

# A Conceptual Exploration on the Interplay of Unconscious in Musical Creativity

## Müzikal Yaratımda Bilinçdışının Etkileşimi Üzerine Kavramsal İnceleme

İsmail Hakkı BURDURLU<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Defense, Turkish Air Force, Air Training Commanding, İzmir, Türkiye

Corresponding author /

Sorumlu yazar : İsmail Hakkı BURDURLU

E-mail / E-posta : ismailhakkibururlu@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

The process of musical creation involves the artist bringing conflicts from the unconscious into consciousness based on their biological, cultural, and psychological experiences. In other words, the transformation of psychic resources into tangible sound arrangements intricately intertwined with cultural aesthetics plays a fundamental role in the formation of music. This study aims to contribute to the analysis of Western art music by emphasizing the interaction between musical creation and the unconscious through Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic methods. Simultaneously, in this regard, it holds significance as an interdisciplinary and explanatory research field that can guide the generation of meaning towards the inner worlds of musicians.

**Keywords:** Musical creativity, unconscious, psychoanalysis

### ÖZ

Müzikal yaratım süreci, sanatçının biyolojik, kültürel ve psikolojik deneyimlerine dayalı olarak, bilinçdışındaki çatışmalarının bilinç düzeyine erişimini içerir. Diğer bir ifadeyle psişik kaynakların müziğin oluşumunda kültürel estetikle içi içe geçmiş somut ses düzenlemelerine dönüştürülmesi temel bir rol oynar. Bu çalışma, Freud ve Lacan'ın psikanalitik yöntemleri aracılığıyla müzikal yaratım ile bilinçdışı arasındaki etkileşimi vurgulayarak Batı sanat müziği bağlamının analizine katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu açıdan, müzisyenlerin iç dünyaları hakkında anlam oluşturmanın yolunu gösterebilecek disiplinlerarası ve açıklayıcı bir araştırma alanı olarak önem taşımaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Müzikal yaratım, bilinçdışı, psikanaliz

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## INTRODUCTION

Musical creation can be evaluated as the 'embodiment' of the ongoing inner state in the artist's cultural and biological background, transforming into sound and rhythm organizations within a specific context. In discovering the latent intrinsic process (unconscious) in a musical work, as a creation transformed into cognition, it seems that psychoanalysis is an important paradigm. Thus, it becomes inevitable to turn to the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, who share an unconscious approach focusing on the impact of internal drive and conflicts, as well as symbols.<sup>1</sup> In this context, an interdisciplinary scientific literature has emerged that discusses and defines, from a profound perspective, the relationship between the unconscious and creative potential in music, influenced by Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theories.

Research on music that solely approaches the musical creative process as a psychoanalytic situation not only generates new and valuable areas for artistic discussion but may also be limited in supporting the musical data a musician may need in the process of 'artistic individuation.' In other words, from the perspectives of composition, performance, etc., such studies indicate a rather restricted musical content regarding the distinctive qualities that make musicians unique and the ongoing effects they have on people. The current study aims to elucidate specific psychological layers inherent in the artistic essence of a musical output by integrating a broad and interconnected array of perspectives. This will also be beneficial in observing the artist's social position within their own culture and the impact of this position on their psychological structure. In this context, the hypothesis of the study is that the process of musical creation takes form through the interaction of the artist's unconscious and socio-cultural existence.

### The Spectrum of Musical Creativity

In Western art music, the process of creation became associated with mathematical systems that imitated nature during the Renaissance, while it evolved from a tradition based on an internal/metaphysical understanding throughout the Middle Ages. In other words, musicians have started to represent a creativity born from emotion and reason, surpassing nature rather than replicating it, progressing on a tradition invented with mathematical systems since the Middle Ages (Michels & Vogel, 2021). In line with Aristotle's design (think, make, and produce) on music is classified into *theoretica* [thinking], *practica* [making], and *poetica* [creation] (Palisca, 2006). Thus, the concept of *musica poetica*, which allows the use of music as a 'language of sound,' has given rise to the tendency to symbolize the non-musical. In fact, it is considered that the symbolized work or element is used as a guide in determining and directing the internal structure of music. However, it is observed that rather than a continuous 'pathological' and 'aesthetic'<sup>2</sup> emotional unity between the musical structure in the work and the linguistic attitude, the formal structure and dynamics of music are crucial. Therefore, the idealization and realization of symbolized emotional orientations and their associated psychological data through sound, rhythm, and tonality have brought about an examination from perspectives such as semiotics and hermeneutics.

Since the 18th century, there have been evolutionary, cultural, and psychological [perceptual-cognitive] theories regarding the origin of music and human musicality (Michel & Vogel, 2021). In this regard, theoretical and empirical research on the Darwinian evolutionary context of music (Miller G., 2000; see also Thompson, 2014; Bannan, 2017; Honing, 2018), rooted in Spencer's (1875) essay on animal vocal mimicry, and the emotional transmission function acquired by music in the evolutionary process, is noteworthy. Derived from J. G. Herder's cultural and language-based book *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, the theories propose that folk songs and the language they contain reflect a society's thoughts, traditions, and even its spirit (Bohman, 2013; Cooley, 2013). Similarly influenced by Darwinian evolutionary theory, C. Stumpf's book *Origins of Music* grounded in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, is accepted as a theory that examines the sound patterns created by humans within the context of music and the prehistoric evolution of humans through sensory, perceptual, and cognitive theories (Trippet, 2012).

It would be appropriate to say that the phenomenon we consider as music is cultural due to the variations of sound patterns and models within a unique numerical application, changing over time and space. This ethnomusicological approach to all kinds of artistic and aesthetic accumulations arising from cultural dynamics establishes a field of contribution in understanding the creation and perception of music within the cognitive foundation of human music as a social and individual entity. In the realm of music, artistic creation, and even the satisfaction process undoubtedly represent

<sup>1</sup> While their fundamental contexts may appear similar, it can be argued that Lacan developed Freud's theory in linguistic and semiotic terms. However, the conception of symbols differs: for Freud, it is tied to dreams (language in the background), whereas for Lacan, it is entirely language-based.

<sup>2</sup> The term pathology, derived from the Greek word *pathos*, representing concepts such as pain or illness, refers to the emotions and their bodily reflections that occur in physiological and psychological dimensions in the process of symbolization. However, depending on the symbolized situation, bodily impulses and emotions represented by physicality gain value as a tool used in the development of music, rather than a continuous unity in aesthetic practices [relying time and culture]. Essentially, this approach grounds the psychological dimension of the emotions or feelings symbolized in the artistic representation of the music discussed in the study.

an inherent interaction between the current time and cultural dynamics. Western art music, beyond continental Europe, incorporates musicians from different geographical areas and cultures, influenced by processes such as globalization and imperialism. Consequently, artistic creation and productivity levels, as a kind of 'shared' music system, also bring about the interaction of biological and socio-cultural diversity. Hence, the integration of cognitive and psychological processes can be considered a distinctive phenomenon in the artistic creation of music. In this sense, establishing a conceptual alliance with psychology stems from the understanding that music (and, therefore, human) is, to some extent, dependent on prior experiences, leading to innovative interdisciplinary approaches. Thus, music psychology, formed by the integration of neurology, philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, cognitive science, ethnomusicology, and comparative musicology, reflects an effort to emphasize the mental processes and behavioral dimensions of music (Margulis, 2018).

Until the mid-20th century, it can be said that music practice and practitioners lagged in efforts to integrate aesthetic meaning with scientific knowledge, relying on ancient traditions and spiritual thoughts (Barale and Minazzi, 2008). Music research within an aesthetic and art-based musicology field shifted from a Cartesian (objective) perspective to a more Humean (subjective) philosophical axis. In the Cartesian view, the real of the object exists outside human perception, singular and incomprehensible. Following this perspective, the artist is tied to the essence of a particular creator, discovering and copying one of that creator's pieces (Mukhamedova & Musinova, 2018). Therefore, the artist is evaluated in a position of discovering rather than creating. In the Humean view, the real of the object is subjective, dependent on individual observation and experience; thus, artistic creativity is an 'individual, unexpected, and mysterious' matter. In other words, in music research conducted through Cartesian philosophy, music is considered 'independent' of humans; in contrast, the Humean view conceives music as an empirical and inherently human phenomenon (Hodges & Sebald, 2011). Therefore, these contrasting perceptions lead to conflicting results in the experimental and theoretical research of music psychology. In this regard, Campbell and Heller (1980) discuss a series of fundamental understandings for music psychology, which opens a broad field by disregarding Cartesian philosophy:

- The real of music is considered equivalent to human-beings.
- The foundation of making music by human-beings is seen as connotation rather than message transmission.
- Implicit rules shared between musicians and listeners are used as models for music learning, perception, and development.
- Musician-centered knowledge, not transcribed and thus resolved based on implicit rules, is evaluated on an equal status with notation-based knowledge (as cited in Hodges & Sebald, 2011, p.25).

The concept of artistic creation in the field of philosophy has been characterized by the distinction between superficial (*pseudo*) and authentic (*authentikos*) forms and contents for centuries. Drawing from Plato's *Symposium*, the distinction between superficial art that beautifies life with artificial things and true art that creates authentic and enlightening feelings stands out as a clear differentiation and understanding for creativity (May, 1994). In this context, in Platonic and Cartesian philosophy, the real of music is sought in its concrete representations such as sound structure and notation. On the other hand, from an Anti-Platonic or Humean perspective, in addition to its concrete representations, the creation of music is correlated with the composer/performer axis (Fisher, 1991).

The Platonic and Cartesian understanding of musicology emphasizes that music represents itself and draws attention to its unique nature; it rejects evaluation with paradigms from other disciplines, such as literature and language, as it lacks a communicative element. However, for music considered independently of humans, imagery is attributed to the discovery of pieces of a cosmic essence. It can be said that this imaginarieness, which gives deep meanings to music that are difficult to grasp and externally, represents a productive implication like Julia Kristeva's semiotic concept of *chora*.<sup>3</sup> In other words, music, highlighting its transcendental dimension due to offering deep emotional experiences and aesthetic pleasures independently of human emotions and thoughts, points to its abstract style that cannot be easily explained by scientific rationality.

In this context, the issue of separating music from its composer is somewhat debatable within the current scientific paradigms. This is because significant progress has been made in understanding and explaining the neurological and psychological dimensions of music. Scientific studies (Koelsch, 2009; Levitin, 2006; Thaut, 2013) addressing topics such as how music is processed in the brain, how it influences human emotions and thoughts, and the therapeutic uses of music have shed light on these aspects. However, it is acknowledged that explaining music solely through

<sup>3</sup> Plato's term *Chora*, as used in his dialogue *Timaeus*, is, as noted by Derrida (2008), an existential metaphysical concept. It is considered an intermediate zone between the physical and ideal worlds in the production of meaning/cognition for humans. *Chora*, later employed by J. Kristeva in psychoanalytic and linguistic theory, is attributed to a fertile and indeterminate space where meaning is yet to form. However, according to Yurdadón (2022), the term, with its complexity that does not align with Cartesian understanding but holds its advantage, represents existential and psychological levels beyond symbolism.

scientific data may fall short of fully grasping its rich and complex nature. Therefore, philosophical, artistic, and aesthetic approaches accompanied by scientific studies will provide valuable contributions to understanding the nature of music and evaluating it as an entity independent of its creator. However, when the music-analytical and aesthetic paradigm reduces music to its notated form and introverted meanings in a one-dimensional manner within the context of historicism or authenticity perception, it oversimplifies the concept of 'creation.' In this regard, Cook (2006) expresses that the concepts of music and musical creation are subjected to authoritative generalization by analytical and aesthetic theories produced within a specific historical and ideological framework.

When it comes to the widespread psychological studies related to the creative process, Rollo May's approach holds a fundamental and significant position. Creativity, as a concept/process with remarkable originality, is often associated with the neurotic conditions (depression and psychosis) of artists in the context of Western art, such as V. van Gogh, E. A. Poe, L. van Beethoven, and G. Mahler. However, May (1994) views the association of creativity with a treatable psychological disorder, like neurosis, as a 'reductive' understanding and suggests that it artificially diminishes its essence. This implication of creativity as a disease and the notion that it could disappear after treatment create a peculiar dilemma. May (1994, p.43) seeks a definitive stance against this dilemma and the reductive approach to creativity, emphasizing the following points:

“... if it arises as a byproduct of an effort to accomplish something else through a kind of emotion or impulse transfer or compensation, does the genuine value of our creative action become merely artificial? I strongly disagree that creativity can be reduced to another process or that it must necessarily be a product of neurosis.”

The creative process [of music] is explained as a cognitive characterization process where the artist's knowledge, skills, and emotional experiences in life are mobilized (Sloboda, 1985, 2005; Vygotsky, 1974). In artistic forms, the foundation of artistic imagery or creation is closely associated with the 'drive' that is intricately connected to the imagination. In other words, it is a mental process where an individual's perception in interaction with the environment and the transformation of the concepts they generate result in the formation of new imaginal data. Musical expression, due to the absence of a tangible output (literature, painting, etc.), creates fleeting perceptual experiences while conveying something in an imaginative sense as if telling a story. Fisher (1991) has addressed the persistent views in the musical sense that this process of imagination exists independently of the composer and that the musical object is only discovered. In the ontological discussion centered around the concepts of 'creation and discovery,' while discovery is about recognizing or revealing what already exists, creativity is defined as the process of creating new things or combining existing things in a different way. In this sense, Fisher (1991) emphasizes that all musical works involve some discovery regardless of being seen as independent objects of the artist and creative activity, drawing attention to the original form and real that emerge because of the artist's choices. Musical creativity here is about the composer transforming images noticed and 'discovered' around them into new and original images within their own thoughts/emotional world. In short, ontologically, music can be said to represent creativity while being an inherent phenomenon in the process of discovery.

Artistic creation should be explored as an act of self-realization, as a natural and highly expressive manifestation of emotional insights, as suggested by May's (1994) reasonable psychological understanding, rather than as a product of illness. From Andreassen's (2005) cognitive-focused approach, artistic creation is viewed as an individual conceptualizing and producing an original work within the context of a problem or conflict, utilizing their abilities and knowledge. Additionally, the concept of musical creativity is examined from the perspective of cognitive neurology as a social practice reflecting and mediating the internal communication need among individuals (Pinho, 2018). In this regard, it can be said that the concept of creation should involve relevance and utility within the context of society. Various approaches proposing different focuses and thought processes indicate that creativity, as the expression of dialogues developed by the artist within their cultural context and inner world, points to an unconscious process in creativity.

In Western art music, artistic creation has given rise to a traditional performance dynamic within a specific cultural framework based on a comprehensive [mathematical] sound system, series, notation, instruments, and polyphony. Beyond traditional principles, it draws attention to the interpretative process in the performance of the musical notation [concrete form] and emphasize its possession of artistic creation (Héroux, 2018; Schiavio & Benedek, 2020). Creativity in performance is most evident in improvisation. Musical creativity can be defined as a social activity where performers interact with each other and the audience, almost like communication. It has neurological foundations and is described as a multi-modal and cross-modal human function (Brattico & Tervaniemi, 2006). However, the creativity here is evaluated as the effort of performers to make each performance unique between the contextual situation in a/the traditional approach and spontaneity (personal feelings and tendencies). The artistic creation of musical performance, while being a concept of interpretation based on a natural and dominant performance tradition, may not encompass as

high subjectivity as in composition. Brenneis (1990) and Clarke (2012) define this concept as the action of creating meaning from musical symbols (tonality, articulation, phrase, timbre, dynamics, etc.) with abstract meaning in notation (as cited in Schiavio & Benedek, 2020).

Psychoanalytic methods represent an interest and aim to understand the personality potential and characteristics of musicians in the Western art tradition in relation to the creative process and nature of musical works, based on the conceptual framework of music psychology. The close relationship between musical creation and the composer in Western art can be evidenced by Solomon Volkov's *Testimony*, where Shostakovich's symphonies reveal extraordinary observations about mood and emotions, and Mahler's creative works demonstrate their intertwined existence, as emphasized in his own statements (Rechartd, 1985). Psychoanalytic music psychology has been theorized around what musical phenomena represent on an unconscious psychological level, both individually and collectively. It encompasses various research topics such as musical thinking and experience, creativity, composition, performance, and improvisational psychodynamics (Välimäki 2005). Additionally, the field of music psychology reflects an effort to examine the main mechanisms and other components in this process from the perspective of loading symbolic and associative meanings to music at the unconscious level. Of course, in this field of study that psychologically grasps the creative potential of music and artistic expressions, the irrationalism and empiricism associated with philosophical aesthetics and art understanding in the context of the artist's inner world and emotional experiences can be seen as a fundamental issue. However, psychoanalytic music research must benefit from the understanding used in musicology while grasping internal and subjective experiences such as the artistic creation process. Ultimately, scientific data from fields such as neurology and cognitive science enable us to understand and explain the emotional, cognitive, and creative dimensions of music more comprehensively.

The relationship between psychoanalytic theory and musicology may offer a two-fold collaboration for research purposes, suggesting that these two areas are intricately intertwined in complex ways. In other words, studies of this nature in the literature are evaluated within the scope of applied psychoanalysis conducted by psychoanalysts, as well as psychoanalytic music criticism carried out by art researchers and cultural critics. Therefore, Nattiez (1993) discusses a dichotomy regarding whether a specific psychoanalytic music study is a psychoanalysis utilizing music or a musicological study employing psychoanalysis. For example, the composer's experiences, emotions, latent conflicts, worldview, interpersonal relationships, etc. While psychoanalysis with situations is a typical research style in the applied psychoanalysis tradition, it is stated that examining all kinds of musical texture as a cultural output, ignoring the situations related to the composer, is in a musicological tradition of psychoanalytic music criticism (Välimäki, 2005). Thus, from a musicological perspective, the utilization of psychoanalytic literature can be beneficial if it provides a solution and model for the problem situation of research with specific methods, tendencies, and current discourses. In the continuation of this study, methods and approaches focusing on the unconscious for the artistic creation process of Western art music are presented.

### **Freudian Unconscious and Musical Creativity**

While Sigmund Freud does not make any references specifically to music in his psychoanalytic approach, he puts forth bold claims regarding art. Freud perceives art as a transformed expression of unconscious, unfulfilled desires, attributing more value and privilege to the artist as a result (Hodges & Sebald, 2011). Although Freud's views on art are scattered across several articles, they have significantly influenced the shaping of a psychoanalytic research perspective on artists. Thus, the psychoanalytic approach has gained a position by addressing significant themes in literature, film, and other art forms. Freud's rare studies on artists and artworks appear to be linked to his personal interests or predetermined compatibility within a psychoanalytic framework (Crozier & Chapman, 1985). Almost all artworks and forms represent a concrete expression of interactions with the world of human cognition, while music emerges as a relatively abstract form of expression through sound and rhythm. However, due to the output presented by music through sound and rhythm, different from the world of objects with which humans interact, psychoanalysis is considered to have limited its ability to develop an approach to the nature of a musical work. As Roazen (1975) pointed out, Freud might have shown indifference towards music (except for opera) because he could not directly grasp its content and could not engage in theoretical production (as cited in Crozier & Chapman, 1985). Nevertheless, according to Rechartd (1985) and Välimäki (2005), Freudian psychoanalysis later attempted to approach music based on different focal points related to objects or movements, forming four distinct starting points:

- Biographical studies on composers and musicians and efforts to understand musical works based on biographical data.



- Information obtained from experiences and analyses of psychoanalytic situations regarding musicians and the emergence of musical experience.
- Psychoanalytic metapsychology and developmental psychology studies on the psychological meanings of music, musical experience and thought, starting from the childhood psychic period.
- Psychoanalytic studies on introspective observation of impressions evoked by listening to music.

The research conducted within the Freudian tradition predominantly explores the psychological factors that drive the artistic creation of a musician in the context of musical and artistic creation. However, a noteworthy movement within the scope of new musicology has attempted to benefit from psychoanalytic approaches, arguing that Freudian examination does not sufficiently encompass a wide range of factors contributing to artistic essence and excellence (Reik, 1983; see also Nass, 1989; Feder, Richard, & Pullock, 1993; Schwarz, 1997). In these studies, two fundamental approach strategies can be discerned concerning the distinctiveness of artistic creation within which the musician operates, encompassing various skills, knowledge, education, and qualifications, as well as the examination of unconscious content over time:

- The introspective examination based on considering music as a psyche.
- Examination of the unconscious level formed because of the musician's life experiences, focusing on the traces and insights in the artwork.

The understanding of artistic creation in psychoanalytic studies gains significance through the transformation of deep regions in the artist's psyche into specific external actions, and even the reprocessing of unconscious (latent) material (Feder, 1981; see also Nass, 1989; Recharadt, 1985; Välimäki, 2005). A psychoanalytically supported music analysis can be considered as an approach that shares a common goal with the detection of the psyche<sup>4</sup> and unconscious emotional processes, aiming to explore the latent aspects of music. In terms of the methods employed in psychoanalytic studies on the artist's personality and creativity, the data used often have easily understandable contents. However, when it comes to the psychoanalytic analysis of music as the artist's creation in the context of rhythm and sound, it involves abstract expressions related to the psyche. This situation suggests that purely psychoanalytic approaches may not directly address the foundational issues specific to the music itself. Therefore, it is not incorrect to say that, despite being a progressive understanding in psychoanalytic music research until the late 20th century, it remains within certain limitations.

Psychoanalytic music examinations (Feder, 1981; see also Keller, 2003; Kramer, 1998; Ostwald, 1985; Recharadt, 1985; Schenker, 1935/1977; Schwarz, 1997) attribute a central role to the concept of unconscious perception/unconscious in their understanding and theorization. In addition to this, methods such as psychodynamics, metapsychology, and psychobiography provide means to investigate the psychic domain that influences and coexists with the musician's creative process. Although these methods may not directly contribute to the creation process and meaning of music, they offer data that the researcher-musician can use for interpretation or analysis.

Noy (1993) criticizes the psychoanalytic tradition that focuses solely on the unconscious/latent aspects of music, arguing that it is a limited approach. He asserts that efforts to explore the abstract aspects of music should be complemented with equal attention to its concrete formal aspects. Clearly, this perspective, rather than aligning with musicological traditions, can be seen as drawing from psychoanalysis to represent a more systematic approach to music research. In his earlier works, Noy (1966; 1967) outlined general subject areas in the formation of psychoanalytic literature on the psychodynamic meanings of music, encompassing linguistic, historical, and introspective (sound, form, etc.) contexts:

- Music as language and communication
- Music and emotions
- The origin of music and the development of the musical language
- Intrapsychic sources of music
- The structure of music
- Psychological functions of music
- The personality of the musician

Freudian psychoanalysis argues that the body, representing physicality in meeting the urges [desires, needs] for the continuation of human existence, produces a discourse by representing the psyche in the external world. In contrast to the notion of urges taking a position with physicality, Freud approached the context of drives within a three-layered topographic psyche model as conscious, preconscious, and unconscious (Sharf, 2018). According to Freud's theory,

<sup>4</sup> This statement suggests that music, as a creation of humans, represents a structure composed of layers corresponding to conscious and unconscious aspects. In this context, the assertion is made that music, as a product of human creation, also possesses a psyche.

music reflects unconscious emotions and desires, addressing deep psychological layers. This demonstrates that music serves not only as an artistic expression but also as a mirror of human psychology. Välimäki (2005) specifically theorizes that music converges at the preconscious level by interacting with the impetus of unconscious desires, emotions, and thoughts. Psychoanalytic understanding of music derived from the Freudian model focuses on exploring the emotional layers beneath the surface of what we can perceive at the conscious level in music (such as sound, rhythm, notation, etc.). In this context, psychoanalytic music research examines the relationships between latent [unconscious] desires and indicators in a musical work. The aim of psychoanalytic music studies is not to identify and cleanse material from the unconscious. Instead, it seeks to bring awareness to the suppressed covert content, making it explicit in the conscious realm for synthesis. Looking through this perspective, Schenker's (1935/1977) work, where he assigns specific concepts and levels to musical structures to reach their meaning in terms of 'relationship and connotation,' is noteworthy. In fact, Fleshner (2012) argues that the conceptual framework in Schenker's theory represents a strong connection with Freud's three-layered psychic theory. In his understanding, Schenker (1937/1977) draws attention to the connotative aspect of music, considering the transformations encountered while progressing towards a goal through 'vital will and imagination' on three levels: background (*hintergrund*), middleground (*mittelgrund*), and foreground (*vordergrund*). In the background stage, he identifies the origin of the musical motif as the first form [ursatz]; in the middleground stage, he discusses the transformation layers of the initial form, which he names *verwandlungsschichten*; and in the foreground stage, he points out that the content of the musical creation is reproduced in different ways [*semper idem sed non eodem modo*] in the initial forms. Previously, Schenker (1930/2014) had formulated a theory suggesting that repeated musical contents, felt with foresight in the depths of the background and creating a genuine connection (middleground), provide a profound understanding.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy, as asserted by Fleshner (2012), that in Schenker's (1935/1977) book, the background level, which he names, lacks a clear Freudian content implication about the unconscious. However, although there might not be explicit Freudian elements, when examined in terms of the starting point and general framework, the conceptual similarities are exciting, suggesting that Schenker's book could be seen as making a bold claim about exhibiting an explicit psychoanalytic approach. It can be said that Schenker attempts to associate conscious musical phenomena on the surface of a musical work with 'suppressed' ideas or feelings to reveal the transformative paths of a musical piece (Drabkin, 2008). The way he defines the background stage, linking it with the unconscious, the middleground with the preconscious, and the foreground with the conscious layer, describes a synthetic process that aligns with Freudian psychoanalytic theory (Cook, 1987; Fleshner, 2012). Rather than identifying a direct relationship between Schenker's model and Freud's psychoanalytic theory, their conceptual similarities are noteworthy. This suggests that there are certain aspects of Schenker's methodology of musical analysis that bear parallels, if not complete agreement, with Freud's theory.

In the psychoanalytic context, individuals focus on creating a picture of themselves and the world around them to make sense of a constant feeling of unrest and the resulting state. On the other hand, music serves as a method or counterpart that shapes relationships between an individual's experiential world and themselves (Kohut, 1957; Wittenberg, 1980). Therefore, it would be challenging to attribute a conscious purpose to musical thought and experience. Consequently, the methodological perspective of psychoanalysis, which addresses the 'formless/conflicted' aspects of an individual's relationship with their experiential world,<sup>5</sup> can bring reflections of musical thoughts to the conscious level (Kohut, 1957; Nass, 1971). Building on this, Rechart (1985) argues that music becomes appealing due to its ability to draw painful and overwhelming experiences into a relatively stable space. In other words, attention is drawn to the transformation of the individualization development of the human psyche as a skill within music. As noted by Nass (1975; 1989), the composer sees the experience conveyed through diverse musical forms as a form of self [psyche]-definition.

Rechart (1985) contributes to the psychology of music from a psychoanalytic perspective by explaining the presence of psychological processes at different levels throughout musical composition using the concept of 'isomorphism'. Isomorphism, as employed by Rechart, can be said to denote the existence of similarities between structures in two different domains. Essentially, the concept of isomorphism suggests that two different systems, such as music and the psyche, may have similar structural or functional characteristics, and understanding these similarities can often lead to a deeper comprehension. In this context, Rechart's (1985) referencing of Feder's (1980; 1981) psychoanalytic studies on the relationship between G. Mahler's life and his compositions is found to be detailed and reliable. Rechart (1985) highlights in his work that Mahler's traumatic experiences and internal conflicts from his life are reflected in the depths

<sup>5</sup> In Freudian psychoanalysis, the psyche is considered formless from birth and naturally represents limited functionality. In this sense, in perceiving and interpreting the experiential world with its instinctual characteristics, the forefront is occupied more by external influences. From this perspective, there is a prevailing notion that the unresolved experiences encountered by individuals in the external world have transformed into musical thoughts and experiences in the form of unconscious fragments.

of his works, offering listeners an internal journey. Additionally, it is stated that Mahler's internal conflicts, such as feelings of guilt and fear of death, are reflected in rhythmic changes and melodic turns in his compositions. Ostwald (1985) describes one of the songs from R. Schumann's *Dichterliebe* song cycle, *Ich hab im Traum geweinet*, as a perfect replica of the childhood abandonment trauma. However, Schumann's experience of being left to live with a family friend and caregiver, *Frau Ruppius*, at a young age due to his mother's illness, the suicide of his sister, and the death of his father are cited as the main reasons for his primary anxiety of abandonment (Guu & Su, 2011; Ostwald, 1985). According to Ostwald (1985), Schumann's psychoses related to these experiences manifested in his relationship with his wife Clara, but choosing music as a space for himself in his childhood to alienate every member of his family is associated with an awareness of this painful situation. Furthermore, Fink's (1993) study, referencing Freud's theory, is noteworthy for its psychoanalytic examination of sexuality in Brahms's first symphony. While initially generating ideas about the impact of sexuality on the form of the symphony, the presence of sexuality in the musical discourse (tonality, thematic structure, harmony, etc.) is indicated through metaphor and analogy in terms of 'desire and repression.'

Freudian psychoanalytic music research is observed to be conceptualized with an introverted and singular focus, employing a method that exclusively examines the psyche of the composer [or the musical work]. In music research conducted within this paradigm, artistic creation is considered as the transformation of deep regions and complex worlds within the musician's psyche into specific external actions. However, such pathographic examinations of the experiential world of composers can offer insights into a broader and deeper understanding of the creative process. In this way, psychoanalytic music research has the potential to be incorporated into music analyses and interpretations by focusing on biographical studies of composers and other musicians.

### Lacanian Unconscious and Musical Creativity

The Freudian unconscious, according to Jacques Lacan, is defined as a concept in which there are always uncertainties or gaps between cause and effect (Lacan, 2011).<sup>6</sup> In this regard, Lacan focuses on how the unconscious of neurosis is related, revealing the uncertain and conceptual aspects of the inner world (the real).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Lacan sees the function of the Freudian unconscious, which disrupts rational discourse, in his own context as the 'place of real'. In a more explicit sense, he believes that the unconscious proclaims itself by overcoming the censorship of the ego through metaphors, jokes, and errors (Freudian slips). The linguistic dimension attributed to the unconscious by Freud holds symbolic significance for Lacan, making the linguistic and semiotic realm a crucial tool in psychoanalysis. However, a fundamental distinction exists between the two approaches. While Freud focuses on latent meanings and accessible emotional content in literature and art, Lacan's point of interest in literature is the concept of *jouissance* and its revelation. As Hogan (1990) suggests, according to Lacan, language makes speech meaningful through symbolization, revealing the meaning of the unconscious in the uncertainties of conscious expressions (as cited in: Carpenter, 1998).

While Lacan identifies the unconscious as a structure-like language, he cannot provide an explanation for the structure of language from the perspectives of linguistic philosophy and psychology. Therefore, the unconscious, being a concept that is difficult to observe, cannot be structuralized (Forrester, 1990). Lacan primarily utilizes Saussure's semiotic terminology of the signified and signifier in his own theory. In Saussure's (1985) semiotic linguistic theory, the signifier is associated with a concrete and physical function, while the signified pertains to the abstract and semantic content. Additionally, the word representing the object (referent) is expressed as the 'sign.' Saussure (1985) views the relationship between the signifier and the signified as arbitrary and does not posit a specific connection between them. Lacan points out that meaning does not reside within the signified; rather, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is highly arbitrary, as it depends on being expressed appropriately by the suitable signifier (Carpenter, 1998). In this regard, Lacan, in his work *The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious*, formulated Saussure's concepts of signifier and signified concerning the symbolic activity of the unconscious. Here, Lacan observed the precedence of the signifier over the signified and emphasized the constantly changing structure of the meanings of symbols (Mellard, 1998). While the position of the word [*parole*] in language may contain a collective meaning in a specific social consensus, it is emphasized that abstract interpretation, largely formed by the signified, takes precedence.

As Lacan demonstrates in psychoanalysis, he posits the claim that every action of ours takes place within the domain of the unconscious; he does not disregard the Freudian slip that facilitates the association of the unconscious with language. Lacan's conception of the unconscious symbolizes its incompleteness as the inaccessible [impossible] object

<sup>6</sup> Essentially, Lacan argues that Freud's unconscious is not merely an unknowable determining factor in neurosis but criticizes its adequacy in the function of analysis.

<sup>7</sup> Lacan explained the foundational theory of psychoanalysis, consisting of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real, as an interconnected topological structure called the 'Borromean knot'. The 'symbolic' denotes the phase of adapting to the functions of society through the formation of language; the 'imaginary' indicates the phase before language and the formation of the ego in the realm of imagination, while the 'real' represents the interactions of the individual's consciousness and their position in the societal context [language] (Lacan, 2019).



of desire, hence the place he calls 'reality.' In other words, Lacanian reality can be described as a representation transmitted through the communication systems of consciousness. As this place distances itself, the situation that triggers desire, opens the subject to desire, and repeats itself is defined by the concept of the *objet petit a*,<sup>8</sup> which is one of the fundamental ideas related to the unconscious. Therefore, Lacan considers the unconscious≈voice<sup>9</sup> as the 'speech of the other' (Lacan, 2011). However, the voice taken as the *objet petit a* by Lacan is not the human voice. According to Miller (2007, p.145), Lacan's thesis implies that 'speaking, conversing, singing, making music, and listening, all serve to silence what deserves to be called the voice of the little other. However, the term 'silence' here should be thought of not as an act of exclusion but rather as the revelation of the *objet petit a*.

Kant believes that music has a temporary yet intense and physical impact that sets the mind in motion: [...] [the art of tone] speaks through non-conceptual pure sensations, leaving nothing behind for thought like poetry does (Kant, 1790/1934, p.109). Schopenhauer, in defining the arts, argues that due to the systematic connection he uses, music does not represent anything other than itself: [...] we do not recognize the copy or repetition of any idea of existence in the world (Schopenhauer, 1818/1906, p.330).

In this sense, it is observed that the Platonist and Cartesian perspectives on musicology, which consider music as an inherent language itself, produce a parallel view, especially in the works of Schopenhauer and Kant. While questioning its adequacy, discussing approaches that consider music as a 'language' is not an unusual situation. However, even though music is not a 'language' in the linguistic sense, a metaphorical linguistic structure is used, especially in opera and programmatic music works. In linguistics, language has a very complex structure. Phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic principles constitute the basic components of language. Unlike language, music does not contain strict symbolism using sounds and notes; notes only serve as the signifier of sounds. The arrangement of notes and rhythmic structure does not have continuous syntactic rules conveying a message as in language. In this context, it would not be wrong to say that the meaning of music is more abstract and subjective, and it does not carry morphological and pragmatic functions. In conclusion, music plays an important role as a means of emotional, cultural, and artistic communication among humans. Language and music are different forms of communication and do not share many of the structural features of language. However, these differences do not necessarily imply a linguistic and semiotic approach for music.

Western art music represents the rational functioning of rhythm and sound organizations, along with the concept of tonality, within a rational framework. Lacan's concept of 'voice' does not contextually overlap with 'the art of tone' [voice] in the creation of this music. While both sounds are abstract, Lacan's 'voice' has a complex psychic relationship with the subject (human), whereas the voice in music reveals a relatively more distinct relationship with the auditory function in the subject. At this point, the Lacanian perspective views sound organizations in musical creation as a symbolic value for the 'other object' [*objet autre*] and the *objet petit a*, allowing an examination of the connection between them through linguistic and semiotic analysis.<sup>10</sup> In Lacan's usage of Saussure's semiotic context, due to cultural differences, the potential to create numerous meanings or nothingness in terms of the 'fixity' of the signifier may not allow its practical application to music on a fundamental level. According to Deliege's (1984) understanding, the meaning of a musical work is held by the signifier that can only release itself and transform into mental images. Therefore, since the signified can have countless possibilities each time, determining the meaning of a musical work will become impossible.

Molino (1990), on the other hand, considers music as a symbolic operation that requires an 'exchange network' among individuals, even if it is not literally communication. In this context, Molino (1990) has embraced an effective idea that approaches the representation and discourse of musical objects from a semiotic perspective through 'communicative coordinates.' In addition, efforts in literature, such as those benefiting from linguistic and semiotic disciplines, like Mazzola (1997), to create a topography about the ontological determinants of music and the process of meaning production are noteworthy. Drawing influence from J. J. Nattiez, C. Peirce, R. Monelle, and J. Molino, Mazzola (1997) defines the creation of the musical work in the 'poetic' phase, its formal structure in the 'neutral' phase, and the mode of perception in the 'aesthetic' phase through his developed musical semiotic analysis. As Mirigliano (1995)

<sup>8</sup> This concept represents a lack that keeps us in a constant search, preventing us from being fully satisfied. Due to its rather abstract content, it can be concretized with an example from daily life, without the criticism that it may create reductionism: Buying a new piece of clothing or a technological gadget may provide temporary satisfaction, but the desire for such objects can never be fully quenched. When a new product is launched, it replaces the previous one, creating a perpetual cycle of desire.

<sup>9</sup> It can be said that Lacan's concept of the 'voice' resembles an internal [from the unconscious] emergence of a drive, like Plato's concept of *chora*. Therefore, the symbol of approximately equal is used between the unconscious and the voice.

<sup>10</sup> According to Smith (2011), the concept of the 'other object' [*objet autre*] is important; because the situation of the composer, from the imaginary process (where it leaves the mother and enters the language) to the socio-cultural context, is effective in musical creation. Considering that in Western Art Music, the composer conveys his unconscious desires and emotional experiences during the creation process of music, the concept of *objet petit autre*, which represents the object of desire, may be a more appropriate term in examining the unconscious in music.

and Lagerspetz (2016) have pointed out, semiotics, in a sense, is concerned not with music itself but with what music is not, in terms of the ability of musical phenomena to symbolize something else [*musica poetica*]. Comprehensive Lacanian psychoanalytic insights indicate that artistic endeavors in musical works cannot be exempt from the effects of the unconscious and provide an opportunity for a critical examination in an intertwined context.

It would be accurate to say that Lacan did not produce a sustainable methodology for analyzing classical and pre-modern musical works through his psycho-linguistic approach, which plays a significant role in analyzing the position of desire in language. While the role of music as a language has been discussed before, considering Lacan's formulation of language in the signifier system, it is possible to accept the compatibility of music with Lacanian linguistics in terms of the assertion that meaning is continuous and variable. At this point, there are studies aiming to conceptualize the field of desire and drive in music through a syntactical approach to the mutual interaction of signifiers and harmony, even if encountering subjectivity biases. Smith (2011) presents a study that associates Charles Ives's music in songs such as 'premonitions, mists, at sea, serenity, and afterglow' with Lacanian theories. The study examines tonic chords, symbolic castration<sup>11</sup>, and the semantic layers of music. Simultaneously, this work reflects an attempt to see C. Ives's music as a source of understanding the complexity of human desire. Building upon the context in which desire manifests within the rules of language and meaning creation in Lacan, Smith (2011) suggests that, within its own means, music can symbolize desire.

Based on this context, Smith (2011) puts forward the idea that desire inevitably makes its presence felt through tonal grammar rules in any musical composition. The incompleteness of desire is associated with the 'tonic' chord, which has the perception of resolving dissonances within the diversity of chords in diatonic music, including major and minor modes. In this context, Smith (2011) utilizes J.P. Rameau's expression, 'the center of the mode that attracts all our desires.' The conceptual framework presented in the study reveals an effort to find a musical counterpart for Lacan's *objet petit a*. However, in the relationship between poetry and music in C. Ives's songs, careful inferences and interpretations can be observed that associate the dominant seventh chord<sup>12</sup> and tonic chord with ambiguous harmonies<sup>13</sup> with Lacan's notion of the insatiable longing of desire.

Before delving into the Lacanian unconscious approach to the creation [*musica poetica*] process of Western art music conceived with an Aristotelian inspiration (sensory or cognitive), it is pertinent to touch upon a congeneric perspective on practical making [*musica practica*] aesthetics. Therefore, Barthes's (2014) focus approach, which divides music into listening and making activities in his essay titled *Musica Practica*, is noteworthy. According to Barthes (2014), the 'making' [*practica*] process of music, as it provides a bodily interaction, will make the aesthetics and impulsiveness [drive] of the composer more felt than what is understood through 'listening.' In this regard, de Assis (2017), referring to Barthes, asserts that Beethoven initiated a new mode of musical comprehensibility based on reading rather than performance or hearing, moving away from Aristotelian inspiration. Barthes (2014) emphasizes the transition from the 'making' aesthetics of music to the 'reading' phase, highlighting the role of the body in displaying specific expressions and the notation's role in transforming sound and understanding. Barthes proposed the concept of *somatheme*,<sup>14</sup> positioned in the realms of desire and *jouissance*, as an opposite analytical tool for artistically produced figures from the unconscious (de Assis, 2017). Thus, utilizing this concept in artistic understanding may offer an unexpected, unconventional, or opposing perspective on the unconscious. However, it is observed that Barthes avoids making definitive statements with the concept of *somatheme* about addressing unconscious and drive [impulse] through a bodily referent.

Hatten (2017) employs the phenomenon of music in a state of perception focused on the rhythm and beats of the musical work. Additionally, it shares the same plane as Barthes' (2011) *term punctum* (animating, mobilizing) from his study on photography. In Barthes' (2014) essay titled *Rasch*, he discusses the meaning of *somatheme* in R. Schumann's *Kreisleriana* (piano sonata) and emphasizes the connection between our understanding of music and the experience of our bodies. Barthes suggests that, through the accentuations and rhythms that interact with the impulsive body, music directs the sexual potency of a spread *jouissance* drive for both the pianist and the listener, as pointed out by Noudelmann (2012). Barthes' explanations about music in this context indicate that music aims to capture the unconscious desires and sexuality of the subject. Therefore, with his conceptual framework for music-making [*musica*

<sup>11</sup> Lacan's concept of castration, which has a symbolic meaning, is the subject's sexual identity and relationship being accepted by the parents to establish himself as a part of social life in the imaginary process. It is associated with situations such as loss of personality integrity due to the trauma that develops during the imaginary process. In this context, it reflects the author's effort to find in C. Ives' music the inevitable impact of experiences of the imaginary process on artistic creation.

<sup>12</sup> Smith (2011), again borrowing from Rameau's theory, argues that the harmonic syntax of this chord has a function that directs the entire desiring process.

<sup>13</sup> Touching on the importance of the harmonic techniques used by C. Ives in his effort to coordinate the tonic chord and uncertain tonal perception, Smith (2011) creates the basis for a tonal and harmonic syntax approach in the context of Lacanian desire, on which he bases his work.

<sup>14</sup> Somathemes: (presented in plural) body figures that are whose texture creates musical meaning (Barthes, 1985, p.307).

*practica*], Barthes points to a theme-like Lacanian approach that focuses on the analysis of the subject's unconscious desires and sexual identities. Although different from Lacan's context of the unconscious as an instinct and producer of language, Barthes' (2014) essay *The Grain of Voice* is inspiring for its examination that brings the physical voice into contact with language. In this essay, he theorizes the concept of 'grain' that he uses concerning the spoken or sung voices. Barthes usually discusses the color and pitch of the voice in terms of its physical manifestation in the body. For Barthes, the 'grain' is not only the pitch of the voice but also, in terms of its depth of meaning, the friction between music and language. Barthes defines music as the body of language, a quality, materiality, lust in relation to the concept of 'grain' (Välimäki, 2005). The broad openness and depth Barthes shows in defining his previous concepts make his essay challenging to understand in its most precise form.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, music, a phenomenon inseparable from humans, is approached in an intrinsic, evocative, and subjective context, focusing on its interaction with the unconscious. In Western culture, musical creation is evaluated as a unique and creative act that takes place at the unconscious level, encompassing the inner thoughts and emotions of composers and musicians. In this process, musicians are influenced by both conscious and unconscious processes while creating music. Psychoanalytic approaches can be applied to explore the unconscious emotions and instincts expressed in musical works as part of the artistic creation process. Psychoanalytic research in the artistic focus of music perceives music as a phenomenon with unconscious connotations.

Within the new musicology framework, Schenkerian music analyses constructed from a psychoanalytic understanding of the psyche are presented as a traditional field that interactively relates psychodynamic and music-analytic insights. Psycho-biographical research tends to focus on childhood experiences, repressed memories with sexual content, adolescent fantasies, family conflicts, and psychological factors in later stages of life. These factors, considered as the 'unconscious sources' of musical creativity and activity within a psychoanalytic framework, establish a close connection between the musical work and life events. However, the unconscious exploration in psychoanalytically oriented psychodynamic music research might not be suitable for an analytical or interpretative perspective solely focused on the musical work, as the emphasis is on the artist's psyche. Nevertheless, these studies aim to generate insights into the relationship between creation and the unconscious by focusing on the intersection of the musician's knowledge, skills, and psyche.

In its simplest form, considering the undeniable connection between the musical work and the composer's unconscious content, it is possible to evaluate the research on the unconscious [in music] as a discovery process derived from two separate fields.

In contrast to the Freudian paradigm, it can be argued that Lacanian psychoanalytic music research entails a structural and complex interpretation that can create separate or integrated analyses of textual (vocal/choral music) and musical syntax in musical works. Since the unconscious belonging to the poet or author exists independently within the text, there is a possibility of mutual unconscious interaction between the text and the composer. Therefore, there may be nuanced distinctions in the unconscious interpretation within the context of text and musical syntax in vocal/choral music. Furthermore, in the combination of music and text, there is a possibility of considering a musical unconscious beyond the composer in the form, style, and syntactical formations of music. Considering the intricate structure of music, reductionism may be in question since Lacanian psychoanalysis will make sense of the 'surface' indicators in the process of analyzing and interpreting music. Therefore, the Lacanian [and Barthesian] understanding, which emphasizes the unconscious based on desire and drive, can highlight the person who interprets music to understand its stylistic and syntactic formation [within its cultural context]. In this regard, the music-analytic method used to identify syntactical elements and the unconscious in music will be a 'personalized' paradigm, and the final interpretation obtained tends to be situated on a subjective basis.

Discussions continue regarding the systematization of music as a language, its interpretation, determination of its limitations, methods, and areas of comprehensibility. Although using a psychoanalytic perspective is interesting, it can be considered lost ground when approached with rigid formalization expectations. The crucial point here is that, within the time and cultural context of Western art music works, methodology that can work through the syntactical theory of sound and rhythm organizations with psychoanalytic and linguistic disciplines are evolving. In other words, it should not be forgotten that the primary purpose of evaluation is to find 'music' within the psychoanalytic approach. Naturally, attention can be directed to the importance of a psycho-linguistic context woven around the basic conceptual framework that turns towards incorporated style representing a specific culture, rather than the idea of a universal musical grammar. Thus, it is evident that a subtle music theory benefiting from the analytic nature of psycho-linguistic

method will serve a descriptive function in the unconscious quest for a musical work. All these considerations highlight the importance and continuity of interdisciplinary research to develop a clear method for understanding the nature of music and humanity. Ultimately, this study, focusing on the advantages of adopting psychoanalytic methods in the artistic creation of music, seeks to observe a sensitive effort towards the researched phenomenon, avoiding the danger of ordinary experimental settings and generalizations.

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### ORCID ID of the author / Yazarın ORCID ID'si

İsmail Hakkı BURDURLU 0000-0001-7465-7679

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