



Representations of Metaphysical Temporality in the Libretto of Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Vincent* with a Corresponding Resemblance to Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*

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Abstract

In his early serialist composition style, Einojuhani Rautavaara expressed indebtedness to the flexible usage of the twelve-tone system that was adapted by Alban Berg. The trace of Berg's influence becomes dramaturgically reminiscent when investigating the philosophical impact that Berg's opera *Wozzeck* had on Rautavaara's opera *Vincent*. This study aims to analyse the symbolic content of the *Vincent* libretto, with a secondary depiction of parallel attributes found in the libretto of *Wozzeck*. This examination demonstrates how the operas share a philosophical foundation that is based on an expression of metaphysical temporality inherent within the plots of both operas, which juxtapose the duality of the two temporal planes of empirical reality and metaphysical illusion. The outcome of such a comparison illustrates how Rautavaara's opera can be interpreted in a new framework of understanding that is based on the Finnish composer's mirroring of Berg's operatic and dramatic style as seen in *Wozzeck*.

From its inception, the twelve-tone method of composition would largely remain a rigid procedural endeavour in both its implementation and reputation among wider audiences following its earliest public exposure in the 1920s and in the ensuing decades. Despite these challenges of reception, twelve-tone serialism came to Finland in the 1950s, which was also felt by the then young Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara (1928–2016), who would make his own adaptation of serial styles in the early years of his career.¹ Rautavaara's introduction to serialism came through the music of the Second Viennese School, one of the key representatives of which was Austrian composer Alban Berg (1885–1935).² Although it is questionable when Rautavaara first heard any orchestral music by Berg, Finnish music scholar Anne Kauppala states that Rautavaara's initial exposure to Berg's music came by way of reading his scores.³ The most important early proximity to Berg that Rautavaara would experience

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- 1 Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones: Einojuhani Rautavaara's First Serial Period (Ca. 1957–1965)* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1997), 22. The author of this text now goes by the name Anne Kauppala and will henceforth be referred to as such.
- 2 Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 23.
- 3 Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 27.

came in the form of his composition teacher, Wladimir Vogel, who had personally known Berg and greatly appreciated his music. According to Rautavaara, 'Vogel's own music belonged to the tradition of Alban Berg's classical dodecaphony.'⁴ In addition, when Rautavaara studied Berg's *Lyric Suite* under Vogel, including listening to stylistically different recordings made of the quartet from the 1930s and 1950s, he recounted those vestiges of that composition and the aesthetic discrepancies between the recordings of Berg's quartet that became evident to Rautavaara in how he interpreted contrasting recordings of his own String Quartet No. 2.⁵ Furthermore, it is likely that Rautavaara first heard an orchestral work by Berg in performance in Darmstadt in 1957 when the Violin Concerto was performed there.⁶ This is Berg's most popular twelve-tone composition, and utilizes such a free form that its inclusions of extended tonal passages of lyricism and also the Bach chorale setting in the finale would have doubtlessly appealed to the young Rautavaara, who was at the time on a similar expressive path of incorporating past compositional practices into a contemporary idiom.

Berg stands as a legitimate model for Rautavaara because his own development as a composer reflected a desire to logically integrate past and present systems of composing. Berg became renowned for his unique style that sought to seamlessly embody a sense of change while perpetuating a traditional aesthetic of recognizable consistency. His most enduring sonic legacy is the widespread awareness that his music simultaneously looks forwards and backwards in terms of the progressive and extended nature of his harmonic language that nevertheless remained rooted in the styles and formal structures of the past.⁷ Although this was an inherent conviction concerning the composer's organic manner of composition, in the last decade of his life, and particularly after the tremendous success of his first opera, *Wozzeck*, in 1925, Berg increasingly sought to adapt semblances of currently popular trends into his music in order to maintain an extensive audience approval. As such, his second opera, *Lulu*, utilized a freer dodecaphonic style⁸ and incorporated idiomatic tenets of the prevailing *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement on top of a coloratura-oriented vocal disposition. All of this rendered *Lulu* an expressive chameleon that both reflected the prevailing musical aesthetics while remaining true to its composer's uniquely dramatic voice.⁹

4 Einojuhani Rautavaara, *Omakuva* (Helsinki: Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, 1989), 185. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

5 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 132.

6 Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 42.

7 One need only to reflect on the suites, rhapsodies, passacaglias, sonatas, fugues, and inventions that *Wozzeck*'s structure is comprised of within the framework of a highly chromatic, advanced tonality. For a chart of *Wozzeck*'s formal design with analysis, see Douglas Jarman, *Cambridge Opera Handbooks: Wozzeck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42.

8 For a study on the structural adaptations of Berg's musical style, see Douglas Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

9 For a study that encompasses the new operatic styles that Berg looked to emulate in *Lulu*, and their central practitioners, see Susan C. Cook, *Opera for a New Republic: The Zeitoper of Krenek, Weill, and Hindemith* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1988).

The explicit influence of Berg upon Rautavaara's compositional language was most apparent (apart from the String Quartet No. 2), in his Third Symphony (1959–60), on which the composer himself stated that the piece was 'inspired by Alban Berg's advanced late-romantic music'.¹⁰ The Third Symphony is also extensively influenced by Bruckner in terms of form and structure,¹¹ which mirrors Berg's practice of utilizing musical models of the past in his works. Moreover, music critics detected the Expressionistic ethos of *Wozzeck* (such as a heightened sense of inner psychological states that harness a wide range of emotions to distort perceptions of reality),¹² in other orchestral pieces by Rautavaara, naming Berg, as Kauppala recounts, as 'Rautavaara's musical paragon'.¹³ Even Rautavaara's first opera, *Kaivos* (first written in 1957–8 and later revised), was compared with Berg and in particular with *Wozzeck* in the Finnish press.¹⁴ The prevailing trend is clear that Berg's music was integral to Rautavaara's own development of a musical aesthetic across chamber, orchestral, and operatic genres. Although Rautavaara would eventually move past serial techniques, he would not outright disavow the style, but would, like Berg, structurally adapt the form to fit his needs. Musicologist Mikko Heiniö concurs on this point, stating that after 1961, Rautavaara would adapt what he himself described as the 'non-atonal dodecaphony' that was inspired by Berg.¹⁵ This was especially evident in Rautavaara's opera *Vincent* (completed in 1985), which is a free-form serial composition.

It is the aim of this article to present *Vincent* as beholden to the lineage that Rautavaara had harnessed in his aforementioned early period, as it specifically relates to Berg, and which was operationally set in motion with *Wozzeck* distinctly. Despite the similarities between the two operas that will be described next, *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* primarily differ in that they are twelve-tone and 'atonal'¹⁶ works, respectively. However, this dissimilarity does not impact

10 Sivuvoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 59.

11 Tim Howell, *After Sibelius: Studies in Finnish Music* (London: Routledge, 2006), 119. Howell's chapter on Rautavaara titled 'Einojuhani Rautavaara – Something Old. . . Something New. . .' presents a detailed overview of the composer's musical development of styles and aesthetics.

12 For a source that compellingly describes the distorting nature of Expressionistic aesthetics, see Shulamith Behr, David Fanning, and Douglas Jarman, eds., *Expressionism Reassessed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). See also John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993).

13 Sivuvoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 69.

14 Sivuvoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 90.

15 Mikko Heiniö, '12-säveltekniikan aila: Dodekafonian ja sarjallisuuden reseptio ja Suomen luova säveltaide 1950-luvulta 1960-luvan puoliväliin', *Musiikki* 3–4 (1986), 94. Heiniö's study offers a historical overview of Finland's exposure to and ultimate adaptation of twelve-tone serialism. In addition, he recounts Berg's reception as recorded by Finnish commentators abroad starting in the 1930s, and then in Finland from the 1950s when Berg's orchestral music began to be performed there. The consensus is that Berg's music was harder to understand in the 1930s, but eventually became the most accessible and popular dodecaphonic works of the Schoenberg circle as seen by Finnish critics. Heiniö also presents brief performance histories of Berg's key works in Finland.

16 The Schoenberg circle disdained the term 'atonal' as a designation of their music. In a transcribed interview, Berg said that the word 'atonal' is merely an antagonistic descriptor that is used to designate music that is perceived as 'ugly' and 'unmusical', which falsely disregards the widespread adherence to form, rhythm, counterpoint, etc., that music of this erroneous designation still embraces. See Alban Berg, 'What is Atonal? A Dialogue', in *Pro Mundo – Pro Domo: The Writings of Alban Berg*, ed. Bryan R. Simms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

this article's comparative arguments, which do not focus on elements of formal structure. As stated earlier, Rautavaara was indeed familiar with Berg's actual twelve-tone compositions, even if they were less intrinsic to Rautavaara's developments as an opera composer. One could hypothesize this to be the case because Berg's only twelve-tone opera, *Lulu*, was a fractured work that generally received far less attention in the decades where Rautavaara expressed interest in Berg's music. After the posthumous completion of the orchestration of *Lulu*'s final act, and a few performances of the completed score throughout the 1980s, the three-act version of *Lulu* only began to gain consistent performances in the 1990s – the decade after *Vincent*'s composition.

A narrative analysis of the *Vincent* libretto¹⁷ is made from the perspective of its inherent philosophical symbolism that is an expression of a particular type of temporal metaphysics. More specifically, the concept of temporal metaphysics denotes a philosophical feature of the libretto that concerns the dichotomization of two overlapping temporal planes of existence in the operas of both composers: the empirical world of reality in which we all live, and an imagined realm of idealized non-reality that exists beyond space and time, thus being metaphysical in scope. This kind of comparison was applied to Wagnerian opera by Bryan Magee, who poetically described the phenomenon as 'singing metaphysics',¹⁸ which I expand and appropriate to Rautavaara and Berg. Communication scholar Sarah Tracy defines narrative analysis as 'a type of analysis in which researchers identify stories that have a plot and audience (both told and untold), and analyse them in terms of their content, type, characters, motivation, and consequences'.¹⁹ I deploy this methodology to examine the interactions of the operatic characters with each other in both *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* and the spaces that they inhabit as vital to the unfolding of the plot and its deeper meanings. Moreover, Tracy's definition is additionally applicable due to her inclusion of a researcher's awareness of an audience regarding the plot. As we will see, both Rautavaara and Berg incorporate into their opera libretti explicit and implicit methods and allusions to communicate directly with the audience in subtle ways. These instances reflect Tracy's concept of narrative analysis, and contribute to an understanding of the complex symbolisms in *Vincent* and *Wozzeck*.

The focus, however, is primarily on *Vincent*, with similar representations in *Wozzeck* acting as plausible points of influence on Rautavaara's opera, akin to the impact that Berg exerted earlier on Rautavaara's instrumental works. This article's theoretical framework stems from interpreting *Vincent* through Berg's *Wozzeck* and the perceptible and shared philosophical foundations of these operatic works. The theoretical scope also extends to drawing upon Kauppala's previous research in a way that expands her original observation about Berg's influence on Rautavaara's early instrumental music, to now include the genre of opera. Berg's underlying impact, therefore, becomes a key reference in Rautavaara's stylistic developments across multiple categories of composition. The main research question of this article

17 It should be noted that Berg and Rautavaara constructed and wrote their own libretti for the operas in question, respectively.

18 Bryan Magee, *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 219.

19 Sarah J. Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 263.

is: What are the key metaphysical characteristics of *Vincent's* libretto, and how do they mirror analogous traits in *Wozzeck's* libretto?

With this primary focus on the libretto of *Vincent* and a secondary, reinforcing focus on the libretto of *Wozzeck*, we will move from strictly musical influences that connect the two composers to a new dimension that is related to philosophical ideas and metaphorical representations. Although there are musical correlations between Rautavaara and Berg in terms of how they employ key formal devices (explained in more detail later), the justification of focusing on the libretti alone stems from the unique investigation of how both composers render these similarities in a purely textual framework, which has been previously underexplored. The protagonists of both *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* traverse the two planes with what I describe as a temporal suspension: a narrative blurring of the temporal planes where linear time is briefly suspended for a character, where they gain fleeting glimpses into metaphysical unreality, often with predetermined and subtle views of the future. What will emerge is a modality of dramaturgy and meaning that is particularly emblematic of the same features in Berg's *Wozzeck*, along with key structural features that both operas share. I argue that these structural features are palindromic, circular forms²⁰ and implied autobiographic projections²¹ of the composers into their operas in the form of narrative doppelgängers. Simply stated, a circular form for Berg encompasses a development to a fixed end point, at which time, the linearity of the development turns back onto itself in a palindromic mirror image and moves backwards, thereby creating the impression that the end point is also the starting point. The concept of autobiographic projections through doppelgängers suggests the nature in which both composers contrive to situate depictions of themselves into their operas via characters that are crafted to represent themselves. These are the key symmetrical designs between the two operas, as it will be made apparent from an examination of their libretti.

Berg scholars have written at length about the meaning that Berg attached to his palindromes. Douglas Jarman proposes that the palindromic structure of *Wozzeck* illustrates Berg's 'view of man as a helpless creature unable to alter his preordained fate and unable to break out of the tragic and absurd dance of death within which he is trapped – a fatalistic and deeply pessimistic view of life that underlies all Berg's mature compositions'.²² Robert Morgan interprets Jarman's representation where 'the palindromes are thus interpreted as symbols of negation, their reversal of musical time mirroring a desire to erase temporal passage and its inevitable consequences'.²³ These ostensibly negative viewpoints demonstrate a

20 For a discussion of circular forms in Berg that contain associations to metaphysical temporality, see John Covach, 'Balzacian Mysticism, Palindromic Design, and Heavenly Time in Berg's Music', in *Encrypted Messages in Alban Berg's Music*, ed. Siglind Bruhn (New York: Routledge, 2016); Robert P. Morgan, 'The Eternal Return: Retrograde and Circular Form in Berg', in *Alban Berg: Historical and Analytical Perspectives*, ed. David Gable and Robert P. Morgan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

21 For a study devoted to the manner in which Berg expressed autobiographical elements throughout his compositional output, see Constantin Floros, *Alban Berg: Music as Autobiography*, trans. Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang GmbH, 2014).

22 Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg*, 241.

23 Morgan, 'The Eternal Return', 146.

preoccupation with notions of destiny and a sense of being trapped in one's fated existential path. While these ideas have been associated with Berg for decades, the present article also investigates how this palindromic connection to fate is articulated in *Vincent* as well.

Palindromic structures in Rautavaara's music are recognizable features that associate Rautavaara and Berg even further. As mentioned earlier, while Rautavaara composed his Second String Quartet, he was explicitly aware of Berg's forms in that composer's *Lyric Suite* string quartet. Indeed, Kauppala describes the 'gestural function' of Rautavaara's quartet as containing 'the paradox of an ending within the beginning [as] a sign of temporal manipulation'.²⁴ This description acutely mirrors both the structural design and the temporal significance of how Berg's *Wozzeck* incorporated these devices previously to serve the same purpose that Rautavaara imagined for his own work. Later on, Kauppala importantly draws attention to Rautavaara's 'retrograde structures', which are ostensibly palindromes because she quotes a passage from Theodor Adorno's monograph on Berg²⁵ where Adorno describes Berg's palindromes as reversing temporality. This notion is then connected by Kauppala to Douglas Jarman's classifications of cyclical structures in one of his monographs on Berg,²⁶ which associates the preceding quote by Jarman with perceptions of Rautavaara's treatments of the same formal designs. In relation to this, Kauppala adjusts the Adorno/Jarman perspective to state that 'more than denying or negating temporality, retrograde forms make it multi-layered'.²⁷ This comment is again in context of Rautavaara's Second String Quartet, by which Kauppala means to convey that the retrograde in that work does not reverse time, but rather makes the musical past and future indistinguishable from one another, which is different from categorizing it as an erasing phenomenon. This semantic differentiation is due in part, according to Kauppala, to the nature of the tempo and rhythmic pulse acting as a strong force of forward momentum, which renders it multi-layered rather than negating.²⁸ Despite these subtle differences in terminology between Kauppala and Jarman, there is still a central correlation to Berg beyond the fact that both he and Rautavaara simply employed cyclical forms. As Robert Morgan notes, Berg's palindromes denote their own paradoxical phenomenon because the path of his retrogrades is not linear but progress backwards while possessing the same forward moving impetus²⁹ that Kauppala described. From these initial structural expressions, it becomes evident that Rautavaara and Berg did not only utilize similar methods, but also gave them a highly overlapping function. This realization is essential in creating a wider context for understanding the

24 Sivuvoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 169.

25 See Theodor W. Adorno, *Alban Berg: Master of the Smallest Link*, trans. Juliane Brand and Christopher Hailey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Adorno designates Berg's palindromes thusly: 'musical retrograde patterns are anti-temporal, they organize music as if it were an intrinsic simultaneity' (p. 14); 'strict retrograde: time passes and revokes itself' (p. 124).

26 Kauppala cites: Jarman, *The Music of Alban Berg*.

27 Sivuvoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 234–5.

28 Sivuvoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 180.

29 Morgan, 'The Eternal Return', 123.

relationship of these two composers that complements the allegorical kinship of *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* from a narrative perspective.

These expressions are analysed as symbolic indications in the libretti rather than the music because it is only through the libretto texts that the temporal duality described earlier can be distinguished, as it relates to existential indications in the two operas' main characters' manner of being. When *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* are juxtaposed in this way (with some accompanying symbolic associations with *Lulu*³⁰ as well), the outcome is a philosophical harmony between the scrutinized operas, which will place Rautavaara's opera in a new framework of understanding that will in turn deepen the academic knowledge and scope of meaning of his oeuvre. Moreover, specific new knowledge can be generated that draws attention to Rautavaara's inclination to not only identify with the character Vincent, but also subtly emplace himself in the opera's narrative using autobiographical allusions that Rautavaara describes in his cited publications, and which become apparent through this article's narrative analyses. As such, Rautavaara's profoundly personal connection with his opera emerges that further associates *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* and their composers' shared propensity for narrative self-reflection.

My comparative analysis will also expand on previous research literature that has addressed Rautavaara's early engagement with Berg, whereas the present article will explore a plausible association with the older composer as reflected in a significant operatic work from Rautavaara's middle period. In addition, there are few English language studies on Rautavaara that have included analyses of *Vincent*, and even fewer that focus on the opera's philosophical-symbolic meaning to the extent that this article aims to convey.³¹ The present

30 *Lulu* is interjected at times to exemplify how the focus of this study is paradigmatic of Berg's overall operatic idiom, and not just to germane components exclusively found in *Wozzeck*. While the latter opera is the focus here, it is important to make clear that the most salient details of this article constitute a stylistic umbrella that encompasses both of Berg's operas. Nevertheless, in the context of a comparison with *Vincent*, only *Wozzeck* will be emphasized more extensively due to their closer association.

31 Recently, a new life-and-works study covering Rautavaara's entire career has been written in English. See Barbara Blanchard Hong, *Rautavaara's Journey in Music* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022). The book also covers a brief composition and performance history of *Vincent*, as well as some dramaturgical and musical features of the opera. See pp. 87–8. For additional literature on Rautavaara in English that involves investigations into the symbolic meanings of his music, see Samuli Tiikkaja, *Paired Opposites: The Development of Einojuhani Rautavaara's Harmonic Practices* (Turku, Finland: Acta Musicologica Fennica, 2019). This monograph addresses elements of Rautavaara's symmetrical usage for the purpose of controlling tone production in his various composition styles, which also covers his twelve-tone period. Although Tiikkaja briefly mentions Berg, he only does so in reference to that composer's freer use of the twelve-tone system, and makes no mention of Berg's influence on Rautavaara beyond a short remark on two hexachord orderings by Berg that the author merely states impacted Rautavaara's music. Other sources include: Anne Sivoja-Gunaratnam, "Narcissus Musicus" or an Intertextual Perspective on the Oeuvre of Einojuhani Rautavaara', in *Topics, Texts, Tensions: Essays in Music Theory on Paavo Heininen, Joonas Kokkonen, Magnus Lindberg, Usko Meriläinen, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Kaija Saariaho, and Aulis Sallinen*, ed. Martha Brech and Tomi Mäkelä (Magdeburg, Germany: Otto-von-Guericke Universität, 1999); Wojciech Stepień, *Signifying Angels: Analyses and Interpretations of Rautavaara's Instrumental Compositions* (PhD diss., Helsinki University 2010). In this book, Stepień presents an interdisciplinary study and cultural placement of the personal and metaphorical meaning of angelic symbolism in five featured instrumental works by Rautavaara; Samuli Tiikkaja, 'Einojuhani Rautavaara – Postmodern Intertextualist or Supermodern Intratextualist?', *Musiikki* 2 (2004); Owen Burton, 'Rautavaara's

study, therefore, provides an important insight that has musicological benefits for a wider, international readership that presumably has little knowledge of this Finnish opera. Lastly, this investigation is analytically feasible without the need of delving into extended theoretical or structural examinations of the music itself, based on the provisions of the libretti, and that being the essential focus of the corresponding factors between Berg and Rautavaara. In terms of the article's disposition, the sections that follow will be divided by each of *Vincent's* three acts with associations to Berg made within the chronological development of Rautavaara's opera. Rautavaara wrote multiple accounts of *Vincent* regarding both its meaning and his motivation behind some of the opera's main ideas. These statements represent one analytical view – the composer's own – which I embed in the present article where relevant to the argument, yet which should not suggest that Rautavaara's is the only template for understanding the complexities of his work. The composer's views are relevant and complementary to the forthcoming analysis, but they should be viewed overall as interpretatively malleable rather than dogmatically incontestable.

***Vincent* Act I: obscuring reality with pathways to illusion**

Vincent opens with an instant juxtaposition of the two temporal planes: the chorus projects metaphysical imagery of non-reality as the first observational association to be made of Vincent Van Gogh as he paints. The chorus sings: 'Above the real, the supernatural, I see the real exceeding all reality'.³² This is immediately dichotomized by an abrupt and somewhat caustic display of empirical reality with the doctor's eccentric diagnostic imperative that characterizes Vincent as 'the victim of an acute mania, combined with a general delirium'.³³ The force of this declarative, self-aggrandizing assertiveness is instantly reminiscent of the same traits and general manner of the doctor in *Wozzeck*, who likewise gives a similar diagnosis to *Wozzeck*: 'You are quite obsessed by an *idée fixe*, such an excellent aberration mentalis partialis, second species! Highly cultivated!'³⁴ Furthermore, by stating that Vincent's psychosis led him to cut off his own ear, the opera's narrative provides a temporal indication of where things are beginning. The doctor's subordinates – the secretary and chaplain – struggle with their speech, where they confuse words and stutter, respectively. This adds a layer of absurdity to the narrative by giving a semblance of authority or responsibility to people in a mental institution who would generally otherwise never hold such positions in conventional

Cantus Arcticus: National Exoticism or International Modernism?, *Twentieth-Century Music* 19/2 (2022); Owen Burton, 'Upholding a Modernist Mentality: Experimentalism and Neo-tonality in the Symphonies of Einojuhani Rautavaara' (PhD diss., University of York, 2020). In both his article and his dissertation, Burton contextualizes the title works as examples of a type of modernism in Rautavaara's music that the author associates with notions of compositional technique, Finnish culture, and Rautavaara's personal approach in adopting new stylistic trends in his music while still embracing older styles as well.

32 Einojuhani Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', English trans. Erkki Arni, liner notes for Rautavaara, *Vincent: Opera in Three Acts*, Finnish National Opera, conducted by Fuat Mançurov, Ondine 750-2, 1990, CD, 36.

33 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto'.

34 Alban Berg, *Wozzeck: Opera in 3 Acts (15 Scenes), Opus 7, after Georg Büchner, English/German Libretto*, trans. Eric Albert Blackall and Vida Harford (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1952), 6.

society. It is rather like 'the blind leading the blind', adding a destabilizing factor to the atmosphere of *Vincent's* opening act. It imparts the notion that in this world (i.e., empirical reality), power and authority are given to caricatures of standardized representations. Indeed, in his published article on *Vincent*, Rautavaara called the doctor a 'silly character, like most parody characters'.³⁵ A similar deviant-turned-righteous power structure is inherent in *Wozzeck*, where characters of authority there display moral deviancy devoid of empathy, compassion, or rudimentary decency. It is also interesting to note that the doctors in both operas are roles written for bass vocalists, while the title roles for both are written for baritones.

The chorus of *Vincent* next returns with its metaphysical suggestions of dreams, life, and death. They instil the impression that these are only discernible to Vincent. This ambient tone is important to Rautavaara, who wrote that 'as in the reality of a dream at least, the character and atmosphere of the region is a more important identifier than the geography'.³⁶ Vincent's *Wozzeck*-like traversal of the temporal planes via suspensions of reality that offer Vincent glimpses into the metaphysical become increasingly apparent when he starts hearing voices call out to him. *Wozzeck* also hears voices, starting in the second scene of Act I. Later, in Act II scene 5, *Wozzeck* complains: 'When I close my eyes, I always see them . . . and then, out of the wall a voice'.³⁷ In response to the voices, Vincent confusedly asks of their origin, ultimately expressing his guilt and humiliation for feeling 'the eternal debt of worthlessness', and his desire for 'immortal' salvation, in no uncertain terms, by invoking the redemptive symbolism of the Holy Grail.³⁸ This is our introduction to Vincent from his own words. He appears to be a sensitive, tormented man who fits that Bergian-Wagnerian archetype of a heavily burdened psyche that wishes freedom from that bondage. Temporally speaking, such a bondage can be equated to philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's depiction of the enslaving features of the empirical will, which we all arguably succumb to and desire to overcome, as Vincent does, via a transcendence to the higher, absolving, idealized realm of the metaphysical. Like *Wozzeck*, Vincent is in a crisis of temporal displacement, where his reality does not match his existential vision of an inhabiting otherness. This otherness is something that the characters of both operas wish to reach but are narratively prohibited from doing so at the first instance of suggestion.

The polarizing division of the two temporal planes is thematically represented in both operas using celestial imagery that operatically originated with Richard Wagner. In *Tristan und Isolde*, the two title characters sought metaphysical salvation in the enveloping darkness of night, while shunning empiricism as depicted by the light. In *Wozzeck*, this phenomenon is expressed in the temporal divergence of the sun and the moon, where the moon acts as one of the central impetuses of prophetic foreshadowing at the root of *Wozzeck's* suspensions into the metaphysical. Indeed, the moon rises blood red just prior to *Wozzeck's* murder of Marie (his adulterous common-law wife and mother of his child), and does likewise again later as the

35 Einojuhani Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas – tasoja, paralleleleja, heijastumia, limittyviä aspekteja oopperassa Vincent', *Synteesi* 2–3 (1990), 124.

36 Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas'.

37 Berg, *Wozzeck Libretto*, 16.

38 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 38.

narrative trigger of Wozzeck's own death by drowning. In the libretto, at the moment of Marie's death, she observes, 'How the moon rises red!' to which Wozzeck replies, followed by a stage direction, 'Like a bloody iron' (He pulls out a knife).³⁹ Similar symbolism is expressed in *Vincent* by way of the title character's existential crisis that bears this temporal duality in the narrative form of light vs. darkness, which Vincent further equates to the binary opposite of life vs. death. Vincent confirms this metaphysical attribution when he states that the night and stars, as depicted in his painting *Starry Night*, represent 'unbelievable windows, doors to other worlds'.⁴⁰ To him, this is clearly a metaphysical realm that he can see but cannot reach, as he calls to his brother Theo to help him because, he states, 'I can't find my way out of here to get home.'⁴¹

Theo's instant arrival on the scene is a curious event: it at once appears as if he has been viscerally conjured into existence by Vincent as the imaginary defence mechanism of a broken mind. When Theo announces his arrival, Vincent erupts into the full gamut of his temporal-existential angst when he draws attention to the stars and the dreaminess of the night. He is still in the thrall of a temporal suspension, glimpsing the metaphysical, and saying: 'I want to fly home to your stars. Theo, how do you ascend there? How do you ascend to the stars? . . . It must be simple, as inevitable as death, as birth, to ascend to the stars.'⁴² The question of Theo being real becomes suspect when he parrots Vincent's last sentence verbatim. Music scholar Barbara Hong does not take a definitive position on Theo's corporeality, but may also believe he is not real when she writes: 'Despairing, Vincent sees his loyal brother Theo who tells him to look back into his past for explanations.'⁴³ Kauppala addresses the presentation of Theo in an earlier publication, writing that 'he is in fact merely a projection of Vincent's troubled mind, a built-in listener and not yet a real-life figure'.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Kauppala also describes Rautavaara's construction of imaginary character projections when she draws attention to this feature in Rautavaara's previous opera, *Thomas* (1982–5), where the events of the narrative exist as the protagonist's mental projections.⁴⁵ The consistency of this element between *Thomas* and *Vincent* renders the practice paradigmatic, where Rautavaara embraces these Expressionistic aspects of inner psychological distortions that bend reality. The wording of Vincent's expression also suggests that Theo came from the metaphysical realm because Vincent asks him how he can go to the place where his brother came from. Moreover, Vincent equating his desired ascension to the stars to notions of death and birth is replete with a temporally dichotomous symbolism of the two existential planes in

39 Berg, *Wozzeck Libretto*, 18.

40 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 39.

41 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 39–40.

42 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 40.

43 Hong, *Rautavaara's Journey in Music*, 87.

44 Anne Sivuoja, 'Rautavaara's *Vincent*: Not a Portrait', *Finnish Music Quarterly* 2 (1990), 7. In addition to this point, Kauppala's brief article also addresses Rautavaara's relationship to the historical Vincent van Gogh; the non-linear temporal layout of the opera's narrative; the musical treatment of the tone rows; Vincent's relationship to female characters in the opera; and other figurative emblems, such as angels and birds.

45 Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 139.

the form of the empirically binding birth juxtaposed with Schopenhauer's ploy of metaphysical transcendence in the form of death. Of course, Wagner believed that death was not the only means of denying the will, viewing sexual love as another method of breaking the chains. But since this option is not available to Vincent in his confinement, his only recourse is the binary circumstance of life and death.

However, in the next instance, Theo essentially downplays his brother's dilemma-induced expressions as dreams that he, Theo, must also share or endure in his connection to his brother. Reality is once again blurred here because we the audience are compelled to question if Theo's connection to Vincent in this exchange is brotherly fidelity or his own form of captivity as a by-product of Vincent's temporally fractured mind. In any event, Vincent, like *Wozzeck*, is privy to metaphysical glimpses that no other character can see, rendering both operatic protagonists as unhinged deviants in the eyes of their empirically emplaced observers. Theo is clearly struggling with his own crisis of identity as an individual or enabler of his brother's mania. That is, if he is indeed his own person. So far, it is unclear whether this is a dramaturgical invention of another character's developmental arc, or whether, again, it is deepening Vincent's turmoil where his psyche has created an imagined avatar of his brother in the mental institution as a moral reverberator of Vincent's angst in the form of an unfiltered and trusting dialogue. We shall see how this hypothesis is substantiated or refuted as the narrative of *Vincent* unfolds. Importantly, in his own confused and jumbled monologue, Theo tells Vincent: 'Your path – it must lead upwards always and to the very end! For the end is the beginning. The end is always the beginning.'⁴⁶ This statement – the imagery of an upward transcendence to the metaphysical notwithstanding – is the most temporally profound encapsulation of *Wozzeck* as a circular palindrome. The essence of that opera's tragedy is that its end is unequivocally another beginning, where the son inherits the empirical enslavement of the father (and with it, his father's torment). Theo's abstract and dubious existence in the narrative highlights Sarah Tracy's notion of told and untold stories regarding plot and audience, as Theo forces the audience to think critically about what is real and what is imagined. It inspires its own form of narrative analysis in real time of the operatic performance.

Among other features, *Wozzeck* is famous for this structural/conceptual design of the full-scale palindromic repeat, and it was *Wozzeck*'s overall structure that Rautavaara praised. Crucially, Rautavaara made a telling observation about *Wozzeck* in his autobiography. In context of his discussion on composers' operatic starting points and various approaches to the initial treatment of text and music, Rautavaara wrote: 'There have been many combinations of the two basic elements, words and tune, text and music. The opera *Wozzeck* is a solid, unified work of art because the classical structure of Berg's music transforms Büchner's fragmented scenes into a work.'⁴⁷ Recognition of this balance as a reconciliation between text and music is a valuable insight in as much as both Rautavaara and Berg made them dramatically homogenous, which creates this sense of unity. In naming *Wozzeck*, it is plausible to presume that this work was a central model for Rautavaara, further exemplifying their shared

⁴⁶ Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 41.

⁴⁷ Rautavaara, *Omakuvu*, 279.

emphasis on symbolic structures in the libretti that were not envisioned as being subordinate to those same qualities in the music. Elsewhere, Rautavaara wrote that his *Vincent* libretto 'uses as many authentic texts as possible, especially Vincent's letters in his lines.'⁴⁸ This can be generally equated to Berg's thorough (but not complete) fidelity to Büchner's text when he crafted his libretto for *Wozzeck*. Rautavaara makes other passing mentions of *Wozzeck* in his autobiography that are worth acknowledging for the extent to which Rautavaara thought carefully about Berg's opera and saw it as an example of multiple elements that the former brought up in his general reflections on opera.

Following Theo's first extended passage in the libretto, Vincent asks his brother if he is still there with him. By this, he could either mean to ask if Theo is still there in his supportive guise, or it could suggest a rhetorical question to himself to test if the imagined metaphysical avatar of his brother is still present. This level of distorting reality renders *Vincent* quite Expressionistic in scope, which is another fundamental and symmetrical element that it shares with *Wozzeck*. This section of the first act ends with Theo telling Vincent to travel back to the beginning, which is the opera's narrative prompt of the first palindrome that diverts the temporal action of what comes next to the past.

The distinction between the two temporal planes is obscured with the return of the metaphysical chorus – a seemingly invisible entity that comments outside the perceived parameters of the narrative, as if they are breaking the fourth wall and addressing us, the audience. Berg did precisely the same thing with his *Lulu* prologue, which is a direct communication to the audience, inviting us in to bear witness to what will unfold. Indeed, in the prologue, the Animal Tamer beckons: 'Come into the menagerie, fair ladies, noble gentlemen'.⁴⁹ In *Vincent*, the chorus is now seemingly prefacing the subsequent action by stating: 'A stranger I am here, and quite unknown, a stranger between earth and heaven.'⁵⁰ In other words, a stranger between the empirical and metaphysical, respectively. Theo again tempts: 'Come, follow me back to the beginning!'⁵¹ From this point, the metaphoric scope of the metaphysical takes on a Christian idiom of expression. The stage direction now reads that Vincent 'preaches', which further clouds the line between reality and idealized non-reality. In this new role as quasi-sermon giver, Vincent states that he is on 'a journey towards redemption and light'.⁵²

The concept of striving towards redemption is a trait that is inherent throughout Wagner's entire operatic oeuvre,⁵³ and one that Berg only makes his characters desire but never experience. The implicit assumption here is that Rautavaara will be more generous to Vincent because he prompts the character to express that this is what he, Vincent, seeks.

48 Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas', 125.

49 Alban Berg, *Lulu: Opera in 3 Acts (7 Scenes), after 'Erdegeist' and 'Büchse der Pandora' by Frank Wedekind, English/German Libretto*, trans. Arthur Jacobs (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1978), 3.

50 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 42.

51 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 42.

52 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 42.

53 For a compelling study that deals with Wagner's concept of redemption, see Roger Scruton, *Wagner's Parsifal: The Music of Redemption* (London: Penguin Books, 2021).

Dramatically speaking, if he was to deny Vincent this catharsis, it would have been more harrowing to convey his desire using no uncertain terms that make his intension crystal clear, only to prevent him from experiencing the catharsis. Such a development might disturb the audience far more for being aware of the inevitable futility even before the character is. This is precisely what Berg does in both of his operas, especially in *Lulu*, where the audience is drawn into the narrative, and therefore experiences the degradation and indignity of the characters that much more viscerally. In this regard, it would appear at first glance that Rautavaara is preparing us for a Wagnerian denouement rather than a Bergian catastrophe.

The figurative sermon ensues with Vincent asking: 'where is that redemption we're seeking' only to answer it himself in his next line, which states: 'it is yourself and the light in your heart'.⁵⁴ The rest of this section progresses with figurative imagery of this ultimate resolution from the night to the day. Theo ultimately interjects to accuse Vincent of metaphysical idealization, to which Vincent replies that it is not a pointless venture, and that providing comfort to those seeking redemption is no lesser than giving a 'listening ear or bread or night-shelter'.⁵⁵ This line is perhaps a bit tongue-in-cheek because Vincent does give a listening ear by cutting his own ear off later, rendering this a subtle foreshadowing. The sermon perpetuates with a coterie of sympathetic sycophants present who are not real people, but are the personified voices that Vincent hears within his temporal displacement between the two planes.

Afterwards, the quartet of empirical oppressors return, this time in the form of a mine foreman, police officer, preacher, and clerk. Rautavaara continues the trend of having characters predominantly named by their vocation, which Berg was noted for doing in *Wozzeck* and *Lulu*. Their presence is ironic and functions as an antithetical ploy to counter the idealized illusions of Vincent, the chorus, and the preaching of redemption. The irony lies in the fact that the Foreman calls Vincent a 'caricature' and 'travesty',⁵⁶ when that is exactly what the members of the quartet are themselves. Berg's dramatic manner was similar in having caricatured figures of authority incapable of seeing those traits in themselves, but having no trouble in pointing out flaws in others. This is most notable in the way the Captain and Doctor treat *Wozzeck*. In this regard, Rautavaara displays a shared ethical disposition with Berg because they both emphasize a parodying injustice in situations where people in weaker social positions are at the least misunderstood and socially ostracized, and at most, exploited and even abused (explicitly or implicitly) by people in stronger positions. Indeed, Rautavaara confirms these notions about the empirical quartet when he writes: 'The appearance of a grotesque quartet under different names in different acts, but always identifiable as the same parodic group, is also an essential structure of the dramaturgy.'⁵⁷ Berg utilizes the same practice of role doublings in *Lulu* with the return of Lulu's dead husbands in the final act of that

54 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 43.

55 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 45.

56 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 47.

57 Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas', 128.

opera where Lulu is now a prostitute, and the previously deceased men appear in new guises as her clients in the final scene.

Vincent's first act draws to a close in a sequence where the empirical quartet insists that Vincent leave behind the unreality that he has created around his paintings, and return to the world of reality. The ethereal chorus urges Vincent not to forget them and to return to the light again in the future, whereas Theo encourages him to return to the empirical because only there can his art redeem the world in ways that only he can provide. Vincent agrees to go to the empirical realm, and he and the chorus exchange metaphysical projections of transcendence and ascendance to the light. Theo abstractly juxtaposes the two temporal planes to Vincent by suggesting that his temporal suspensions into the metaphysical that yielded a *Starry Night* are conditions needed for him to create illusions that are then adapted into 'something tangible',⁵⁸ or in other words, bear redemptive significance in the empirical world, but with the added understanding that such a transmutation between realms comes at a price. It is a touching admission from Theo that he understands that Vincent's gifts to humanity come at the cost of his mental health, which is deteriorating from his traversal between the temporal planes.

The act closes with a dispute between Theo and Gaby, one of the illusory metaphysical beings, which constitutes one of the most reality-defying exchanges thus far in the opera. It is a personified argument between the temporal realms, as they vie to pull Vincent to each polarity. Owing to Theo's advocacy for Vincent's return to the empirical, the tangibility of his own existence is given greater structural integrity than during his first introduction. Nevertheless, significant metaphysical imagery is on display here. When Theo asks Gaby who she is, she replies by stating: 'I am the one who was always facing him, but whom he could never reach . . . she whom he will always meet again and again.'⁵⁹ Theo replies: 'Or are you part of my dream? It's as though you spoke my own dreams.'⁶⁰ Then Gaby: 'A real unreal one. She whom he alone hears, and whom he alone sees.'⁶¹ This is a captivating exchange, and begs the question: If only Vincent can hear and see Gaby – the one who is real in her unreality – then how can Theo be speaking to her now? The audience is once again compelled to imagine that Theo can do so because he is an extension of Vincent's mind himself. Theo accuses Gaby of giving Vincent visions, which she disregards as immaterial, instead going into a poetic monologue on metaphysical virtues of light and so forth. Theo hijacks this explanation to tell Vincent that yes, this is all true as Gaby says, but tells him that there is 'no need for you to try to reach distant worlds; they all look out through your eyes already'.⁶² Theo is telling his brother that he can recreate the metaphysical without having to go there, and make himself a sacrificial martyr in the process 'like a man made insane under an insane sun'.⁶³ Theo invokes an image of the martyred Christ, when he

58 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 53.

59 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 54.

60 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 54.

61 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 54.

62 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 55.

63 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 55.

says: 'A man speared by rays, nailed to the sun. Is this your prophecy and sign? . . . to signal the end of the time that you are just beginning here.'⁶⁴ Theo's last words of Act I further invoke a palindromic image of circularity, implying that the end of these visions may constitute Vincent's next beginning, further suggesting his survival by revoking the metaphysical and remaining in the empirical as the form of his new beginning. However, Gaby has the last word of the act, speaking of the living quality of the world and the dream – another metaphor of the empirical and metaphysical – suggesting her own circularity of temporal timelessness where 'everything that once was, is alive. And everybody who once was, is alive.'⁶⁵ This closing section of the first act is the epitome of an Expressionist distortion of reality at its most dramatically confusing and metaphysically poignant. Vincent's temporal dilemma is presented to us with these two polarities that simultaneously pull at him.

Vincent Act II: empirical satire and self-referential allusions

The second act opens firmly ensconced in the empirical world. As such, we are immediately introduced to the newest incarnation of the empirical quartet: the critic, the professor, the artist, and the aesthete. They are gathered at an art exhibition of Vincent's paintings. Their banter is ludicrous, superficial, and misguided – displaying the subtle artifice of empirical judgement made upon metaphysical art. Rautavaara includes such topics in their discussion as 'class struggle', Maoism, Hegelianism, and toothed vaginas.⁶⁶ The dramaturgy of this ridiculousness is mirrored in the rantings of Berg's own empirical characters, who display equally narcissistic tendencies of self-assurance that are pretences for social jockeying, but are ultimately the product of vapid minds. None display this more than *Wozzeck's* doctor, who, in the grip of his delusion of grandeur, exclaims: 'Oh, my theory! My fame! I shall be immortal! Immortal! Immortal! (at the height of ecstasy).'⁶⁷ Rautavaara, likewise, parodies the empirical with aplomb. The primary outcome of the exhibition is that Vincent's work is derided as ugly and worthless. Interestingly, the character Maria, who originated from Vincent's past, breaks the fourth wall and laments indirectly to the audience by telling Vincent that she does not belong in his play in the capacity of her inclusion, wishing instead for a more diminished role to reflect her modest connection to Vincent in historical reality.⁶⁸ This is the second time that the audience of this opera has been pulled into the narrative, reminding us that we are still emplaced in it as we were in the first act. As such, Rautavaara reasserts our own presence in both temporal planes: the metaphysical illusion of the opening act, and now in its empirical antithesis. Like Berg, in another example of symmetry between the two composers, Rautavaara wishes the audience to remain engaged and invested in whatever path the narrative takes.

64 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 55–6.

65 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 56.

66 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 57–58.

67 Berg, *Wozzeck Libretto*, 7.

68 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 62.

Vincent attempts to defend the integrity of his art, but Maria keeps the pace of her derision, saying: 'Look at the truth for once: your God and the poor, and art and the people, they are only a mirror of you! Your own mirror image! Look into the mirror!'⁶⁹ This is another key allusion to palindromic mirror designs that were so central in Berg's operas, which Rautavaara renders personal. There is a palpable theory that Vincent bore autobiographical reflections of Rautavaara, which is again what Berg famously did as well: presenting his opera's title character (Wozzeck in the case of that opera, Alwa in the case of *Lulu*), as narrative doppelgängers of himself. Indeed, Kauppala concurs, stating that 'Mahler, Berg, and Rautavaara . . . are all male composers creating musical identities by writing thematic music.'⁷⁰ Elsewhere, she quotes a line from the *Vincent* libretto (Vincent's text), and states that it is a 'self-citation'⁷¹ by Rautavaara in his opera. In the opera, Maria already broke the fourth wall to voice her qualms to the onlookers in the audience's reality, and now she essentially speaks to Rautavaara himself through Vincent, from the perspective of the 'self-citation', by invoking the powerful imagery of the mirror. Berg spoke to himself in similar ways, but only through his doppelgängers and not from other characters that are aware of the temporally traversing characteristics of the composer. This may be a tenuous claim in *Vincent*, but it is an undeniable feature of *Lulu* when Alwa states that as a composer, he could write an opera about Lulu⁷² while the orchestra plays the opening from *Wozzeck*, denoting that such an undertaking has already been made in reality by Berg himself. We encounter a tenet of Sarah Tracy's concept of narrative analysis here regarding an analysis of plot and audience, where Berg clearly employed the recognizable opening of *Wozzeck* in *Lulu* as a veiled reference to the audience to instil in them a feeling of *déjà vu*. Rautavaara's knowledge of Berg should not preclude the overlap of such a subtle dramatic ploy (in terms of Rautavaara hypothetically speaking to himself through a character), and the notion of such a shared relationship when instigating the powerful and telling image of mirror forms.

As far as his views on *Vincent* are concerned, Rautavaara shared some formative, personal experiences that extend this notion of the narrative doppelgänger. In his autobiography, he wrote how at a certain point in his life, he felt an inner turmoil that was almost hallucinatory in nature in regard to visions, voices, and other perceptions that became skewed and altered. Years later, when he was writing the libretto to *Vincent*, Rautavaara drew upon these past experiences to imbue Vincent with Rautavaara's own past 'neuroses', quoting lines from the libretto where Vincent expresses instability in his perception of voices, colours, and sounds.⁷³ This is an absolutely essential admission, because Rautavaara is acknowledging having experienced what he would dramatically portray as a temporal suspension that unmoored him from the empirical and gave him a glimpse into metaphysical unreality. As such, he imbued *Vincent* with direct autobiographical allusions, rendering his protagonist as his intended doppelgänger. Once again, this is precisely what Berg did when he crafted

69 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 64.

70 Siivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 190.

71 Siivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 241.

72 Berg, *Lulu Libretto*, 35.

73 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 88.

Wozzeck in his own image. Indeed, in a letter to his wife dated 7 August 1918, Berg described his emotional and existential kinship with Wozzeck during his (Berg's) ordeals in World War I: 'There is a bit of me in his character, since I have been spending these war years just as dependent on people I hate, have been in chains, sick, captive, resigned, in fact humiliated.'⁷⁴ Rautavaara further echoed these self-referential acknowledgements in his article on *Vincent*: 'In everything, the neural imprint of intimacy, identification, and personal message runs through the author's theme and parallels with the author – both the author and the composer. There are obvious similarities to earlier operas, such as *Gaby*, where there are noticeable features of the girl in *Thomas*, and more distantly, *Ira* from *Kaivos*.'⁷⁵

Returning to the second act of *Vincent*, this exchange with Maria infuriates Vincent, who smashes the mirror with his easel, and after some nonsensical dialogue from the empirical quartet, Vincent rhetorically asks: 'Who are you? This is a mirror!' Theo replies: 'Look at yourself, then; I must be at least your brother!' Vincent: 'And do I still have you, Theo!' Theo: 'Your brother is always near you.'⁷⁶ We are again brought to confusion regarding Theo's corporeality, but also Vincent's own question of self-identity when the mirror obscures this for him. This strengthens the hypothesis that Vincent's rhetorical question could have actually been made to Rautavaara himself. Vincent begins to unravel, stating: 'If you are a mirror image, tell me whose! Who am I? For I am beginning to fear that I don't see myself.'⁷⁷ We are again exposed to a brilliant display of distorted reality that obfuscates Vincent's temporal emplacement to him. Paul, a mysterious new character in *Vincent*'s second act, and of dubious origin,⁷⁸ tells the troubled Vincent: 'You will become transparent, so that you see the world through yourself, you transparent maker of visions. – So that you don't see your world any longer, but the world looks at itself through you.'⁷⁹ This reflects Theo's earlier statement to Vincent that his paintings are doorways to the metaphysical realm for those who behold his artwork. This imagery motivates Vincent to start thinking about the metaphysical realm again, and he resumes his sermonizing with Wozzeck-like incoherence that ensues when he is experiencing a temporal suspension. Theo becomes concerned that his brother is losing his tether to the empirical as Vincent begins to comment on visions of unreality that again stand before him. He speaks of 'spiraling movement', which Theo and Paul equate to an 'eternal revolving'.⁸⁰ These are references to palindromic structures and temporal repeats, alluding to the opera's central theme of things returning to their beginning.

74 Bernard Grun, ed., *Alban Berg: Letters to His Wife* (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 229.

75 Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas', 128.

76 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 66–7.

77 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 67.

78 Barbara Hong suggests that this character is meant to be a representation of Paul Gauguin. See Hong, *Rautavaara's Journey in Music*, 87. Rautavaara confirms that 'Paul is a fictitious Gauguin.' See Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas', 125.

79 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 67.

80 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 69.

Paul attempts to calm Vincent's growing agitation by suggesting that they go find themselves some women who are ideally 'mirror images of each other'.⁸¹ Rautavaara is really pushing this concept of mirrors now, and mirror images of each other may further allude to Vincent and Theo being that, or also Vincent and Rautavaara. Paul's comment was expressed in a somewhat flippant way, but the subtext and significance of invoking mirror images of people is simply too symbolic to not assume that there is something more temporally relevant there. In the next instance, the empirical quartet of caricatures return to the fold, bringing ridiculous levity with them, where the aesthete sits down at an out-of-tune piano, which plays diegetic music, precisely of the like and musical quality of the diegetic piano in the tavern scenes of *Wozzeck*. Irony abounds when a member of the quartet, the Professor, begins another inane expression with the words: 'It has been proved empirically',⁸² which perfectly encapsulates, within the narrative itself, the mocking parody that represents this temporal plane.

Paul's attempts to calm Vincent do not work, so Theo tries to do likewise by again reminding his brother that he has created metaphysical wonders of that other realm of light, but that now, the key for Vincent is to stay in the world of reality and paint in this realm. Vincent is not convinced and proceeds to paint a door on the wall as a doorway back to non-reality. And as he does so, he begins to hear the metaphysical voices again. As another foreshadowing of his pending self-mutilation, Vincent utters that he paints with 'colors given to us through the ears!'⁸³ Once he finishes painting the doorway to the metaphysical, Gaby and other non-real beings step through. They all begin to wax metaphysical in a textual cacophony of surreal imagery. The metaphysical chorus chimes in, alluding to circularity and repetition in the spoken image of death and rebirth following a sacrifice that will make it so. The chorus is juxtaposing the two temporal planes with further dichotomies of darkness yielding to light, mentioning the need for a sacrifice again. The empirical quartet interjects, attempting to disqualify these invocations as the 'mythologisation [*sic*] of reality',⁸⁴ as they philosophically and temporally duel with the chorus. Rautavaara next writes in the stage direction that the ecstasy of the atmosphere is rising, with the chorus pushing more and more for their sacrifice. Vincent is seduced by it all, and at that moment, cuts off his ear, but no one he presents it to wishes to accept the offer of his sacrifice. Everyone – being of both empirical and metaphysical emplacements alike – turn on Vincent and unanimously attack him, which triggers the onslaught of darkness upon Vincent. He has lost the light of the metaphysical, and the second act concludes with his horrified realization of confining darkness.

***Vincent* Act III: a return to the metaphysical realm?**

The third and final act of *Vincent* is called an epilogue. It is a curious choice, and suggests that the narrative proper is confined to the first two acts, with this final act as a commentary on

81 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 70.

82 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 73.

83 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 78.

84 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 81.

what preceded it. If the form can be looked upon in that way, then *Vincent* has a narrative model of a two-part story that can be construed as a rise and fall scenario. If this were the case, it would narratively conform to Berg's second opera *Lulu*, which is in three acts, but is bisected evenly as a rise and a fall that are each comprised of one and a half acts. Indeed, as the first act of *Vincent* is a metaphysical treatise, and the second is a somewhat violent and dramatic return to empiricism, the bulk of the story has already been told.

The third act opens with the chorus singing the exact same text that opened Act I. It is the same metaphysical imagery that conflates notions of 'real', 'supernatural', and 'oceans of dreams'.⁸⁵ Rautavaara is enacting a mirror form – a palindromic textual recapitulation of the first act, which implies both circularity and repetition. It at once instils an awareness that the metaphysical realm has not fully absconded from the narrative, and that it will bear some significance in the epilogue. Vincent enters as once again being confined to the mental institution, proudly exclaiming the completion of his newest painting: 'It is finished. There could be nothing more complete than the world just born! Not yet worn down, dried in the sun, drowned in water.'⁸⁶ As we know, Vincent's paintings originate from his temporal suspensions in the metaphysical, but they are created in the world, as he said – in the empirical – where the metaphysical realm is observed. For that reason, as a newborn vestige of the unreal, the latest painting has not yet been corrupted or diminished, as is implied, but is virtuous at the inception of its creation. Vincent's use of drowning as a metaphor of the empirical is a powerful choice, as this is how *Wozzeck* died when he was at last struck down by the torments of the world.

Vincent offers his painting to the doctor, who, as an empirical being of no metaphysical proportions whatsoever, rejects the gift, as do two of the other empirical oppressors. It is only the chaplain who accepts it, but not as an expressive work to be cherished, but in the hope that he can sell it for a profit. After the others leave, Vincent is left alone to sing his final monologue of the opera. In it, he laments about the injustice imposed upon him and the hatred and indifference with which his work is received. He is condemning the empirical world for its lack of vision, which is precisely what he feels he has been granted to create his works of art. He describes his own vision as a 'revelation'⁸⁷ that is bathed in the light of the metaphysical. The chorus suddenly reappears, confirming this vision of the sun, and Vincent sings the final lines of the opera: 'The day of the sun! And he who dies today shall never disappear, but will join those who once had the courage to go on and live! To go on and live! To live!'⁸⁸ This final expression is at once a defiant admission of resolve, and indicative of metaphysical assurance that transcendence is attainable for those who have faith to live. By this, he seemingly means to live as he does: as a person with each foot within a different temporal realm, reconciling them both through his work, which is his essence of life. Vincent is once again listening to the voices from the first act, thus closing the temporal circle of the

85 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 85.

86 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 85.

87 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 87.

88 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 88.

opera and invoking a repetition, of sorts, by saying that it is 'to go on'. There is a symmetrical implication here with the ending of *Wozzeck* and that opera's palindromic circling back to the beginning. However, another interpretation of these cryptic final words could suggest that Vincent is announcing his own empirical death on that day and subsequent transfiguration to the metaphysical realm. The lack of comprehensive finality certainly adds to the possibility that something more could follow. This dubiousness relates to a key element of Sarah Tracy's notion of narrative analysis that refers to told and untold stories, where the ending of *Vincent* reflects an untold story that is left out by the author (composer) in order to motivate the listener to formulate their own inherent conclusions for themselves in the wake of vague plot resolutions.

Indeed, Misha Donat suggests that *Wozzeck*'s final D minor interlude is a veritable overture to the final scene, thus closing the temporal circle and triggering the narrative repeat,⁸⁹ which links up, as Berg says,⁹⁰ to the beginning of the opera. If there is any similarity to this in *Vincent*, then one could posit the final act's orchestral prelude, titled 'The Church of Auvers', as the overture to the second cycle. Certainly, the interlude in question in *Wozzeck* also feels like an epilogue where the composer, as George Perle suggests, is externally passing judgement from outside the narrative on the story that ends with *Wozzeck*'s death.⁹¹ The final scene with *Wozzeck* and Marie's orphaned son is a new beginning, just as the return of the chorus and Vincent's invigorating call to go on and live, feels like a beginning rather than an ending. Or in the case of both operas, the continuation of what has already happened.

Despite similarities in narrative and design, *Wozzeck* is ostensibly a tragedy and *Vincent* is a drama, because in spite of their shared projections of the temporal planes and treatment of the title character in either realm, Berg denies *Wozzeck* any semblance of hope or catharsis, and indeed, kills him and passes on his enslavement to his son like a curse. Although Rautavaara does not free Vincent in any direct way, by bringing the metaphysical chorus back and giving Vincent an air of triumph in his final text, there is a distinct feeling of resolution, even if it is seemingly irrational and unreal. Yet, even with this resolution in place, the strong pull towards palindromic repetition is also evident, instilling a suspicion of apprehension that the empirical bondage that is always present will gain prominence once again to quell the ideality of Vincent's metaphysical inclinations. The circularity of this interplay becomes even more apparent then, and one wonders if, in the long run, this sequence of continuity will not be seen as tragic due to the near-certain phenomenon that the tenets of empiricism are too great for metaphysical idealizations to circumvent, and like *Wozzeck*'s reality, are the inevitability of a subjugating force that does not function to redeem but to compel to obey.

Conclusion

This study has sought to present a new analysis of Rautavaara's opera *Vincent* by delineating similarities between the libretto of his opera and that of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*. The symbolic

89 Misha Donat, 'Mathematical Mysticism', *The Listener*, 2 April 1970, 458.

90 This point by Berg will be addressed in the conclusion.

91 George Perle, *The Operas of Alban Berg*, vol.1: *Wozzeck* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 88–9.

and narrative similarities of these two opera libretti were analysed through the lens of metaphysical temporality, with special attention to the dichotomization of the two temporal planes of the empirical world and the metaphysical realm. The function of this investigation, in part, was to demonstrate how Berg's inherent influence on Rautavaara's earlier instrumental works also extends to the genre of opera, with *Vincent* as a significant case in point. As such, this study's main research question was: What are the key metaphysical characteristics of *Vincent's* libretto, and how do they mirror analogous traits in *Wozzeck's* libretto? Examples from the libretti were identified that showed how the protagonists of both operas grapple with representations of the real and the unreal, often in ways that reflect their own inner turmoil surrounding their tenuous temporal emplacement. This focus on inner states was further expounded through expressions of autobiographic projections in the form of narrative doppelgängers that both composers employed, where circular methods of implied repetition were also evident from suggestions that both narratives could plausibly go on after their endings. Conclusions can now be drawn to convey the scope of similarity between *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* when interpreting these two operas through their composers' shared implementation of metaphysical temporality in the libretti of their respective operas.

Once more, Rautavaara's formative musical education and early serialist style featured profound associations with Berg. This yielded metaphoric dividends when Rautavaara composed *Vincent* with clear connections to *Wozzeck*, which featured palindromic, circular forms and self-referential allusions using characters rendered in both composers' own images. When viewing *Vincent* through such distinct parallels, one can come to see how the opera is indebted to a specific dramaturgical lineage. Indeed, by virtue of these features, and also its focus on a historical artistic figure of international stature in Vincent van Gogh, *Vincent* should be viewed as a Finnish-language opera that bears no national distinctions other than the language, which is also a stretch, as Rautavaara wrote the libretto simultaneously in Finnish and German.⁹² These wider contexts of applicability that the present study brought to light will hopefully allow *Vincent* to be regarded as a dramatic opera of international significance and not solely as a 'Finnish opera'. However, it is also useful to briefly contextualize *Vincent* within Rautavaara's operatic output to draw meaningful parallels that demonstrate how *Vincent* displays archetypal characteristics of Rautavaara's symbolic style in this compositional genre. Anne Kauppala again provides a cogent framework for such a comparison, describing Rautavaara's protagonists as characters of unique dispositions who diverge from established paradigms of sociocultural practices. The phenomenon of creating explicit outcasts further facilitates the creation of different modes of reality, where several Rautavaara operas manipulate the temporal perception of emplacement to drive their narratives.⁹³ Kauppala quotes Rautavaara, who called these temporal traversals 'projections',⁹⁴ which is related to my expression of temporal suspensions that take the character out of the narrative's linear time to place them into the metaphysical realm of timelessness. These

92 Hong, *Rautavaara's Journey in Music*, 131.

93 Anne Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, 'Einojuhani Rautavaara as Opera Composer', *Finnish Music Quarterly* 3 (1993), 41–2.

94 Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, 'Einojuhani Rautavaara as Opera Composer', 42.

broad reflections unite Rautavaara and Berg in their shared treatment of Expressionistic idioms in their narratives that perpetuate drama through representations of existential conflict and manifestations of real vs. unreal articulations. The result of such powerful figurative structures renders works such as *Vincent* and *Wozzeck* highly personal, to the extent that their composers saw themselves in their main characters and implanted depictions of their own real essences to drive the humanity of their plots beyond mere storytelling.

To develop the dramatic kinship between Berg and Rautavaara even further, it is interesting to note that Berg harboured his own ambitions of composing a *Vincent* opera. In the aftermath of *Wozzeck*, when Berg was thinking about composing a new opera, an early idea was to focus on the heated friendship between Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, which was to act as a metaphorical projection of Berg's own tumultuous relationship with Arnold Schoenberg.⁹⁵ Berg went as far as to write a few cursory notes on how he would create a libretto for an envisioned *Vincent* opera. The plan for this opera was for it to be in two acts of two, three, or four scenes in either act, with a total of six scenes for the whole opera. There was to be an orchestral interlude between the acts, with the second act serving as a retrograde of the first.⁹⁶ Berg's *Vincent* was to be the second opera of an imagined trilogy, which would start with *Wozzeck* and end with an opera about Mozart called *Wolfgang*. The trilogy was to form a developmental arc where *Wozzeck*'s role as a 'servant' would evolve to the strained 'friendship' between van Gogh/Gauguin (Berg/Schoenberg), and end with the single-act *Wolfgang*, which would culminate in what Berg expressed as 'master'.⁹⁷ Berg had become acquainted with Hermann Kasack's play *Vincent*, which appeared as a favourable text for his opera. He wrote the following to Kasack: 'After completing my opera *Wozzeck* – for several years, that is – I have planned to compose an opera "Vincent", to deal musically not only with the fate of this artist, who for decades has been closest to me, but also (even more) to capture *the drama* of an artistic friendship in general.'⁹⁸ Berg ultimately did not pursue his plans for either a *Vincent* or *Wolfgang* opera, but the breadth of his interest, planning, and overall conception can in some ways be seen as having been fulfilled in Rautavaara's *Vincent*, knowing how dramatically similar both composers are, especially in light of the results of this study's comparison of *Wozzeck* and *Vincent*.

In the previous section, I suggested that the nebulous ending of *Vincent* could invite the opportunity of something more to follow. Although the purpose of this study has been textual rather than musical, a possible clue to this question of continuity after the opera's end could be in the music. In his famous lecture on *Wozzeck*, Berg wrote how the ending and beginning of the opera can easily be circularly conjoined: 'Although it [*Wozzeck*'s ending] clearly cadences on the final chord, it creates the feeling that it could keep going. In fact, it does keep going! The first measures of the opera might well link up harmonically with these final measures without further ado, thus closing the circle. Here is the end of the opera,

95 Bryan Simms and Charlotte Erwin, *The Master Musicians: Berg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 317.

96 Simms and Erwin, *The Master Musicians*, 318.

97 Simms and Erwin, *The Master Musicians*.

98 Simms and Erwin, *The Master Musicians*, 319.

then the beginning.⁹⁹ Remembering Rautavaara's consummate knowledge of Berg from his studies with Wladimir Vogel, it is plausible to interpret a *Wozzeck*-derived ending of *Vincent* where Rautavaara created a musical synthesis of palindromic circularity between the ending and the beginning. The nexus of this theory is string tremolos. The very opening of the opera begins with *sul ponticello*¹⁰⁰ playing in the low strings (celli), whereas the opera ends with regular tremolos in the violins.¹⁰¹ And just like Berg's palindromes are never verbatim repetitions, these two sets of tremolos at the poles of *Vincent* are different in articulation and register, but are both still quiet, distinct, and ethereal in nature. What is more, they display palpable cohesion and could link up in the manner than Berg described in *Wozzeck*. From a textual perspective, there is also a relationship in the libretti where in Act II scene 4 in *Wozzeck*, the implication of endless circles is expressed when Wozzeck, Marie, and the Drum Major all separately chant 'on we go!',¹⁰² which is paralleled, in a way, with Vincent's last string of words, which include 'to go on',¹⁰³ and are also repetitive. The *Wozzeck* text may not have come at the very end, but the suggestion is motivic. However, a further strong textual insinuation of these notions can be gleaned from text sung by the metaphysical chorus towards the end of Act II in *Vincent*, which suggestively invokes circular continuity when it states: 'the end and the rebirth'.¹⁰⁴ Kauppala concurs with this relationship of shared circularity between both composers when she writes: 'Rautavaara and Berg, from seeking to create the illusion of reversible time, [produce] the possibility of returning to the past. In such cases the musical discourse tries to deny its own presence by referring to another musical time and space which never can be authentically reached.'¹⁰⁵ Rautavaara himself discussed his preoccupation with non-linear temporality in his opera, stating that 'the most important material of the drama is time', 'the structuring of the drama is done, for example, by stopping the three episodes "out of time".'¹⁰⁶

Following the inferred symbols taken from the *Vincent* libretto and juxtaposed with overlapping imagery found in Berg's operatic narratives, it is meaningful now to return to some of Rautavaara's own reflections on his opera that are reminiscent of Berg. In his autobiography, Rautavaara reflects on how the 'claustrophobia of childhood dreams and the dreams of one's own invisibility'¹⁰⁷ reminded him of Berg's music. This reflection is paramount because a few lines later, he writes that it was not until the 1980s, when he was writing his libretti to *Thomas* and *Vincent*, that he felt he had found something of himself that he had

99 Alban Berg, 'Lecture on *Wozzeck*: The "Atonal Opera"', in *Pro Mundo – Pro Domo: The Writings of Alban Berg*, ed. Bryan R. Simms (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 232.

100 A bowing technique where the bow plays near or over the bridge to create a unique tone that can be described as nasal, glassy, or metallic in quality.

101 Cf. the recording of *Vincent* on Ondine.

102 Berg, *Wozzeck Libretto*, 14.

103 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 88.

104 Rautavaara, 'Vincent Libretto', 81.

105 Sivuoja-Gunaratnam, *Narrating with Twelve Tones*, 235.

106 Rautavaara, 'Vincentius Inter Disciplinas', 127. The three episodes he spoke of are: the duet between Theo and Gaby; the trio between Theo, Vincent, and Paul; and Vincent's final monologue.

107 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 121.

lost in the 1950s.¹⁰⁸ We know that Rautavaara had first come into contact with Berg in the 1950s, and that this inspired him to compose such works as the Second String Quartet and Third Symphony. It is telling that he relates the writing of the *Vincent* text to the decade in which he not only felt such visceral things, but also metaphorically equated them to the sound of Berg's music. These are powerful associative cues that demonstrate how acutely Rautavaara thought his psyche was tied to impulses that were clearly associated with Berg, and then channelled into his work on *Vincent*. His reflection here also emphasizes even further his grappling with this study's central dichotomy, as he spoke of dreams and invisibility that are indicative of real vs. imagined symbols. Indeed, Rautavaara is illuminating how the character of Vincent is dramatically connected to his own earlier mental experiences. Furthermore, Rautavaara's personal reflection are reminiscent of Sarah Tracy's idea of narrative formation, where it becomes clear that the blurring of reality and the imaginary is a vehicle of personal and artistic expression for both Rautavaara and Berg. The layered narratives must be analytically untangled, but also recognized as linchpins for emplacing the composers in their operas. This methodological tool and system of understanding facilitates the ability to comprehend not only symbolic meaning, but also each composer's motivation in crafting characters and stories that are anything but straightforward or developing linearly or logically.

Towards the end of his autobiography, Rautavaara goes into a detailed explanation of *Vincent* with analyses presented on the music, his source materials, and various other ideas. For the interest of this study, it is important to address how Rautavaara viewed his character as someone who 'embodied most of the qualities I had felt to be necessary in an artist. He was naïve and crude, an unrestrained idealist'.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, 'in all these roles, in this imaginary life, he finishes the work, paints a new world; a new way of seeing the world'.¹¹⁰ Likewise, he states, 'the text gave birth to the music and, as always in my operas, also the opposite musical solutions'.¹¹¹ Rautavaara's overall autobiographic reflections underscore a deep symbiosis between experience, thought, and artistic expression. His insights portray a profound personal unity between himself and *Vincent*, and he arguably drew much inspiration for how to dramatically synthesize all of these parts from his knowledge of *Wozzeck*. It is perhaps fitting then that the composer chose to end his autobiography by quoting the final lines of *Vincent*, aptly calling them an apotheosis.¹¹²

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108 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 121.

109 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 331.

110 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 332.

111 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 334.

112 Rautavaara, *Omakuva*, 348.

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