A* is finally presented by cor anglais, saxophone, cellos and basses (bar 19). The melody is lyrical, refined, and adorned with triplet figures. The texture during this statement is stripped back and the arching accompaniment is transferred to string glissandi. The theme begins in the key of C major; however the tonal centre is regularly subverted by succeeding deployments of the theme in alternative keys. The *Love Theme B* (fig. 26) enters at the section change in bar 57. This theme is subdued; characterized by soft dynamics and thin orchestration. A cantilena-style melody played by violin sits above a bed of fluttering winds and pulsing strings. This melodic line is taken over by flute and oboe before approaching a fleeting refrain that carries implications of finality (bar 78). This juncture recalls the opening of the Balcony Scene. However, this sense of closure is quickly thwarted by a final statement of the *Love Theme B* (bar 85). Following this, the orchestra is condensed, textures simplified and the material returns to that of the opening Balcony Scene once again (bar 93). The final bars are confined to *con sordino* strings. A fragmented series of ascending scalar passages are played by violin, analogous of the lovers’ reluctance to part.
II. The Tomb

Like the numbers of the Balcony Scene, numbers 51. and 52 of the Tomb Scene are marked *attacca*, suggesting a collective significance. Juliet's Funeral and Juliet's Death are comprised the *Death theme, R&J theme A, Love theme A* and *Juliet's theme C*. The funeral topic and death classeme are constituted from semes of death. These include: slow tempo, minor key, obsessive and repetitive gestures applied as ostinato, tragic gestures (akin to crying or moaning), semitone gestures, and a proclivity for brass timbres, snare drum, and violin in high registers.74

i. 51. Juliet's Funeral

The opening bars comprises high tremolando violins alternating in unison between the semitone G-flat and F. These are the semes of bewailing, what Pawłowska refers to as a 'special case of semes of death'.75 This gesture is succeeded by the *Death Theme* at bar 13. This entire number is comprised of repetitions of this theme in various permutations. Like his predecessors, Prokofiev utilizes aspects of the funeral topic to construct his *Death Theme*. This predominantly homophonic section of music is characterized by an arciform melodic contour with descending chromatic attributes played by violins. This is supported by viola and cellos in their highest registers, marking time with metrically placed pulses, and funereal rhythms. The tempo is slow and the tonality is minor. This expands to winds which contribute harmonic drones and basses which reinforce the ostinato implied by the viola and cellos. *Juliet's Funeral* is predominantly mad up of a sequence of variations of the *Death Theme*. The second statement of the theme is played by horns with a thin orchestral accompaniment. A crescendo on snare drum ushers in a full orchestral account of the theme played

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74 Pawłowska, 'The Story of Romeo and Juliet', 183
75 Ibid.
fortissimo. The snare drum is frequently associated with funeral topics. The number continues to present variations of the **Death Theme** punctuated by various interjections such as the frantic gestures of the strings at bar 62 preceding a fleeting and discordant statement of the **R&J Theme A** and followed by **Love Theme A** (bar 74). This thematic recall is akin to that which both Berlioz and Tchaikovsky deploy in their respective Tomb Scenes. At [355] the **Death Theme** return to overthrow these nostalgic tokens in one final grand statement. The solemnity and heaviness of this is emphasized by timpani and bass drum. At bar 355, the strings play out desperate shrieking arcs that extend across two octaves. These subside to a low semitone tremolando in the cellos and basses, as well as a bass drum roll. Two crescendi are emphasised by additional suspended cymbal rolls and sustained notes in clarinet, bass clarinet and flute. Together, these gestures signify tolling or the death knell that accompanies Romeo's death (fig. 28).
Figure 27: Romeo’s Death Knell

L’istesso tempo
ii. 52. Juliet’s Death

This section opens with *Juliet’s Theme C* (fig. 29) played by high *con sordino* violins underpinned by drones in the lower strings and a pulsing gesture in the second violins (which resembles the accompaniment of the *Death Theme* at bar 35 of No.51. This is followed by a sequence of variations including a larger orchestral statement of *Juliet’s Theme C* at bar 9 (perhaps this signifies her awakening), a duet of solo violin and horn pair at bar 22, and a final and full orchestral statement following. As this final statement subsides, a perilous and discordant gesture played by winds, trumpet, tuba, *pizzicato* violas and *arco* bass, signifies Juliet’s suicide (fig. 30). This is followed by a tragically pallid recollection of the *Love theme* played by clarinet. The section ends with an unanimated chord sequence with chromatic inflections, tolling bass drum, static high strings (that spell the tonic C major triad), and a bass line that moves obsessively between the tonic and subdominant before ultimately coming to rest (by way of fleeting chromaticism) on the tonic C. Although the concluding bars are underpinned by a C major tonality, the positive quality of the major mode is robbed of its affect by the chromaticism of the woodwinds and its contextual placement in the narrative. Contrarily, the major tonality here has the poignant affect of nostalgia. Or perhaps, like Tchaikovsky’s version it signifies the transcendence of their love.\(^{76}\)

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\(^{76}\) Pawłowska, 'The Story of Romeo and Juliet', 185.
Chapter 5: Commonalities

I. Semes and Topics

There is an obvious and incontrovertible crossover of semes and topics deployed across the Romeo and Juliet adaptations of Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev. Furthermore, each of these composers depends to some extent upon the concept of instrumental and thematic assignation (pseudo-leitmotiv).

Love

Semes: Moderate tempo, Major key, consonances, harmonic suspensions, cantilena melody, proclivity for ascending melody, legato articulation, predilection for winds, harp and strings (especially con sordino).

Topics: Amoroso

Singing Style

Aria

Recitative

Death

Semes: Slow tempo, minor key, dissonances, obsessive and repetitive gestures applied a la ostinato, proclivity for descending melody, tragic gestures (akin to crying or moaning), semitone gestures, and a predilection for brass timbres, snare drum, and violin in high registers.

Topics: Funeral

Lament

II. Instrumentation and Dramatis Personae

Each of these composers employs the traditional gender associations of high and low instruments with femininity and masculinity, respectively. In particular, each composer similarly applies high instruments such as flute, oboe and violin to signify Juliet, and low instruments such as cor anglais, horn and cello to signify Romeo. This form of signification is iconic as it parallels the natural vocal ranges of the male and human voice.
III. Systems of Thematic Assignation

Associating themes with characters and situations is an invaluable significative device. Elaborate narratives may be conveyed through the treatment of these themes. They are transfigured, disfigured, developed and deployed according to the course of the narrative. And as such, they have a profound analogous quality. As previously divulged, this technique has proven so effective that it continues to be applied generously today, especially in the field of film scoring. All of the above composers applied this technique to some extent, Prokofiev being significantly more assiduous with his use of leitmotiv. The success of the ballet as a concert piece is largely owed to this narrative device. Furthermore, each of these composers deployed their respective love theme in the final Tomb Scene. Their treatment of this technique however slightly differs. Berlioz uses this opportunity to deconstruct the love theme and so signifies the death of Romeo and Juliet through the analogy of the death of the love theme. This is an example of disfiguration. Alternatively, Tchaikovsky, transfigures his love theme in the Tomb Scene. Rather than dismantle the theme, he alters its semes so that it becomes a classem of death. Furthermore, the composer also superimposes a funeral topic, reinforcing its new position as a signifier of death. Finally, Prokofiev, applies statements of his theme in several ways, some disfigured by harmonic subversion or by fragmenting or deconstructing this theme and others in unchanged statements like nostalgic echoes.
Chapter 6: An Atonal Romeo and Juliet?

Although Shakespeare's tragedy preoccupied many composers of the past, since the turn of the 20th century, the composition of works pertaining to this theme have profoundly lessened. This suggests that either composers stopped adapting the story, or that the attempts that were made failed to garner laudable attention. Those adaptations that did gain some traction demonstrate a categorical bisection corresponding to the aesthetic dichotomy that characterized the modernist era: that of tonality vs. atonality. Each of these compositional systems is afforded a unique lexicon of significations. However, what may be thematically congruous with one system may not be with the other.

In his assessment of atonality, Neil M. Ribe asserts that whilst it is well suited to expressing an abnormal character, '[atonality] is not very well suited to expressing things traditionally considered "beautiful."

Atonality extended the expressive range of music: extramusical concepts that were previously unexplored were given agency through the idiom of atonality. However, treating tonality and atonality as mutually exclusive compositional systems is ineffective if the composer aspires to signify a broad and perhaps conflicting scope of extramusical concepts within a single work. Until recently, composers have approached composition in either one or the other idiom and the literature is reflective of this practice. However, now that composers are creating works that freely amalgamate both idioms, it is necessary to reflexively formalize this new practice.

Arnold Schoenberg, the originator of atonality and the Second Viennese School, declared that 'Music without a constant reference to a tonic was comprehensible, could produce characters and moods, could provoke emotions and was not devoid of gaiety or humour.'

Ribe duly points out that in his statement, Schoenberg did not specify which characters, moods and emotions he proposed atonality was actually capable of expressing.

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Like all musical idioms, however, atonality is better suited to express some characters than others. The expressive qualities of a musical style are notoriously difficult to describe, but one useful indication is the nature of the poems or other literary texts a composer chooses to set. An examination of the texts of Schoenberg and his students suggests that atonality is particularly well suited to imitating actions of an extreme or abnormal character.\(^79\)

Ribe continues to state that:

> In spite of Schoenberg’s claim that atonal music is ‘not devoid of gaiety or humour,’ a convincing atonal comic opera has yet to be written, and subjects of a noble or tragic character have not fared much better; most atonal composers, like the rest of us, find it difficult to imagine an atonal... *Romeo and Juliet*.\(^80\)

In lieu of Ribe’s quip about an atonal *Romeo and Juliet*, several composers have in fact attempted such a work. German composer Jürg Baur, composed *Romeo und Julia* in 1962 as an atonal symphonic composition. The symphony is in four movements with the following order of tempi: fast, slow, fast, slow. However, despite the implication of slow tempi with the Balcony and Tomb Scenes, the musical material itself, does little to confirm this assumption; there are no distinguishable topics, and the semes catalogued in the above analysis are lacking. Perhaps the work borrows from Shakespeare's play in a less direct way. French composer Pascal Dusapin, composed his opera *Roméo et Juliette* in 1988 as a work that intentionally thwarts its title theme. The opera exhibits few obvious musical connections to Shakespeare's play. Pawłowska affirms that 'what is obvious is that the composer's and librettist's intention was to ignore the linearity of a literary program and to avoid clearly defined semantics.'\(^81\) Numerous contemporary *Romeo and Juliet* adaptations demonstrate both a musical, aesthetic and ideological rejection of the signs that constitute the adaptations of the past; they are either ambiguous in their representations (Baur) or altogether uninterested in representation (Dusapin). But what does this mean for the contemporary composer who aspires to signify these themes using a compositional system that amalgamates both tonal and atonal idioms?

The adaptations of Berlioz, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev demonstrate a tendency to preserve tonality in the music of the Balcony Scene and accommodate greater

\(^{79}\) Ribe, 'Atonal Music and Its Limits', 52.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 53.

chromaticism and dissonance in the Tomb Scene. Whilst the semes and topics of love apply particularly well to tonal music, they are less congruent with the atonal idiom. However, this is not the case with the semes and topics of death; the signs of death proffer generous potential for development using the atonal idiom. Although an entirely atonal representation of *Romeo and Juliet* is unlikely to be comprehensible, there is potential for an effective adaptation that judiciously combines both tonality and atonality.
Appendices

Appendix A: Synopsis of Romeo and Juliet

Prologue: a Chorus outlines the story, requesting a patient hearing.

1.1
Servants of the Capulet family provoke a quarrel with their Montague counterparts, which, with the Capulet Tybalt's encouragement, develops into a full-scale brawl involving Capulet and Montague themselves, despite attempts by Benvolio, members of the Watch, and the wives of Capulet and Montague to restore order. The fighting is stilled by the arrival of the Prince, who threatens that if the feud breaks out once more Capulet and Montague will be executed. Left with Benvolio, Montague and his wife ask after their absent son Romeo, and employ Benvolio to investigate the cause of his solitary melancholy. Romeo reveals to Benvolio that he is suffering from unrequited love.

1.2
Capulet, bound to the peace, tells the Prince's kinsman Paris that if he can win his 13-year-old daughter Juliet's acceptance he may marry her. He invites Paris to a feast that night, and gives a list of the other intended guests to his servant Peter. Alone, Peter admits he cannot read, and when Romeo and Benvolio arrive he seeks their help. Learning of Capulet's feast, Benvolio hopes to cure Romeo's melancholy by taking him there and showing that his beloved Rosaline has no monopoly on beauty.

1.3
Capulet's wife, much interrupted by the digressive Nurse, tells Juliet of Paris's suit: they are called to the feast.

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1.4
Romeo, Benvolio, and their friend Mercutio have masks and torches ready for their uninvited arrival at the Capulets' feast. Romeo has dreamed the occasion will be fatal to him, but Mercutio ridicules this notion, attributing dreams to the fairy Queen Mab.

1.5
During the dancing at the feast, Romeo is captivated by Juliet's beauty, renouncing his infatuation with Rosaline. Despite his mask he is recognized by Tybalt, whom Capulet has to restrain from challenging him. Romeo accosts Juliet and begs a kiss, subsequently learning her identity from the Nurse before he and his friends depart. Juliet similarly learns his.

2.0
The Chorus speaks of the mutual love of Romeo and Juliet, which they will pursue despite the dangers posed by their parents' enmity.

2.1
Returning from the feast, Romeo doubles back, concealing himself despite the mocking summons of Benvolio and Mercutio. Hidden, he sees Juliet emerge onto her balcony: when she sighs his name, wishing he were not a Montague, he reveals himself, and in the lyrical conversation which follows they exchange vows of love. Juliet promises to send by nine the following morning to Romeo, who is to arrange their marriage.

2.2
Friar Laurence is gathering medicinal herbs early the following morning when Romeo tells him of the night's events: at first chiding Romeo for so quickly abandoning his passion for Rosaline, he agrees to marry him to Juliet in the hopes of ending the feud between Montagues and Capulets.

2.3
Benvolio and Mercutio at last meet Romeo, and Mercutio banters with him against love. The Nurse arrives with Peter, and after much mockery from Mercutio is able to speak privately with Romeo: Juliet is to come to Laurence's cell that afternoon, and Romeo will send a rope-ladder by which she may later admit him at her window to consummate their secret marriage.

2.4
The Nurse teases an impatient Juliet before passing on Romeo's message.
Friar Laurence warns Romeo against immoderate love before Juliet arrives to be married.

Benvolio and Mercutio are accosted by Tybalt, who wishes to challenge Romeo: when Romeo arrives, however, he refuses to be provoked to fight, to the disgust of Mercutio, who draws his own sword. As Romeo tries to part the combatants, Mercutio is mortally wounded by Tybalt: incensed, Romeo fights and kills Tybalt before fleeing, aghast at what he has done. The Montagues and Capulets gather, with the Prince, Mercutio’s kinsman, who, learning what has happened from Benvolio, sentences Romeo to immediate banishment.

Juliet’s eager anticipation of her wedding night is cut short by the Nurse, who brings the news of Tybalt’s death and Romeo’s banishment: moved by her grief, the Nurse promises to find Romeo and bring him despite everything.

Friar Laurence brings Romeo, hidden at his cell, the news of his sentence, to his inconsolable despair. The Nurse arrives, and has to prevent Romeo from stabbing himself: the Friar reproaches Romeo for his frenzy, telling him to go to Juliet as arranged but leave for Mantua before the setting of the watch.

Capulet agrees with his wife and Paris that Juliet shall marry Paris the following Thursday.

Early the following morning Romeo reluctantly parts from Juliet, descending from her window. Her mother brings Juliet the news that, to dispel the sorrow they attribute to Tybalt’s death, she is to marry Paris: Capulet arrives and, angry at Juliet’s refusal, threatens to disown her unless she agrees to the match. After her parents’ departure, the Nurse advises Juliet to marry Paris. Juliet feigns to agree, but resolves that unless Friar Laurence can help her she will kill herself.

Paris is with Friar Laurence when Juliet arrives: after his departure, the Friar advises Juliet that she should pretend to agree to the marriage, but that on its eve she should
take a drug which he will give her, which will make her seem dead for 24 hours. She will be laid in the Capulets’ tomb, where Romeo, summoned from Mantua by letter, can await her waking before taking her back with him.

4.2
The Capulets and the Nurse are making preparations for Juliet's wedding to Paris, to which she, returning, pretends to consent. Capulet brings forward its date to the following day.

4.3
Left alone in her chamber that night, Juliet, despite her apprehension at the prospect of awakening in the tomb, takes the Friar's potion.

4.4
The Capulets' busy preparations on the wedding morning are laid aside when the Nurse finds Juliet apparently dead: in the midst of their grief Friar Laurence takes charge of funeral arrangements. Hired musicians, no longer needed, jest with Peter.

5.1
In Mantua Romeo has dreamed he died but was awakened by Juliet when his servant Balthasar brings the news that Juliet is dead: intending to return to Verona and kill himself, Romeo buys poison from a needy apothecary.

5.2
Friar Laurence learns that his colleague Friar John has been prevented by plague quarantine restrictions from delivering his explanatory letter to Romeo: he hurries towards the Capulets' tomb.

5.3
Paris is strewing flowers at the tomb and reciting an epitaph for Juliet when Romeo arrives, sending an apprehensive Balthasar away: Paris attempts to arrest Romeo and is killed in the fight that ensues, asking, as he dies, to be laid with Juliet. Romeo opens the tomb and brings Paris's body inside. He speaks to the apparently dead Juliet, bidding her a last farewell, drinks the poison, kisses her, and dies. Friar Laurence arrives as Juliet begins to awaken: frightened by the approach of the watch, he attempts to persuade her to fly with him and enter a nunnery, but she will not leave. She finds that Romeo has taken poison, but there is none left for her: hearing the watch approaching, she takes his dagger and stabs herself. The Watch, finding the bodies, summon the Prince, the Capulets, and the Montagues (though Lady Montague has just died, in grief at
her son's exile) and arrest Balthasar and Friar Laurence, who are able to explain the whole story to the assembled families. The Prince regards the deaths of Romeo, Juliet, Paris, and Mercutio as the families’ punishments for their feud and his own for failing to quell it. Montague and Capulet shake hands, promising to build statues of the dead lovers.

Appendix B: List of Adaptations

Bryan N. S. Gooch and David Thatcher provide a comprehensive catalogue of Romeo and Juliet adaptations in volume two of *A Shakespeare and Music Catalogue*. This paper submits Jurg Baur and Pascal Dusapin’s respective adaptations to the increasing list of works pertaining to this theme (as they are yet to be included by Gooch).83

Appendix C: Glossary of Semiotic Terminology

**Classeme.** A classeme is a generic seme . . .. In other words, it refers to a particular class of objects.84

**Saussurean model.** In semiotics and linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure's dyadic model of the sign consisting of the signifier and the signified. 85

**Seme.** A seme is the smallest common denominator within a unit of meaning.86

**Semiosis.** Broadly, the process of thinking or meaning-making as we experience it. For semioticians, this involves an exchange of signs whereby one thought prompts another and then another in a continuous chain of associations.87

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85 Ibid., s.v. 'Saussurean model.'

86 Martin and Ringham. s.v. 'seme.' In *Dictionary of Semiotics*.

87 Chandler and Munday. s.v. 'semiosis.' In *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*. 

52
Semiotics. The study of signs (both verbal and nonverbal). Semiotics is widely assumed to be purely a structuralist method of textual analysis, but it is much more broadly concerned with how things signify and with representational practices and systems (in the form of codes). Different traditions in modern semiotics theory derive from the Saussurean and Peircean models of the sign.88

Sign. A meaningful unit which is interpreted as ‘standing for’ something other than itself. . . Signs have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when sign-users invest them with meaning with reference to a recognized code. The two main models of the sign are the Saussurean model and the Peircean model.89

Signification. 1. The defining function of signs (i.e. that they signify, or ‘stand for’ something other than themselves).
2. The process of signifying (semiosis).
3. What is signified; meaning or intended meaning.
4. The reference of language (or any sign system) to reality.
5. The relationship between the sign vehicle and the referent.
6. Signs as part of an overall semiotic system.
7. A representation.90

Peircean model. Charles Peirce’s triadic model of the sign including the representamen, the object, and the interpretant.91

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88 Ibid., s.v. ‘semiotics.’
89 Ibid., s.v. ‘sign.’
90 Ibid., s.v. ‘signification.’
91 Ibid., s.v. ‘Peircean model.’
Bibliography


