Symphonic strings, operatic vocals and classical virtuosity. Examining the classical in progressive metal – music, discourse, and diversity

By
Aleksandar Golovin

Acknowledgements

Back in my secondary school days, I recall meeting with a friend in a coffee place near my parents' home. As part of the discussion, I mentioned that despite our Western art music focused education, I was interested in popular music bands from the fields of rock, jazz, metal etc., and that, frustrated with the limited number of books on the subject, I wanted to write a book about popular music. I am recalling this event not to stroke my ego or to signal a deeply-rooted motivation that led to this study, as time, adulthood, and life experiences certainly brought a fair amount of jadedness that precludes such narratives. Rather, in addition to wishing time machines were a thing, so that I can travel back to said moment and 'slap some sense' into my younger self and get across what writing a book *actually* entails, I want to acknowledge that overcoming these very real challenges would not be possible without the tremendous help of several people, to whom I want to offer my deepest gratitude.

First and foremost, I want to thank my supervisor Florian Heesch for his continuous support to my work from the constructive feedback, through the many discussions, to unwavering optimism and belief that this research will come to fruition, even if I was not the quickest in putting the advice to practice. I also want to extend special thanks to Michael Rappe who, in conjunction with Florian, organises the Research-Forum Popular Music, as well as to all participating colleagues (current and former) whose open-minded contributions, feedback and overall, incredibly supportive environment, were of tremendous help to this study. It remains an absolute privilege to participate in these meetings, and to know that, any time I participate, I am far from the 'smartest person in the room', if such a claim could ever be made. I am also indebted to my colleagues and close friends Laura Fleischer and Reinhard Kopanski, for instilling a productive and fun working environment in our shared years working together, as well as for the weekly talks, laughs and 'fist-waiving' at the world's injustices. Oh, and how can I forget the many 'quality cinema' experiences; fret not, I will pass on some of the eventual therapy costs! Special thanks are also in order to my 'friend-a-town-away', Zhivka Panayotova, who provided both a supportive ear in sharing laughs and disappointments, and who kept me 'in check' by reminding me of the language, culture and particularity of our shared home country. Last but not least, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my entire family who has long supported my pursuit of music and research, even though this means living half-a-continent away.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. General Introduction

A fairly enduring concept in Western culture since arguably the Enlightenment period is the existence of a division and fundamental difference between objects or concepts understood as 'classical' and those in the 'popular' category, a contrast that can still be detected in discussions on music, art or architecture as well as in the differing audiences that engage with each artistic realm. Whilst such division undoubtedly still exist to some extent in contemporary culture and society, enacted and maintained through artistic or educational institutions,[1] there are few clear lines indicating where 'popular' ends, and 'classical' begins. In fact, many phenomena exist in what can be described as 'grey zones' of overlapping aesthetic ideas and cultural processes between the two concepts.

The realm of popular music is by no means an outlier to this principle as its history is littered with numerous examples of songs, albums, performers, or even entire genres and musical traditions that have engaged with a variety of auditive, visual, or generally referential transgressive behaviours. From jazzmen such as Miles Davis recording their interpretations of Western art music concertos e.g. "Concerto de Aranjuez" from *Sketches from Spain* (Miles Davis 1997), or Duke Ellington's recontextualization of genres associated with Western art music to jazz contexts e.g., the "Creole Rhapsody Parts 1 and 2"[2] (Duke Ellington 1996),[3] to the catalogue of the Canadian rapper Maestro

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[1] The division between classical (i.e., Western art music) and popular music relates to the emergence of a series of musical canons between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century (Weber 2001 [1999]; Cook 2000 [1998]), an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm quoted in Walser 1993, 60) still maintained due to the repertoire's supposed universality or timelessness and via the perception of stability it shares with the institutions that espouse it (Parakilas 1984). Beyond reframing genres such as opera that had a fairly strong popular tendencies at the time, yet are now viewed as part of the classical realm (e.g. Zelechow 1993; Charosh 1992), the canon's cultural segregation resulted in new notions of aesthetic value as well as the positioning of Western art contexts as representing the 'centre' of culture; though the emergence of a canon and associated value-ascription processes in genres such as rock (C. W. Jones 2008), should also not be ignored as a quasi-perpetuation of such ideas. The claims of Western art music's 'superiority' remain to this day whether from a formalist perspective (J. O. Young 2016), thorough arguments of contemporary relevance and distinct aesthetic value (J. Johnson 2002), or via highly debatable viewpoints of popular music as mere 'mass culture'-targeted consumable, defined by its gaudy and sex-focused contents (Mahnkopf 2016). However, such perspectives do not go unchallenged (e.g. J. Becker 1986; R. P. Locke 2012), and efforts in decentering music from new musicology, gender-, post-colonial or cultural studies etc. help to re-examine the historical 'othering' of various musical and cultural traditions within Western art music (e.g. Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Clayton, Herbert, and Middleton 2003). The malleability of the divide's borders becomes visible, for example, in the debates surrounding the changing perception of jazz as form of 'American classical music' (Davis 1997; W. Taylor 1986; L. Thomas 1995); in jazz rap's framing as a form of high art in hip-hop contexts (J. A. Williams 2010); or the scholarly debates whether rock and Western art music should be analysed with the same tools or parameters (e.g. Baugh 1993; J. O. Young 1995; S. Davies 1999) with some discussing artists as moving between both (e.g. Bernard 2008). Others have commented on Western art music's integration in various popular culture contexts e.g. its 'contextless' use in the diverse and pluralist disco genre that retains and ironizes its elitist and universalist claims (McLeod 2006); its "imagineered" status as a quasi-educational tool, yet underpinned with questionable ideological perspectives about society, in the medium of animated film (Clague 2004); or re-popularised in an Afro-futurist cultural project as one of the first well-known digital samples, whilst surrounded by a melody commenting on Western art culture's contemporary decline (Fink 2005).

[2] I am referring here to a version that truncates Ellington's piece into a single track, rather than earlier releases which include "Creole Rhapsody" as two separate tracks (see Duke Ellington and His Orchestra 1989).

[3] The term third stream, as per Gunther Schuller, is worth briefly mentioning here as a similar, yet quite distinct, principle in which techniques and characteristics from both Western art music and jazz are combined (see Schuller and Greenland 2013; see also, Joyner 2000).

Fresh-Wes whose visual and auditive output attempts to re-claim the cultural power behind high culture institutions e.g. his albums *Symphony in Effect*, (Maestro Fresh-Wes 1989), or *Orchestrated Noise*, (Maestro Fresh-Wes 2013). From Freddie Mercury recording his second solo album *Barcelona* together with the operatic soprano Monserrat Caballé (Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballé 1992) – or any of the works of The Three Tenors if the opposite direction of the overlap is to be discussed – to film music composers such as Michael Kamen writing a concerto for the blues guitarist Eric Clapton that, whilst performed live and preserved via unofficial releases, were regrettably not recorded in the former's lifetime e.g. *First Orchestra Night* in 1990 (Eric Clapton 1990) or *Eric Clapton and The National Philharmonic Orchestra Conducted by Michael Kamen* from 1993 (Eric Clapton 1993).[4] From Deep Purple's *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* (Deep Purple and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 1970b) that in the late 1960s served as an early example of rock musicians attempting to combine rock and Western art music; to *Karmaflow: The Rock Opera Video Game* (see Karmaflow 2015; also store.steampowered.com 2015), an interactive experience combining a myriad of female heavy metal growlers delivering what are effectively dramatic opera performances. The variety is quite impressive, and such a list does not even begin engaging with the ever-changing re-contextualisation of what should or should not (or maybe even 'can' or 'cannot') be viewed as classical or popular in nature.

At this point, I would fault no reader in asking a rather direct question such as 'Aha, and?' or even 'Why care about any of this?'. Whilst I cannot offer any worthwhile advice towards existential nihilism, one possible answer that may pique the interest of those placing inquiry, rather than dismissal, behind such hypothetical questions is the following: where there is a line, there will be those that choose to ignore it, cross it and, however briefly set up camp on the 'other' side. Without wishing to present, neither in this introduction nor in the main body of this book, a starry-eyed tale of daring musical adventurists whose careers charted new paths of musical expression and that abolished the cultural boundaries, paying attention to such border-crossing cultural artefacts can be beneficial in identifying where said lines are, and also that nothing unpleasant happens when they are crossed.

To illustrate what I mean, I would like to offer a perspective. I am a 'recovering' clarinettist and, as part of my Western art music-centric education from the late 1990s and until the early 2010s, I attended a fair number of concerts, at times as a visitor but more often as a member of the orchestra or a choir. These events included the repertoires of predominantly Italian operas, the symphonies of German/Austrian composers, or the piano concertos of Polish or Russian composers, yet I am certain that, despite leaving names out, most listeners generally familiar with Western art music can fill-in the gaps, and match most of my own experiences. Whilst there is nothing deeply problematic to the programmes of these concerts, I would venture a guess that the sheer notion of sharing performance spaces dedicated to Western art music with performers from the popular music category may have been viewed as unpleasant (to say the least) by some conservative voices. The world has certainly moved on by now, which can be supported by pointing out that, for some time, classical orchestras have engaged with various projects that combine rock and Western art music (e.g. see Wicke, K.-E. Ziegenrücker, and W. Ziegenrücker 2007a, 17; Custodis 2009, 61–156); have been performing

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[4] For a similar introductory overview of classical/popular transgressive performers, see Polkow (1992).

live-soundtrack renditions to the film-adaptations of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (see lordoftheringsinconcert.com n.d.); or have even dedicated entire evenings to music derived from video games (e.g. see videogameslive.com n.d.), yet the aforementioned boundaries are not entirely removed.[5] As positive of a progress these changes represent, we are a far cry from a culture-borderless utopia in which an upcoming evening concert at the local opera or concert hall aims to incorporate a series of performers utilising an symphonic orchestra to some degree of the overall ensemble: the romantic fantasy connotations of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* [Eng. Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun], would effortlessly transition to brief set of choir-and-orchestra infused metal tracks such as "Planets" and "Requiem" by the US heavy metal band Avenged Sevenfold (Avenged Sevenfold 2013), and will conclude with a few renditions of the melancholic jazz and classical orchestra-combining love songs found in the jazz output of Diana Krall e.g., "The Night We Called It a Day" or "Maybe You'll Be There" (Diana Krall 2001).

If this elaborate description is to (somewhat hyperbolically) suggest anything to the readers of this book is that the examination of performers that choose, even if for a song, to step beyond the boundaries of 'popular' and 'classical', can help understanding and undermining the division between the two fields within Western culture. A common aspect shared by each of the aforementioned performers is that, to my knowledge, they did not dedicate their entire careers towards cultural transgression. And yet, however small their contribution may have been, it added to a long-running process of challenging preconceptions as to the boundaries between 'popular' and 'classical' music, as well as the (supposedly) corresponding 'popular' or 'high' cultures.

It goes without saying that the concept of examining the large variety of transgressive cultural artefacts, events, or perspectives, that can be used as examples of this cultural 'grey-zone' is by no means a new concept. Scholarly work has produced a number of studies discussing such instances, and have showcased multiple popular music genres rife with transgressive examples that, in turn, have contributed to the continued erosion of the kinds of 'lines in the sand' that separate 'popular' from 'classical'. In my study I am interested in offering a small, yet I believe important, contribution to this line of thinking, by examining a music genre that, in my view, has remained mostly unexplored in relation to its transgressive potential, namely progressive metal.

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[5] In order to avoid the potential for some to (mis-)interpret the act of relating my own experiences in post-Communist Bulgaria as implying that said country, or the concert life of my own hometown of Varna, was somehow 'backwards' or 'insufficient' in comparison to Western cultures, I want to offer an additional perspective. During my involvement as a chorist in the Хор на Варненските Момчета и Младежи [Eng. Varna Boys and Youth Choir], directed by the late Проф. Марин Чонев [Eng. Prof. Marin Chonev] and Дарина Кроснева [Eng. Darina Krosneva] (see bnr.bg 2019), as well as a clarinettist in the Варненска Детско-Юношеска Опера [Eng. Varna's Children and Youth Opera] under the direction of Ганчо Ганчев [Eng. Gancho Ganchev] (see odk-varna.com n.d.), I was exposed to a variety of situations and/or repertoires in which the division between 'classical' and 'popular' was blurred. These include concerts with the former ensemble in which arrangements of Beatles' "Michelle" will share the same program with the classical and traditional folklore choir compositions by Добри Христов, one of Bulgaria's most renowned composers (see ubc-bg.com n.d.); or the latter's performances of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*. Similarly at the start of the last year of this study's development, I was able to attend a concert titled *Jazz Cats Symphony* (see visit.varna.bg 2021), in which the Bulgarian jazz player and composer Проф. Христо Йоцов [Eng. Prof. Hristo Yotsov] (see nma.bg n.d.) presented a concert consisting of new compositions and orchestral re-arrangements of some of his earlier jazz works.

Selecting progressive metal for this study may strike some as simultaneously an expected example, yet from a different perspective, as a rather odd choice. What I mean by this contrast is that, on the one hand, mentioning the genre likely evokes a series of typified conceptions about its lyrics, aesthetic and musicianship that are not immediately identifiable as relating to the realm of the 'classical'. As an example, a typical description of a progressive metal aesthetic may highlight aspects such as lyrics addressing the human condition or album artwork filled with abstract or contemplative imagery; the songs as fairly long and often incorporating tricky rhythmic patterns, played on seven-, eight- (or even eighteen-)[6] string guitars, walls of keyboard synthesisers providing additional long virtuosic solos; all of which played by (most often) multiple white performers (tattoos or long hair being optional accessories these days). Vocals seems to be a bit messier thing to summarise, with some delivering high-pitched 'wailing', others retaining a fairly 'normal' sung delivery, and growling also appears more often than one may assume, but that's beside the point.

On the other hand, however, progressive metal is often discussed as representing the crossing point between the aesthetics of two meta-genre precursors, heavy metal and progressive rock, a not-incorrect, yet oversimplified description of the genre's own aesthetic. What this summary fails to capture (or seemingly overlooks) is that both genres from which the progressive metal draws are historically known for their engagement with Western art music. Heavy metal bands such as Manowar singing the aria *Nessun Dorma* from Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot* (Manowar 2002), guitar virtuosos such as Tony MacAlpine including piano soloistic pieces such as Chopin's *Prelude 16 in Bb minor*, Op. 28 (Tony MacAlpine 1986), or lead singers such as Tarja Turunen having received traditional operatic training, which she utilised during her tenure in the symphonic metal band Nightwish (tarjaturunen.com n.d.; see also Hillier 2018; Weinstein 2016). On the progressive rock side, examples include Emerson, Lake and Palmer's reinterpretation of Mussorgsky's eponymous work in the album *Pictures at an Exhibition* (Emerson Lake and Palmer 1971), The Moody Blues' part-orchestral film music, part-beat rock album *Days of Future Passed* (The Moody Blues 1997), the folk-rock/rock-opera of Pesnyary's *Guslyar* (Песняры [Eng. Pesnyary], Игорь Лученок [Eng. Igor Luchenok] 1980; see also Näumann 2016b) or Renaissance's *Scheherazade and Other Stories* (Renaissance 1975). Based on this saturation, the question emerges whether aspects related to the classical such as orchestral segments, choir accompaniment, operatic vocal delivery and Western art music references, or artwork filled with marble statues, high ceilings and powdered wigs have relevance for the framing of progressive metal?

Before going any further, it is worth reflecting on a rather simple question: why choose to examine the classical in progressive metal? Surely, these characteristics must be reflective of those *neo-classical* metal or perhaps *symphonic* metal genres rather than *progressive* metal as, after all, the two aforementioned genres position Western art music as an important component to their entire output. As easy as it may be to view contemporary popular music genres as 'lines in the sand', I will

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[6] One of the modern outlooks towards progressive metal's typical use of guitars with more than six strings views such practices as excessive, and presents them in a dismissive/comedic fashion. An example of this is the YouTuber Jared Dines who commissioned and co-designed a custom eighteen-string guitar, which was then "topped" shortly after later by a fellow YouTuber and guitarist Steve Terreberry which were then put against one another in an over-the-top comedic performance (see Bienstock 2019; guitarworld.com 2019; Ormsby Guitars 2018).

argue that in actuality the boundaries and the elements used to set said boundaries are much subtler and require further discussion. To me, the impetus to opening such an inquiry stemmed from what I perceived as contrasting framings of progressive metal in academic contexts and the perspectives found in the communities surrounding the genre. Whilst the number of articles and book chapters has increased significantly since the early 2010s research on progressive metal is still a fairly small field, nestled (primarily) under the larger progressive rock scholarly work, with some notable contributions from the field of metal music studies as well, and has yet to produce contributions discussing the genre in a more encompassing manner, barring a few masters/PhD-level dissertations on individual artists. That said, research has seemingly positioned certain aspects of the aforementioned generalised description of progressive metal as its primary characteristics (e.g., rhythmic complexity), which whilst not incorrect have been generated by the investigation of a smaller selection of highly canonised artists. Moreover, progressive metal's classical 'inheritance' from both heavy metal or progressive rock is often acknowledged predominantly in its capacity as an intriguing, yet hardly vital, component that is often left unexplored or poorly explained. This struck me as a rather incomplete description as, even in my own limited knowledge of the genre before this research commenced, I was familiar with bands that engaged with classical aspects, be it (re-)recording their music with a symphonic orchestra, incorporating Baroque-esque elements in some of their songs or including Greco-Roman aesthetic in the album artwork, to name a few simple examples.

My own curiosity intensified when I began noticing both journalistic and audience-based perspectives that, despite progressive metal's lack of overt focus on such aspects, commented on classical components in progressive metal bands, and moreover in numbers implying that these perspectives were not produced by a small sub-set of audiences or publications. Similarly, whilst some literature has suggested that vocals in progressive music as a whole were of lessened importance overall, it was difficult to ignore how much emphasis audiences place on the singers and their role in the progressive metal genre overall. This had implications not only regarding the supposed focal point of progressive metal's aesthetic, but also as I will showcase later in this study towards the, in my view, more subdued movement and presentation of progressive metal performers.

Based on these observations, I was left with the impression that a gap exists in academic discussions on the genre, not to mention a need for a different perspective towards the genre's framing. Though also, they offered me a prerequisite for the relevance of exploring the classical's role in progressive metal based on cultural (i.e., audience) perspectives. As such, I elected to examine progressive metal not through the lens of its borderline stereotypical characteristics, or through the examination of highly canonised artists, but rather by examining less-discussed artists and the investigation the genre's 'grey-zone' classical aspects, exploring their role and significance towards framing the genre. Moreover, I wanted to approach the investigation not by simply drawing from audience perspectives for the purposes of my own arguments, but also in a way that continues supporting the agency of music audiences in academic contexts by prioritising their discourses towards how the genre can be framed and discussed. The goal of this study is therefore to open an academic inquiry into processes of meaning co-construction in relation to the role of the 'classical' within discourse towards the genre of progressive metal, through analytically examining evaluative

audience-generated writings on a selection of artists. Questions that I want to frame and hopefully offer some perspectives on are as follows:

- Do progressive metal performers engage with classical elements, and if so, which ones and how?
- What do audiences identify as the 'classical' in the genre, and how do they describe and discuss it?
- Is the 'classical' limited to transforming Western art music, or are other artistic venues such as art, architecture, literature etc. also involved?
- Do audiences only describe musical/aesthetic characteristics or can quasi-reflexive echoing of cultural and societal norms and understandings also be identified in the discourse?

These questions intend to frame the examination of the classical in progressive metal and will be guided by several core principles. I consider the discourses of the audiences as an invaluable resource that, if properly examined, can be of tremendous benefit to furthering the understanding of progressive metal. As such, I aim to position the perspectives of progressive metal's audiences at the core of this investigation by presenting a discursive analysis of their writings on the genre so as to determine whether aspects pertaining to the classical can be found when the genre-label of progressive metal is applied to a band or a performer. However, in order to avoid academic contexts to be perceived as inadvertently 'overriding' said audience perspectives, I will offer close-readings based music- and visual-interpretations as means of more accurately describing what the audience perspectives may imply, whereby I will be suggesting the ability to interpret potential deeper connections to Western art music/Western culture's historical contexts.

I will also attempt to address some of the challenges found in the current academic discourse on the genre by approaching the inquiries in a balanced manner. On the one hand, I am interested in contributing towards the discussion of overlooked or under-researched facets of the genre, that is to say not simply about the classical as a whole, but also as to how the concept's investigation may help to shed light on perspectives such as the dramatic delivery of a performer, approaches to arrangement, or whether progressive metal is still subject to de-authenticating discourses due to its classical aspects, as was the case for progressive rock in the 1970s. On the other hand, academic discourse on the genre strikes me as insufficiently reflecting on issues of canonisation, be it in relation to which performers are discussed, or the (in my view, infamous) 'compound' nature of the genre. As such, I aim to attempt addressing these issues by discussing artists that have not been (extensively) examined in academic writing, as well as attempt to counterbalance the prioritisation of progressive rock aesthetic elements or contexts at the expense of heavy metal counterparts when outlining the characteristics of the genre. With that in mind, my work is motivated not by a desire to establish a new definition for the genre, but to offer meaningful extension of the progressive metal academic conceptualisation through audience discourses and critical interpretations, and to do so in ways that are forward-directed, flexible and differentiated in manner.

Having said all this, this book has an additional goal that whilst still drawing from the classical, approaches the discussion in a different manner. As context, I want to evoke another mental image related to the progressive metal genre. When one says a 'progressive metal band', what band

members come to mind? And no, I am not inquiring as to whether the envisioned members have long hair or present thoughtful, rather than aggressive facial expression. Rather I am interested in more basic aspects such as their race and gender. I would venture a guess that, barring a few notable exceptions,[7] there is a good chance that most any band that comes to mind consists of white male performers.[8] I would actually go a step further, and point than my suggestion represents not a simple guess but rather refers to the images visible when one simply Googles the term 'progressive metal bands'. This is undoubtedly a somewhat murky metric, one that the 'technological overlords' at Google actively re-model and adapt to match the interests of those presenting the search query, however out of the dozen or so images that appear on my screen, most bands – whether Dream Theater, Opeth, Fates Warning, Tool, Pain of Salvation or Meshuggah – predominantly incorporate white male performers. Whilst the acknowledgment that an aspect of contemporary culture is centred around white males may strike some as a self-evident observation, it highlights a rather simple question: where are the female performers in the genre, and what roles do they play? Moreover, this question was motivated by the somewhat limited attention that academic, journalistic literature and audience discourses have presented towards issues of gender. That is to say, whilst some have pointed out female performers when they are identified in progressive metal bands, in general, historical outlines or canonical framings of the genre rarely mention bands with female members thus constituting somewhat of a 'blind spot' beyond the typified white male progressive metal player.

The outlined limitations of both the culture and its audiences' discourse can easily be transplanted to the discussion of most popular music genres (and to some degree the power relations in professional positions as part of the world of Western art music), however I was not content with simply acknowledging this as an issue, and moving on to 'more important' discussions handled in the rest of my work. Scholarly work such as by Susan McClary (1991) has showcased that Western art music is by no means 'above' aspects such as sexuality, which together with the availability of academic investigations on diversity related aspects such as gender, race, disability etc. in both the realm of heavy metal music studies and, to a lesser degree, progressive music scholarly work served as a point of departure for this study. Whilst I will not be able to address all aspects of diversity in this study, I can contribute to the continued need for academic perspectives to critically explore the roles of underrepresented pockets of performers within the genre, as well as reflect on the implications and

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[7] These include, but are not limited to, Tosin Abasi, the lead guitarist for the progressive metal/djent band Animals as Leaders; Tony MacAlpine, the multi-instrumentalist and central figure of the eponymous progressive metal band; Doug Pinnick, the lead singer and bass player for the American heavy metal/progressive rock-related band King's X; or Johanne James, drummer of the UK progressive metal band Threshold.

[8] Some scholarly work has argued that progressive metal incorporates a "substantial Asian and Hispanic participation (as both performers and fans)" (Pillsbury 2006, 98) though no examples of bands are provided supporting this claim. That said, it should be mentioned that the author does include the band Living Colour as an example of the term "thinking-man's metal" (Pillsbury 2006, 98), itself related to bands in the progressive metal, though this is not enough evidence to fully overturn the perspective of progressive metal as including predominantly white, male performers. To be clear, my scepticism should not be taken as denying the possibility of a large community of non-white and/or male performers but rather stems primarily from the perspective that, at the time of writing, the performers mentioned as serve as 'exceptions' to the progressive metal rule of typical performers are included in the metal-archives.com database as performers, yet their bands and corresponding discographies are not represented.

significance of their contributions. To do so, I elected to extend my research into progressive metal's relation to the classical by examining aspects pertaining to diversity. More specifically, in contrast to the more multi-artist, indirect and broad-context focus of the first half of this study, the diversity-focused latter half will provide an in-depth investigation focusing a single female performer so as to highlight the gender- and gender-bending potential in the progressive metal genre. As such, the main inquiry of this section will examine the output of the American violinist/guitarist The Great Kat as a representative of female progressive metal performers, and particularly the complex interplay between Western art music and feminist/queer-interpretable gender-bending practices.

The structure of this study consists of four large sections that are divided into a total of ten chapters, in addition to the general introduction and conclusion chapters of the work. The first section serves as an overview of the conceptual components underpinning the investigation of the audience's discourses. After an overview of literature on progressive metal and the pockets of information that engage with the classical, chapters four through six focus on the main theoretical concepts and methodological approaches that are utilised in the first results-focused segment of the study, as well as outline key-terms that will appear often throughout the work, such as the classical or utterance. The fourth and final chapter of this section will present the process of data sources and band corpus selection, by introducing the sources, their respective contexts, and the broad analytical steps undertaken for generating the conclusions presented in the next section.

The second large section includes three extensive chapters constituting the primary discourse analysis of the work. Each chapter (seven through nine) presents an in-depth discourse analysis of album reviews by progressive metal audiences, focusing on one of three 'classical'-relevant terms as used by the progressive metal community. These chapters include multiple sub-sections in which the different meanings employed by the genre's listeners are outlined together with interpretative close readings contextualising cultural artefacts and the performance/aesthetic practices that can be identified, followed by their potential connection to contexts such as Western art music, art-studies, architecture etc.

The third and final section will present the second main inquiry of this book, namely diversity aspects within progressive metal genre, and more specifically gender aspects. The emphasis on one performer necessitates structuring the chapters in a manner mirroring that of this book's opening. First, after a brief introduction on gender aspects in the genre, the main subject of investigation – The Great Kat – will be introduced, first through a series of justifications for selection, followed by a brief outline of her biography and concluding with a literature overview of available academic literature. After an overview of the main theoretical, conceptual and methodological principles employed in the examination of cultural artefacts, I will provide three interpretative close readings through which the performer's complex engagement with Western art music and gender components can be presented.

The conclusion chapter will summarise the research, offering an interconnected look into the significance of the interpretations presented in this work, including the role of audiences, their discourses and the gender elements. Also, I will offer perspectives as to future expandability both in terms of further aspects relating to the 'classical', the significance of the 'classical' towards the framing of the genre, as well as other diversity components that reach beyond the scope of this book.

2. Self-positioning statement

As part of my understanding of engaging with popular culture phenomena, I share the sentiment of André Doehring regarding the necessity for researchers to critically reflect on their position in relation to the examined subject (Doehring 2012, 37), and thus I will briefly outline how I relate to the investigation at hand. At the time of writing, I am a white straight man in his early thirties. I was born in Bulgaria, where I complete my classical-music focused education up to university level, which I continued in the UK where I completed a Bachelor and Master's degrees before moving on Germany for the study that results in this publication. Despite the classical focus of my education, I have always been more interested in popular music, and throughout most stages I tried to shift as much focus on such topics, and in my spare time I have enjoyed listening to a variety of heavy metal – and to a lesser degree to some progressive music performers – since my introduction to these popular music genres in the late 1990s. Unpacking this somewhat long-winded description will help to frame my own positioning with regards to the current research subject.

My somewhat close proximity to both heavy metal and progressive music contexts does not intend to authenticate my interest in the research topic but rather to emphasise the opposite. Despite often listening to performers from both genres, due a variety of socio-cultural and economic reasons, I would not consider myself a fan of either music but rather my motivation for researching progressive metal stems from a "professionally interested" [Ger. Orig. "Professionell Interessierte{r}] (Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010, 184) scholarly perspective. As for my Western art music focused education, its relation to this study is based more on pragmaticism than on anything else. This book developed as an outgrowth from an unpublished Bachelor of Music dissertation that was designed to both move in the direction of popular music, yet keep close enough to Western art music contexts so that my (at the time) department and its emphasis on the latter context would not object to such topic of independent study. With this book representing my first study situated primarily in the realm of popular music studies and cultural studies, I thought it prudent at its conception to 'err on the side of caution' by drawing from a subject that I had some previous familiarity with, as well as from the Western art music contexts my earlier education had emphasised.

When taken together, these two highlighted perspectives have several major implications towards my work. First, as I have no personal involvement in the progressive metal culture, or any smaller related music scene, this positions my work and any observations on progressive metal culture, its members and their discourses, as representing an 'outsider' perspective – that is to say, as 'outsider' as a half-a-decade long academic study of a genre allows. Furthermore, I developed my understanding of the genre 'from scratch' by balancing examining literature (academic or journalistic) and writings of audiences in the online user-driven communities that I investigate, specifically the statements of album reviewers. Again, this is not an attempt to position a 'naturalistic' relation to the subject but rather that my 'outsider' position was underpinned by a desire (at times somewhat standoffish tendency) to keep asking 'Yes, but *why* only outline performance characteristic X?', 'Aha, and what sources support genre definition Y?', or 'And what about audience perspectives on argument Z?', to name a few. This led me to search high and low for texts that might help me answer general

questions about the genre, though despite my best efforts, I cannot promise to have read everything. If I have overlooked a well-known (yet unspoken) aspect of progressive metal culture's knowledge, or that my chosen counter-examples throughout this study are not of the 'deep cuts' variety, I hope those are interpreted more as errors, rather than as purposeful omissions. Also, positioning myself 'at arm's length' from the subject of my study was motivated, on the one hand, due to experiencing a variety of somewhat condescending perspectives – ranging from the (inevitable) bewilderment by non-academics as to 'Oh, they award doctorates for such things now, do they?'. And on the other, due to the (mostly second hand) experience within academic settings where the general popular music field is viewed less favourably than its Western art music counterpart, not to mention critical viewpoints that this type of scholarly work constituting scholars 'legitimising their fandom'.

Second, building on from the last point, despite my Western art music education I openly oppose ideas of Western art music's 'superiority', aesthetic or otherwise, though some additional positioning is required given the focus of my work. The study of progressive rock has been ongoing since at least the mid-1990s, and whilst very fruitful in helping to provide a less 'rock authenticity'-underpinned evaluation of the genre, it has been criticised from within for having presented a more restricted view that relates progressive rock heavily to Western art music contexts. The most recent example of such criticism can be found in an article by Chris Anderton and Chris Atton in which they outline that the earlier "book-length studies by [Edward] Macan, [Bill] Martin, and [Paul] Stump, […] are also, arguably rooted in fandom" (Anderton and Atton 2020, 19). The challenge is not limited to only the authors Anderton and Atton mention. As an example, Peter Saint-Andre's (2003) discussion of the band Yes in relation to some philosophical perspectives pertaining to Ayn Rand, outlines the author's close relation to the music of the band e.g., "[t]here is a nobility, grandeur, and spirituality I have seldom experienced elsewhere in music" (Saint-Andre 2003, 220) and highlights the notion of complexity in relation to Western art music contexts e.g. "[The music of Yes] has the kind of structural complexity that makes one's mind go to work, the kind of complexity one finds in a Beethoven symphony or a Back fugue, transferred to the realm of rock" (Saint-Andre 2003, 222). To be clear, I am not aiming for a 'cheap shot' at any of the aforementioned scholars, as some may simply be reflecting a tendency at the time.[9] And, as this work will showcase, I have no issue with the concept of dedicated audiences (or fandom), including more personal approaches it being reflected in academia, so long as such self-ascriptions are properly disclosed and balanced, if not outweighed, with critical reflexivity. However, what leaves me concerned is how such perspectives may have contributed to specific, and in my view less than fully productive, approaches and perspectives as part of the research of the

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[9] For example, John Cotner's (2000) text on analysing progressive rock suggests that the interest in the genre may stem from scholars' close proximity to the bands they discuss i.e. "[M]any of our most productive and groundbreaking thinkers on the subject were young adults during the 1960s and early 1970s, and experienced first-hand the social and political turmoil of the times" (Cotner 2000, 88–89). With regards to the more relation between scholars and their research subject he suggests that "[W]e rarely concern ourselves with styles of music – or most any form of art, for that matter – with which we have no personal investment. To put it another way: we are inclined to internalize and contemplate the form and content of those artistic phenomena with which we sense a certain emotional ownership – those associated with own life experiences, feelings, and memories" (Cotner 2000, 89).

progressive metal genre, not to mention the potential implication of my work to be seen as an (uncritical) continuation of such individual fandom-influenced perspectives; the broad issues behind such criticism will be discussed in more detail in this book's section on the current state of research on progressive metal. Thus, to outline my self-positioning clearly, I intend to discuss progressive metal as an autonomous genre with a potential for its own aesthetic practices. As for how I view the broad argument about the relation to Western art music contexts, whilst I consider it a valid argument that popular music as a whole can be as complex, or as demanding, to the listener as pieces of Western art music, my perspective firmly remains that overcoming the boundaries between such 'markedly different' categories will not occur by prioritising the latter's principles in the evaluation of the former.

As the aforementioned criticism does incorporate aspects of canonisation, I wanted to mention that my approach to identifying a band corpus not only aimed to avoid choosing performers with an overly focused Western art music relation, but also deliberately excluded engaging with progressive metal artists with which I had some familiarity (e.g., Rush, Dream Theater, Queensrÿche, Symphony X, Animals as Leaders etc.). Furthermore, I have to the best of my abilities set aside any pre-established auditive familiarity with the genre, especially when developing argumentation regarding its technical or semiotic rules. I will disclose, however, that I did utilize the album artwork of performers with which I was familiar, though they were used only in their capacity to present examples outside of the current corpus of artists. I hope that, overall, the framing of my work as representing an 'outsider' perspective will help alleviate concerns regarding what motivates the majority of decisions: from discussing the role of Western art music, through the band constituting the study's corpus to the types of observations and approaches towards them.

The aspects that this self-positioning statement has not yet addressed is those relating to gender and sexuality. This book will dedicate a substantial section to discussing, and attempting to address, aspects of diversity and specifically gender in relation to the progressive metal genre. I will openly admit that such issues were 'on my radar' in a rather limited capacity prior to this study, something that can be attested by glancing at my music collection in which for every one Heart, Triosphere, or Otep album, there are many others where predominantly men perform. However, my continuous exposure to discussions about diversity, whether through my supervisor's own research directions, thematization of these challenges in the Research Forum that I and my research peers participated in, or discussions with colleagues engaging heavily with gender studies such as Laura Fleischer, caused me to be unable to 'unsee' issues such as the genre's more limited female representation or participation. As my engagement with gender aspects is centred on an in-depth study of a female performer and perspectives such as gender identity, potential for queer reading, and the interpretation of female self-representation, my own relation to the subject needs a brief addressing. In short, I had no familiarity with the work of The Great Kat prior to commencing the examination of her work, and I have attempted to ground any perspective in relation to the aforementioned points of discussion as interpretations supported by appropriate theoretical framing. The goal of the discussion is not to ascribe an identity to the performer, but to offer interpretative possibilities that can contribute to the ongoing work in mapping and expanding on the perceived image of progressive metal performers as, mostly, white males. I will reiterate on these positions in

the latter half of the work, but suffice it to say, I wanted to offer an alternative, and arguably somewhat challenging, perspective that will hopefully contribute to further discussions of female performers in the genre.

Overall, I hope that this quick summary presents a clear outline as to where I stand in relation to the researched phenomena, how I position myself to current issues that may be inferred based on the study's focus, as well as potential pitfalls based on my own identity and history as a person and scholar. These are by no means intended to serve as 'fixes' to said issues, or as 'excuses' if I happen stray from such perspectives, but simply to signal reflexivity, whereby I hope that by presenting such quick outline further scholars will adopt a similar reflexive position towards future research.

3. Progressive metal and the classical – state of research

Despite the field of progressive metal research to be rather small, comparative to research on other popular music genres, identifying a point of departure when presenting a literature overview on the genre is not without its challenges. In a general sense, this overview aims to avoid beginning with an outline of progressive metal's 'origins' thus paralleling what the German scholar Bernward Halbscheffel recently outlined as a common characteristic of writing on progressive music. Namely, the often re-appearing question of 'What is progressive rock?' (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 7)[10] at the start of a text, an observation valid for both academic (e.g. Adamczewski 2018, 182–85; or Holm-Hudson 2002b, 2–3) as well as journalistic examples (e.g. Lambe 2011, 7; or Weigel 2017, xi, xvii) discussing the genre. That said (usually journalistic) examples of heavy metal literature are by no means averse to approaching a genre's discussion chronologically, and/or with a comment on the genre's 'roots' (e.g. see Christe 2004; Sharpe-Young 2007, 8; Wiederhorn and Turman 2014).

To be clear, what concerns me is not how widespread said approach is, but rather the genealogical implications it raises when considering the study's core interest. Specifically, based on the not uncommon framing of progressive metal as a combination of heavy metal and progressive rock aspects, some may argue that this overview should begin by situating progressive metal in relation to the classical-interpretative practices identifiable in the aforementioned meta-genres. Whilst acknowledging the merit of such an approach, based on my genre-studies derived theoretical framing, I question the benefits of anchoring this academic overview in genealogical or historiographical means. I contend that the prioritisation of such historical-focused perspectives can, and in my view already has, limited the potential outlook towards progressive metal to primarily perspectives on the genre's ability to echo or replicate pre-established practices, a critique that I will address in more detail at the end of this segment. Rather, this study will approach framing the genre in a slightly different manner: this segment will emphasise the current state of research on progressive *metal* in relation to the classical, though to reassure critical readers that I have 'paid my dues' to previous scholarly work, each of the investigative chapters will be supplemented by a brief outline of pertinent aspects derived from research on progressive rock and heavy metal.[11]

In terms of the sources this overview will discuss, I have explored a variety of academic, journalistic and audience-based writings/perspectives which were derived, as per my own linguistic familiarity and abilities, primarily from English and German languages, with smaller contributions from literature written in my native Bulgarian language (or by Bulgarian researchers). I have included brief references to contributions from French and Russian language literature, whereby my very limited knowledge of such languages was supplemented through discussions with fellow scholars that have a better linguistic understanding (e.g., my colleague Laura Fleischer offered comments on the few French texts I quoted). With that in mind, whilst I am aware of literature on progressive metal written

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[10] Ger. Orig. "Es gibt kaum einen Text zum Thema Progressive Rock, der nicht mit der Frage eingeleitet wird, was 'Progressive Rock' überhaupt ist".

[11] As a brief note, the emphasis in my gender-focused investigation will prioritise discussing The Great Kat's adherence to metal culture, though additional perspectives aligning her with progressive music aspects will be added in order to achieve a similar balance in terms of drawing from each perspective.

in languages such as Italian (Salari 2019), Dutch (Deweppe 2006), Indonesian (Putra 2007), Spanish (González Fuentes and Roquer González 2016; García Salueña 2019) and Portuguese (dos Reis Franz 2009), my own language limitations precluded me from engaging with said writings and the larger language fields they represent. This latter point is an unfortunate reality, though I hope (and encourage) further research on progressive metal to continue drawing from more sources, both in the main languages I discuss, as well as those that I regrettably did not manage to engage with.

The engagement with Western art music in progressive metal's 'ancestry' may imply a (fairly) high probability for the classical to be discussed as a notable part of the genre. Whilst initial engagement with academic and journalistic literature that discusses progressive metal suggested that not to be the case, a series of small perspectives continued to emerge thus implying that, even if by no means central to its aesthetic, the classical is not an aspect the genre fully avoids. These range from addressing the entire genre, to briefly discussing classical-connotative elements in a singular song. I will summarise the pertinent parts of these texts, and as the information this study is seeking is not presented without flaws or challenges, those will be briefly pointed out as well.

Multiple scholars have provided brief comments regarding progressive metal's connection to the classical on a larger scale. For example, the multiple publications by Janell R. Duxbury titled *Rockin' the Classics and Classicizin' the Rock* (Duxbury 1985; Duxbury 1991; Duxbury 2000), offer an overview of "selectively annotated discography documents" (Duxbury 1985, 9), and more specifically on instances in which a performer's output overlaps the broad fields of popular music and Western art music. The back cover of the latest supplement of this reference book from 2000 features a brief mention of progressive metal, and whilst the book does include some of the performers examined in this study, the offered information is restricted to short descriptions acknowledging the act of Western art music borrowing. For example, Savatage's track "Memory (Dead winter dead intro.)" is described as drawing from the first theme of Beethoven's Ninth symphony (Duxbury 2000, 189), which whilst broadly useful, offers very limited information towards understanding the classical's role in the genre. Furthermore, despite the aforementioned explicit mentioning of progressive metal on the supplement's back cover, the author seemingly does not employ the term in neither of the three publications. Instead she refers to bands culturally understood as within/in close proximity to said genre such as Angra, Savatage, Yngwie Malmsteen's Rising Force as heavy metal (e.g. see Duxbury 1991, 30, 42; Duxbury 2000, 30). This is by no means an insurmountable challenge, though it raises some questions as to whether the offered classical-related perspectives were labelled as examples of progressive metal due to the broader association between Western art music and progressive rock contexts, or whether they can be seen as representative of the progressive metal's aesthetic.

A similar example can be found mentioned in passing by Chris Matthew Sciabarra (2002) whose critical evaluation of Edward Macan's ascription of "Apollonian" and "Dionysian" characteristics of counter-culture towards progressive rock and heavy metal, respectively (Sciabarra 2002, 162–65), draws from a personal correspondence with Matthew Graybosch, in suggesting that "a hybrid form known as 'Progressive Metal' […] incorporates classical influences" (Sciabarra 2002, 179n7). The challenge to Macan's questionable division notwithstanding, there are two main issues with Sciabarra's contribution: first, the (presumably scholarly) suggestion by Graybosch strikes me as

somewhat superficial even for 2002. The implication that progressive metal represents a type of genre hybridity in part due to its classical influences can be easily challenged through the, at that time nearly decade old, book by Robert Walser who argued for a number of key performers in heavy metal culture as having studiously engaged with, and drawn from, Western art music (Walser 1993, 57–107). Second, whilst Graybosch's suggested list of artists representing progressive metal is by no means outright inaccurate based on contemporary understandings – "Yngwie Malmsteen, Dream Theater, Queensryche [sic], Symphony X, Nightwish, Therion, Rhapsody, and to a lesser extent, Iron Maiden" (Graybosch, quoted in Sciabarra 2002, 179n7) – the selection provides , at best, a wide-range of performers with only a brief mention of specific classical characteristics. These include "orchestras, choirs, and solo singers" or the "lush symphonic arrangements worthy of the better Hollywood films" (Graybosch, quoted in Sciabarra 2002, 179n7) in performers such as Therion and Rhapsody. The succinct nature of this description offers very little actual information as to what constitutes the genre's classical components, as well as lacks contexts as to how often said influences appear both within and beyond the performers' output. At worst, the selection represents a list of performers which is passed on by Sciabarra seemingly without cross-referencing further literature or critical reflection as to whether their framing in relation to the genre is derived via Graybosch's individual ascription, journalistic or audience perspectives.

John Covach's (2000) extensive discussion of the US-development of progressive rock includes a brief statement that describes the band Cairo as "combin[ing] aspects of 80s progressive metal with keyboard-dominated passages reminiscent of 70s ELP" which the author frames as part of one of two large categories of American progressive performers during the 1990s that "return in some significant way to the style developed by Yes, Genesis, and ELP in the 70s (often called 'symphonic prog')" (Covach 2000, 40). He adds that,

> "[w]hat unites these two camps under the banner of progressive rock is that each attempts to blend classical music with rock: for the avant-proggers, the classical music of choice is twentieth-century music since Schoenberg; for the symphonic-prog bands, classical music is the standard chamber and symphonic repertoire of European instrumental music from Bach to Brahms". (Covach 2000, 40)

Whilst these brief comments can be framed as evidence of progressive metal's engagement with the classical, two major issues emerge towards such reading: first, the author's lack of context as to what bands or aesthetic characteristics are understood under progressive metal remains a significant challenge, as neither dedicated journalistic sources (e.g. J. Wagner 2010) nor the online user-driven databases this study engages with have listed Cairo under the category of progressive metal. Second, the co-relation between Cairo and symphonic progressive rock bands such as ELP (i.e., Emerson Lake and Palmer) creates an immediate conflict as, based on Covach's summary, it was the aspect of drawing from Western art music that characterised the "symphonic-prog bands" to which Cairo is implicitly framed as belonging. In other words, in Cairo's presented mixture of aesthetics, the classical could be seen as something draws from said symphonic bands, rather than as stemming from the "80s progressive metal" component.

Bettina Roccor's early study on heavy metal culture includes both an outline of the typical characteristics ascribed to the genre e.g. "the most complex and demanding style is progressive metal" and "[t]he most complicated song structures, constant tempo and rhythm changes, difficult to play melodies and harmonies", though interestingly also aspects less commonly encountered by more recent academic discussions such as the "emotional, clear and intensely sung, demanding, philosophical and poetic texts" (Roccor 1998, 117).[12] More importantly, however, on multiple occasions she frames the genre in relation to Western art music contexts e.g. the genre as characterised through "the compositional diversity of classical music with the technique and harmonies of heavy metal"; through the "use of unusual sound elements – classical instruments, choral chants" (Roccor 1998, 117);[13] and more broadly that "[v]irtuosity, melodic and compositional variety as well as the use of classical instruments increase steadily, especially in progressive metal" (Roccor 1998, 330).[14] Furthermore, Roccor presents a somewhat anecdotal evidence further supporting the co-relation between progressive metal and the classical, namely that a fan of the genre that despite listening only to Western art music begun noticing parallels in the genre such as through engaging melodies and "well-constructed arrangements" [Ger. Orig. "durchkonstruierte"] (Roccor 1998, 118).

Whilst the author's written sources used to support this overview are rather limited in number and primarily journalistic, such criticism has to be tempered by acknowledging that Roccor's work was one of the first German-written studies on metal, and that she was drawing from sources that were fairly contemporary i.e., one of the earliest journalistic lexicons on heavy metal in German, the first volume of which written by Matthias Herr in 1994 (Roccor 1998, 128n148–151). Moreover, she does briefly engage with the academic sources relevant to this study such as Walser's book on heavy metal, however she offers only a broad suggestion that progressive metal's increase of compositional complexity and use of classical instruments can be seen as extension of the increasing professionalism and aspects of formal education mentioned by Walser (Roccor 1998, 325, 330). As the connection is not expanded on in more detail, developing an argument that progressive metal's engagement with the classical can be contextualized as derived via heavy metal's increased formal education becomes difficult. Not to mention that the overall description provided by Roccor leaves out a great deal of detail such as what techniques are utilized by progressive metal performers as well as where, how often, and in what density such classical elements can be identified. Despite such limitations, Roccor

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[12] Ger. Orig. "Die komplexeste und anspruchsvollste Stilrichtung ist der Progressive Metal. […] Bands wie Fates Warning, Watchtower, Psychotic Waltz und Dream Theater verbinden die kompositorische Vielfalt klassischer Musik mit der Technik und den Harmonien des Heavy Metal. Komplizierteste Songstrukturen, ständige Tempo- und Rhythmuswechsel, schwierig zu spielende Melodiebögen und Harmonien bestimmen diese Stilrichtung […] Ein weiteres Merkmal sind die emotional, klar und intensiv gesungen anspruchsvollen, philosophischen und poetischen Texte".

[13] Ger. Orig. "Bands wie Fates Warning, Watchtower, Psychotic Waltz und Dream Theater verbinden die kompositorische Vielfalt klassischer Musik mit der Technik und den Harmonien des Heavy Metal […] [diese Stilrichtung wird bestimmt durch] der Einsatz ungewöhnlicher Soundelemente - klassische Instrumente, Chorgesänge".

[14] Ger. Orig. "Virtuosität, melodischer und kompositorischer Variantenreichtum sowie der Einsatz klassischer Instrumente nehmen besonders im Progressive Metal stetig zu".

does generally reiterate on her observations in an article released a few years later, by referring to the genre as "oriented towards classic music" (Roccor 2000, 85), and it can be argued that more contemporary research has either implicitly echoed some of the author's perspectives or has directly drawn from her arguments in pursuit of further classical phenomena in relation to progressive metal.

On the one hand, Roccor's aforementioned anecdotal evidence regarding the Western art music tastes of some progressive metal audience members appears paralleled in several studies that have mentioned the genre. For example, Christoph Lücker's (2013 [2011]) large-scale discussion of heavy metal culture offers a brief comment regarding prog metal concerts as including "visitors who otherwise prefer jazz or classical music" (Lücker 2013 [2011], 38);[15] or Andy R. Brown (2015) who draws from an empirical study by Stuart Cadwallader to suggest that "some varieties of progressive metal are replacing classical music as the 'genre of choice' for the educationally gifted student" (A. R. Brown 2015, 262).[16] Furthermore, this argument is not limited to progressive metal, but rather can be found in relation to broader progressive rock contexts e.g., scholars such as Durell Bowman (2002, 186) or Covach (1997, 8; 2000, 15) have argued that the genre represented a stand-in for Western art music. With that in mind, there are perspectives that have contested the broader association between progressive and Western art music audiences. For example, Matthias Lehmann's (2018) examination of overlap between listeners of 'extreme' music (i.e., heavy metal, hardcore and punk) and Western art music, derived from visitors of 'high culture' music festivals, highlights that despite the former to be fairly common category, the author includes no mention of progressive metal, even at the conceptual level of discussion i.e. the genre as an example of overlapping elements from (broadly) Western art music and popular music contexts. Similarly, Stuart Borthwick and Ron Moy (2004) suggest that despite 1970s UK progressive rock to incorporate aspects from Western art music, "the relationship between the classical and the prog rock fraternities rarely moved beyond one of somewhat grudging respect" (Borthwick and Moy 2004, 65), and in relation to more contemporary contexts, the examination of progressive rock fanzines by Atton (2001) argues that "the fans seem disinterested in the specifics – even the generalities – of how their music resembles classical models" (Atton 2001, 35).[17]

On the other hand, Elisabeth Pölzl-Hofer and Susanne Sackl's (2010) examination of the metal opera-type of concept album has drawn from Roccor's argument, with the authors suggesting that during the 1980s progressive metal contributed to a broadening of heavy metal's range of sounds through the introduction of strings and choir (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 46). The central argument developed in said text suggests that the progressive metal genre represents the context in which the

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[15] Ger. Orig. "So lassen sich auf Konzerten des Prog-Metal-Sektors auch viele Progressive-Rock-Fans antreffen, mitunter finden sich dort ebenfalls Besucher ein, die ansonsten Jazz oder Klassik bevorzugen".

[16] It should be mentioned, however, that an examination of the Brown's sources (Cadwallader 2007; J. Brown 2007) makes it difficult to validate the actual scope of such an observation beyond progressive metal's appearance as part of a general trend in which heavy metal is preferred over genres such as jazz or Western art music (Cadwallader 2007, 8; J. Brown 2007, n.p.).

[17] The critical examination of progressive rock by Sheinbaum (2008) served as a quasi-inspiration for parts of this argument as, whilst the author does not directly contrast between Bowman and Atton's texts, a similar co-relation can nevertheless be inferred (Sheinbaum 2008, 29, 46).

earlier rock opera phenomenon has continued to move forward, and through a series of exemplary analyses of bands such as Ayreon, Dream Theater, Savatage and Avantasia, the authors have suggested that this new metal opera permutation employs techniques or practices that can more directly be related to the traditional opera counterpart.[18] Despite focusing only on the metal opera phenomenon, Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl's approach certainly provides sufficient evidence in supporting Roccor's general observation on progressive metal. Without wishing to position a handful of texts as representative of the entire genre, it can be framed as furthering the argument that progressive metal engages more than occasionally with the classical.

Several recent scholarly contributions such as by Bernward Halbscheffel (2013d) or Paul Hegarty and Martin Halliwell (2013 [2011]) have seemingly addressed some of the previously mentioned criticism by simultaneously drawing from a wide selection of artists and offering somewhat in-depth discussions. However, their situating of progressive metal in broader contexts strike me as somewhat problematic due to their prioritisation of genealogical aspects. Halbscheffel's lexicon article on progressive metal presents a rather succinct framing of the genre by arguing that "progressive metal bands recourse to traditional art music not directly, but indirectly through the music of Jethro Tull, Genesis and Yes" (Halbscheffel 2013e, 381).[19] The author provides no further explanation as to what performers/pieces exemplify this principle, nor how the "indirect" engagement with Western art music is achieved, thus delivering little useful context for readers interested in how the genre functions beyond its connection to progressive rock. Rather, a few paragraphs later Halbscheffel mentions bands such as Epica, Dream Theater or Riverside (Halbscheffel 2013e, 381–82), whereby their specific articles reveal some additional brief comments regarding the role of the classical, though these are hardly insightful due to the lack of provided details.

For example, the discussion of the US metal band Epica (Halbscheffel 2013c) states that their output incorporates symphonic elements, though remarks on said elements are limited to the inclusion of an "obligatory choir and orchestra",[20] mentions of "at best stylistic references to 'Carmina Burana' and Gregorian chant" and brief comparisons to (unnamed) "current fantasy films"[21] culminating with the describing the band's music as overall "act[ing] like the ongoing soundtrack to an imaginary film" (Halbscheffel 2013c, 152–53).[22] Leaving the underhanded dismissal that emanates from this statement, a regrettably oft-found attitude in metal-related articles by the author,[23] there

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[18] This summary is rather purposefully limited in its descriptive capacity as I engage with this text in more detail in the section on contextualizing rock opera.

[19] Ger. Orig. "Dabei erfolgte der Rückgriff von späteren Bands des Progressive Metal auf die traditionelle Kunstmusik nicht unmittelbar, sondern mittelbar über die Musik etwa von Jethro Tull, Genesis und Yes".

[20] Ger. Orig. "Das Konzept der Band, obligat Chor und Orchester einzusetzen, wurde in seiner Wirkung eindrucksvoll durch das erste Live-Album der Band 'The Classical Conspiracy' (2009) unterstrichen".

[21] Ger. Orig. "Doch dienen diese vornehmlich der Klangwirkung, abgeschaut aktuellen Fantasy-Filmen - allzu komplizierter Satz ist hier nicht zu finden, allenfalls stilzitierende Verweise auf 'Carmina Burana' und Gregorianik".

[22] Ger. Orig. "Es ist keine Frage, dass die Musik der Band als Ganzes wie der andauernde Soundtrack zu einem imaginären Film wirkt - und entsprechende Kenntnisse des Hörers voraussetzt".

[23] For example, in addition to discussing "the so-called symphonic metal" genre [Ger. Orig. "[D]ie Musik der Band wird dem so genannten Symphonic Metal zugerechnet"] (Halbscheffel 2013c, 152), Halbscheffel is openly

are notable parallels to another article in Halbscheffel's lexicon, namely that of progressive metal band Symphony X (Halbscheffel 2013n). There, the author offers nigh identical observations i.e., the implementation of "paraphrases of symphonic pieces, such as those used in the music for fantasy and catastrophe films",[24] framed via the "background coloristic function" of the orchestra and choir in tracks such as "Paradise Lost"[25] and achieved via "sample-libraries of orchestral instruments"[26] (Halbscheffel 2013n, 478). Both articles also share some critical remarks regarding the bands' engagement with the classical – e.g. Epica's 'lack of complexity' or milder criticisms such as suggesting that only with their album *Paradise Lost*, does Symphony X manage to meet the expected characteristics of music for fantasy films (Halbscheffel 2013c, 152; Halbscheffel 2013n, 478) – which nevertheless offer very little useful information in terms of understanding how the bands operate in relation to the classical. Overall, whilst offering a basic confirmation regarding the classical's involvement in progressive metal contexts, Halbscheffel's contribution presents a series of superficial observations that would have greatly benefited from additional details, instead of limiting the perspective to a continuation of progressive rock tendencies. Furthermore, the fragmented and needlessly obfuscated approach[27] of delivering information, not to mention the fairly limited sources used to generate such observations,[28] obstructs readers interested in progressive metal to receive sufficient general information on the genre, and more focused understanding of its classical components.

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dismissive to audiences of both symphonic and progressive metal genres, as exemplified by his discussion of Dream Theater's album *Octavarium* in which "the use of odd time signatures, ludicrously fast unison passages […] and quotes from classical, jazz and rock seemed pretentious, if not incomprehensible, to a large part of the audience" (Halbscheffel 2013b, 115). [Ger. Orig. "Die vielen Formalismen der Gruppe, etwa in der Verwendung von ungeraden Taktarten, aberwitzig schnell gespielten Unisono-Passagen, Zahlenspielereien der Art, dass Titel und Anzahl der Songs einer CD miteinander korrespondieren, Tonarten-Verrätselungen – 'Octavarium' (2005) etwa enthält acht Stücke in den Moll-Tonarten F, G, A, H, C, D, E und wieder F - und Zitate aus Klassik, Jazz und Rock schienen einem Großteil des Publikums prätentiös, wenn nicht unverständlich"].

[24] Ger. Orig. "Der Progressive Metal, den Symphony X auf ihren Alben vorführen, basiert einerseits auf Elementen des Thrash Metals, andererseits auf Paraphrasen symphonischer Werke, wie sie etwa auch in der Musik zu Fantasy- und Katastrophenfilmen verwendet werden".

[25] Ger. Orig. "Das alles geschieht nicht ohne Bruch, mitunter stehen Rockband und Orchester disparat nebeneinander und zumindest bei 'Paradise Lost' haben Orchester und Chor oft lediglich koloristische Funktion im Hintergrund".

[26] Ger. Orig. "Nach der Jahrtausendwende ist die Musik der Band zwar eher dem Heavy Metal zuzurechnen, doch hatten Romeo und Pinnella ihr Dungeon genanntes Studio ausgebaut und avancierte Sample-Libraries von Orchester-Intrumenten gekauft".

[27] Whilst my limited editorial experience affords me some context towards comprehending the logic in Halbscheffel's fragmented approach, I consider the inclusion of insufficiently descriptive genre-articles that almost require readers to scour the internally-linked articles on related performers just to receive a rudimentary understanding of what constitutes an element (in this case the Western art music contexts), as confusing and rather unhelpful. Also, I am hesitant to suggest that said performer-articles provide a sufficient context to the aforementioned "indirect connection to progressive rock contexts" and I was surprised that the by far most detailed example of the genre's classical's inclusion (i.e., Symphony X) was not linked in the main progressive metal article.

[28] The author's article on progressive metal is based on a singular journalistic source (i.e., J. Wagner 2010), which is a stark contrast to the article on progressive rock that features over a dozen book sources and a variety of websites (Halbscheffel 2013f, 392) Whether this is also the reason for the substantial difference in article size (i.e., progressive metal is described in about a page, whilst to progressive rock are dedicated ten) is difficult to say.

The progressive rock-focused book-length study by Hegarty and Halliwell dedicates an entire chapter to what they refer to as the "metal progression" of the genre (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 259–82). In said chapter, the authors examine the "amorphous category of 'progressive metal' which refers to progressive rock but indicates that it has grown from a process of convergent evolution" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 259–60), and further suggest that "the fusion of styles is what makes a metal band progressive" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 279). Whilst Hegarty and Halliwell's discussion initially offers a step forward in framing the classical's role in progressive metal contexts, the authors' approach can be somewhat misleading. Specifically, the authors argue that the aforementioned 'amorphous'-ness of progressive metal also stretches to "some parts of symphonic metal" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 260), which is broadly justified through the view that "the symphonic element of [symphonic metal bands such as] Nightwish, Kamelot, Within Temptation, Epica, Stratovarius, Sonata Arctica and Ayreon recalls the aspiration of progressive groups to incorporate classical music" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266). Despite offering several brief analyses that help to illustrate the utilisation of the classical, the actual description remains somewhat limited. Beyond suggesting that the more fore-fronted utilisation of orchestral passages in symphonic metal's output represents a less-often engaged approach in progressive rock contexts (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266–67), the line of inquiry is not pursued to a greater degree. Instead, the authors prioritise the search for "more authentic take[s] on prog" in relation to "complexity as [..] a building device" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 267) and/or elements that are somewhat novel to progressive music aesthetic. For example, the analysis of Within Temptation's DVD *Black Symphony* states that "there [is not] much in terms of compositional development; rather Within Temptation achieves a rich density by incorporating orchestral instrumentation that relies heavily on the percussive attack of choir and instruments heard in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 267). Similarly, discussing Epica's album *The Phantom Agony* the incorporation of "a full choir and chamber orchestra" is discussed as rather restrained and lacking development i.e. "[e]ven with a few extended tracks, a narrative connectedness to the album and the presence of chamber orchestra, there is not much space for instrumental development" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 268).[29]

Despite some similarity to Halbscheffel's observations, I am hesitant in simply accepting Hegarty and Halliwell's argumentation for a few reasons. First, the aforementioned discussion as to how symphonic metal relates to progressive rock framework may be excused based on the study's emphasis on discussing contexts 'beyond' progressive rock's most active period in the 1970s. However, the broad argument remains problematic as it is based on a genealogical principle that effectively views most references to Western art music in a rock/metal setting as constituting a connection to progressive rock contexts. Second, the authors' argument that symphonic metal is a sub-category of progressive metal ignores cultural perspectives in which the genres are framed as separate (e.g., on fan-driven databases such as metal-archives.com) which reflects the perception of

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[29] Additional aspects from this text which can be seen as expanding the understanding on how the genre operates such as the stylistic mixing argument, the co-relation between progressive metal and symphonic metal will be addressed in various points throughout this study.

differences ranging to more than auditive/music-analytical components. Conversely, even when framed as (at best) related, as is the case for journalistic publications, such perspectives also have notable caveats (see my discussion on Lambe 2011, and Sharpe-Young 2007) thus presenting additional issues to simply viewing progressive metal and symphonic metal as referring to a common phenomenon.

Another text worth briefly mentioning is Erik Smialek and Mei-Ra St-Laurent's (2019) article in which the authors provide a compelling argument against the widespread assumption that both performers and fans of metal music stem from "working class or blue collar" contexts (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 378). Specifically, the authors argue that performers such as Meshuggah, Gorguts, Septicflesh and Unexpect engage in a "white-collar aesthetic" which is framed through Keir Keightley's 'modernist' rock authenticity (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 378–79). The authors outline multiple Western art music-related strategies through which the aforementioned aesthetic can be detected: from Meshuggah's semi-jamming and semi-collaborative editing of ideas during their writing of the album *I* which is described as "more reminiscent of a composer pondering over written music than an oral transmission of musical ideas within a rehearsal studio"(Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 382); to the emergence of more complex compositional processes in the creation of the track "Pleiades' Dust" by Gorguts,[30] and the use of "work[ing] out [of] ideas on sheets of paper and speak[ing] about those ideas with detailed, technical vocabulary" (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 384) framed as related to the conservatory training of the band's guitarist and singer Luc Lemay. From the influence of Stravinsky via the compositional-focused higher education of some members of Septicflesh (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 388), and both their more engaged compositional and arrangement practices in combining orchestra and rock band, and the implications of the orchestral forces framed as "an act of conscious seriousness" (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 389); to avant-garde mixing of styles in the music and lyrics of Unexpect including Western art music quotations, which the authors relate to both metal and progressive rock contexts (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 391), and compositional practices with hidden messages compared to "a cipher in the spirit of centuries of cryptic music puzzles – Shostakovich's DSCH melody, Bach's name motif, retrograde canons in the Renaissance and Baroque, and Cordier's heart-shaped rondeaux about love" (Smialek and St-Laurent 2019, 393).

Whilst my description only scratches the surface of the authors' examinations, I do so purposefully as each of these bands fall in the broader range of extreme metal genres and thus outside of the operational limits of this study. Nevertheless, as most of these performers are included in one of the databases this study examines Unexpect as an "experimental/post metal" band (Progarchives.com n.d.y) and Gorguts and Meshuggah under the "tech/extreme prog metal" label (Progarchives.com n.d.i; Progarchives.com n.d.o), I wanted to include this text as it showcases techniques and class-related underpinnings that inform the role of classical in related progressive metal categories as well as serves as a highly useful point of departure for additional research of the classical in relation to extreme metal contexts.

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[30] An additional extensive analysis of this piece can also be found in Vanek (2018).

A final group of texts discussing the genre on a broader scale includes instances in which progressive metal is briefly positioned in close proximity to Western art music contexts, yet the genre is implicitly distanced from said contexts. For example, Carmen Deanna's (2010) discussion of the relationship between Greek tragedies and their Dionysian influence on heavy metal briefly mentions progressive metal, yet she frames parallels to the output of Western art music composers as stemming from aspects such as the dark aesthetic or the volume of the performance:

> "Nietzsche [sic] praise of Wagner's music as the modern rebirth of the tragic paradigm hints at the tragic character of Heavy Metal, though this is a praise he ultimately revokes. Most popular genres of music are founded on African American blues; largely constructed in a 4/4 time signature and following a 1-3-5 or 1-4-5 pattern. Metal, however, and particularly the subgenres of progressive and thrash metal were willing to explore more complex time signatures and rhythmic progressions. Yet, the central restatement of late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century concert giants like Wagner, Holst and Stravinsky is the awesome darkness and loudness of the music. In no way is the intent here to suggest Heavy Metal is the heir of classical or concert music rather the claim is heavy Metal shares some of the aesthetic qualities of this era of classical music and that quality is plausibly that of the Dionysian experience". (Deanna 2010, 50)

Another example that seemingly implies a lack of connection between progressive metal and the classical is Durrell Bowman's (2011) discussion of adaptations of Rush's music which features some comments regarding the band's output and its relation to Western art music contexts. Bowman points out that Rush

> "used relatively subtle classical elements in a few songs in 1985, 1987, and 1993, including a wordless choir, a brass section, and several string sections. However, Rush's more elaborate, progressive-oriented music from 1975 to 1981 then lent itself to wholesale classical treatments by others". (Bowman 2011, 38)

What is interesting is that said classical treatment – e.g. in Rachel Barton's Stringendo and their album *Storming the Citadel* (Bowman 2011, 38–39) as well as the *Exit… Stage Right: The String Quartet Tribute to Rush* album (Bowman 2011, 36) – is seemingly not continued in progressive metal contexts. This is evidenced by the lack of comments to that effect when Bowman outlines progressive metal artists such as Dream Theater or Meshuggah (Bowman 2011, 29), who have expressed being influenced by Rush. Furthermore, Bowman briefly comments on instances in which popular music bands attempted "fusions of classical instruments or actual classical music along with rock instruments and rock music" (Bowman 2011, 38) both during the 1970s as well as the 1990s. However, he does not mention progressive metal thus implying that despite Rush's influence, classical or otherwise,[31]

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[31] In a prior article Bowman (2002) has suggested that tracks such as Rush's "Anthem", "Bastille Day" or "Something For Nothing" represent early examples of progressive heavy metal (Bowman 2002, 190), which in turn positions the band as one of the early proponents of the genre. Where the classical comes into focus is the author's mentioning of the instrumental "Overture" within the large track "2112" which borrows from Western art music contexts by incorporating "a brief quotation from Pyotr Ilich Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* (1869)" (Bowman 2002, 194). Similar perspectives that semi-reaffirm the band's classical aspects appear in Chris

the classical is not something the former band passed over and/or is not a particularly noteworthy component for the genre.

As scholarly literature transition from providing primarily broader overviews to more focused investigations on specific progressive metal artists – by which I am referring more to a general, and still ongoing, tendency rather than a paradigmatic shift in how the genre is pursued – some of these contributions continue to include perspectives relevant to the discussion at hand. As part of academic texts that focused on examining core progressive metal genre-aesthetic aspects such as rhythmic or metric complexity, multiple authors also offered brief comments pertaining to the engagement with Western art music contexts thus supporting the argument that the classical is not a foreign element in progressive metal. With that in mind, more often than not such aspects are framed as minor components to the performer's output, and are commonly presented without a great deal of detail or context as to their significance to the genre as a whole.

An example of this type of academic text is Gregory McCandless' (2010)[32] PhD dissertation which examines one of the most highly canonized progressive metal performers, Dream Theater, specifically in relation to their utilisation of metric and rhythmic complexity. Throughout the study, multiple brief comments regarding the role of the classical in the band's output can be identified. These range from acknowledging the "classical training" of the band's current keyboard player Jordan Rudess (McCandless 2010, 69); the author offering brief parallels between the band's use of some metric devices and similar approaches as found in compositions by Beethoven (McCandless 2010, 99), Bartok (McCandless 2010, 122) and to a lesser degree Grieg (McCandless 2010, 57); the use of functional harmonic progressions (McCandless 2010, 59, 133–134); and the use of classical instruments in the band's output (McCandless 2010, 44–45, 132, 147).[33] With that in mind, despite the wide variety just mentioned, most discussions of the classical remain at the surface level e.g. McCandless suggesting that the inclusion of an orchestra in the track "Sacrificed Sons" constitutes "add[ing] to [the song's] grandiosity" (McCandless 2010, 132). As such, based on the lack of reiteration on the aforementioned classical components in neither the individual chapters' conclusion or the study as a whole, I am hesitant to suggest that the classical is framed as more than an intriguing detail.

McDonald's (2009) discussion of the band, which the author describes as "purveying a loud and distinctive form of progressive heavy metal" and as "combin[ing] the blunt-force power of hard rock with the disciplined complexity of classical music" (McDonald 2009, 2, 3). However, later on McDonald suggests that Rush's more limited engagement with Western art music can be considered as reflecting cultural developments in North America, namely "although a number of North American rock musicians have appropriated classical influences, they have done so with a certain distance from the classical tradition, a superficiality, that contrasts with the relative depth of classical influence on the music of Yes, Genesis, King Crimson, and other British progressive rock bands" (McDonald 2009, 47–48). Considering Rush's more restricted engagement with Western art music as highlighted by both Bowman and McDonald together with their influence to other progressive metal performers (e.g. J. Wagner 2010, 23–24, 48, 57, 73) this can be seen as one context contributing to the (perception) of the genre as having very limited classical aspects as a whole. That said, as I am not interested in pursuing genealogical perspectives, my comment is only offered in its potential to extend the observations made in relation to Bowman's 2011 article.

[32] The author released an article a few years later that echoes a great deal of the observations and arguments he developed in his PhD project (see McCandless 2013)

[33] For other scholars briefly mentioning Dream Theater's classical components see Custodis (2016c, 2–5), Hegarty and Halliwell (2013 [2011], 269–70) and Mądro (2017, 162).

McCandless' text draws from another early progressive metal-focused discussion, namely Jonathan Pieslak's (2007) examination of the rhythmic/metric complexity of Swedish band Meshuggah. The author offers a brief comparison to the classical by mentioning that on some occasions "Meshuggah's music suggests metric dissonance, but it seldom occurs in full, or in the same way as many pieces within the Western Classical tradition" (Pieslak 2007, 222).[34] Despite the argument to introduce a certain distance between Meshuggah and Western art music contexts, in a later publication from 2008, Pieslak notes that some fan reviews of the band's 2004 EP titled *I*, contain comparisons to the classical composer Bartok, which are offered as a form of praise towards the band's complex output (Pieslak 2008, 46). Whilst in a way one may suggest that the comparisons to Western art music represent a quasi-authenticating process, other examinations of the band paint a more differentiated picture in which the engagement with 'high culture' aspects is ambivalently perceived by Meshuggah's audiences. Specifically, Erik Smialek (2008) dedicates a significant portion of his examination of Meshuggah (Smialek 2008, 72–123) in which he highlights that the inclusion of 'high' culture settings or art music connotative-elements (e.g. referring to themselves as composers) in statements by some of the band's members showcases a complex tension between such contexts and the supposed working-class contexts of the extreme metal genre and the band's audiences (Smialek 2008, 44, 72–75, 119–122). Furthermore, Smialek's examination of fan discourses surrounding Meshuggah has showcased a significant parallel to the conflicting reception in progressive rock discourses, as discussed in Atton (2001). Namely, whilst some of Meshuggah listeners have incorporated allusions to Western art music (Smialek 2008, 78) or have evoked "terms that create an aura of 'high art'" (Smialek 2008, 79), the author also points out the existence of a category of fans (and also journalistic perspectives) expressing contrasting and rather critical responses. Said criticism is addressed towards those perceived as overly-analysing Meshuggah's work (e.g. via music transcriptions) and argues that doing so misinterprets the band's broad perception (and self-framing) as approaching the complexity of their output more through randomness or the peculiarities of the creative process, rather than calculative principles (Smialek 2008, 80–96, 109–118). Of note here is not only the contrasting reception to elements associated with the 'high' culture or the (progressive music-interpretable) aspects such as emphasis on complexity, but also the band's own attempts to navigate their (self-)positioning in close proximity to such contexts.

The aspect of audiences invoking comparisons to Western art music mentioned by Pieslak is seemingly not an isolated occurrence as similar perspectives have also been observed from other scholarly contributions. For example, Craig Bernardini's (2009) literary studies examination of Mastodon's album *Leviathan* which reinterprets Melville's novel *Moby Dick*, points out some reviewers' comparison between "elements of *Leviathan* […] to Bela Bartok […] and (more broadly) to jazz and art rock" (Bernardini 2009, 32).[35] The author draws from both heavy metal and progressive

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[34] A similar argument can be found in David Burke (2018) whose discussion on the reception of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* examines the piece's influence on heavy metal by pointing out parallels in Meshuggah's output such as structural devices, thematic parallels etc. (Burke 2018, 54–61).

[35] Whilst the author does not explicitly point to the band as progressive metal, he does suggest that in some reviews its genre is referred to as a "'progressive' or 'concept metal' band, and sometimes as just plain 'progressive' or 'hard rock'" (Bernardini 2009, 31).

rock contexts and suggests that one possible interpretation of the comparison to classical composers is as drawing from the prestige that is (to some extend) relegated to Western art music's/high culture's capacity in said genres. Even if one accepts this interpretation, it remains unclear what auditive elements led to the comparison to Bartok, not to mention that there is not enough information as to how often such perspectives appeared, or whether the claim to Western art music's prestige was limited to Mastodon's specific album or reflective of a broader tendency in the genre's engagement with classical contexts. This type of relation to the classical can also be (tentatively) extended via similar comparisons that distinctively emerge from scholarly perspectives. Namely, Hegarty and Halliwell introduced a Western-art music context in their description of the band Don Caballero[36] and their track "Please Tokyo, please THIS IS TOKYO", which is summarised as including "a multiplicity of pulsing riffs and section changes [that] push the music close to classical sonatas and Abstract Expressionist painting" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 263).

Two final academic contributions that I want to briefly mention are the large-scale examination of progressive music by Andreas Hinners (2005), and Markus Wierschem's (2016) examination of Pain of Salvation's concept album *BE*. Hinners' book includes brief comments regarding Queensrÿche's engagement with the classical – i.e. the band including "noise-collages in the style of the band Pink Floyd, including choir- and orchestra-arrangements by the film-music composer Michael Kamen, who had previously worked with Pink Floyd (*The Wall*)" (Hinners 2005, 64)[37] – which whilst certainly useful, remain fairly limited in their descriptive potential. Also, leaving aside my hesitancy in suggesting that the appearance of such elements in a single piece is to represent the aesthetic of an entire genre, the author's definition of progressive metal, specifically the mentioned sources, present some challenges.

Hinners' definition of progressive metal is fairly typical in describing the genre as combining heavy metal and progressive rock elements (Hinners 2005, 63), though by drawing from a lexicon article by Peter Wicke, Kai-Erik Ziegenrücker and Wieland Ziegenrücker (Wicke, K.-E. Ziegenrücker, and W. Ziegenrücker 2007d) as means of framing classical elements this raises questions about the classical's role in progressive metal. Specifically, in said article, the latter authors briefly mention the category of "Progressive rock of the 1990s" which is defined as a combination between "orchestral sound imagery, complex metric structures, the riffs of heavy metal and the harmonic borrowings from jazz" (Wicke, K.-E. Ziegenrücker, and W. Ziegenrücker 2007d, 561).[38] The article is rather short and broad and seemingly draws only from Bill Martin's early book on progressive rock, though Wicke and Ziegenrücker provide some bands as examples of said development such as Dream Theater, Magellan, Tool, Threshold and Porcupine Tree; this seemingly reduces terminological blurring as these artists are

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[36] For an additional examination of Don Caballero, see Cateforis (2002).

[37] Ger. Orig. "1988 produzierten [Queensrÿche] mit *Operation: Mindcrime* ein auf George Orwell basierendes Konzeptalbum (ebd.). Die Produktion enthält starke dynamische Kontraste, Geräuschcollagen im Stil der Gruppe PINK FLOYD sowie Chor- und Orchesterarrangements des Filmmusik-Komponisten Michael Karnen, der zuvor für PINK FLOYD (The Wall) gearbeitet hat".

[38] Ger. Orig. "Mit orchestralen Klangbildern, komplizierten metrischen Strukturen, den Riffs des Heavy Metal und harmonischen Anleihen aus dem Jazz steht der Progressive Rock seit den 1990er Jahren in der Tradition des Art Rock, wie ihn Pink Floyd, Genesis oder Yes in den 1970ern verkörperten".

contemporarily accepted in progressive metal contexts. With that in mind, the same publication includes a separate brief entry on progressive metal that whilst overlapping with some of the aforementioned performers (e.g. Dream Theater or Threshold), does not mention the same or similar classical-interpretative components (Wicke, K.-E. Ziegenrücker, and W. Ziegenrücker 2007c, 314–15). Hinners is aware of this latter article (Hinners 2005, 16), yet he seemingly does not resolve the aforementioned lack of overlap in relation to the classical's role in progressive metal. When taken together, these issues do not fully invalidate Hinners' observation, yet similar to my criticism on Duxbury's texts, they do raise concerns as to whether mentioning progressive metal's classical elements stems from an attempt in strengthening genealogical connections, rather than as an aspect that can aid in more thoroughly examining the genre's aesthetic.

Another point of interest is the author's analysis of the album *The Heretic* by Victor Smolski & The Whiterussian Symphonic Orchestra (Hinners 2005, 78–81). In terms of the analysis, the level of detail in the author's discussion does not go much deeper than that of the large-scale discussion contributions outlined above – e.g. "influence of Russian orchestral music, for example that of Prokofiev and Shostakovich", "dissonances and shrill orchestral sounds", or comparing the electric guitar to that of the "violin in a violin concerto" including the use of a cadenza (Hinners 2005, 79, 80).[39] Whilst this can be beneficial to the current investigation as offering evidence for progressive metal's more focused engagement with the classical, such suggestions are to be made carefully. Specifically, Sidney König (2016) has argued that Hinners' drawing from the work of Theodor Adorno in the distinction between 'authentic' from 'commercial' performers is somewhat problematic due to creating a "definition of progressive rock, which enables [Hinners] to position the genre as 'serious music', i.e. outside the regression of hearing, and thereby legitimize its scientific relevance" (König 2016, 96).[40] Indeed, this potential can be identified in relation to the progressive metal discussion such as in Hinners' attempt to frame Smolski's work as more 'authentic' than the commercial pursuits of the "heavy metal meets orchestra" recordings by bands such as Rage, Scorpions or Metallica (Hinners 2005, 79). Furthermore, Hinners' description of Smolski's album as mostly lacking heavy metal song structures and thus as contrasting to other progressive metal performers and the "'heavy metal meets classical music'-productions" (Hinners 2005, 80),[41] makes it difficult to determine whether it is the difference in arrangement or the general focus on Western art music that marks Smolski's work as untypical for the genre. As such, the combined broadly definitional challenges and Adorno-inspired 'culture-critical' perspectives present not-insubstantial challenges to framing Hinners' contribution as

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[39] Ger. Orig. "Der Einfluss der russischen Orchestermusik, beispielsweise die von Prokofjew und Schostakowitsch, ist deutlich zu hören. Dissonanzen und schrille Orchesterklänge treten ebenso hervor, wie auch der in der Rockmusik sonst übliche Beat überwiegend nicht mehr vorhanden ist. Die E-Gitarre wird in ihrer Funktion ähnlich wie die Violine in einem Violinenkonzert eingesetzt, dazu gehört auch eine eingeschobene Kadenz – ein unbegleitetes, improvisiertes Solo".

[40] Ger. Orig. "Hinners formuliert nun eine Definition von Progressive Rock, die es ihm ermöglicht, das Genre als 'E-Musik', also außerhalb der Regression des Hörens zu positionieren und damit seine wissenschaftliche Relevanz zu legitimieren".

[41] Ger. Orig. "Das Konzept-Album [*The Heretic*], das mit Ausnahme des Titelsongs (Track 7) keine Heavy-Metal-Songstrukturen verwendet, unterscheidet sich damit deutlich von anderen Gruppen des Progressive Metal, wie auch von den 'Heavy Metal meets Classical Music' -Produktionen".

offering more than somewhat contestable evidence towards progressive metal including performers that attempt to position the relation to the classical as a more central component to the genre's aesthetic.

With regards to Wierschem's discussion of Pain of Salvation's album *Be*, the author offers several comments regarding the band's incorporation of orchestral elements, such as suggesting that ensemble inclusions represent a "foray into classical and Broadway musical idioms" (Wierschem 2016, 83), as well as that the use of the orchestra in tracks such as "'Dea Pecunia' […] serves as a good example of how the overall album is held together by the use of samples, fades, and blending effects, and the consistent orchestrated sound" (Wierschem 2016, 92). Of further note here is the author's comment that "band and orchestra not only blend well, the compositions leave space for both to breathe and assert their respective voices" (Wierschem 2016, 92). He also quotes the main album's composer Daniel Gildenlöw as wanting to "avoid 'doing a Metallica'" which implies adding orchestra to music intended for a smaller band ensemble, so as to "make it more impressive" (Gildenlöw, quoted in Wierschem 2016, 92). Despite providing an interesting example in which the emphasis on including the classical is intended to serve a broader, more interconnected purpose, the author offers too narrow description to that effect. From a music-analytical perspective, the descriptions of the actual arrangement remain somewhat limited – e.g. the track "Dea Pecunia" as "lushly orchestrated […] betraying its initial blues with increasingly orgiastic bombast" (Wierschem 2016, 92) or referring to the track "Vocari Dei" as "pastorally orchestrated" (Wierschem 2016, 93). Furthermore, whilst Wierschem's text emphasizes the importance of multimedial narratives towards the progressive rock genre, in other words an attempt to expand on the genre's theoretical faming, he seemingly situates the aforementioned orchestral aspects as a continuation of progressive rock's eclectic borrowing from (often) non-popular contexts (Wierschem 2016, 83). Given that this genealogical underpinning does not offer forward-directed perspectives situating Pain of Salvation's classical elements in broader progressive metal contexts, the text results in reaffirming the idea of the strong co-relation between progressive rock and the classical, though regrettably adds little substantial information as to the latter's role in progressive metal.

As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, I will also take some time to examine how journalistic sources have engaged with progressive metal and, to some degrees, its relation to the classical. The discussion of the genre in several (fairly) recent publications focusing on heavy metal, such as by Ian Christe (2004) and Jon Wiederhorn and Katherine Turman (2014) can, as a whole, be described as extremely limited in their scope. Despite employing different approaches – Christe's focuses on a period/location/group emphasis, and Wiederhorn and Turman offering a 'oral history' constructed via interviews – the progressive metal genre is only partially acknowledged as having any significance to the broader heavy metal history. For example, whilst Christe's book does mention on multiple occasions how different performers transitioned into some type of progressive metal – e.g. "much like Florida's Savatage and Connecticut's Fates Warning, [Queensrÿche] vaulted from an early power metal style into a heady new progressive metal realm" (Christe 2004, 230) – the genre is not included even as part of the book's one-page genre summaries. With regards to relations to the classical, on the one hand, the author indirectly hints at progressive rock as contributing to the general

development of heavy metal i.e. "contemporaries of Black Sabbath contributed to the development of what would later be considered heavy metal […] Others, like King Crimson, Queen, and Rush, attempted to introduce elements of classical music" (Christe 2004, 16), and on the other, he comments on the classical developments of the "progressive black metal" through the influence of Celtic Frost (Christe 2004, 282). Through these examples the classical is made somewhat visible in relation to progressive metal, yet the overall connection remains unclear, as either example can be seen as equally valid in simply attempting to contextualise and expand on the accepted role of Western art music in the broader metal field.

Similarly, although Wiederhorn and Turman's publication features a handful of instances in which progressive music is mentioned as an early influence of bands such as Judas Priest (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 42), Iron Maiden's bassist Steve Harris (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 91), or Metallica's late bassist Cliff Burton (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 245, 246), the progressive metal genre is not discussed in a dedicated chapter. Instead, short perspectives emerge in the expected progressive rock influence-affirming interviews with members of canonised (to various degrees) bands such as Queensrÿche (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 133–34), Cynic (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 470) or Tool (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 616), or a few photographs of Enslaved and Mastodon listed, respectively, as "Norwegian progressive black metal" and as the "new masters of prog-metal" (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, n.p.).[42] Some intriguing outliers worth briefly mentioning here include Saxon's Biff Byford discussing how despite "looking at a lot of progressive rock bands like Yes and Genesis […] our music was more aggressive, a bit faster" (Byford, quoted in Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 93) and a more general suggestion by Wiederhorn and Turman of progressive rock influencing metalcore bands (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 557), seemingly referring to the influence of "progressive stuff like Mr. Bungle and Dream Theater" as mentioned by Synyster Gates, guitarist of Avenged Sevenfold (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 561). Nevertheless, the text's more limited outlining of progressive metal precludes offering new or more revealing contexts in relation to the genre's classical connections.

Other book-length discussions such as by Gary Sharpe-Young (2007) do acknowledge progressive metal as a genre, though due to the author's somewhat bizarre division of sections (e.g. including both a category of "European metal", as well as separate ones for "Finnish Metal", "Swedish Metal" and "German Metal") the resulting selection of artists brings more confusion than clarity. Specifically, progressive metal is listed in the same category as symphonic metal and Gothic metal (Sharpe-Young 2007, 275–94), which may suggest a small representation until the category of "Innovators" is explored (Sharpe-Young 2007, 477–95) in which performers culturally associated with the progressive metal genre such as Meshuggah (Sharpe-Young 2007, 485–86), Voivod (Sharpe-Young 2007, 493–94), or Watchtower (Sharpe-Young 2007, 495) are listed. This confusion aside, the aforementioned category of "Progressive, Symphonic and Gothic metal" creates the impression that, if anything, the classical is situated outside of progressive metal contexts. For example, through the Western art music training of performers in symphonic metal bands such as Epica's Simone Simmons

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[42] The images are located in a photo-only section without page numbers positioned between pages 590 and 591.

(Sharpe-Young 2007, 270) and Nightwish's Tarja Turunen (Sharpe-Young 2007, 285); or the "classical heritage" of Rhapsody of Fire's guitarist Luca Turilli as well as via practices such as borrowing from/transforming Western art music pieces (Sharpe-Young 2007, 289) and the incorporation of an orchestra and a choir for one of their records (Sharpe-Young 2007, 290). Similarly, the author mentions the use of vocal choirs or Western art music-interpretative instruments in Gothic metal bands such as After Forever's *Prison of Desire* album (Sharpe-Young 2007, 276); Moonspell's EP *Under the Moonspell* (Sharpe-Young 2007, 284); Paradise Lost's *Gothic* album (Sharpe-Young 2007, 288) or Theatre of Tragedy's *Velvet Darkness They Fear* album (Sharpe-Young 2007, 291).

In contrast, the section on Dream Theater – an editorial oversight of which results in a somewhat humorous description of the band as the "pro-metal scene-leaders" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 277) – discusses the "inclusion [of Dream Theater's keyboard player Jordan Rudess] on the classical *Steinway To Heaven* album alongside Sherinian and Yes maestro Rick Wakeman" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 278) as part of side projects beyond the band's core repertoire. The exception here is the US band Kamelot, which lacks an explicit genre ascription in Sharpe-Young's book, yet is listed in the metal-archives.com website as "Progressive/Melodic Power Metal" (Metal-archives.com n.d.i) and in progarchives.com as "melodic metal with progressive elements" (Progarchives.com n.d.l). Specifically, Sharpe-Young discusses Kamelot as engaging with session performers seemingly implying Western art music contexts such as "the Fallersleben String Quarter [and] flautist Simon McTavish" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 281–82), albums such as *Karma* including "a wide-ranging arsenal of vocalists, a string quartet, and the Rodenberg Symphony Orchestra", or their album *Epica* which included "a backing choir" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 282).

From the perspective of progressive music-focused publications, progressive metal appears to be more commonly acknowledged as a genre, though these instances are often somewhat short, broad-stroked, and attempt to situate the genre in a typically formulaic 'prog rock + heavy metal' framework (e.g. see Lambe 2011, 144; Weigel 2017, 262). As an example, Will Romano (2010) prioritises canonised progressive rock performers such as King Crimson (Romano 2010, 31–45), Yes (Romano 2010, 59–69) or Gentle Giant (Romano 2010, 115–19), whereby despite including broader chapters on "German Prog and the Krautrockers" or "Progressive Italiano", progressive metal is predominantly represented via a chapter dedicated to Dream Theater (Romano 2010, 215–23)[43] and a brief mention that (somewhat) outlines the genre:

> "Others [sic] bands such as Opeth, Pain of Salvation, Enchant, Threshold, Shadow Gallery, Mastodon, Trans-Siberian Orchestra, and Symphony X continue to combine prog rock's exploratory sense of adventure (and sometimes excesses) with heavy metal thunder". (Romano 2010, 226)

The lack of details on some of the basic parameters of the genre, notwithstanding, these types of approaches are not entirely devoid of perspectives useful to this investigation as, for example, the same text by Romano features an intriguing quote from Symphony X's guitarist Michael Romeo:

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[43] Romano's 2014 publication includes a similar approach, relegating the discussion of progressive metal to an interview with several members of the US progressive metal band Scale the Summit (Romano 2014, 340–44).

"'There has always been a lot of guitar-keyboard interplay in our music, but as time went on, the classical influence of Bach and Beethoven gave way to modern-sounding stuff, like twentieth-century art music and film scores' […] 'But we never lost sight of metal. I think our common influence of classical music and progressive music, along with the heavier stuff, led us to where we are now and what we do'". (Romeo, quoted in Romano 2010, 226)

This quote is not only noteworthy for representing a progressive metal band's engagement with Western art music, but also as it highlights that the performer seemingly introduces a certain separation between progressive rock and Western art music contexts.

Another more general instance can be found in a later publication by Romano in which the author points out parallels between "the *tone* or *symphonic poem* – one long piece of music that's meant to tell a story" the "rock equivalent […] can be found in the extravagant efforts of bands in the progressive rock and progressive hard rock or metal categories […] even prog metalers like Voivod and Queensrÿche" (Romano 2014, 46, italics in original). To be clear, this is not a new perspective as drawing comparisons to the symphonic poem in relation to progressive rock can be found in academic texts such as Macan (1997, 41–43). Moreover, as the comparison by Romano points to Queensrÿche's concept album *Operation: Mindcrime*, which is neither a single 'tone-poem style' piece but an album the included songs of which are supporting a developing narrative, I am left with the impression that the relation to the classical is positioned on a more abstract level, rather than as reflecting the use of Western art music instrumentation.

Stephen Lambe's *Citizens of Hope and Glory. The Story of Progressive Rock* (2011) situates the progressive metal genre as one example of the progressive music development in the 1990s (Lambe 2011, 144–46). Whilst this general outline offers little useful information for the purposes of this study, not to mention includes somewhat underhanded comments regarding "1990s metal bands [looking] beyond the cliches of their own music and towards Progressive Rock as an inspiration" (Lambe 2011, 144), the author offers a notable extension to the progressive metal genre. Namely, Lambe mentions a quasi-separate category of the progressive rock-influenced "Female-Fronted Symphonic Metal" which he summarises as having a more substantial classical component, i.e. its "women who sometimes sing in an operatic style […] and huge orchestral sweeps" (Lambe 2011, 146–47). This description can be initially contextualised as confirming the argumentation in Hegarty and Halliwell's text, yet when Lambe's text is viewed side by side with the text by Sharpe-Young, a more complicated image begins to emerge.

On the one hand, Lambe and Sharpe-Young's texts share a common framing in that, despite stemming from progressive rock and heavy metal contexts, both outline symphonic metal as a related, yet not identical, genre to progressive metal. On the other hand, certain contradictions are also at play as whilst Lambe's description can be interpreted as signalling progressive rock's influence on symphonic metal via the mention of the (classically-connotative) operatic and orchestral components (Lambe 2011, 146), Sharpe-Young's examination of symphonic metal bands, as previously outlined, does not discuss progressive influences, and moreover seemingly situates the appearance of classical elements as an uncommon characteristic in bands exemplifying progressive metal. Whilst some may dismiss these as simply an inconsistency in the interpretation, from the perspective of a scholar

attempting to investigate progressive metal's engagement with the classical, these texts highlight the need for academic writings on progressive metal to equally draw from both progressive rock and heavy metal writings and to examine and reflect on the implications of such contradictions. Furthermore, the texts also highlight that despite the close connection between progressive rock and Western art music, a more directly genealogical approach to outlining progressive metal, as seen in Hegarty and Halliwell, is not without its weaknesses.

The 2010 reworking of Paul Stump's 1997 publication on progressive music should also be briefly mentioned for its inclusion of a discussion on progressive metal, though for less than admirable reasons. Whilst somewhat praiseworthy for acknowledging that, in 2010, "there is simply not enough research into and lab work done with […] basic elements by Progressive Metal musicians", such as "harmony, texture, development", Stump provides no set of characteristics by which he chooses the several succinctly discussed bands[44] (Tool, System of a Down, Mastodon and The Mars Volta), barring the mentioning of virtuosity as "the criterion of musical integrity" for the genre (Stump 2010 [1997], 331). Instead, the author briefly rehashes the same simplistic divisions regarding the Apollonian progressive aesthetic and the Dionysian influences on heavy metal (Stump 2010 [1997], 330 also 243), and acknowledging that "the progressive metal field is now taking dimensions more like those of a prairie: it stretches as far as the eye can see", Stump is keen to dismiss it as a genre and as part of the so-called "progressive pantheon" (Stump 2010 [1997], 331).

Regrettably, due to Stump's dismissive attitude towards heavy metal culture as a whole (Stump 2010 [1997], 8, 244), including some of its fans if the quote below is any indication, it is difficult to determine whether the discussion of Yngwie Malmsteen is to be taken as representative of progressive metal's engagement with the classical, or simply as an example of newer genre contexts' inability to reach the desired 'level of complexity' as that of similar approaches in 1970s progressive music:

> "Robert Walser makes an excellent Progressive case for the Swedish guitarist Yngwie Malmsteen, but the evidence of this highly respectable argument is not *prima facie*. Malmsteen, like so many other progressive metallers, cannot ever quite bring himself to deconstruct his basic musical units – harmony, texture, development – enough for a neutral listener to claim that the denim-leather crowd are likely to turn nasty. No matter how fast one plays them, flat-picked arpeggios of Lisztian chordal processes, guitar flashes, rat-ta-tat bass, lump-hammer drumming and the ever-present minor-key harmonies are always going to sound familiar. They are as recognisably consonant to a trailer-trash metalhead in

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[44] Whilst this criticism can be levied to a great deal of journalistic literature, I want to make clear that my emphasis here aims to acknowledge that Stump's publication offers discussions somewhat comparable to academic counterparts in terms of depth of arguments and critical engagement with history. This certainly helps framing why Stump can be viewed as an equal contributor of progressive rock's early academic discussions such as by Macan or Covach (e.g., see Anderton 2009, 97). However, affording Stump's text with such weight in the formal discourse surrounding progressive music – not to mention the lower barrier to entry in the face of the much more affordable cost of the book – also necessitates a similar level of scrutiny when debatable arguments about progressive metal (often with little literature behind them) are being presented to large audiences.

Williamsburg, Yuma, Skokie or Great Bend as they might be to a musicology major". (Stump 2010 [1997], 331, italics in original)

Similarly, the author's discussion of the US band System of a Down employs multiple comparisons to the Western art music composer Aram Khachaturian, presumably due to the band members' American-Armenian background, yet the overall impression of the comparison is less about signalling actual classical-interpretative aspects, but rather as a potentially ironic summary highlighting one's knowledge of history:

"System of a Down['s] rampaging sonic assault seems the most natural of settings for the racing rhythms, quasi-oriental scales and tart chord progressions of Armenian folk. The belligerent rowdiness and clamour of the music indeed brings to mind Georgian-born Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian's deafening symphonies and chin-up-comrade Soviet ballet scores like *Spartacus* and *Gayane*. Boris Schwartz's gauging of Khachaturian's work as 'music for street and square' (significantly, the Socialist-Realist monumentality of the 1947 Symphony No. 3, which calls for a typically Stalin-hymning dozen extra trumpets) could apply just as well to System of a Down, but fuelled by unadorned immediacy". (Stump 2010 [1997], 333)

Arguably by far the most focused journalistic resource on progressive metal available is Jeff Wagner's book *Mean Deviations. Four Decades of Progressive Heavy Metal* (2010) where the author provides a veritable 'phonebook' of performers from a multiple heavy metal periods/genres and in which he identified progressive tendencies. The engagement with the classical is not outwardly presented as a core element of the genre, yet its appearance in a variety of perspectives throughout the book suggests that it is nevertheless rather substantial. These range from discussing classical-engaging metal bands with influence to progressive metal contexts such as Metallica as "one of the very first metal bands to be compared to classical music due to the suitelike [sic] movements of their most complex arrangements; the bombastic melodic sense; the multitude of time changes and mood swings; and the sweeping grandiosity" (J. Wagner 2010, 40); progressive-related artists such as Helloween and Blind Guardian are framed as "seductive to many a prog metal fan" due to "epic atmospheres, neoclassical elements and Tolkien-esque imagery" (J. Wagner 2010, 206–7); references to the use of classical instrumentation appear in the output of canonised performers such as Celtic Frost (J. Wagner 2010, 120), Fates Warning (J. Wagner 2010, 61), Queensrÿche (J. Wagner 2010, 53), Symphony X, (J. Wagner 2010, 203–4) or Voivod (J. Wagner 2010, 108); bands are presented as having a more substantial engagement with Western art music devices, visible in multiple albums of their respective outputs such as Believer (J. Wagner 2010, 154–56), Coroner (J. Wagner 2010, 131–33), Mekong Delta (J. Wagner 2010, 134–37), or Therion (J. Wagner 2010, 233–39); to instances in which Western art music is attested as an influence from, or is used as a point of comparison by, the author/performers such as Cynic (J. Wagner 2010, 173–74), Gorguts (J. Wagner 2010, 185–86), Devin

Townsend (J. Wagner 2010, 218), Andromeda (J. Wagner 2010, 223), Enslaved (J. Wagner 2010, 271), and Sigh (J. Wagner 2010, 303–4).[45]

I consider Wagner's publication as a fairly useful resource, including its discussion of Western art music-related perspectives in progressive metal as, whether due to being one of the few dedicated books on progressive metal, or due to Wagner's knowledge of the culture, there are observable parallels in his writing and definitions by the examined communities' own categories of progressive metal. For example, Wagner's framing of Shadow Gallery as drawing from "neoclassical metal in the vein of Yngwie Malmsteen" and PA's definition of one of the "Progressive metal" categories that mentions the band in close proximity to "a strong theatrical, symphonic and melodic approach" (Progarchives.com 2012b); also Wagner's discussion of "tech metal" as influenced by "jazz fusion, classical and world music" (J. Wagner 2010, 69) as well as to some types of black metal exemplified by Enslaved (J. Wagner 2010, 247–48) matches the co-relation between "symphonic" or "classical" elements in the PA definitions of the categories of "Technical/Extreme Prog Metal" and "Experimental/Post Metal"[46] (Progarchives.com 2012a; Progarchives.com 2012c).

With that in mind, despite its usefulness towards expanding on progressive metal's cultural framing, several important aspects of the text are to be clearly outlined. With regards to the author's understanding of what constitutes progressive metal, Wagner outlines two clear, though somewhat romanticised, criteria:

> "First – do [the band discussed in the book] sound like no other metal band? They must be unique. […] Second, […] does a band deviate from the norm? Does the artist approach metal using an innovative ingenious, and/or novel angle of attack?" (J. Wagner 2010, xviii)

Whilst acceptable as deciding factors, and offering a somewhat clearer context than some of the academic attempts, Wagner's viewpoint strikes me as including an undercurrent of 'if it is interesting – it's prog' narrative that carves out a canon consisting of 'thinking man's metal'[47] at the expense of those 'non-smart' metal bands and/or fans. This is problematic as it can be interpreted as both presenting a 'positive spin' on Stump's dismissal of metal fans, but also as it touches on the types of simplistic associations regarding the cultural framing of metal's audiences that Smialek and St-Laurent's research have attempted to address.

From a genre studies perspective, Wagner is clearly focused on the idea of a 'timeline' visible not only in the continuous reiteration of influence from progressive rock to progressive metal

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[45] A mention of Meshuggah's listeners to include classically trained singers is seemingly used in a same manner by the author, though referring to Smialek's investigation of the band's self-positioning, it remains unclear as to whether the quote offered in Wagner's book represents Meshuggah's surprise regarding how far their fanbase spreads, or disbelief that people take their work so seriously.

[46] These categories will be discussed in more detail in a later section outlining the data sources for this study.

[47] To be clear, I am referencing the term here in its capacity to describe the general perception of performers found in Wagner's book. That said, the term is not an invention of the author, but rather reflects how early releases by Queensrÿche or Fates Warning were discussed "by a global media struggling to find new names for the genre's rapid expansion" (J. Wagner 2010, 68). For a discussion of the term 'thinking man's metal', specifically in relation to Metallica and the presentation of complexity and generation of white masculinity, see Pillsbury (2006, 57–98).

performers,[48] or from established progressive metal performers to newer performers, but also in his suggestion that some bands excluded from the book such as Between the Buried and Me or Mastodon are "still too much in flux to properly pace in the historical timeline" (J. Wagner 2010, xviii). Furthermore, consider the following quote from Wagner's book:

> "To me, the bands with the most interesting stories were the ones that began humbly, playing crude, simple forms of metal, and later expanded way beyond that. On the other hand, many modern progressive or technical metal bands begin life already sounding as mature as their final albums will years down the road [...] These kinds of bands are playing safe 'progressive' music. Even if they offer worthwhile listening, there's not enough forward evolution to warrant closer inspection here". (J. Wagner 2010, xvii–xviii)

Leaving aside the somewhat dismissive expression of "crude, simple forms of metal" as potentially poor choice of words, the division that Wagner is hinting at can be identified clearly in the author's framing of Dream Theater's emergence into prominence. Specifically, he suggests that through the band's *Images and Words* album, Dream Theater helped to establish an approach to making progressive music defined by "lengthy multi-part songs, high-pitched vocals, dominant keyboards, chops-intensive musicianship, memorable melodies, and heavy rhythmic attack" and notes that "[Dream Theater] wore their influences on their sleeves" (J. Wagner 2010, 198), mentioned earlier as the band "lov[ing] progressive, complex music – Rush, Yes, the Dixie Dregs, Frank Zappa – and also lov[ing] heavy music: Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath, Metallica, Queensrÿche" (Portnoy, quoted in J. Wagner 2010, 90). The resulting overall approach is described as taken up by a variety of bands, that whilst initially praised, led to an upsurge of imitative work i.e. "[i]nstead of deviating from the norm, this movement established a new norm – progressive in appearance but not in practice" (J. Wagner 2010, 198), and the emergence of a quasi-pejorative term "Dream Theater clones" (J. Wagner 2010, 199). This is, perhaps somewhat unreflexively contextualised as paralleling how 1970s (implicitly UK-founded) progressive rock was imitated by bands in France, Netherlands, Sweden or Norway

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[48] I would like to offer a somewhat roundabout example that helps illustrate my issue with definitions prioritising such influences. Some years ago, I encountered a rather bizarre and surreal 1980s post-apocalyptic action/comedy film of a 'so-bad-it-is-good' variety titled *Surf Nazis Must Die* (George 1987). In one of the scenes, a dramatic camera shot zooms to a nearby pier on which the album cover of King Crimson's *In The Court of the Crimson King*, with its purple-reddish screaming face, is spray-painted. If one is to understand referencing to auditive/visual elements as a form of influence, should this example be seen as an indication of referencing progressive rock/progressive music culture or, perhaps as a fruitful coincidence creatively used in by the film's director? To avoid misunderstanding, it is easy to find progressive metal performers that have professed their influence from progressive rock, yet scholars such as Weinstein (1998) have argued that the practice of creating a song cover has become increasingly more complex since the 1950s. Specifically, she outlines that in relation to the influence of postmodernist thinking, covers can range from "the commercial advantage of familiarity, homage, introducing obscure artists to a wider audience, gaining credibility, criticizing the past, appropriating a song from one genre into another, demonstrating one's roots, finding the original song to express the cover artists' views or feelings as well as if not better than anything they could write, and lack of creativity" (Weinstein 1998, 146). This is not to suggest that Wagner's approach is inherently wrong, but rather that, similar to McCandless who argued for the importance of music covers in Dream Theater's self-framing (McCandless 2010, 54–55), suggestions emphasising the influence of one performer to another should be presented as one potential and should be accompanied by reflexive perspectives as to what takes place when a progressive metal band professes their interest or influence by a previous progressive rock performer.

(J. Wagner 2010, 198–99), as well as with the emergence of "Fates Warning imitators, Queensrÿche revivalists, and obvious Rush wanna-bes" (J. Wagner 2010, 199).

However, most telling, is a quote from Ken Golde from the music label *The Laser's Edge*, who (drawing from the writing of Paul Stump) suggests that: "Stump clearly delineates the difference between Progressive with a capital 'P' and progressive with a little 'p.' Progressive with a capital 'P' meaning a style, a formula. Progressive with a little 'p' being an adjective, describing music that's trying to progress, trying to do something innovative and challenging and break down barriers" (Golden, quoted in J. Wagner 2010, 200). I say telling as a near identical framing is mentioned in Christoph Lücker's brief discussion of the genre, in which he quotes a 2005 interview with Nicolas van Dyk from the band Redemption in which the performer states:

> "I think there are two meanings. On the one hand, progressive music that pushes boundaries is written with a lowercase p. Mr. Bungle, Sleepytime Gorilla Museum and Devin Townsend are progressive artists to my ears. Progressive Metal with a capital P describes a special genre that includes song structures that are far from the norm, technology, polyrhythmic, uneven bars and similar compositional content. That means that you can speak of progressive metal without the music being really progressive, like all the Dream Theater clones for example".
> (Dyk, quoted in Lücker 2013 [2011], 39)[49]

It remains unclear as to whether Dyk's use of the same division is related to the perspective of Golden (and by extension Stump), however it frames Wagner's viewpoint as reflecting a tension between some canonized bands and their approaches, and the principles of 'innovation' or 'variety' that other/newer performers and the broader culture surrounding progressive metal has to navigate.

It is difficult to say whether Wagner's own prioritisation of 'innovation' is influenced by this principle, though even if it is not, there are several implications in terms of how the book should be viewed. On the one hand, as previously mentioned, Wagner's book either reflects the culture's own perspectives, or has taken sufficient root in the discourse; if the quote from Dyk is any indication, the answer potentially lies between the two possibilities. My own observations on discourses in this study's corpus of artists can attest that, whilst Dream Theater is very often evoked as a point of comparison and/or influence to some performers, it is not difficult to find examples showcasing the band mentioned in some negative capacity e.g., as instrumental 'musical masturbation'/'wanking' or 'noodling';[50] or the artist being compared to Dream Theater is praised for being distinct from the

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[49] Ger. Orig. "Ich finde es gibt zwei Bedeutungen. Einerseits, mit einem kleinen p geschrieben, ist es fortschrittliche Musik, die Grenzen verschiebt. Mr. Bungle, Sleepytime Gorilla Museum und Devin Townsend sind in meinen Ohren progressive Künstler. Progressive Metal mit einem großen P bezeichnet ein spezielles Genre, das Songstrukturen fernab der Norm, Technik, Polyrhythmik, ungerade Takte und ähnliche kompositorische Inhalte umfasst. Das bedeutet, dass du von Progressive Metal sprechen kannst, ohne dass die Musik wirklich progressiv ist, wie die ganzen Dream Theater-Klone zum Beispiel".
[50] For example: "Threshold are not the musical masturbators that Dream Theater are, with just the right amount of technicality to be impressive but not pretentious, and the solos and songwriting on the album show it" (MA-Threshold-#13, 2015); or "The tracks are also of considerable length where after the verses and choruses playout there are lengthy instrumental wankery sessions that are of the same type of extended play as heard on Dream Theater and Symphony X albums of the same era" (PA-ShadowGallery-#20, 2016).

'Dream Theater clones' trend.[51] However, it is possible that the issue is less about 'innovation' in the sense of creating something radically new, as per Wagner's own framing, but rather about prioritising the band's ability to project an individual identity that separates them from the aforementioned quasi-derogative 'clone' bands.[52] As such, despite the problematic and dividing components of these two types of progressive music, their perpetuation in the discourse is a reality that should be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, the prioritisation of 'innovation'-framing contrasts with both previously mentioned perspectives, such as Halbscheffel's suggestion regarding progressive metal's 'indirect' relation to the classical, as well as with academic perspectives on the corelation between progressive rock and notions of development. Kevin Holm-Hudson has noted a similar contradiction as to what the 'progressive' label stands for i.e. "[t]he irony is that most 'progressive' bands that wear the label have ceased to progress beyond the stylistic conventions established in the 1970s, whereas those bands that continue to progress refuse to accept the progressive label" (Holm-Hudson 2002b, 5–6). The audiences' reception of such 'innovation'-centric practices also appears different, as for example, Atton's examination of progressive rock fanzines suggests that (again drawing from Stump), some fans of progressive rock music are not interested in music that consistently changes, but rather aim to "regain […] a 'defining moment' in rock history" (Atton 2001, 43), most likely progressive rock's 1970s heyday. A similar perspective is mentioned by Jarl A. Ahlkvist (2011) whose content analysis of reviews found in the progarchives.com community highlights (also drawing from Atton's perspective) that in evaluating later progressive genres such as neo-prog, a co-relation between innovation and the term "progressive" can be identified (Ahlkvist 2011, 646, 648). However, conservative voices can also be detected, such as in occasional criticism levied against bands that do not conform to stylistic traits established in the genre's highly canonised period around the mid-1970s (Ahlkvist 2011, 653–56). Finally, the idea that norm deviation is somehow indicative of progressive music should be viewed somewhat critically. If drawing from the idea of pushing beyond the 'norms' of a song's length or structure, Albin Zak's (2008) discussion of extended forms in pieces in the 1970s has showcased that, despite strongly associated with the progressive rock genre (Zak 2008, 345), there is a substantial number of fairly long and complex songs, which the author refers to as "rock epics" i.e. tracks "embody[ing] an aesthetic ambition that has been growing since the 1950s" (Zak 2008, 357). These include, performers from genres such as hard rock (e.g. Led Zeppelin's "In the Light" [Zak 2008, 349–50]), glam (e.g. David Bowie's "Station to Station" [Zak 2008, 351–52]) or singer/songwriters (e.g. Bruce Springsteen's "Incident on 57th Street", [Zak 2008, 353–54]).

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[51] For example: "[Redemption] do a lot of things that Dream Theater has done and can't be accused of being a Dream Theater clone" (MA-Redemption-#2, 2010); or "Typically, one expects a progressive metal band to sound something along the lines of Dream Theater or Symphony X, and conform to a certain protocol (in other words; being incredibly unprogressive.) Threshold manages to steer clear of that stereotype; and in melding great melodic hooks with progressive integrity, have created an unlikely masterpiece" (MA-Threshold-#17, 2010).

[52] For example, "Although [Atmosfear] have some similar sounds to bands like Dream Theater and even Evergrey, they do have their own unique sound" (PA-Atmosfear-#2, 2008); or "Shadow Gallery's brand of metal is distinctly differen't [sic] from Dream Theater's" (PA-ShadowGallery-#99, 2005).

I am pointing out the contrast between Wagner's perspectives and that of current academic research less to imply that the former is somehow incorrect, or that the contexts of progressive rock audiences as observed in academic settings should be taken as priority. Rather, I aim to highlight that drawing from Wagner's arguments as part of an academic discussion would benefit from further reflection. For example, should the previously outlined list of engagements with Western art music be viewed as representative of the entire genre, or is it limited to those bands that somehow also incorporate 'innovative' perspectives through such approaches. Also, is the extent to which the author's (and seemingly some performers') perspective towards innovation represent the broader culture's viewpoint, even with the parallels I already mentioned, or are there additional contrasting perspectives circulating the discourse as seen in academic overviews. And the book raises questions as to how to navigate the underlying relation between progressive metal bands (as per Wagner's definition) and progressive rock contexts, especially given the aforementioned contrast in terms of prioritising past performers as seen in other progressive related communities. For the purposes of this study, Wagner's publication will remain a source from which I will draw perspectives, though as mentioned in the examination of academic texts, I will retain my more critical stances against canonisation and genealogical perspectives.

A critical perspective

Readers will have undoubtedly noticed that up to this point I have discussed a rather limited number of texts in substantial detail, and in many instances, I suggested that, whilst useful in constructing a general picture of progressive metal's engagement with the classical, overall, the contributions leave the reader wanting, whether due to larger-scale discussion lacking details, or an individual examination that is not well situated in wider context. This approach was only partly necessitated by the limited selection of texts highlighting progressive metal's classical aspects, and my critical stance against genealogical perspectives may leave the negative impression that I was searching for a 'perfect' summary that, for whatever reason never have, or (possibly) never will exist. To avoid the potential for these critical arguments to be seen as an expression of the author's 'pet peeve', I want to expand on the reasons behind their adoption. Having explored a fair number of additional texts dealing (in various depths) with the genre, as well as the broader progressive music field, I want to highlight and critically reflect on several tendencies that, in my opinion, have presented a rather limited viewpoint on progressive metal and in turn, may have led to further research assuming that progressive metal has little-to-no engagement with the classical. Some of these issues were briefly mentioned already, though I believe they merit a more in-depth discussion.

Referring back to my discussion of Covach's somewhat unclear usage of the term "progressive metal", it is noticeable that, despite it there being a clear increase in academic engagement with the genre since the 2010s, a large number of texts can be detected in which the appearance of the term progressive metal is somewhat unclear, to say the least. A number of articles either mention the genre, or refer to a band as progressive metal, without explaining the criteria by which such an ascription is made (e.g. Azevedo 2010, 332, 338; Barone 2015, 190; Bielmann 2011, 145; Belgrad 2016, 289; Bowler 2016, 16; Burns 2016, 94; Eriksson 2016, 226; Fejes 2017, 54; Foster 2011, 324n5; S. Grant 2016, 216,

220; Hagen 2011, 194, 199; Hoad 2015, 28; Karjalainen 2011, 106; Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 434; Klypchak 2007, 222; Morris 2014, 556; Varas-Díaz 2011; Venkatesh et al. 2015, 77; Waksman 2009, 8; Weinstein 2011, 40; Wildberger and Farreras 2016, 99; Zahova 2016, 22, 24). In the interest of transparency, I will point out that in most of these instances progressive metal is mentioned in passing and the genre's aspects rarely constitute a core aspect of the examination. As such, I can excuse to some extent the lack of definitions provided as it goes without saying that doing so for every other term will unnecessarily burden the creation (not to mention readability) of a text. However, as these are academic texts, I do not consider it an unreasonable expectation for scholars to briefly mention how the term is derived and/or for authors to simply acknowledge in a footnote that the term they are utilizing is somewhat under-theorised.[53]

Similarly, there are some instances in which scholars indicate the context from which the term is derived, either directly, or the information can be somehow inferred from within the text, though the main challenge for a reader to understand what is meant by the term remains present. These include the term as utilized by fans/interviewees/respondents (e.g. Berger 1999b, 57, 271; Berger 1999a, 165; Rowe 2017, 119; Sharman and Dingle 2015, 4, 8; Smialek 2015, 52; Tacchini and Damiani 2011, 61); as ascribed by journalists or record label-staff (e.g. Anderton 2016, 161; Braae 2016, 117; Diaz-Bone 2010, 280, 297; Goldhammer 2017, 139; Smialek 2015, 48n43; Zahova 2016, 23); from its use in online communities such as the metal-archives.com database or metalstorm.net (e.g. Berkers and Schaap 2018, 20, 114; Taina 2014, 13, 16, 33, 34, 40; Yavuz 2017, 4); or as applied by the members of the bands (e.g. Piotrowska 2015, 107; Schäfer 2012 [2011], 29).[54]

Another broad grouping of scholarly contributions include seemingly viable, yet ambivalently presented, information whereby the issue emerges due to the unclear relation between the (usually very short) definition of the genre, the provided bibliographical data, or other information from within the main body of the text (Çelikel 2016; Deanna 2010, 50; Fellezs 2016b, 99, 101; Freeborn 2002, 32; Freeborn 2010, 843; Frelik 2013, 290; Granholm 2012, 562, 563; P. Grant 2017, 100, 160, 196, 214; Hickam and Wallach 2011, 260; Lusty 2013, 118, 121; Shuker 2005 [1998], 135, 211; Swami et al. 2013, 379, 383; Unger 2016, 19, 26, 72). Rather than outline each individual issue I identify within these texts, I will summarize the engagement with such writings by stating the following. Different writing goals or writing styles at times mean that the process of extracting necessary information includes having to 'rummage' through another scholarly text's (at times unused) bibliographical information. With that in mind, whilst I can generally recognize when familiar progressive metal-related texts have been used, it is not that difficult to imagine instances where someone less-familiar or new to the subject encounters one or more bibliographical entries that are not immediately relatable to the study of progressive metal. In such a situation, determining the sources from which the description of the

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[53] I would also point out that whilst it may be convenient to frame these texts as technically presenting progressive metal as a separate entity – especially as a counterpoint to texts that have dismissed such possibility (e.g., Elflein 2010, 231; Stump 2010 [1997], 331) – doing so will do a disservice to any genuine attempt to engage critically with progressive metal literature in future research.

[54] To that effect, my application of the term progressive metal attempts to balance between how a performer is framed in the major communities this study is examining. Additionally, any mention of a band's genre that is not the subject of direct examination here defaults to drawing from its genre-label as found on metal-archives.com

genre is derived or influenced becomes rather challenging, thus obstructing the ability to follow up from the short or unclear usages of the term and/or the provided description.[55]

More troubling than the lack of terminological clarity in the aforementioned texts are instances in which even direct engagements with the examination of progressive metal still offer little context or framing as to the parameters of the term's ascription, thus resulting in contradictory perspectives. Referring back to Stump's book, the author suggests that the US alternative metal bands System of a Down and Tool are examples of progressive metal bands due to "trying to read the rulebook in order to read between the lines and rewrite in" (Stump 2010 [1997], 332, see also 332–333 for a brief analysis of both bands). Leaving the lack of clarity aside, the ascription of the label progressive metal is contrasted by the, comparatively brief, closing statements in the article by Jérôme Melançon and Alexander Carpenter (2015) which, despite evoking the same principle of attempting to overcome "the standard form of song-writing" explicitly frames the same two performers as "non-prog groups" (Melançon and Carpenter 2015, 145).[56]

If one is willing to discard these initial unclear terminology-focused observations as 'nitpicking' on my behalf, I want to draw the attention to a much more substantial issue that appears when writers attempt to provide some definition of progressive metal i.e., canonisation. Referring to my discussion of the contributions by McCandless and Pieslak, these texts offer important music-theoretical contributions in the early stages of the genre's focused examination. However, they can also be viewed as examples of research in which a limited selection of canonised bands are investigated and/or used as representation of the genre e.g. Dream Theater (e.g. Deweppe 2006; Friesen and J. S. Epstein 1994, 10, 11; Graham 2011; Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 268–72; Mądro 2017, 161–63; McCandless 2010; McCandless 2013; Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 48–49; Respati and Yunairto 2015; van Dijk 2013; Verne 2013, 10; Weinstein 2011, 40),[57] Meshuggah (e.g. Burke 2018; Capuzzo 2018; Gil 2014; Hannan 2018; Lucas 2018; Marrington 2017; Pieslak 2007; Pieslak 2008, 46–48; Smialek 2008);[58] and to a lesser degree Pain of Salvation (Burns 2020; dos Reis Franz 2009; Wierschem

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[55] There is a possibility that some texts overlap, or that I have missed including some from my own bibliography. However, given the core purpose of these paragraphs i.e., reflecting on how challenging and/or time-consuming it is to extract valuable information from a large number of texts, I believe such small omissions would be excused.

[56] A similar ambiguity emerges in the genre-label ascription of bands such as Mastodon, whereby Bernardini outlines that the band is "routinely described as a 'progressive' or 'concept metal' band, and sometimes as just plain 'progressive' or 'hard rock'" by its listeners (Bernardini 2009, 31). In contrast, Lusty's brief mentioning of the band provides no genre label (Lusty 2013, 124), though based on her discussion of classical literature in heavy metal contexts, one might assume that she implies that the band belongs to said latter category.

[57] Of the listed texts, only those by McCandless, Graham, Respati and Yunairo, and van Dijk are dedicated exclusively on examining the band; the texts by Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl, Hegarty and Halliwell and Mądro offer analyses of Dream Theater as part of larger discussions on progressive metal; and those by Weinstein, Friesen and Epstein mention the band as an/one of several example(s) representing the progressive metal genre; Verne's text mentions the band as an example of progressive metal artists that another performer mentioned as part of their interests. What I want to emphasise here, however, is that, whilst differing in how the band's appearance is framed, when taken together with the oft appearance of Dream Theater in journalistic and fan discourse, the inherent contribution to further canonisation of the band cannot be discounted.

[58] Of the listed texts, Meshuggah is the focus of the investigations by Pieslak (2007), Burke, Capuzzo, Lucas and Smialek; Pieslak (2008), Gil, and Hannan's contributions are still of substantial depth, yet primarily address/also

2016).[59] Also they can be described as developing an early conceptualisation of progressive metal that tends to prioritize discussing (whether in length or in passing) its central/characteristic feature, namely, the rhythmic or metric complexity (e.g., Angeler 2016, 8, 12, 17; Ayik 2010, 296; Biamonte 2014, n.p.; Custodis 2012, 40; Deanna 2010, 50; Lucas 2018, n.p.; Pieslak 2008, 45; Shelvock 2013, 129). It goes without saying that criticism against this development should be appropriately contextualised: first, prioritising highly canonised bands such as Dream Theater certainly makes sense given the band's prominent role in the culture, as it became clear by their appearance in a variety of journalistic publications, but also when considering that Timothy Dowd, Trent Ryan, and Yun Tai's analysis of album reviews point to Dream Theater as amongst the most commonly appearing points of comparison (Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016, 110). However, what I find lacking in these texts is an attempt to reflect on more contemporary developments that view the band's influence towards a supposedly more 'formulaic' approach and as not representative of the broad culture's emphasis on 'progressing' as forward development, as seen in the aforementioned discussions found in Wagner and Lücker.

Second, despite it being extremely difficult to argue against the emphasis on rhythmic complexity in progressive metal, some scholarly perspectives seemingly suggested that such principle is not the only defining factor for the genre. For example, Harris M. Berger's (1997) discussion of several bands within the broader progressive metal field suggests that "[w]hen used to modify the name of a variety of rock or metal, the adjective 'progressive' is used to indicate that the band employs complex musical structures" and in relation to the band Winter's Bane he notes that "the band's songs were sufficient in length and complexity to make their music 'progressive metal' (Berger 1997, 485n3). This argument is not without its issues as it can potentially be viewed as overlapping with the discussion large-scale metric changes, as well as representing a somewhat comparable 'core' trait that can be encountered in relation to the genre (e.g. see J. Wagner 2010, xix), though it can still be used as an example in supporting the ideas of deploying a wider set of characteristics.[60] Furthermore, even in newer related (sub-)genres that emphasize rhythmic/metric complexity such as djent there are

investigate other performers; and Marrington's text includes brief mentions of Meshuggah's contribution to the framing of the djent genre (Marrington 2017, 260, 261). Same as with my argument on Dream Theater, despite the different depth of discussion, the canonisation potential of so many entries, given how small the progressive metal research field is, should not be ignored.

[59] In the interest of full disclosure, both Franz's and Alexander Deweppe's texts mentioned in this paragraph allowed me to only gain a surface overview of the authors' respective engagement with Pain of Salvation and Dream Theater (Deweppe 2006, 67–77). As such, their inclusion serves only as anecdotal evidence for said artist's use in non-Anglo-speaking contexts.

[60] Another tentative example can be found in the previously discussed text by Wierschem (2016) the author briefly mentions that one of the characteristics of progressive rock is "odd time signatures and polyrhythms" (Wierschem 2016, 82), yet shortly after he draws from Deena Weinstein in her suggesting that "[progressive rock's] defining feature is not a set of concrete sonic elements, such as particular rhythms or instrumentation [but rather] a conceptual trope […] the appropriation of nonpopular musical forms" (Weinstein, quoted in Wierschem 2016, 83). Despite the intention of this to have clearly been supporting the author's investigation of the concept album's musical and paramusical complexity, considering that the text engages with the investigation of progressive metal performer, it is possible to interpret the act of drawing from Weinstein's broader argument as quasi-supportive of the idea that rhythmic complexity is not the singular characteristic to be pursued when examining artists from said genre.

other relevant characteristics that should be reflected on e.g., Kevin Fellezs's (2016a) suggestion that "[d]jent, in particular, seems concerned with controlling metal's sonic excesses with palm-muting embodying this sense of expressive abatement" (Fellezs 2016a, 335).

Whilst the previous section of this book already highlighted that rhythmic complexity's relation to classical composers can be a valid perspective to inquiries such as mine.[61] However, the overemphasis of one aspect as the 'core' aesthetic feature of progressive metal, may have contributed to a limited outward perception of the genre, including the lack of connection to the classical despite the variety of small pockets of evidence I mentioned earlier. An example of such a separation can be identified in discussions suggesting that (less-)canonized progressive metal artists such as Symphony X differ from progressive contexts, in part, due to their utilization of the orchestra (see Bolay 2019, 7; see also Botero Camacho and Picón del Campo 2017).[62]

The issues outlined here can be considered as paralleling a broader set of challenges related to canonisation found in academic discussion on progressive rock, which have been noted by scholars such as Anderton as early as 2009 (Anderton 2009; also Anderton 2010). Specifically, the author has argued that "[a]cademic studies have focused primarily on the major British bands, especially Yes, Genesis, Emerson Lake and Palmer (ELP), Jethro Tull, King Crimson and Pink Floyd, thus ignoring or downplaying the mainland European contribution to the development of progressive rock, and describing its characteristics in relatively narrow terms" (Anderton 2009, 97–98). Whilst more recent publications such as the edited collections by Philippe Gonin (2016) as well as by Martin Lücke and Klaus Näumann (2016) showcase definite improvement through the inclusion of articles examining progressive performers in a variety of contexts, Anderton himself repeated the same call to action during the closing remarks of the second international conference organized by 'The Progect Network for the Study of Progressive Rock' that took place in Edinburgh in 2016, where contributions on Procol

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[61] To that effect, a recent performance-focused master's thesis by Lauri Ahone (2015), engaged with transcribing and re-arranging a variety of pieces by progressive metal/djent bands such as Animals as Leaders, Meshuggah or TesseracT for various percussive ensembles. Of note here is that Ahone's intentions were "to bring my favourite songs to the repertoire of the classical percussion so I could play them to the classical music audience" (Ahone 2015, 5), which however tentatively, offers additional connections between progressive metal and Western art music contexts through the genre's rhythmic complexity.

[62] To briefly summarise, Jordan Bolay's argument suggests that Symphony X's *Paradise Lost* album "blends form and content to produce a Satanist – in the Blakean sense, i.e. not necessarily Satanic – concept album that could only work as a metal album, distancing Symphony X from prog rockers like 'Dream Theater and Rush', to whom they had previously been compared [...]" (Bolay 2019, 7). He continues that the album's "use of demonic or occult-sounding scales [is combined] with 'blinding, speed-metal riffs', 'a full-blown orchestra', 'and complex piano parts' [...] The result is a neoclassical offshoot of the hybrid subgenre known as power metal" (Bolay 2019, 7). Whilst the point of separation from progressive rock/metal bands such as Dream Theater or Rush seemingly lies on the demonic/occult scales, by mentioning the use of orchestra and piano as elements leading to a different genre Bolay is implicitly separating said elements from progressive metal contexts. Similarly, Manuel Botero Camacho and Nuria Picón del Campo's discussion of the broad heavy metal genre's engagement with mythological contexts describes Symphony X as a symphonic metal band (Botero Camacho and Picón del Campo 2017, 170). By framing said genre as "assembl[ing] all the typical characteristics of heavy metal together with elements from classical music, which may include choirs, symphonic instruments or an orchestra" (Botero Camacho and Picón del Campo 2017, 169) this seemingly reaffirms the same gap between Symphony X, Western art music contexts and their combined relation to progressive metal.

Harum, Pink Floyd, Gentle Giant, Genesis and King Crimson appeared (see Academia.edu 2016).[63] Furthermore, Anderton reiterated his criticism in several publications from 2020 (see Anderton 2020, 1–2; Anderton and Atton 2020, 9), whereby despite affirming the changing focus of the academic field, the act of repetition leaves me with the impression that the issue is by no means fully overcome.[64]

An important aspect of the critique by Anderton (2010) is the idea of the "symphonic orthodoxy" which is defined as "conflat[ing] 'symphonic' progressive rock with progressive rock in general" and also as positioning the genre as "the exploration and development of harmonic, metric and structural forms towards a high level of musical sophistication, as judged by Western conceptions of the classical tradition", resulting in some early studies "largely ignoring the contributions of those bands which adopted or adapted alternative influences" (Anderton 2010, 419).[65] Anderton is not singular in adopting this viewpoint as similar arguments attempting to provide critical perspectives can be found in other texts on progressive rock. John Sheinbaum (2002) has argued that early academic research on progressive rock has utilised "[a]nalytic tools and language derived from the study of Western art music, and the implicit value judgements associated with them, are employed in

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[63] It should be noted that the following editions of the same conference from 2018 in Lund, Sweden and in 2021, (digitally) in Ottawa, Canada seemingly reflect a slow opening of the field, whereby research on contexts outside of UK/USA has increased and progressive metal appears as a more prominent theme. Whilst I can attest to this observation having participated in the 2018 edition of the conference (and visited its 2016 edition), I was unable to do so for its 2021 edition and examining the programme leaves me with some mixed feelings when considering the framing of progressive metal. Despite the more prominent discussion of progressive metal artists, with more contributions commenting on the overlap between progressive rock and heavy metal, not to mention discussions on progressive metal in Japan or China, other aspects seemingly reflect the criticisms this section is outlining such as emphasis on music theoretical and rhythmic complexity in the progressive metal genre, as well as discussions on canonised artists such as Dream Theater, or Tool (see progectconference2.wixsite.com 2021). It goes without saying that, due to my absence in the Ottawa-based conference, I am offering only a superficial comment rather than extending my criticism to said contributions without proper examination.

[64] An additional perspective that can be added here is that a contrast between Anderton and Atton's (2020) publication on journalistic framing of the term progressive rock in the late 1960s and early 1970s; and the examination of specialist music critics as appearing in an online website dedicated to progressive rock by (Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016). Anderton and Atton's examination of what the term progressive rock signified to UK journalistic publications reveals that "the bands routinely referred to as progressive rock today were regularly featured in the most important weekly music papers of the time, yet in the period up to 1974 they were rarely discussed using the genre term 'progressive rock'" (Anderton and Atton 2020, 19) and suggest that a certain historical revisionism can be detected in the more recent academic framings of the genre (Anderton and Atton 2020, 19–20). However, when contrasted to Dowd, Ryan, and Tai's text, the latter outlines that "the specialist critics in this study have also converged with progressive rock scholars in terms of emphasizing canonical bands, with both using a canon to situate the development of progressive rock" (Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016, 119), and thus implies that a change in the perception of the progressive rock genre has already taken place. Considering that progressive rock listeners (and potentially the specialist critics just mentioned) may have been aware of recent academic developments, one must wonder whether 'the damage' may have already been done, and more pertinently – what efforts will be required for a more differentiated perspective to re-emerge.

[65] Whilst Anderton is addressing the early academic/journalistic publications in progressive rock from the Anglo-speaking world, the examination of German publications can provide additional and much earlier contexts supporting the outlined issue of canonisation. For example, academic discussions of rock bands' engagement with Western art music contexts, including canonised artists such as Emerson Lake and Palmer, The Nice or The Beatles, can be found as early as the 1970s (Schuler 1978). To be clear, I am by no means suggesting that such early contributions are of the same quality or reflexivity as the modern writings on progressive rock, though one must wonder how many similar examples can be located if a more thorough search of German-, French- or any other non-Anglo-speaking academic discourse is conducted.

such a way that analyses of progressive rock parallel analyses of 'classical' music" (Sheinbaum 2002, 27). This critique is extended by the author suggesting that "[i]t is not that there are no factual connections between […] aspects of rock music and stylistic or formal tendencies in the art-music tradition, but that describing rock with the terminology of 'high' music often seems to be an end in itself" (Sheinbaum 2002, 28). Similarly, Jay Keister and Jeremy Smith (2008) attempt to reintroduce perspectives on progressive rock as a music incorporating a "nasty" tendency i.e. "everything that might be considered bad form in musical establishment circles: from images of tongues salivating near buttocks to offensive on-stage antics – such as flag burnings – to excruciatingly loud and dissonant depictions of warfare and detailed narratives of human castration" (Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 435). The direction of this argument does not emerge out of a state of vacuum but rather reflects on the authors' critical perspectives that

> "[m]usicologists who study progressive rock […] apply a well-honed vocabulary based on 'high-art' musical qualities that tend to isolate music from its context, but it's the wrong vocabulary for a music that was designed to promulgate a political message. The ultimate effect is that a once vibrant, nasty genre of 'prog' has now been cast as an imperturbable form of elitism". (Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 449)

Finally, Bowman (2002) criticised music theoretical approaches in progressive rock scholarship that first introduce historical/interpretative perspectives, which are then followed by analyses that effectively support such claims, or in other words, texts that would introduce progressive rock as engaging with Western art contexts with the analyses being utilised as means of proof (Bowman 2002, 187). The author outlines the issue with this approach by arguing that

> "This strategy has led to an emphasis on early-70s progressive rock and on younger, underground (i.e., relatively obscure or 'cult') progressive rock bands that emerged after the 1970s and self-consciously modeled [sic] themselves after the earlier bands". (Bowman 2002, 187)

The three perspectives do not express identical criticism, yet they all touch on the commonly identified issue of a more restricted, and Western art music context/aesthetic focused reading of progressive rock genre. To infer a direct connection between any of these criticisms to progressive rock scholarship, and issues in progressive metal equivalent might push the argument a bit too far, though to suggest that there are clear parallels between the two processes, and in my view, that similar issues arise from said processes, is fairly unproblematic. From my perspective, current research on progressive metal can be described as deploying not only a parallel 'rhythmic complexity orthodoxy', but I would also argue that the consistent referrals back to progressive rock contexts in pursuing the examination of progressive metal presents some notable challenges. For instance, the opening of this section alluded multiple times to texts employing a typified surface definition of progressive metal in which the genre is framed as a combination between progressive rock and heavy metal (see e.g., Angeler 2016, 8; Freeborn 2002, 32; P. Grant 2017, 161; Halbscheffel 2013e; Harrison 2007, 205; Hillier 2020, 11; McDonald 2009, 2, 9, 55, 60, 127, 131, 147, 166, 180, 182; Pierry 2013, 147; Weinstein 2000

[1991], 289; Wicke, K.-E. Ziegenrücker, and W. Ziegenrücker 2007c, 314)[66] or have discussed progressive rock's influence on heavy metal (e.g. Elflein 2010; Elflein 2016; Elflein 2017; Frelik 2013, 290; Kahn-Harris 2007, 133; Puri 2015, 72, 74, 77, 78). Whilst I firmly support discussions that help in the dissolution of 'solid' or 'opaque' boundaries between genres, and that situating newer genres in larger/older contexts is an important aspect, several issues emerge due to most authors not pursuing the interactions between the two meta-genre terms in greater detail, which results, in my opinion, in the presentation of a restricted overview of progressive metal.[67]

Despite claims that progressive rock and heavy metal as inherently different[68] can be found in (mostly early) academic and journalistic texts (e.g. Bashe 1985, 24; Bowman 2002, 189; Earl 2009, 37;[69]

[66] A quick note on the selection of texts. Thomas Harrison's text does not explicitly include the term 'progressive metal', but rather describes the band Queensrÿche as a "metal band with […] pronounced progressive stylistic traits" (Harrison 2007, 205); with that in mind, the author also lists the same band as part of "[g]roups with stylistic characteristics of hard rock" including bands such as Tesla, Great White and Warrant (Harrison 2007, 213) thus somewhat diluting the accuracy of the genre-related observation. With regards to McDonald's text, the author's examples focus exclusively on Rush, with the majority of quoted pages focusing on the mention of genre mixing, and a few isolated instances where the author refers to the two meta-genres' audiences. As I normally would object to positioning one band's stylistic mixing as representative of the entire genre, I will refer back to Footnote 31 that has touched on sources outlining the band's influence on the genre.

[67] To avoid misinterpretation, as Elflein's 2010 study on heavy metal is based on the argument that influences of progressive rock are a core aspect of the former's musical language, my criticism of the author not pursuing progressive metal in great detail targets only the author's direct ascription of Western art music aspects to the broader context of progressive rock music, which he draws from the previously mentioned somewhat problematic definitions by Wicke and Ziegenrücker (Elflein 2010, 226, 230).

[68] An aspect that can further complicate the matter is the usage of the term 'progressive' in metal music studies does not necessarily indicate a relation to progressive music culture/aesthetic but can refer to the political implications of progressivism and negative co-relations to some facets of heavy metal culture (e.g. Bayer 2009, 7; A. R. Brown 2018; Phillipov 2012a). This may initially seem innocuous, and I doubt that writers familiar with either field will mistake the long discussed political dimensions of progressive rock (e.g. Anderton 2009, 104–5; Blüml 2020; Cutler 1991 [1989], 120–24; García-Peinazo 2020; García Salueña 2020; Ed Macan 2003; Sciabarra 2002), or of progressive metal (e.g. Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 260–262, 270–272; Walser 1993, 165) with broader discussion of politics. However, I do not discard the possibility for students or less-familiar writers to potentially conflate the discussion especially since the division is not always as clear. For example, non-musicological/cultural-studies observers such as Emily Robinson (2015) have suggested that there are some parallels between UK political progressiveness at the turn of the twentieth century and 1970s English progressive rock (Robinson 2015; see also Melançon and Carpenter 2015, 145n2), which brings the discussion closer to engaging an overt political dimension. Another example is Weinstein's discussion of early criticism of heavy metal as "primitive" by progressive critics that "were dedicated to evaluating rock as serious creative expression, if not an art form" Weinstein 2000 [1991], 239, also 237-244), which may be seen as evoking parallels to progressive rock's own engagement with what constitutes art and its emphasis on complexity. With that in mind, as my work does not engage with explicitly political dimensions of progressive metal beyond aspects such as diversity (and specifically female representation and gender), my comment draws from a rather superficial level of understanding and examination of this aspect.

[69] A brief note on Benjamin Earl's contribution as it discusses a contrast between heavy metal and progressive rock somewhat ambivalently. The author frames a potential relation between the two fields via performers such as Uriah Heep whose engagement with fantasy-themes served as "a marker of authenticity of heavy metal" and as facilitated through the work of Roger Dean, an artist associated with the artwork of Yes (Earl 2009, 37). However, Earl then states that "[progressive rock] obtains its authenticity not, as for much of metal, from pop-cultural folk influences, but especially from classical music, enabling it to gain a devoted authenticity from high cultural form" (Earl 2009, 37), a contrast which is reverted back towards similarity by mentioning Uriah Heep's late singer and guitars Ken Hensley (†2020) as contributing "a more orchestral sound than found with bands restricted to the basic metal instruments of guitar, bass and drums" (Earl 2009, 37) and pointing out that "the link to high cultural classical sources was not exclusive to progressive rock" (Earl 2009, 38).

Halbscheffel 2013e, 381; Edward Macan 1997, 39, 83–84; Straw 1984, 117; Walser 1993, 61–63, 104[70]), there is a plethora of examples that showcase similarities or overlaps between the two.[71] For example, there are those that point out the relation to psychedelic/counter-cultural precursor contexts, close proximity and mixing of aesthetics in early permutations of both genres (e.g. Bowman 2002, 185, 187, 188;[72] Christe 2004, 16; Lilja 2009, 31, 33, 34, 35, 39; Edward Macan 1997, 46, 65, 136–138; Martin 1998, 157, 252; Middleton 1990, 171n23; A. F. Moore 1993, 59, 70, 98, 99–100;[73] N. Scott 2016a, 29; Stolz 2016; Waksman 2009, 16; Weinstein 2000 [1991], 16; Weinstein 2002, 107n5;

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[70] It should be pointed out that Walser's criticism of progressive rock as elitist (Walser 1993, 62), and that the genre's "point is typically […] to refer to a prestigious discourse and bask in reflected glory" (Walser 1993, 104) has been challenged by Macan as somewhat ambivalent and generalised (Edward Macan 1997, 164). Also, Bowman's example draws from Walser and contrasts "the borrowed aesthetic of art music in progressive rock [and] the specific gestural appropriations of art music by hard rock and heavy metal guitarists (Ritchie Blackmore, Eddie Van Halen, et al.)" (Bowman 2002, 189), though in this instance Bowman's general argument is directed more towards integrating Rush's combination of progressive rock and heavy metal aesthetic as a valid approach as opposed to the general framing of progressive rock as mostly defined through Western art music references and/or pursued via similarly Western art contextualised analytical methods.

[71] A brief comment to set appropriate expectations, despite the rather dense saturation of examples included in these paragraphs, not all examples will include a direct statement that engages with both progressive rock and heavy metal. Rather, these texts will often offer perspectives that pertain to either field, yet when viewed collectively they allow to construct the framing each category is pointing out.

[72] Bowman's argument suggests that "[w]ith a few notable exceptions (the members of Genesis, for example) most progressive rock musicians came from the same small town and working-class British origins where hard rock and heavy metal originated (Bowman 2002, 185). As beneficial as this perspective is to my own critical perspectives, I will do so by strongly emphasising that, based on the previously discussed work by Smialek and St-Laurent, I do not think that the generalised description of heavy metal performers and audiences as predominantly working class is valid in 2021 as it may have once been assumed by academic writing.

[73] Allan Moore's early contribution to the conceptualisation of progressive rock leaves a somewhat ambivalent description regarding the connection between progressive rock and heavy metal, the latter's relation to Western art contexts, and by extension how progressive metal's engagement to the classical can be framed. The author's framing of progressive rock can be described as an attempt to present a musicological overview of the "series of related but separate styles, each with their internal consistencies, some of which are not necessarily reactionary, but which deny the monolith of a single 'progressive' rock" (A. F. Moore 1993, 57), and appearing after the 1960s as reflected by some record labels' appearance during the time such as EMI's Harvest progressive label (A. F. Moore 1993, 61). Moore suggests that "[t]he term 'rock' first came into general use after 1967, to refer to what is now loosely termed 'progressive rock'. The stance that unifies this historical moment is reconciliatory. [… P]rogressive rock takes the stylistic norms of beat/r&b and extends some of them to new boundaries by incorporating elements of 'folk', 'jazz', 'blues' and other musics" (A. F. Moore 1993, 59). As part of this constellation of styles, heavy metal is discussed as a continuation of "'hard rock' [as] a catch-all term for the 'rock' that arose from one side of the progressive movement, a music based on riffs" (A. F. Moore 1993, 59), as influenced by blues contexts (which Moore draws from a 1985 text by Iain Chambers, A. F. Moore 1993, 70), and is characterised as "[h]eavy metal […] was harmonically and rhythmically simple in comparison with most progressive rock, which it followed chronologically" (A. F. Moore 1993, 105). As for the role of the classical, Moore's discussion on art rock (a synonym for progressive rock) is where the inclusion of Western art music components is framed (A. F. Moore 1993, 79–87). To be clear, newer studies such as by Elflein or Stolz, have presented strong music-analytical evidence for progressive rock's extensive influence to heavy metal, which I have no intention of overturning. However, I consider it problematic to equate Moore's more encompassing understanding of progressive rock with contemporary definitions that, at times, focus primarily on progressive rock's relation to the classical (e.g., in the work of Macan). Specifically, Moore's discussion can be interpreted as framing heavy metal as a 'simpler' and blues (but not classical-) related continuation of progressive rock, thus enabling the contextualisation of progressive metal's classical 'roots' as inherently stemming from progressive rock due to the latter's historical precedence over Western art music contexts and/or as overturning the validity of heavy metal's own classical borrowings.

Weinstein 2014, 45; see also Whiteley 1992) including sharing some artwork's fantasy contents or artwork design company (e.g. Alleyne 2014, 253; Earl 2009, 37–38; Straw 1984, 117–18). Further similarities include authors pointing out the occasionally shared audiences between progressive rock and heavy metal (e.g. Anderton 2016, 157, 159; Bowman 2002, 188; Friesen and J. S. Epstein 1994, 10; Edward Macan 1997, 156; Martin 1998, 197, 249; Martin 2003, 202–3; Stump 2010 [1997], 244); parallels in terms of both meta-genres engaging with political topics (e.g. see Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 438), yet from different perspectives are (self-)framed as less/non-political (e.g. see Borthwick and Moy 2004, 139; Edward Macan 1997, 172–73; N. Scott 2013); both meta-genres as subjected to similar condemnation by critics (e.g. A. R. Brown 2010, 111; P. Grant 2017, 10; Laurin 2013, 58–59; Edward Macan 1997, 168–73; McDonald 2009, 186; Weinstein 2002, 96); the common emphasis on albums rather than singles (e.g. Borthwick and Moy 2004, 146; Covach 2000, 14; Holm-Hudson 2002b, 2); or the historical interactions between sub-genres such as neo-prog and NWOBHM (e.g. Anderton 2016, 153, 155, 156–158; P. Grant 2017, 60; Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 183; Lambe 2011, 112–13; Näumann 2016a, 22; Weinstein 2009, 21).[74] Whilst some scholars have claimed that progressive metal is mostly a US/Scandinavian phenomenon (e.g. Halbscheffel 2013e, 382; Stump 2010 [1997], 331) – possibly as an echo of the now challenged early ascription of progressive *rock* as a predominantly British phenomenon (see Anderton 2010, 418, for a critical perspective) – the (self-)ascription of the progressive metal genre-label to bands from a variety of locations suggests a much broader geographic relation of the genre. These include Easter Island (Bendrups 2011, 314),[75] Hong-Kong (Yavuz 2017, 7), Slovenia (Muršič 2011, 303, 304, 308), Turkey (Ayik 2010, 294; Çelikel 2016, 71; Soğanci 2019, 2019);[76] Iraq (Foster 2011, 324n5); Switzerland (P. Grant 2017, 100); Israel (P. Grant 2017, 196; S. Grant 2016, 216, 220); Tunisia (Barone 2015, 190), Malta (Bell 2011, 276) etc.,[77] thus suggesting that to situate progressive metal to a single geographic location is much more difficult. The

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[74] This observation can be extended with a combination of perspectives in which bands have been positioned as situated either in progressive rock or heavy metal contexts. For example, Macan discusses bands that rose in popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the US that he groups under the name of 'stadium rock' e.g. "Kansas, Boston, and Styx (as well as Rush, Toto, Journey, R.E.O. Speedwagon, Foreigner, Heart)" (Edward Macan 1997, 186–87). As a complementary perspective, some of the aforementioned bands are included by Chris Ingham and Daniel Lane's (2002) discussion of heavy metal bands e.g. Kansas or Marillion (Ingham and Lane 2002, 120, 132).

[75] The entries for bands from Easter Island and Malta list, respectively, the bands Nako [Eng. Marrow] as a "progressive hard rock band" (Bendrups 2011, 314), and Ivory Cross as "progressive hard rockers" (Bell 2011, 276). These inclusions may be seen as 'cheating' on my behalf, yet given that Rush's framing also involves a similar term (see Bowman 2002), and that the emphasis of this discussion is to advocate for more inclusive definition of progressive metal, I would consider Nako's and Ivory Cross' inclusions to be acceptable outliers.

[76] To my understanding, Hale Çelikel and Hale Soğanci are contributions (respectively an article and a PhD thesis) by the same scholar, and addressing an identical thematic, with the change in last name seemingly reflecting a different marital status (see Soğanci 2019, ix).

[77] See Wagner (2010, 335–45) for some additional examples that, despite not discussed by the author in great detail, highlight the emergence of artists from Europe and beyond. Additionally, Tamás Nagy's (2018) examination of the Hungarian rock/metal discourse community mentions the appearance of the term progressive metal (Nagy 2018, 514, 515, 517) which offers a perspective that predominantly confirms audiences from the same country as having expressed interest in the genre. However, this observation can be framed as valid to my argument when supplemented by results from the metal-archives.com website that (at the time of writing in July 2021) lists over one hundred bands from Hungary that include the term "prog" in their genre-label (see Metal-archives.com n.d.a).

outlined perspectives may not universally lead to new developments or a fundamental change in research on progressive metal, though I believe that they should at least be mentioned, if not actively reflected on, so that future contributions on progressive metal are more inclusive and constructive.

Beyond these large-scale perspectives, I want to refer back to my examination of Hegarty and Halliwell's text and elaborate on my criticism regarding the framing of symphonic metal as a sub-category of progressive metal. As mentioned earlier, the authors' argument can be broadly accepted given that their investigation attempts to present how progressive rock elements can be identified in more contemporary genre-settings, including the broad heavy metal genre. However, if adopted as a directive towards how progressive metal should be conceptualised, then the utilised approach becomes problematic in many ways: the prioritisation of style mixing as a progressive rock/metal principle; and arguing that, due to progressive rock's close relation to Western art music contexts, the implied 'exclusivity' of such elements aligns genres to a broader progressive (metal) framework.

With regards to the first aspect, at first glance Hegarty and Halliwell's discussion of progressive metal through principles such as mixing of styles (or stylistic borrowing) and eclecticism seems relatively straightforward as this characteristic has been often mentioned when discussing progressive rock (see e.g., Albiez 2003, 359; Bowman 2002, 184; Horst 2002, 172; Middleton 1990, 28; A. F. Moore 1993, 56–57; Sheinbaum 2002, 29; Spicer 2008, 336-337n1). However, implicitly framing this principle as synonymous with progressive rock, as well as transferring it to another meta-genre such as heavy metal, presents some notable problems. On the general side, an argument can be made that the emergence/reconfiguration of new (sub-)genres can take place due to performers borrowing and re-combining aspects from other stylistic contexts, thus to suggest that this practice exemplifies only progressive rock strikes me as somewhat reductive. When focused more narrowly to the meta-genre of heavy metal, scholars such as Esa Lilja (2009) have argued that heavy metal has long been a "synthesis of different musical styles" and, drawing from Pekka Jalkanen's framing of "cultural fusion", suggests that said term's ability to encompass the mixing of new and established elements "seems to be a more appropriate description of the process than simply adaptation of foreign influences" (Lilja 2009, 153). To that effect, and touching briefly on the other main challenge at hand, Lilja has showcased a variety of classical-interpretable elements that can identified in the broader heavy metal genre (Lilja 2009, 152–94). From a more anecdotal viewpoint, the nü metal genre can be described as an attempt to combine aesthetics of rap and heavy metal. Yet I am certain that to suggest that a band often associated with said genre such as Limp Bizkit represents an example of progressive metal due to the mixing of styles, would most likely be rejected based on nü metal less admirable standings in the broader metal culture, as well as engaging with perspectives that seemingly do not match with expectations of progressive music and heavy metal audiences.[78]

Further questions remain open as to the scope and type of this 'mixing of styles' approach. For example, an act of style mixing can take place for a duration of twenty seconds in one song out of

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[78] A similar argument can be found in Pieslak (2008) whose investigation of the band Korn suggests that "the musical aspects of nü metal are so seemingly conventional that fans of progressive/math metal openly mock the music and its surrounding subculture by constructing 'how to' lists for success in nü metal that always emphasise a lack of musical skill" (Pieslak 2008, 46).

a performer's twenty-year career. Does that indicate that they are now suddenly positioned within the 'progressive' category, or that they do not meet certain criteria of 'progressive saturation'?[79] Similarly, should one consider the process of style combination on a visual, auditive, textual (i.e., lyrics) level or a combination of them, and once more, in what quantities/what level of density? To exemplify why the broad scale adoption of style-mixing as an exclusive progressive music characteristic presents challenges, I will outline two perspectives. Continuing from my discussion of Christe's and Wiederhorn and Turman's journalistic contributions, which mention progressive rock's influence on heavy metal, scholarly work such as by Nolan Stolz (2016) has argued that Black Sabbath incorporate progressive rock elements in their early career, yet he adopts a critical position on such overlap by stating that he "does not claim that Black Sabbath is – or was – a progressive rock band" (Stolz 2016, 143–44). In other instances, the style-mixing was deployed in ways that fully contradicted and even undermined the framing of progressive metal. For example, after examining the work of the bands Emperor and Queensrÿche as representatives of the progressive metal genre (Elflein 2010, 226–31), Dietmar Elflein concludes that "[p]rogressive metal cannot be regarded as an independent musical style simply because of the fundamental differences between the two representatives analysed" (Elflein 2010, 231).[80] The issue here is not only in Elflein potentially failing to take into account the ideas of eclecticism when discussing progressive metal,[81] but also that this position is maintained even in later publications. In his 2017 lexicon article on the broader metal genre/culture (Elflein 2017), the author

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[79] The handling of the band Queensrÿche can be seen as an example here. Despite considered a fairly canonised performer as evidenced by the band being often evoked as representing the 'origins' of progressive metal during the 1980s (e.g. Progarchives.com 2012b; Progarchives.com n.d.q; Stump 2010 [1997], 331; J. Wagner 2010, 48), academic discussions of Queensrÿche seemingly recontextualise the band's role in the genre's history (e.g., Halbscheffel's *Lexikon* publication does not include an article on said band). Barring a few quick mentions of the band as a progressive metal performer (e.g. Burns 2016, 94; Friesen and J. S. Epstein 1994, 10; Hinners 2005, 65; Lücker 2013 [2011], 38–39; Roccor 1998, 117; Sciabarra 2002, 178–179n7; Shuker 2005 [1998], 211), it is equally common to find the band referred to either without a genre label, as a (heavy) metal or hard rock performer (e.g. see Elicker 2001, 233; Frelik 2013, 290; Harrison 2007, 205; Philipps 2012 [2011], 445, 453; Rubin 2011, 75). Far be it from suggesting that Queensrÿche be 'reinstated' in some canonised role, yet the aforementioned lack of parity between broad cultural and academic perspectives is intriguing. One possible context may be Queensrÿche's transition away from engaging with progressive metal genre after the early 1990s (e.g. see J. Wagner 2010, 53–54). Despite suggestions such as by Hinners that the band "turned to grunge [and] following the commercial trend too late, Queensryche [sic] lost its importance as a result" (Hinners 2005, 64), the response of the community is to still view the band as formative to the genre. Without wishing to read too much into this contrast, one possible interpretation for the limited number of dedicated examinations of (portions) from the band's output (Elflein 2010, 228–29; Hudson 2021) is that academic writings may consider the band insufficiently 'progressive' for analysis, thus inadvertently resulting in Queensrÿche being filtered out of the academic discourse. [Ger. Orig. "Später wandten sie sich mit dem Album Hear In The Now Frontier (1997) – dem kommerziellen Trend zu spät folgend – dem nur kurzfristigen Grunge zu, QUEENSRYCHE verloren dadurch an Bedeutung"].

[80] Ger. Orig. "Progressive Metal kann allein schon wegen der grundlegenden Unterschiede der beiden analysierten Vertreter nicht als eigenständiger Musikstil betrachtet werden".

[81] To be clear, Elflein's drawing from the work of Wicke and Ziegenrücker does acknowledge that eclecticism is part of the genre's aesthetic, yet when discussing how progressive rock's aspects can be observed in the context of Iron Maiden, Elflein limits the notions of eclecticism as "reflected only in the band's formal structure" (Elflein 2010, 226) [Ger. Orig. " Die in der musikalischen Sprache des Heavy Metal angelegten komplexeren Additionen von Teilgruppen von Pulsen bei Iron Maiden und anderen gelten nach Wicke und Ziegenrücker als Echo der sich verselbstständigenden Artistik des Progressive Rock, während sich der bombastische Eklektizismus eher formal in den reihenden Strukturen niederzuschlagen scheint"].

discusses influences of progressive rock to heavy metal (Elflein 2017, 89), yet there is not even a passing mention of progressive metal thus resulting in the genre being excluded from contemporary academic overviews of metal culture.

With regards to the strong co-relation between progressive rock and Western art music, and returning to this study's core inquiry, such perspective is not limited to Hegarty and Halliwell's text but can also be found in a variety of texts engaging in various depths with progressive rock (e.g. Elflein 2010, 226, 230; Fast 2014, n.p.; Freeborn 2002, 32; P. Grant 2017, 161; Edward Macan 1997, 12–13, A. F. Moore 1993, 79–87). This framing is, again, not entirely incorrect from a historical/genealogical perspective, given that it is more likely for a variety of listeners to associate the classical as a central component to progressive rock rather than heavy metal contexts.[82] However even ignoring that John Covach and Walter Everett (2000) have (somewhat hyperbolically) suggested that "there seems not to have been a time in the last one hundred years when American musicians were not experimenting with some kind of pop-art music fusion" (Covach and W. Everett 2000, 1), to frame progressive rock as near-synonymous with the appearance of Western art music-contexts in the broader rock field, and most importantly heavy metal culture, is problematic for a number of reasons (see also Nicholls 2004, 102, 103). Scholarly work on progressive rock has already offered multiple perspectives that frame the classical as but one of multiple aspects contributing to progressive rock's eclecticism (e.g. Anderton 2009, 103; Anderton 2010, 420; Bowman 2002, 187; Cotner 2000, 95; Covach 2000, 14, 31–32; Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016, 99;[83] Dowd et al. 2021 [2019], 122; Holm-Hudson 2002b, 2, 10–11; Keister and

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[82] An academically derived example to this point is Covach's discussion of musical humour in the track "Heavy Duty" from the mocumentary film *Spinal Tap* (Covach 1995). The author's theoretical framing draws from Kant and Schopenhauer's "incongruity theory" which is summarised as "laughter is the result of some perceived incongruity between concept and object" which Covach then extends by suggesting that "[t]o say that something is incongruous is to appeal to some set of norms" (Covach 1995, 400, 402). This is then continued by framing the investigation of musical style as allowing one to understand what norms "could give rise to incongruity and account for how these could be manipulated to humorous ends" (Covach 1995, 402). From this context, Covach's analysis of the track "Heavy Duty" outlines the inclusion of a reference from Boccherini's *String Quintet in E major*, accompanied by power chords, into a heavy metal song and suggests that "the incongruity [here] resides between two very different, even antithetical, musical styles" (Covach 1995, 403). Whilst the broad argument is theoretically sound, the general impression created that this "obvious stylistic incongruity" (Covach 1995, 404) results from the contents, rather than its obviousness is somewhat problematic. In other words, such an argument implies that it is the stylistic contrast not the act of overexaggerating the classical reference that elicits a humorous response – a line of inquiry that Covach explores in relation to the analysis of the track "Cups and Cakes" as drawing attention to real stylistic traits derived from the 1960s British invasion (Covach 1995, 407–12) – which when viewed from a broader perspective supports the notion of heavy metal genre borrowing from Western art music as an untypical characteristic.

[83] I should note that Timothy Dowd's argument suggests that the genre is defined via its "aggregation principle, not in terms of its musical elements, but rather its musical *intention*. It is a genre whose musicians (and fans) aspire for the creation of timeless art by combining rock music with other forms of music" (Dowd et al. 2021 [2019], 122; also Anderton 2010, 420). Whilst I do not entirely reject this approach to the argument, I remain somewhat sceptical at its first half as adopting such an idea and applying it to the broader field of popular music can potentially result in a form of 'cultural imperialism' that positions any form of genre-mixing as a form of progressive music. Some may argue that similar processes of redefining naming conventions are constantly at play (e.g. see Brackett's discussion of shifting genre labels, 2016, 1–3), and I suspect that even if the latter half of Dowd's suggestion is taken into account, there will be difficulties in resolving even progressive music community's own preconceptions e.g. the track "November Rain" by Guns n' Roses seemingly matches the

J. L. Smith 2008, 433; Kuzmanova, quoted in Zahova 2016, 24; Lukanov 2008, 242; Middleton and Muncie, quoted in Whiteley 1992, 6; Sora 2020, 24). Conversely, associating Western art music contexts with progressive rock overlooks heavy metal's own classical-signification potential as examples from scholarly work have, and continue to discuss classical components in heavy metal *without* arguing that they inherently stem from progressive rock (e.g. Cope 2010, 45; Custodis 2009, 23-60, 61–110, 111–156; Diaz-Bone 2010, 311–16;[84] Heritage 2016; Lilja 2009, 39, 43, 95, 132, 142–143, 152–194; A. F. Moore 2002b, n.p.; Saint-Laurent 2012; Strauss 2018; Vanek 2018; Walser 1993, 57–107).[85] To be very clear, the issue I am outlining here is not simply from what context progressive metal derives its Western art music aspects but rather the implications and consequences of such one-sided framing. By repeating the 'prog rock = classical' argument, the act inherently furthers the previously mentioned "symphonic orthodoxy" as per Anderton, though filtered through progressive metal contexts. It can be argued that this is achieved either via implicit 'shepherding' of readers into progressive rock literature and its framing of the classical such as in Halliwell and Hegarty's perspective; or, paralleling Bowman, who has suggested that "the emphasis on 'classical' music, music theory, and limited historical/interpretive arguments provides a fairly direct method for arguing that other music – progressive hard rock, progressive heavy metal, and so on – is not really progressive rock" (Bowman 2002, 187) via more negative framings as showcased in relation to Halbscheffel's

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notions of a mixing of styles, lofty ambitions, symphonic elements and a grand concept that also spans two other music videos (see Draper 2021), yet the band is not listed in the progarchives.com website, and I suspect that it will take some time before such inclusion takes place.

[84] Diaz-Bone's addition to this category requires a brief clarification. Despite the author's extensive work on the discourses surrounding heavy metal, his framing of the relation between Western art music and heavy metal is rather limited. In simple terms, the text contributes little beyond notions of heavy metal drawing from Western art music's legitimation or outlines difficulties in adapting/writing a piece to include a larger orchestral ensemble. The author does briefly mention progressive rock as associated with the incorporation of classical forms (Diaz-Bone 2010, 314), though does not suggest any genealogical relation between said genre and heavy metal. Diaz-Bone does make clear that his discussion is more exploratory, indicated by the selection being framed as a brief excursion, though somewhat less excusable is the lack of either fairly well-known examples discussing such aspects (e.g. Walser 1993) or any mention of publications released close to the second expanded edition of the book from 2010 I examined (e.g. Custodis' study on Western art music in relation to metal bands such as Scorpions and Manowar was released a year prior).

[85] In the interest of transparency, I want to point out that both Cope and Lilja have offered limited perspectives suggesting some relation to progressive rock contexts. Cope's output does discuss progressive rock as having influence on Black Sabbath (Cope 2010, 66), and indeed the research of Stolz (2016) has showcased the extent of this potential. That said, it is noticeable that Cope situates progressive rock as relating more to the London scene (Cope 2010, 35–37) in contrast to Black Sabbath as associated with Birmingham (Cope 2010, 7–35), and when presenting some comparison between Black Sabbath and Western art music, Cope focuses on a comparison to Shostakovich instead of progressive contexts (Cope 2010, 45). As for Lilja, the author mentions that "[e]arly metal […] was ultimately British, and in its early phase was closely related to art rock" and adds that "[t]hroughout the 1970s, song forms are often complex, with more or less direct influences drawn from art music" (Lilja 2009, 39). This observation can, to some degree, be framed as supporting the idea of heavy metal's classical influence to have some relation to progressive rock's similar engagement. That said, Lilja does not pursue this idea further in his study, but draws on Walser's discussion (and of Christe's journalistic argument to the same effect) of the increased formal technical knowledge and proficiency of heavy metal guitarists (Lilja 2009, 43) or that, in relation to known performers' proficiency in a variety of musical styles (e.g. Ritchie Blackmore, Jimmy Page etc.) early developments of the genre drew from a variety of sources (Lilja 2009, 153).

aforementioned simplistic overview of progressive metal's classical elements and Stump's exclusion of progressive metal from the so-called 'progressive pantheon'.

Whilst there are clear issues in research of progressive metal, suggesting to ignore perspectives on the genre that draw from progressive rock contexts would be a tad harsh, as scholarly texts have successfully showcased relations between the two, and in some ways, the indebtedness of the former to the latter is perceived as a fairly strong associations in cultural discussions and some journalistic publications. Similarly, the investigation of the classical's role in progressive rock (e.g. Clement 2015; Covach 1997; Halbscheffel 2001; Holm-Hudson 2002a; Josephson 1992; Kawamoto 2005; Edward Macan 1992; Edward Macan 1997; Edward Macan 2006; Palmer 2001; Spicer 2008; Lundberg 2014a, 2014b) and heavy metal (e.g., Custodis 2009; Lilja 2009; Walser 1993) have certainly paved the road for studies such as mine, however I believe that the outlined critical remarks highlight how unproductive or unsustainable some of the current approaches can be. If scholars investigating progressive metal do not reflect on the history and issues within the progressive music research field, they risk inherently replicating what some progressive rock scholars have described as the delegation of progressive rock to a footnote in the general rock history (e.g., see Holm-Hudson 2002b, 2; Sheinbaum 2002, 22–23). Conversely, it can lead to the reappearance of a similar need to *overturn* oversimplified conclusions about the culture, however instead of having to address the issue of 'progressive rock is about drawing from Western art music' it may be focused on notions such as 'progressive metal is just progressive rock with some metal riffs added'.[86]

Without advocating for progressive metal scholarship to become an independent field, I would overall argue that future research on the genre should become more open, encompassing, and inclusive of alternative aspects, techniques or bands, as well as attempt to balance pre-existing framings or contexts with more forward-directed perspectives. In the next pages I will offer some suggestions to that effect, yet I hope these will not be misread as 'my' rewriting of how progressive metal scholarship should or should not be pursued. Rather, I hope to offer perspectives contributing to further understanding progressive music as a whole, whilst simultaneously addressing some of the outlined issues through continuing the critically reflexive and anti-canonisation perspectives. Also, as this study and its examination of role of the classical in progressive metal can be seen as an example of some of the principles mentioned below, I will deemphasise the discussion of such a perspective.

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[86] Fabbri's (2016) genre theory discussion on aspects such as the "birth" or "death" of a genre includes an important suggestion regarding the challenges of examining such processes. When summarising what usually takes place when a music historian engaging with the aforementioned genre "birth", the author outlines the examination of relevant historical documents, discussions with direct witnesses, engagement with the genre community and its behaviours, and finally an engagement with the "chronologies of naming and other conventions" so as to "formulate hypotheses on a possible pre-history of the genre" (F. Fabbri 2016, 189). Later on, drawing from Rick Altman's discussion of the methods by École des Annales, Fabbri suggests that "it is essential that historians look at past practices as they were, without being influenced by their subsequent evolution" (F. Fabbri 2016, 189). The emphasis on investigations of (contemporary) cultural perspectives is something that Fabbri suggests should have a similar underpinning i.e., that the investigation of the genre should engage with the "continuously shifting perspective [and] an uninterrupted comparison among conventionally accepted practices before and after a genre is born" (F. Fabbri 2016, 189).

Despite the existence of more sceptical perspectives towards progressive metal such as by Stump or Halbscheffel, genres at the intersection between progressive and metal aesthetic have elicited a great deal of interest by those interested in specialist critics (e.g. see Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016, 108). As such, not only should research on the genre be continued, so as to fill the gaps left by more limited overviews, but also scholarly work is to be encouraged to conduct analyses on progressive metal in a forward-directed manner that acknowledge previous academic developments, without being restricted to positioning new phenomena in older contexts. In other words, *without* having to constantly navigate how 'element X differs from established progressive rock conventions'. To that effect, I agree with Sheinbaum that discussions on progressive music have to examine the contradictions, and clashes between the 'high' and 'low' aesthetics (Sheinbaum 2002, 29–30), though I would suggest that this principle should be extended to several broader contexts: the relation between performers and progressive music; the criteria and principles through which progressive rock is related to progressive metal, but also to metal as a whole; and the relationship between academic and journalistic or music-audience perspectives.

With regards to the relation between performers and progressive music, this study already mentioned Smialek's work highlighting how members of Meshuggah attempt to navigate engagement with aspects perceived as untypical for their own fandom, and that even though bands such as Dream Theater have expressed their admiration to progressive rock precursors, the former's perception in the culture has now become more strained and associated with stagnation as mentioned in the journalistic writing of Wagner and Lücker. Indeed, similar tension has been mentioned by Holm-Hudson who suggests that bands such as Radiohead and Don Caballero draw from progressive rock whilst attempting to distance themselves from it (Holm-Hudson 2002b, 16). Combined, these examples suggest that whilst progressive metal's relation to progressive rock is important, prioritising a genealogical perspective may not be the best approach, yet if chosen, it should be pursued in a more reflexive manner. That is to say, I would argue that since we are already (very) aware of progressive metal's relation to progressive rock contexts, a more fruitful step forward would be the examination of how performers and other members of the culture engage with such conflicting perspectives.

From a different perspective, it is worth mentioning Moore's (2007) discussion of Gentle Giant which includes a reflection on what constitutes the progressive rock genre. The author argued that "[a]s a movement, it is individualistic and, in skill terms, elitist. But in its definitional emphasis on the importance of individual difference, within some loose stylistic bounds, it has had a profound effect on subsequent popular music, wherein a similarly-coded 'difference' is the key discursive marker of aesthetic success" (A. F. Moore 2007, 6). In other words, if progressive music is about the pursuit of individuality within a general framework, it makes little sense to argue that progressive *metal* bands are to be included in said large framework by virtue of similarity to their progressive *rock* predecessors, a notion that can be extended to the former genre's engagement with the classical. To reiterate however, the purpose of this argument is not segregating progressive metal from progressive rock, but to highlight that viewing elements such as the classical as entirely derived from progressive rock contexts both essentialises the complexity of the classical's role in heavy metal meta-genre, as well as

has larger implications such as echoing the framing of progressive rock in a limited Western art context-centric capacity.

However, my critique at genealogical perspectives should not imply that, as per Wagner, progressive metal should be ultimately framed via prioritising 'innovation' principles. Doing so strikes me as equally problematic as, drawing from another argument by Moore, Anderton (2010) argues that bands after the mid-1970s tended to work within certain limits found in earlier performers, thus leading to the suggestion that "a further definition of progressive rock may be offered: as a category or label for bands that consciously make use of the stylistic elements and developments pioneered by others, yet add little if anything new to them" (Anderton 2010, 421). Another way of wording this criticism is to suggest that the lack of reflexivity on matters of canon and/or exclusion of some performers represents a parallel to the prioritisation of innovation in modernism, not to mention somewhat outdated discussions such as Adorno's perspective on popular music as standardised and imitative in its construction (Adorno 1990, 259–61). As such, as previously mentioned, I believe that future research on the genre should be conducted in a more forward-facing manner, yet also balance reflexive engagement with historical contexts. One way through which this can be achieved, as I will attempt to do in this work, is to clearly outline historical precedents for a phenomenon, in my case Western art music-interpretable practices, yet direct the discussion towards expanding how the genre functions, as opposed to how the genre-precursors can be re-identified in new contexts.

Also, regardless whether the perspective regarding progressive metal's 'compound' nature is to be maintained, future research should attempt to balance in equally deriving perspectives from the genre's constitutive parts. To illustrate this point, I want to mention two examples. From an academic perspective, Lilja's (2009) discussion of harmonic language of classic heavy metal frames 'complexity' as derived from formative NWOEHM[87] bands such as Iron Maiden when suggesting that "Metallica's compositions were often relatively complex, extended in form and heavily based on riffs, much akin to the NWOEHM; one may compare Metallica's *Master of Puppets* (1986) to, for example, Iron Maiden's *Powerslave* (1984)" (Lilja 2009, 44).[88] As for a journalistic perspective, a recent article by *Louder* magazine – which belongs to the same group of magazines that publishes the progressive rock-focused *Prog* magazine – presented a track-by-track overview of Iron Maiden's first album (Ling, 2021). The term "progressive" does appear as both a component of a song, as well as a genre which Steve Harris is fond of, yet the title of the article is not about the introduction of progressive rock in heavy metal through the album but rather about "the debut album that reinvented heavy metal" (Ling 2021, n.p.). What these examples help to illustrate is not that by emphasising progressive rock components, scholars offer invalid interpretations as the description of either example can potentially be extended by pointing out the 'deeper' progressive rock contexts derived from Iron Maiden's own

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[87]Lilja prefers the term "New Wave of European Heavy Metal" (Lilja 2009, 40–42) rather than its more common "New Wave of British Heavy Metal" (and related NWOBHM acronym) variant which he adopts from a late 1990s (seemingly) journalistic reference book on guitar players. The argument for this change is that "many influential groups would easily fall under the same heading were formed in other parts of Europe as well, for instance, Accept, Scorpions and UFO in Germany and Krokus in Switzerlands" (Lilja 2009, 40).

[88] Similarly, Lilja discusses the use of Aeolian mode in several of Iron Maiden's compositions as contextualizable either from the European concert music tradition or the American folk revival of the 1960s (Lilja 2009, 168–69).

history, which in turn can help further contextualise various gestures or techniques. Yet it is important to clearly acknowledge that, even if technically derived from 'earlier' contexts, such perspectives should be in conjunction with, or as a reflexive extension to, notions closer to/derived from academic or journalistic contexts. Doing so will ensure that, until it comes a moment in which progressive metal research has been saturated with historical framings, arguments are derived from a multi-faceted position.

We should also keep in mind that whilst scholarly work can offer highly in-depth descriptions of a variety of progressive metal phenomena, the contemporary framing of the genre is managed by dedicated audiences and broader listeners with a variety of histories and engagements with 'precursor' bands.[89] For example, in an imaginary conversation between two listeners of progressive metal (be it in a private setting or in a broader-discourse affecting place such as a fan forum) one recommends a progressive metal band to the other by pointing out that said band is influenced by Iron Maiden. However, whether the recipient/interpreter of this utterance will interpret the original speaker's perspective as 'the NWOBHM/classic metal band Iron Maiden influenced progressive metal X' or as 'the progressive rock-influenced band Iron Maiden passed said influences to a newer progressive metal band', as per Iron Maiden's own admission to interest in progressive rock, is difficult to determine. With that in mind, I believe that the pursuit of such perspectives should not focus on 'resolving' which meaning was meant, but to potentially highlight the various, often contradicting, perspectives that circulate the surrounding discourse and to then critically attempt to re-incorporate them into academic writings.[90]

A final consideration with which I want to conclude this section is to echo Sidney König's argument for the need of reflexivity regarding the academia's perception in the wider culture. König's text (2016) analyses both journalistic, fan, as well as academic definitions/histories of the genre as

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[89] As a hint of the upcoming theoretical framing, one of several recent contributions on genre theory by Franco Fabbri (2016) has argued not only that "[genres'] existence today [is] found in the domains of culture, of common sense, that is, in the semiosphere, in the discourses and practices of musicians, critics, fans, concert promoters, record industry executives, sales people, web designer" (F. Fabbri 2016, 180), but has also suggested that "the 'birth' of a genre can be located in the establishment of conventions within a community, in the 'semiotic act' of naming, as well as in the acknowledgement of 'family resemblances', in the acceptance of prototypes" (F. Fabbri 2016, 180). In other words, to base the understanding of a genre only on its "family resemblances" as described by Fabbri is a valid, yet not exclusive approach, that, in my view, should be pursued in active co-relation to the discourses surrounding the genre.

[90] Another way of wording this argument is to reflect on the principles of popularisation and their effects on the perception of bands in the progressive music field, which can be exemplified via the incorporation of the introduction of the song "Roundabout" by the British progressive rock band Yes into 'meme' culture. In simple terms, the song gained online popularity due to its inclusion on several occasions in a TV adaptation of the Japanese manga "Jojo's Bizarre Adventure". More specifically, the opening of the track and its use of acoustic guitar and crescendos, including the more energetic bass line, would appear towards the end of the episode to lead the viewers towards the "To Be Continued" screen (knowyourmeme.com 2016). What should become clear here is not only the broad recontextualization of Yes' track, but also the agency of the viewers in accepting and reusing the same principle ("Roundabout"-intro quotation, leading to a "To Be Continued" sign) in a variety of user-generated 'memes' and thus the (in my view rather obvious) recontextualization principle on which popular culture functions. In other words, the importance here is not that the song was written by the highly canonised progressive rock band Yes, but rather that it was included in a popular culture artefact thus enabling it to become re-popularised through various re-contextualisation practices. For an academic analysis of Yes' "Roundabout" that attempts to contrast a structural and a cultural reading, see Sheinbaum (2002, 30–40).

forms of narrative through which popular music may form canonized perspectives. In his discussion of power relations, the author points out that:

> "Fans and journalists as well as academics have an influence on the formation of canons, and all instances wield power. However, scientific publications are given a higher profile socially and a greater power potential in the canon discourse on progressive rock. These facts result in the need to reflect on one's own subjectivity – and on the power of one's own word, especially in scientific work". (König 2016, 99)[91]

König offers an important perspective regarding how sites dedicated to progressive music such as babyblaue-seiten.de, to which I will add the progarchives.com site that this study engages with (see babyblaue-seiten.de n.d.; Progarchives.com n.d.d), seek out, examine and discuss academic contributions. From that perspective, issues such as the aforementioned 'symphonic orthodoxy' by Anderton, as well as the parallel 'rhythmic complexity orthodoxy' I outlined, canonization of performers, or placing aspects such as Western art music components solely in progressive rock contexts, become relevant not only as to how academia discusses a genre, but also how said genre is perceived in the broader culture. I believe that, overall, in addition to the potential knowledge that can be gained when drawing from the perspectives of the genre's audiences, future research on progressive metal will benefit from adopting a sense of reflexivity in relation to how it is perceived by the broader culture. To be clear, this is not meant as a 'dire warning' but rather that, in my view, by keeping in mind that a broader non-academic community will likely engage with academic texts, scholarly work should try to balance showcasing clearly what they mean by ascribing the genre's term, or from where said perspective draws from, as well as emphasize the discussion of tensions and contradictions that emerge from the genre. When combined with more accessible writing, something that I offer as a general suggestion rather than as addressing criticism, doing so will benefit both how scholars in related fields, or unfamiliar scholars engaging with progressive music are introduced to the broad discussion, but may also aid the text to be received by non-academic readers.

This study's contribution to the outlined suggestions can be summarized as, on the one hand, positioning audience perspectives at the core of the investigation and as a central source of information in developing arguments towards the genre, namely towards developing an understanding of an aspect that is not particularly well researched. On the other hand, reflecting on challenges pertaining to canonization and the related 'rhythmic complexity orthodoxy', whilst acknowledging such approaches' validity in the genre, I will attempt to address some of their limitations by engaging with bands that have been subject to limited or no academic discussion, and I have left aside any audience perspectives on rhythmic complexity, that had no direct bearing on the role of the classical in the genre.

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[91] Ger. Orig. "Sowohl Fans und JournalistInnen als auch WissenschaftlerInnen haben Einfluss auf die Kanonbildung, und alle Instanzen üben Macht aus. Allerdings wird wissenschaftlichen Publikationen gesellschaftlich bedingt ein höherer Stellenwert und damit ein größeres Machtpotenzial im Kanondiskurs zum Progressive Rock eingeräumt. Aus diesen Fakten resultiert insbesondere bei wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten das Erfordernis der Reflexion über die eigene Subjektivität – und über die Macht des eigenen Wortes".

I previously mentioned that despite my critical perspective on genealogical arguments, I have drawn equally from progressive rock and heavy metal academic work as means of offering a broad context from which my own investigation moves outwardly. In discussing progressive metal's engagement with the classical, I have placed the emphasis on elaborating the questions of 'what' audiences suggest represents the classical, as well as 'how' it can be interpretatively related to Western art music contexts. In other words, whilst Deena Weinstein has argued that the "appropriation of nonpopular musical forms" rather than "a set of concrete sonic elements such as particular rhythms or instrumentation" (Weinstein 2002, 91) are what defines the progressive rock genre, my work will focus on discussing aspects such as instrumentation, arrangement or borrowing. I will therefore leave perspectives actively situating said aspects in the conceptual framework and/or ideology of the broader progressive music field to scholars more inclined in pursuing such line of inquiry. That said, in order to contribute to offering more differentiated perspectives, I have attempted to balance discussing perspectives that appear in various quantities throughout the discourses, thus hopefully aiding in less common perspectives to become more visible. Also, I have included a section that briefly highlights how the discourse surrounding the examined progressive metal bands have offered a somewhat contrasting perspective, namely a discussion of the music's accessibility, rather than its complexity.

As a general conclusion, this overview of the current state of research discussed a series of academic and journalistic texts that include information regarding progressive metal's engagement with the classical. Overall, both large-scale and individual-focused discussions have showcased that, even if not as central to the genre's aesthetic as the current definitional focus on rhythmic complexity, the classical can be identified as a notable component in the genre's aesthetic. However, the discussed limitations of such texts also clearly outline the untapped potential in relation to the specific techniques or practices framed as related to the classical, and that much work is needed for their full examination and to be properly situated in academic contexts. With regards to the second segment of this section, I presented a critical perspective that outlined issues such as canonization of artists, the prioritization of specific characteristics of the genre, and I attempted to situate these perspectives in relation to larger issues found in the broader progressive music research field. I hope that the section, and the offered future perspectives, will be seen as a call towards reflexivity and will ultimately contribute to opening the field to new perspectives that are already circulating in the broader culture surrounding the genre.

4. Theoretical foundation

As I illustrated in the previous chapter, some of the major challenges I perceive in current progressive metal scholarship are the lack of definitional clarity when the progressive metal genre label is applied. As well as the genealogical perspectives that, in some instances, arise when a framing of the genre was offered thus overall precluding a thorough and/or differentiated investigation of the genre. With my continuous confrontation with the implications of 'what' is discussed when the genre-label is broadly applied, as well as how to present observations in relation to the classical that are neither too broad, nor too narrow, I began reflecting more on the aspect of 'who' is making a certain claim, and from what perspective. A common characteristic I observed in relation to a great deal of the examined texts was that their discussion of the genre represented, and perhaps prioritised, the perspective of the researcher/writer. Also, in instances where the perspectives of audiences were evoked they were not the focal point of the investigation (e.g. Anderton 2009; Lücker 2013 [2011], 38, 47, 92–94; McCandless 2010, 1n2; Pieslak 2007, 243–44; Roccor 1998, 118, 119, 192; Smialek 2008, 72–123).[92] These observations, together with instances in which scholarly work discussed audience discourses as challenging the "accepted history and canon of progressive rock" (Anderton 2009, 108), generated the initial impulses to ground my work in the examination of perspectives from the culture's members. As such, having encountered multiple online audiences communities I aimed to adopt a theoretical framing that would allow me to appropriately incorporate the clearly observable opinions, or "lay discourses" (Anderton 2009, 108), of progressive metal's audience when conceptualising the role of the classical in the genre.

After considering several potential concepts, the combination between the theoretical framings of genre theory and the circuit of culture model struck me as most suitable in situating the complex role and contribution of audiences towards constructing the meaning of the classical in progressive metal. The former theory-field offered approaches to both systematically organise observations regarding a genre's working mechanics, and most importantly, texts from said field highly emphasise the role and perspectives of various groups constituting a genre's community including that of its audiences. The latter model presents a series of interconnected processes framing how meaning is constructed in relation to a cultural artefact and helps considering audiences not as passive recipients, or as representing simple consumers of a media product, but rather as active participants in the co-creation of cultural meaning. In the following sections, I will briefly summarise

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[92] To avoid misinterpretation with regards to Smialek's text, I have listed his work here as he incorporates discourse-analysis-comparable perspectives drawn from how the Meshuggah's audiences have perceived the band or other members of the community's perception of the band towards the final third of his dissertation. This is not an attempt to devalue his work or to designate it as 'insufficiently focused on discourse analysis' but simply to point out that it approaches engaging with the audience in a more additive manner, than this study's positioning of audience perspectives as a core source of data for analysis. Similarly, Roccor's book is based on ethnographic perspectives and the quoted page numbers represent the examples she derives from perspectives of metal fans. Furthermore, she does outline several German fanzines in which progressive metal is specifically mentioned such as *Mortal Sin* (Roccor 1998, 333) or *Nonkonform* (Roccor 1998, 335) which can be taken as evidence of her work incorporating such audience-based perspectives into her discussions of the genre. As previously mentioned, however, the overall contribution on the understanding of progressive metal is rather short, thus reflecting my own inclusion of the publication as an example here.

relevant points derived from the specific academic texts that constituted my theoretical framing, as well as include brief mentions towards the end regarding the theoretical foundation in the gender-focused investigation found in the latter part of my work.

4.1 Genre Theory

As a general introduction to my experience with genre studies, having examined a variety of contributions from the field (e.g. D. Brackett 2005; D. Brackett 2015; F. Fabbri 1982; F. Fabbri 1999; F. Fabbri 2004; F. Fabbri 2016; Fornäs 1995; Holt 2007; Kennedy 2018; Lena 2012; Marino 2015; Negus 1999), one of the early observations that led me to consider genre theory as highly conducive to the direction of my study was Jennifer Lena's (2012) comment on "thin histories", namely:

> "In most histories of music, the focus is placed on individual actors: genius performers, opportunistic promoters, or divisive wives. By attributing credit for bold innovations to single individuals, we have a fragile, thin explanation for the very complex worlds in which these innovators lived". (Lena 2012, 2)

As previously discussed, I view multiple established perspectives within the current academic field on progressive metal as somewhat problematic, such as the general prioritisation of specific techniques, definitions or performers. Genre theory views such approaches as "flawed not because [thin histories] identify the wrong events and people, but because they focus on too few of them, and because the importance of events and performers is determined by contemporary values" (Lena 2012, 2). It goes without saying that this perspective serves primarily as another way to contextualise some of the previously mentioned criticisms. Thus, I will summarise how my work draws from several academic contributions in the field that both help to underscore a structured approach to the interpretation of specific facets within a genre's confines, as well as illustrate the importance of the surrounding culture in the continuous re-evaluation of the genre's boundaries.[93]

Since early efforts in adapting genre theory to popular music contexts around the mid-1980s, scholars pursuing and contributing to this theoretical framing offered perspectives on the working mechanisms of a genre, yet also emphasised that the emergence, development and continuous existence of a genre is strongly related to its community. One of the earliest contributions in this regard is Franco Fabbri's "A Theory of Musical Genres: Two Applications" (2004),[94] which succinctly outlines the definition of a genre as "a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (F. Fabbri 2004, 7). These socially accepted rules can be divided into five categories, which may initially appear as too formalist in their conception, however the author offers two points of consideration. First, a researcher should consider which of these categories are of significant relevance to their study, and add or subtract some rules as necessary for the investigation at hand; and second, Fabbri somewhat tentatively presents the

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[93] Having engaged with Moore's discussion on the differences between the terms "style" and "genre" (A. F. Moore 2001), it is worth pointing that all texts I am referring to in this section (as well as several that I have engaged with, though with less relevance to my theoretical framing (such as Lena 2012) have framed "genre" as a socially constructed formation that can include multiple styles, be they larger or related to individual performers. Based on this emphasis on the cultural aspect, my work will employ the term 'genre' when addressing progressive metal.

[94] The article was originally published in 1982, though I am referring here to a later reprint.

concept of a "hyper-rule", which is discussed as representing the "'ideology' of that genre" (F. Fabbri 2004, 10). As such, the following categories can be seen as a useful point of departure and as malleable in their application to research inquiries.

The category of 'formal and technical rules' focuses on the building blocks of what one is to listen to when considering a genre, and refers to aspects such as what forms can be commonly associated with a genre, as well as range "from performance techniques, to instrumental characteristics, to a musician's ability" (F. Fabbri 2004, 10), to name a few. An additional notable aspect is Fabbri's outline that "rules of genres are [well rooted] in our musical culture" (F. Fabbri 2004, 11), which helps to consider the aforementioned building blocks not as universal, or fully predetermined, but as having somewhat different interpretation based on their appearance and use in different musical contexts. Under 'semiotic rules' Fabbri outlines the "codes which create a relation between the expression of a musical event and its content" (F. Fabbri 2004, 11) as well as further extends the communicative principle beyond the expressivity of the musical text by considering components such as "the distance between musicians and audience, between spectator and spectator, the overall dimensions of the event", or "dance forms […] the posture and movement of singers, instrument players, conductors, the listeners and even the critics" (F. Fabbri 2004, 12). A closely related category is that of 'behaviour rules' which engage with both "psychology of musicians" as well as "psychological and behavioural reactions" of the audience and the overall "rules of conversation, smaller and larger rituals" (F. Fabbri 2004, 13). Due to the tangential importance to my study of the 'economical and juridical rules' governing the financial and contractual processes that "guarantee the survival and prosperity of [a] genre" (F. Fabbri 2004, 14), I will not dwell on said category and instead move directly to the category of "social and ideological rules". For said rules, Fabbri outlines that "[e]very genre is defined by a community of varying structure which accepts the rules whose members participate in various forms during the course of a musical event" (F. Fabbri 2004, 13). Furthermore, he discusses the musical community not as a term focusing only on the audience or the genre's consumption, but rather to a variety of groups performing different tasks within/in relation to a specific genre, whether they be composer, performer, listener critic etc. (F. Fabbri 2004, 14–15).

The conceptualisation of a genre's multiple sets of rules in Fabbri's approach offers a solid theoretical foundation to my work by laying out a systematic, yet flexible framing through which observations can be structured. However, before moving to further genre-studies, I want to draw the attention to a specific terminological aspect that relates Fabbri's outlined framework. Specifically, the author offers a comment that in examining a phenomenon, scholars are to decide if said "set of musical events" is "being considered in relation to its sub-sets" or "in relation to other opposing sets" (F. Fabbri 2004, 8). This decision results in a small terminological adjustment, namely, the phenomenon being referred to as, respectively, constituting a 'musical system' or a 'genre'. This distinction may be superfluous, at least outside of studies that engage heavily with outlining the various aspects of a less-known, or even new, genre, and indeed Fabbri does not expand on this a great deal, as pointed out by David Brackett (D. Brackett 2015, 192–93). However, I am dedicating

more than a passing mention to the distinction as it can help contextualise my usage of the term 'meta-genre' that already appeared a few times in this book.

Both progressive rock and heavy metal may be narrowly described as musical genres which can be traced back to the roughly late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet, as time went on and further bands emerged, newer terms would be introduced to discuss specific permutations or sub-categories of said genres e.g., for heavy metal examples include 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal' or 'Thrash Metal'; and for progressive rock 'Rock Progressivo Italiano' or the 'Canterbury Scene'. These developments can be considered as indicating a change of perception of the larger term's framing from 'horizontal' means of comparison between "other opposing sets [of musical events" to 'vertical' means of comparison against "sub-sets" (F. Fabbri 2004, 8). In other words, if the term 'heavy metal' (and for that matter 'progressive rock') would have previously been used as a way to differentiate it from other genres (e.g., funk, glam rock, soul, country etc.), today it can be used as a catch-all designation that encompasses a variety of sub-genres that fit said genre-category.[95]

Whilst the principle I just outlined is easily contextualised via Fabbri's framing, I found the author's term 'musical system' – or later on as a "superordinate category, which includes many genres" (F. Fabbri 2016, 180n4)[96] – to be somewhat cumbersome. As Fabbri was not the only one to offer a similar conceptualisation, I explored other naming conventions of the same phenomenon that might offer a more accessible label e.g., Fabian Holt's "historical genres" (Holt 2007, 16). Of these, my encounter with the term "metagenre" in a text by Roy Shuker (Shuker 2005 [1998], 122), where the author distinguishes between "metagenre [as] loose amalgams of various styles [and] genres, which exist in a purer, more easily understood and specified form" and "subgenres" (Shuker 2005 [1998], 122), struck me as comparable yet less precise division that the one by Fabbri, and I decided to conflate the two.[97] Thus, for the purposes of this study, I have elected to describe 'heavy metal' and 'progressive rock' as 'meta-genres', whilst suggesting Fabbri's understanding of musical system. I considered this combination approach as necessary as it allows me, if needed, to suggest the large

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[95] To be clear, and to avoid essentialising the discussion, I am well aware that both heavy metal and progressive rock were initially terms with much less firmly-set characteristics and thus my discussion of such 'horizontal' capacity of comparison should be seen as relative. Similarly, it goes without saying that from a more contemporary perspective, even when acknowledging the broader 'vertical' depth of terms such as 'heavy metal', this does not exclude the potential for their usage to still imply a 'horizontal' contrast against other similar encompassing terms such as 'rap' or 'techno'.

[96] The idea of a musical system or its newer permutation of a superordinate category is not limited to that of how genres may be described, but also reflects different levels of how various types of music relate to one another. For example, whilst 'heavy metal' cab be described as a musical system due to including several genres, it participates into the larger musical system of 'popular music' that in turn can be situated into categories such as 'Western music' and so forth. I am pointing this out not only as the quote from Fabbri's 2016 text is referring specifically to how one may describe the term 'popular music', but also to refer interested readers to an additional text by Brackett (2015) that further elaborates on Fabbri's discussion.

[97] Another reason for selecting 'meta-genre' is me encountering isolated instances where the term has previously been employed for progressive rock (e.g. Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016, 99; P. Grant 2017, 4) and heavy metal (Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016, 108), and the bibliography of said writings offers contexts that have already been utilised in this study, namely Anderton's 2010 article (see Anderton 2010) or Borthwick and Moy's 2004 book chapter (Borthwick and Moy 2004, 3), thus ensuring a level of definitional parity.

variety of musical, visual, textual etc. perspectives that can be drawn from either context, as part of the notion of 'progressive metal as a mixture of heavy metal and progressive rock aspects'.[98]

As a great deal of academic texts offering theoretical reflections related to genre in popular music contexts have considered the role of the surrounding community (e.g. D. Brackett 2015, 196–99; Fornäs 1995, 115–17; Frith 1996, 75–95; Lena 2012; Toynbee 2000, 110–15), I elected to draw from sources beyond Fabbri's contribution as means of strengthening the theoretical underpinning when examining the perspectives offered by progressive metal's audience. With that in mind, rather than summarise the complex field of (often overlapping) aspects constituting genre theory as discussed by these scholars, I will discuss specific characteristics from two texts that helped strengthen my theoretical framing, and will intersperse brief mentions of other texts I found illuminating.

Fabian Holt's (2007) book, *Genre in Popular Music*, has been a highly pertinent extension to the theoretical framing of my work as the author places a notable emphasis on the importance of discourse in the process of genre formulation, and I found his argument that "[g]enre boundaries [are] contingent upon the social spaces in which they emerge and upon cultural practice, not just musical practice" (Holt 2007, 14) to be particularly relevant. Similarly, in light of my critical perspective towards the genealogy- and canon-aspects in the progressive metal research field, I considered his suggestion that research should aim at "*understanding* rather than *defining* genres" (Holt 2007, 8, italics in original), to be a useful mindset when reflecting on how to constructively approach and offer perspectives relevant at the level of a genre. The author's "general framework of genre" (Holt 2007, 20) presents several useful viewpoints into addressing the co-relation between a community and the elements found within a genre's boundaries, namely the notions of "networks" and "conventions". Under "network", Holt discusses a combination of social and discursive processes summarised as "the communicative relations between the many different agents that create and sustain a genre's identity" (Holt 2007, 20). Of particular interest to my work is the idea of "center collectivities" or "clusters of specialized subjects that have given direction to the larger network" which also includes "influential fan communities" (Holt 2007, 21), a source which my study will draw heavily from.[99] With that in mind, Holt does suggest that despite various social groups – be they fans, "social authorities, educational institutions, and the music business" (Holt 2007, 15) – have some degree of influence on

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[98] That said, the progarchives.com community has framed 'progressive metal' as a form of 'meta-genre' itself, with further divisions based on historical period and/or what types of heavy metal and progressive elements are drawn (Progarchives.com 2012b). I will briefly discuss the details of such ascription in a later section, however, as theorising the co-relations between these (sub-)categories is not the primary function of this study, I am purposefully avoiding engaging with them further.

[99] A more recent publication by Fabbri has offered a similar perspective: "Communities, as sets of human beings, may be the union of smaller communities, or be formed by individuals who also belong to other communities. In this way they may find themselves at the intersection between two or more communities. If we think of the community accepting and sharing the norms that define a genre, we'll find that it is probably formed by the union of various, more homogeneous communities, and that each individual is a member of other communities, accepting and sharing the norms of other genres" (F. Fabbri 2016, 183). As both Fabbri and Holt address a genre's community as consisting of members from varying group-types, I found such contributions particularly important in forming my perspective on the necessity to draw from both progressive rock and heavy metal audiences as constituting the broader progressive metal community.

popular music-focused genres, "no single group of agents or institutions has the power to sanction its typology as the standard for everyone" (Holt 2007, 15).[100]

With regards to the genre "conventions", Holt outlines multiple "processes of communication and signification in the network", of which the ideas of "codes" and "values" will be of use to my work (Holt 2007, 22–24). The author draws from the structural linguistics principle of a code as "impl[ying] a relatively strong and fixed convention that can be identified in concrete correlations between discrete entities in the communication process" (Holt 2007, 22) which he then suggests is of use when "exploring conventions on the level of discrete musical elements" that "have assumed the status of genre signifiers" (Holt 2007, 22, 23). Additionally, Holt's positioning of the shared "values" of a community as articulating genre conventions proved useful when considering the underlying implications of some audience perspectives and by extension informed the generation of some interpretations. In other words, the discussion of specific components in discourse surrounding a genre serves not only as description, but as a form of ascription of meaning and value thus resulting in internal and external co-relation between said components and the genre in question.

Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning David Brackett's (2016) contribution titled *Categorizing Sound. Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music*, which despite focusing primarily on US and early-to-mid twentieth century phenomena, I found useful in addressing some of the definitional challenges stemming from Fabbri's work, as well as providing some extensions to Holt's discussion of genre "conventions". Brackett's text discusses a turn away from "retroactive grouping based on what is already known or assumed to be the contents of a genre" (D. Brackett 2016, 4) in genre studies – a problematic aspect that I illustrated in my overview of the state of research – but rather towards historicist notions that emphasises "the study of the conflictual meanings of categories via a reconstruction of a historical horizon of meaning" (D. Brackett 2016, 5). As such his study, drawing from Michel Foucault's genealogical principles, suggests that "[r]ather than focusing on *what* constitutes the contents of a musical category, the emphasis here falls on *how* a particular idea of a category emerges and stabilizes momentarily (if at all) in the course of being accepted across a range of discourses and institutions" (D. Brackett 2016, 6). This approach is not the main point of interest to me as, indeed, my study engages with a position 'in between' the author's notion of 'what' and 'how'. However, some of the critical perspectives offered by Brackett were influential to my data selection process, as well as to addressing some of the challenges outlined in the previous chapter.

Brackett's examination of Fabbri's article, as discussed a few pages earlier, points out that the latter's notion of a musical system seemingly draws from a Ferdinand de Saussure-evoking perspective, namely "meaning as created through a system of difference without positive value"; he also adds that, in relation to this co-relation between genres as part of the system they "cannot be identified according to a list of positive terms" (D. Brackett 2016, 7). Brackett contrasts this idea by

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[100] Whilst this comment addresses potential meaning interactions between separate collectivities, it is also worth briefly mentioning Johan Fornäs' genre theory contribution which employs the term "intersubjectivity" so as to describe the same interactions, though with a somewhat more expressed emphasis on the relations by members of specific collectivities (Fornäs 1995, 115–16).

drawing from Jacques Derrida's argumentation regarding genres functioning on the basis of "citationality or iterability" (D. Brackett 2016, 12), which is suggested as follows:

> "[I]t is a condition of the legibility of a text that a listener can place it in the context of a genre, that is, in the context of how sounds, lyrics, images, performer personae, musical rhetoric, and a generic label (among other things) can be related. In order for this to occur, texts must cite or refer to generic conventions that predate them. A musical text that is not a literal quotation can only be understood as participating in a genre if that genre is capable of being quoted outside of, or beyond, the initial context in which it was created, and if that genre is legible to addressees beyond the initial audience for the genre". (D. Brackett 2016, 13)

I consider Brackett's argument rather useful not only as an extension of Jason Toynbee's (2000) discussion (itself derived from the work of film scholars such as Steve Neal) of genres as processes that balance "tension between repetition and difference" (Toynbee 2000, 106). But also, as means of countering some dismissive arguments towards progressive metal as not sufficiently distinct so as to represent its own genre.[101] In addition, when taken together with Brackett's discussions of levels of genre in which he positions the category of "critic-fan genres" as most specific when compared to radio format, or chart name categories (D. Brackett 2016, 11), the idea of iterability allows to consider the appearance of genre-boundary components in audience discourses as a representation of a highly debated definitional process. In turn this allows to consider such portions of the discourse as equally valid points of examination when considering the role of the classical in progressive metal.

The second aspect emphasised in a substantial portion of Brackett's work is the notion that "[c]ategories of music are often associated with categories of people" (D. Brackett 2016, 1), which is then extended to both considerations such as music's capacity to "evoke connotations of particular types of people" (D. Brackett 2016, 3) as well as that "people identify with different types of music" (D. Brackett 2016, 2). Of particular interest was the author's discussion of the concept of "foreign music" during the 1910s and 1920s which highlights the reproduction of stereotypes in music recordings and their supposed demographic origin and target audience (e.g. regarding Jewish music see D. Brackett 2016, 53–57). Whilst my work's engagement with identity and diversity is limited to exploring issues of gender representation in progressive metal contexts, prioritising the perspectives of listeners required some consideration regarding issues of cultural identity, especially as discussions of performer and/or audiences' class for both progressive rock and heavy metal have been subject to discussion (e.g. see Borthwick and Moy 2004, 62, 144; A. R. Brown 2016c; Johnes 2018; Edward Macan

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[101] With regards to how I navigate both Brackett's position together with my adoption of Fabbri's musical system principle under the term 'meta-genre', I view the two as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In other words, whilst I do tend to prioritise framing progressive metal as an independent genre due to incorporating techniques, gestures, etc., that help to differentiate it from other genres, including its most often discussed predecessor, progressive rock, I do not deny its indebtedness to it or heavy metal contexts. As I outlined in the previous chapter, my goal is not to segregate progressive metal from any historical context, but rather, that as the relation to progressive rock has been firmly established, it is now necessary to shift discussion towards prioritising how the genre moves forward. Similarly, I have no general objection towards scholarly work describing the genre through positive terms such as rhythmic or metric complexity, but rather to said parameter's canonisation potential. This ultimately underpins my criticism that future definitions of the genre should attempt to include a variety of perspectives.

1997, 144–58; Martin 1996, 45–53; Smialek and St-Laurent 2019). As I will illustrate in the discussion of data selection, issues of class and gender are somewhat sidestepped in my work, due to both the large number of users and the obscuring effects of utilised usernames, though reflecting on the potential for stereotyping was a consideration when developing interpretations framed as representing the audience's combined perspective.

In summary, this overview helped to outline several important aspects as to the importance of genre theory for the theoretical framing of this study. Despite being one of the first texts on genre in popular music studies, I consider Fabbri's contribution as offering a clearly differentiated approach towards discussing various facets of progressive metal, yet one that allows flexibility towards how various rules of the genre are organised in relation to one another. In simple terms, if we are to accept the hyper-rule status of progressive metal's rhythmic complexity, this enables my work to examine the role of the classical as part of the technical and semiotic rules as having importance without needing to overturn existing observations. Fabbri's text also notes the importance of the genre's surrounding communities, and that the aforementioned rules are generated in processes involving the culture's audiences, which certainly helps in reaffirming that perspectives from such groups are of importance to genre-related discussions. Additionally, I elected to expand the outlined perspectives via several additional contributions by Fabian Holt and David Brackett. The former offers a more detailed consideration of the network of the multiple groups of communities surrounding a genre. As well as regarding a genre's conventions and the subsumed codified processes of meaning co-relation that can be identified in various forms of communication surrounding a genre, including the discursive practices of the aforementioned groups of communities. The latter's contribution helps in raising awareness on aspects such as the need for critical reflection when relations between audiences and various music are framed, which has contributed in part towards my decision to engage with gender aspects in progressive metal. As well as on the importance to consider a genre not only via emphasising its difference from other similar formations, but also as constituted and further recognised through a repetition of elements, itself an important point when attempting to offer new perspectives of a genre based on a community's reiteration of specific terms and their related understandings.

4.2 The circuit of culture

Despite the aforementioned texts from genre theory to place a notable emphasis on the importance of a genre's community, I decided to include an additional theoretical concept that further outlines the active role of audiences towards meaning co-construction in relation to cultural phenomena. Doing so allows to me parallel Fabbri's segmented overview of a genre's various rules, as well as highlights the importance of discursive principles in culture thus offering connections to my choice of methods outlined in the following chapter. As such, the second central theoretical framing I chose to frame my work is that of the circuit of culture model as developed in the mid-to-late 1990s by Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda James, Anders Kold Madsen, Hugh Mackay and Keith Negus (2013).

The central argument driving this model is an attempt to move past the, at the time, production-centric view found in social sciences which offered a somewhat restricted understanding on how a cultural product is "'encoded' with particular meanings and uses" (Du Gay et al. 2013, xiii).

Instead, the authors propose a discourse and signification-based model that prioritises the analysis of cultural artefacts or "object[s] brought into meaning" (Du Gay et al. 2013, 4) through a series of five distinct, yet interconnected processes – representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. The connections between the processes are outlined as "articulation" or

> "[t]he process of connecting disparate elements together to form a temporary unity. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two or more different or distinct elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, or absolute and essential for all time; rather it is a linkage whose conditions of existence or emergence need to be located in the contingencies of circumstance". (Du Gay et al. 2013, xxx)

Whilst the titles of individual processes are fairly explanatory, it would be worthwhile to briefly touch upon what each process entails. 'Representation' engages with various forms of meaning-making in culture and specifically focusing on language, in turn, implies "*any* system of representation – photography, painting, speech, writing, imaging through technology, drawing" (Du Gay et al. 2013, 7), as well as both the "semantic networks" (Du Gay et al. 2013, 9) of connotations surrounding the discussed artefact, and the signifying practices that are constituted through culture (Du Gay et al. 2013, 10–12). 'Identity' outlines the co-relation between how an artefact, as well as those generating it, are projected into culture with certain identities in mind, and the associated framing of potential for self-identification and/or identity adoption by those interested in the artefact (Du Gay et al. 2013, 21, 33-34). Under 'regulation', the authors consider how an artefact participates in boundary transgressive practices, and the blurring of socio-culturally constructed 'lines' regarding the supposed appropriate engagement with certain activities e.g. music consumption as either actionable in 'private' or 'public' spheres (Du Gay et al. 2013, 104–6); as well as the co-relation to the enforcement (or creation of new) regulatory principles as a result of said actions (Du Gay et al. 2013, 106–9).

'Production' examines partly the technical elements of how an artefact was created (in the original publication the engineering considerations of the Walkman) but also views how said elements projected the artefact towards the world in relation to the underlying principles, values, and ideas (Du Gay et al. 2013, 37–54, 56–59). In addition, these elements are considered as subject to changes and adjustments as part of the artefact in relation to the changing dynamics of an artefact's reception (i.e. consumption) in various countries or the lenses of transculturation and hybridization (Du Gay et al. 2013, 66) and the challenges of globalization (Du Gay et al. 2013, 72–74).

With 'consumption', the authors discuss the co-relation between how an artefact is utilised in culture, though not limited to its practical dimensions, but rather, drawing from cultural theorist Michel de Certeau's view of consumption as a form of "production" (Du Gay et al. 2013, 97). In other words, as opposed to the culture-critical perspectives of Adorno or Horkheimer represented in their concept of the "production of consumption", or the idea that mass culture results in inherently formulaic, "superficial and inauthentic" cultural forms (Du Gay et al. 2013, 82), the circuit of culture model prioritises the capacity of agency and individual meaning construction. In turn, these include a suppressive and/or subversive potential against the (identity) normative principles that may be

assumed if one accepts that meaning is hard-coded during the moment of production (Du Gay et al. 2013, 97). The resulting meaning is then constructed as a form of 'dialogue' that incorporates

> "an ongoing cycle of **commodification** – where producers make new products or different versions of old products as a result of consumers' activities and **appropriation** – where consumers make those products meaningful, sometimes making them achieve a new 'register' of meaning that affects production in some way". (Du Gay et al. 2013, 97, emphasis in original)

With that in mind, a warning is made for scholars to avoid pushing the argument exclusively in the direction of consumption and to present it as fully separate from practices of production, thus resulting in "project[ion of] a vision of consumption practices as inherently democratic and implicitly 'subversive'" (Du Gay et al. 2013, 98).

As my work emphasises the importance of audience discourse that surrounds progressive metal, and more specifically draws information from user-generated album reviews, the adoption (and somewhat adaptation) of the circuit of culture model allows to consider the various expressed perspectives as not only a view into the reception (or consumption) of the genre, but rather a complex, multi-faceted engagement process that engages (to various degrees) with all of the outlined categories. Under 'adapting' the model, I suggest two things: first, the model's emphasis on the Walkman presents an interesting balance between discussing a 'unified' cultural artefact that exists in a multitude of permutations or sub-series. This principle can be somewhat replicated when considering the relation between a genre and close readings of individual songs, though to avoid oversimplification, I consider such parallels to constitute a form of model-adaptation for the purposes of my material. Second, the authors' emphasis on discussing a cultural artefact by tracing its elements through the entire model history is something that I can only partially achieve due to the specific aspects of my material as well as the magnitudes of the data, and also by offering some adaptations of how the five processes can be seen as represented in said data.

To exemplify what I mean by these two adaptations, I want to offer some brief examples of how examining album reviews strikes me as incorporating all of the aforementioned processes. Reviews of progressive metal albums are posted by users as part of an online platform dedicated to the (supposedly) systematic inclusion of progressive or metal performers – thus enabling to argue that, even if the term 'fan' has some problematic applications, the co-relation between some artefacts and identity is fairly strongly implied. The album reviews are means of textual/visual communication that not only showcases consumption, but by evaluating the albums the agency of the writers is taken into consideration, thus enabling to suggest that (given the more limited framing of the genre in academic/journalistic texts) these writings also constitute a form of representation. With that in mind, as the online communities in which the users participate are governed by some rules of their own, the principles of regulations emerge both in terms of what is considered acceptable to be allowed on the platforms, but also via the self-regulation that is observable in the presentation of conflicting or contrasting perspectives by the reviewers. Whilst the production side (i.e., regarding the intentions of performers) is not actively pursued, reviewers' utterances to this effect are critically examined thus offering a somewhat filtered view towards production perspectives that can potentially be taken up

by future research. I hope that this summary helps to broadly situate how the investigation of album reviews can be seen as reflecting the processes within the circuit of culture, whereby I will offer additional details regarding the album reviews in the following methods and data selection chapters.

Before concluding this theoretical overview, it is worth reiterating that the combination of Brackett's discussion of how certain types of music evoked stereotypes of people, and the circuit of culture's categories of identity and representation – not to mention cultural studies' general emphasis on the investigation of marginalised perspectives – served as notable contexts influencing my decision to engage with topics such as diversity in progressive metal. Similarly important were texts such as Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) and Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998) as introductory theoretical perspectives into, respectively, the often contested close proximity between Western art music as incorporating aspects of sexuality and that identity-concepts such as masculinity and femininity are much less set in stone than media or culture likes to project. Through this combination of perspectives, it became impossible to 'unsee' aspects such as the lack of female representation, or as we will later see, The Great Kat's engagement with elements of female masculinity, thus overall steering my decision to dedicate a significant portion of my work on gender perspectives.

4.3 Key concepts I: the classical

An extension of this study's theoretical framing that should be addressed before transitioning to the outline of employed methods is the operational definition of a key-term that will be applied throughout the book, namely that of the "classical". Based on both progressive rock and heavy metal's historical engagement with Western art music, as well as the planned examination of the writing of specialist audiences with differing degrees of definitional clarity, it would be tempting to brush the issue aside and simply point to any standard discussion of Western art music. However, doing so will present a formative challenge towards the otherwise discursive and culture-based principles underpinning this work, not to mention that it will ignore a seemingly obvious factor, namely that to some viewers the term "classical" may connote a wider set of semiotic (i.e., not just auditive) signs. To address this, I decided to base my understanding of the classical in a slightly modified version of the conceptualisation employed by US musicologist Michael Long as outlined in his study *Beautiful Monsters. Imagining the classic in musical media* (2008).

The author offers a perspective on the term classic by pursuing an open approach intended to overcome the perspective of "categories of 'art' and 'popular' that we [academics] know are meaningless or wrong" (Long 2008, 4). Said approach is to be facilitated through

> "a methodologically flexible – that is, a 'generalist' – perspective to bear upon music that has often been represented even by its adherents and its devoted analysts as something essentially distinct from that which lay at the heart of academic musical discourse prior to the last decades of the twentieth century". (Long 2008, 3)

Long's understanding of the classic "is concerned primarily with a collective, not quite definable, yet inescapably powerful 'vernacular imagination'" (Long 2008, 5), whereby this perspective is framed via drawing from literary tradition and sociolinguistics. Specifically, the author incorporates the concept of the register, understood as "related to the broader fields of acculturated styles and genres in which

it functions as a signal and marker [and as] expanded beyond the measurements of a simple scale to a system of classification based on words, syntax, form, and sounds; it often serves in place of more general notions of, for example, tenor, tone, and style" (Long 2008, 12). Later on, he continues in emphasising the connection between the register and cultural perspectives by stating:

> "If register is primarily a vernacular shorthand, the deciphering of which proceeds from a shared cultural or linguistic understanding, then it must be considered at least as much, perhaps more, a feature of the act of reception as one of authorship, intention, or performance. By focusing on this fluid aspect of register, and by locating its field of operation within *standard* cultural discourse, we can largely avoid invoking the cumbersome bipolar signifiers that demark and deaden the meaningful or lively critique of mixed-register, pastiche, or middlebrow works and genres". (Long 2008, 23, italics in original)

From this, the author conceptualises the notion of the "classic register" as existing within the boundaries of "cultural discourse" and argues that in such vernacular settings "terms or objects of the classic collection will tend to be registrated as such on the basis of mnemosynic or metonymic apprehension [i.e.] a speaker […] drawing upon this register will trigger a recognition response that tends to proceed from the listener's experience (memory) on the one hand, or from an intuition that beyond what has been heard, its phenomenal portion, lies a greater whole, with 'greater' intended in the dimensional rather than the evaluative sense" (Long 2008, 26). Furthermore, making reference to broad musical discourse, Long suggests that the register of the classic is "often associated with the invocation of death and the dead on the one hand, and reanimation on the other. [This refers] not merely to a condition of pastness, of being dead, but to the state of being monumentally dead, or in a *monumental* state of being dead, emphasizing monumentality to call attention to the architectural implications of invoking the register" (Long 2008, 26).[102]

Of particular note is Long's conceptual framing of the classic register and as incorporating a high degree of generality thus removing it "from any enforced participation in the Western cultural tradition of the classic, which typically has stressed the deathless aspects of the aesthetic objects so identified" (Long 2008, 27). As examples of this, the author brings perspectives such as Michael Jackson's incorporation of movie theme songs (e.g. "Smile" by David Raskin from the film *Modern Times*, or "People" by Barbra Streisand) into his Neverland Estate, which highlight Jackson's perception of "an ethical position" that represents the classical (Long 2008, 31–32). Similarly, he discusses use of "samples that 'classicize' the sound environment" (Long 2008, 34) in the output of DMX's "What's My Name" and Busta Rhymes' "Gimme Some More" and their transformation in the context of the respective artist's output. The former is discussed as integrating the first bars of Richard Addinsell's *Warsaw Concerto*, thus enabling DMX to draw from "the manifestation of nonintegrated piano sound [...] often associated with the registers of the heroic or the demonic" as established in the popular

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[102] A similar argument appears to have been made by Leonard Bernstein who argued that "when a composer writes a piece of what's usually called classical music, he puts down the exact notes that he wants, the exact instruments or voices that he wants to play or sing them – even to the exact number of instruments or voices. […] This means that what people call classical music can't be changed, except by the personality of the performer. This music is permanent, unchangeable, exact. There's a good word: exact – maybe that's what we should call this kind of music: exact music" (Bernstein, quoted in Custodis 2009, 234).

media during the twentieth century (Long 2008, 35). Furthermore, "by selecting from the register of the classic and item that bears resonance in its own and other repertoires that are both oratorical and annunciatory (i.e. the standard big-chord piano concerto opening), [DMX] capitalizes upon its high expressive value potential" (Long 2008, 36). With regards to the later example, Busta Rhymes' "Gimme Some More" is discussed as drawing from Bernard Hermann's written soundtrack for the film *Psycho*, and more specifically sections derived from the film's title sequence. Here (though also with relevance to DMX's track), Long argues for the "implicit cinematicism of sampling from past classic references" (Long 2008, 39) as well as that by looping the sample in the track, Rhymes "truly co-opts Herrmann's music, nurturing the cyclic germ inherent in but never truly realized in the original" (Long 2008, 39). A notable aspect in these analysis that should be reiterated is that whilst neither samples from which the performers draw constitute "a piece of classical music" (Long 2008, 34) they contain embedded connections to the register of the classic.[103]

Despite the purposeful brevity of this overview, I believe it showcased the benefits of this conceptual approach towards my operational definition of the classical. Specifically, the concept's emphasis on flexibility and deriving a multiplicity of meanings towards the classic (as per Long's terminology) which in turn are culture situated, yet with notable connections towards historical contexts. The adoption of such framing allows me to consider 'high' cultural implications associated with the classical, yet without such observations to constitute a form of essentialisation. The flexibility and multi-perspective underpinnings of this principle will be further strengthened by my efforts in pointing out any discussed aspect's echo in popular culture contexts as an alternative point of reference.

With that in mind, I want to briefly touch on two small yet important changes that I adopt for the purposes of including Long's concept into my work. First, whilst the author discusses the broad cultural imagining of the register of the classic, I was left with the impression that he prioritises the performer's perspective. This is by no means a substantial problem, though I want to make clear that my approach will directly engage with the audiences' perspectives, thus positioning how they perceive the performer's actions (itself filtered through my role as an interpreter), rather than directly commenting on/considering the intentions of the performer.

Second, my use of Long's concept will opt to refer to 'the classical' rather than 'the classic' as, despite seemingly limiting the original's evocative potential, there exists a rather convoluted series of overlapping meanings that can introduce interpretative difficulties. The difficulties I am referring to is the overlap between the broad language definitions of the terms 'classic' and 'classical' as well as the specificities of the terms' usage in popular music-related contexts. From a general perspective, despite the English language offering fairly similar perspectives as to what is meant under the terms 'classic' and 'classical', they are not entirely interchangeable. The Oxford Dictionary of English outlines the adjective "classical" as either "relating to ancient Greek or Latin literature, art or culture" or as "representing an exemplary standard within a traditional and long-established form or style" whereby

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[103] Whilst I have utilized Long's discussion of rap music, he does dedicate a substantial discussion on popular music genres such as (broadly) rock (Long 2008, 104–20) and progressive rock and more focused on Procul Harum's "Whiter Shade of Pale" (Long 2008, 121–56).

the latter option specifically references the notion of "classical ballet" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 319). On the other hand, when the term 'classic' is applied as an adjective, it indicates something that is "judged over a period of time to be of the highest quality and outstanding of its kind" or as "very typical of its kind"; when used as a noun, a similar "a work of art of recognized and established value" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 319) perspective may be applied.[104] From this, if a reviewer suggests that 'album X is a classic', this would potentially indicate that a certain value is inferred, either within the context of the band's output or that of a broader genre characteristic. However, if they state that 'album X is classic Metallica', the emphasis lies more on the album representing typical characteristics found in said band's output. In contrast, referring to a band as having a 'classical passage' in one of their songs, as having written an album with 'classical tendencies' etc., these would more likely indicate an invocation of an element associated with Western art tradition (or 'high' culture) contexts.

Where things become more complicated is taking into account potential changes of meaning when the terms 'classic' or 'classical' appear as part of a genre-labels in popular music contexts, and more specifically the meta-genres of progressive music and heavy metal. In general, it can be summarised that the term 'classical' (or variations such as 'neo-classical') tends to be used in instances where a performer, album, or a genre, is perceived as in close proximity to aesthetics or practices connected to Western art music contexts e.g. "classical rock" as an early synonym for progressive rock (e.g. see Covach 1997, 3; Edward Macan 1997, 27) or "neo-classical metal" (e.g. see Heritage 2016); though as I will argue later on, the relation to Greek antiquity is not entirely outside of the realm of interpretative possibility. In contrast, 'classic' is used when the genre in question is perceived as reflecting a previous period in which well recognised performers and their (potentially influential) albums were created e.g. "classic metal" (see e.g. Borthwick and Moy 2004, 143, 146–147; Weinstein 1998, 143); or "classic progressive rock" (see e.g. Anderton 2009, 107; Anderton 2010, 420; Progarchives.com 2006, n.p.).

The division is far from clear, however, as Anderton's 2009 article refers to a "resurgence of interest in Italian progressive rock, as there has in progressive rock in general" and adds that "'Classic' albums of the early 1970s have also been released in recent years" (Anderton 2009, 107). This could indicate both albums considered examples of 'classic' Italian progressive rock, as well as the UK contexts, which were earlier viewed as the 'place of origin' for progressive rock. Also, his 2010 text critically discusses "bands now routinely associated with the 'symphonic' or 'classic' progressive style" (Anderton 2010, 420) and specifically draws from Edward Macan's work in which the latter discusses the Western art music influences of the progressive rock. In other words, it is the Western art music contexts of some early progressive rock performers that have led the latter to become a 'classic' i.e., as somewhere between the "very typical of its kind" and the signification of "established value" as discussed in general definitions. This co-relation can be seen as circulating in the discourse surrounding progressive rock, whereby the following quotes from the progarchives.com website

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[104] There are other definitions included, though those fall outside of the scope of this study e.g. classical as relating to the theories of "classical physics" or classic as an indication of "a major sports tournament or competition" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 319).

generally confirms that audiences can be referring to a 'classic' period even when discussing genres with a strong relation to Western art music:

> "Progressive rock (often shortened to prog or prog rock) is a form of rock music that evolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s […] the arrangements often incorporated elements drawn from classical, jazz, and world music". (Progarchives.com n.d.a)

> "Symphonic [prog] is without doubt the sub-genre that includes the most bands in Progressive Rock because for many people it's almost synonymous [with] classic Prog, something easy to understand being that most of the classic and/or pioneer bands released music that could be included in this sub-genre". (Progarchives.com 2006, n.p.)

In other instances, authors would employ the term 'classic rock' as means of indicating rock music drawing from Western art music sources (e.g. Wicke, K.-E. Ziegenrücker, and W. Ziegenrücker 2007b), a conflation that may have been caused due to the utilization of the term in the German language, though this is not a universal principle (Halbscheffel 2013a); or perhaps such usage reflects an earlier terminological ascription (e.g. A. F. Moore 2002b). These contrast with a text by Steven Horwitz that, in reference to the output of Rush, utilizes the term "classical progressive [rock]" (Horwitz 2003, 170), in a manner that suggests evoking the idea of a 'classic period' i.e., the period in which most typically progressive aspect can be found in the band's output. Finally, there exists the retrospectively named American "classic rock" (or "timeless rock") radio format which prioritises rock music from the 1970s (Vallee 2013, n.p.; see also Gregory 2013, 22, 23, 26, 27) and thus overlaps with the idea of albums/artists associated with established value in the rock culture.

Based on this rather convoluted and overlapping set of meanings, I have elected to prioritise the term 'classical' rather than Long's 'classic' as the former's broader framing as signifying Western art culture contexts struck me as more closely matching the potential meanings applied by reviewers. Simultaneously I consider such adaptation of the operational term to contribute to easier meaning-absorption by either discipline-foreign or non-academic readers. With that in mind, this does not mean that I have ignored the utilisation of the term 'classic', rather I have carefully considered whether a reviewer's use of said term potentially implies the previously outlined implications of 'classical' (or vice-versa). As a closing remark, I hope that through this brief discussion of the complex meaning potential of the terms 'classic' and 'classical', I have offered a sufficient framing of the latter terms use in my work, thus avoiding the potential for misinterpretation.

5. Methods

The selection of methods employed on this study is underpinned by two major but related principles: first, I am approaching this research from a phenomenological perspective i.e. adopting those methods I deem necessary in examining specific aspects related to the classical's role in progressive metal; and second, I follow what Judith Halberstam refers to as "queer methodology" or a "scavenger methodology"-approach that emphasises using "different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded" (Halberstam 1998, 13). This approach is also characterised by its "combin[ing] methods that are often cast as being at odds with each other, and it refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence" (Halberstam 1998, 13). What these principles mean, in practical terms, is that whilst the methods I will outline in the following pages serve as the 'primary' tools I utilise throughout this study, they have a) been adapted to the needs of the data I examine; b) have been selected without explicit consideration as to their (widespread/limited) use in the fields of musicology/cultural studies; and, where appropriate, c) have been expanded on for the purposes of producing more encompassing (and hopefully stimulating) observations and conclusions.

In the simplest possible terms, the methods employed in my study aim to address three basic challenges. With the main subject of examination being the perspectives of progressive metal audiences as derived from writings they generated, I first employed a discourse analysis process to select, code (i.e., sort into specific categories), and reconstruct/interpret the classical-related discourses. Second, to go a step further than summarise the audiences' various discourses, I elected to offer music-interpretative close readings of specific cultural artefacts that attempt to not only outline potential auditive components that may be associated with classical-connotative perspectives, but also to relate them to relevant contexts stemming from both Western art music as well as popular music. Finally, where necessary I elected to take an additional step and offer additional close readings on aspects derived from visual-based cultural artefacts as a reflection of popular music's (and specifically heavy metal and progressive rock's) intermedial construction but also so as to expand on aspects that are very rarely discussed in the data. Each of the methods employed to address said challenges were based on pre-existing approaches, though as per the aforementioned phenomenological direction of my work, the emphasis was not adhering to the methods' limits but rather to address the specificities of the source material.

5.1 Discourse Analysis

As a basis for my discourse analysis approach, I drew from the work of the German sociologist Rainer Diaz-Bone (2010), which struck me as highly suitable for the direction of this study. Not only as his method was designed for the examination of media closely related to popular cultures and genres, but also as the author's study within the publication involved the examination of heavy metal culture.[105] Diaz-Bone's approach was conceptualised as a discourse-focused critical extension (or even

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[105] For other studies and/or edited collections on discourse analysis see Angermuller et al. 2014; Bhatia, Flowerdew, and R. H. Jones 2008; G. Brown and Yule 1983; Fairclough 1995; Fairclough 2003; Gee 1999; Gee

substitution) of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction, that draws from/reflects on the discourse-theoretical approaches of Michel Foucault, Michel Pencheux and Norman Fairclough. A notable aspect of the contrast is outlined by Diaz-Bone as such:

> "In contrast to the Bourdieu's approach, the discourse-theoretical approach does not use the structure of the social space and the field as an analysis framework in order to then infer the dispositions of actors and the explanation of the forms of work. For Bourdieu, the work is a symptom of the field, since the latter imposes its forms on it [.] The discourse-theoretical perspective, on the other hand, looks for the discursive production practices (such as thematizing, problematizing, classifying, juxtaposing, excluding) in a delimited field of statements etc., in which discursive practice is at work. The significant Bourdieu principles of order (positions and symbolic capital) of the field and the cultural-world sub-field should be able to be analysed from the field of statements itself from a discourse-theoretical perspective. The discourse analytical approach remains initially limited to the interdiscourse space; it replaces the Bourdieu's field concept with the discourse theoretical concept of the statement field". (Diaz-Bone 2010, 191)[106]

Before summarising the analytical steps that the author outlines, I want to discuss the coding model. Specifically, Diaz-Bone emphasises the adaptation of the coding practices found in the systematic methodologies of Grounded Theory "which specifies for text review and coding what [are the] relevant text elements and dimensions to be identified" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 200),[107] and instead suggests that:

> "The different steps of the reconstruction of the discursive practice are in a sequence, which is not simply processed step by step, but contains recursions that are necessary due to the logic of the discourse analysis. The elaboration of discursive regularities takes place as a strategy to analytically work into the textual 'surface', whereby interlinking of various steps is necessary in order to mutually relate elements and their networking". (Diaz-Bone 2010, 200)[108]

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and Handford 2012; Jorgensen and Phillips 2002; Keller 2007; P. LeVine and Scollon 2004; Paltridge 2012; Rogers 2011; Schiffin, Tannen, and H. E. Hamilton 2001; Warnke 2018; G. Weiss and Wodak 2003; Wodak and Meyer 2001.

[106] Ger. Orig. "Anders als die Bourdieusche Vorgehensweise, wird in der diskurstheoretischen Vorgehensweise nicht die Struktur des sozialen Raumes und des Feldes als Analyserahmen eingesetzt, um dann auf die Dispositionen von Akteuren und die Erklärung der Werkformen zu schließen. Für Bourdieu ist das Werk ein Symptom des Feldes, da letzteres ihm seine Formen auferlegt [.] Die diskurstheoretische Perspektive sucht dagegen in einem abgegrenzten Aussagenfeld nach den enthaltenen diskursiven Hervorbringungspraktiken (wie dem Thematisieren, Problematisieren, Klassifizieren, Nebeneinanderstellen, Ausschließen usw.), in denen die diskursive Praxis am Werk ist. Die bedeutsamen Bourdieuschen Ordnungsprinzipien (Positionen und das symbolische Kapital) des Feldes und des kulturweltliche Teilfeldes müssten sich aus diskurstheoretischer Perspektive aus dem Aussagenfeld selbst herausanalysieren lassen. Die diskursanalytische Vorgehensweise bleibt zunächst auf den Interdiskursraum beschränkt, sie ersetzt das Bourdieusche Feldkonzept durch das diskurstheoretische Konzept des Aussagenfeldes".

[107] Ger. Orig. "Dies betrifft im Detail das Set vorgegebener Grundkategorien, das sogenannte Kodiermodell (oder auch Kodierparadigma) der Grounded Theory, das der Textdurchsicht und der Kodierung vorgibt, was relevante Textelemente und zu identifizierende Dimensionen sind".

[108] Ger. Orig. "Die verschiedenen Schritte der Rekonstruktion der diskursiven Praxis stehen zwar in einer Abfolge, welche aber nicht einfach schrittweise abgearbeitet wird, sondern Rekursionen beinhaltet, die notwendig

Diaz-Bone's coding model incorporates "the components of the discursive formation, the relationships between them, the underlying oppositions and the thematic complexes of the aesthetic schematization" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 201),[109] the latter of which focusing on the processes of production, lifestyle and reception. The thematic complexes serve as large-scale categories under which multiple terms, objects, speakers, relations or oppositions can be mapped, whereby I will briefly outline some of their working mechanics, and their implementation into my work.

The thematic complex of reception attempts to reconstruct "[t]he appropriate ways of receiving art and culture" as they are "dependent on the production of ideas about their ontology";[110] furthermore, reception governs aspects such as "the modalities of the place, the appropriate attitude (contemplative, ecstatic, etc.) and the expected prerequisites and group membership in the individual" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 173).[111] These principles are reflected in my work through the focus on audience-driven and regulated databases as primary sources of data, as well as by referring to journalistic publications for historical contexts and informing the potential culture expectations, though significant emphasis remains the intersubjective perspective of the members of the two communities. Furthermore, reflecting on the reception-related question of "which experience can be made collectively or individually in reception" processes (Diaz-Bone 2010, 173),[112] to balance the emphasis on intersubjectivity with that of reflecting perspectives pertaining to the culture at large, an attempt was made to avoid implicitly prioritising the most often identified perspectives. Specifically, smaller perspectives are discussed not as 'dissident' voices but as having the ability to express less-voiced perspectives, which in turn I attempted to frame in relation to the aforementioned journalistic sources.

With regards to lifestyle, whilst this thematic complex focuses on "the virtual conceptions of community, solidarity and individuality that circulate in the cultural world" and the related "aesthetic schematization that describe the cultural world" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 173),[113] its incorporation in the analysis was achieved primarily through the consideration of both heavy metal and progressive music's own cultural specificities when formulating distinct discursive codes. With that in mind, as the focus remained on identifying progressive *metal*'s tendencies, and to avoid further entrenching

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werden durch die Logik der Diskursanalyse. Die Herausarbeitung diskursiver Regelmäßigkeiten erfolgt als Strategie, sich in die textuelle 'Oberfläche' analytisch einzuarbeiten, wobei Verschränkungen verschiedener Schritte notwendig sind, um Elemente und ihre Vernetzung wechselseitig aufeinander zu beziehen".

[109] Ger. Orig. "Das Kodiermodell umfasst die Bestandteile der diskursiven Formation, die Beziehungen zwischen ihnen, die unterliegenden Oppositionen und die thematischen Komplexe der ästhetischen Schematisierung".

[110] Ger. Orig. "Die angemessenen Weisen der Rezeption von Kunst und Kultur sind damit abhängig von der Hervorbringung der Vorstellungen über deren Ontologie".

[111] Ger. Orig. "Das thematische Feld der Rezeption reglementiert die Modalitäten des Ortes, der angemessenen Einstellung (kontemplativ, ekstatisch usw.) und der erwarteten Voraussetzungen und Gruppenzugehörigkeit beim Individuum".

[112] Ger. Orig. "Die angemessenen Weisen der Rezeption von Kunst und Kultur sind damit abhängig von der Hervorbringung der Vorstellungen über deren Ontologie. Sie schließt daran an, geht aber darüber hinaus: welche Erfahrung kann kollektiv oder individuell in der Rezeption gemacht werden?".

[113] Ger. Orig. "Aber im weiteren Sinne wird die Lebensführung insgesamt thematisch erreichbar. Dazu zählen dann auch die virtuellen Konzeptionen von Gemeinschaft, Solidarität, Individualität, die in der Kulturwelt zirkulieren [...] Diese thematischen Komplexe der ästhetischen Schematisierung, die die Kulturwelten beschreiben sind an Ethiken gebunden oder gekoppelt".

differences between the two constitutive communities, the analyses focused on representing meanings as ascribed by combination of factors derived at the interface between said communities. Furthermore, I made a conscious effort in incorporating quotations that equally represent both communities' perspectives, though I omitted placing emphasis on whether an utterance emerges from heavy metal or progressive music-sides of the discourse.

The thematic complex of production "concerns the most diverse problematizations, since the process of production as symbolic, material, division of labour etc. opens up a complex field for problematization" and furthermore raises questions as to "[w]ho the various donors (authors, artists, etc.) are, who have the particular, genius quality and transfer it to their products and in which respects the quality is expressed and can be categorised" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 172).[114] Aspects pertaining to this complex such as "the accepted materials, instruments, and the forms of performance and exhibition" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 172)[115] can be found in most central codes examined in this study. As reviewers more often offered general notions of what these aspects were, yet not sufficiently deep to understand their operation, I derived more in-depth observations via supplementary music interpretative close readings, whereby the specific pieces chosen for examination were derived based on said general observations from within the discourse (see section 5.3 Musical Interpretation). With that in mind, due to a combination of my efforts in decreasing canonisation practices, as well as the prioritisation of audiences' reception-focused perspective, this necessitated a scale-down in relation to notions such as whether a performer represents some form 'genius quality'. Similarly, aspects pertaining to the 'confrontation' between the two communities i.e., reviewers expressing criticism to approaches viewed as representing the, at times undesirable, aesthetic characteristics of the 'other' community were primarily left out of the examination due to their higher potential to contribute to the aforementioned entrenchment and, as per my own examination, its limited capacity in contributing towards the study's research questions.

In order to implement this methodological approach, Diaz-Bone outlines four main steps that need to be undertaken. As a first step, several publications are to be selected so as to generate the textual-corpus.[116] This stage of the analysis centres on considerations regarding suitable sources and the "justified assumption about the distinctiveness of the genre knowledge organised in them" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 201),[117] as well as the process of selecting the appropriate segments which will subsequently constitute the data for analysis. My study (mostly) replaces journalistic publications with

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[114] Ger. Orig. "Der thematische Komplex, der sich um die Herstellung herum ansiedelt, betrifft die unterschiedlichsten Problematisierungen, da der Prozess der Herstellung als symbolischer, materieller, arbeitsteiliger usw. ein komplexes Feld für Problematisierungen eröffnet [...] Wer die verschiedenen Stifter (Autoren, Künstler etc.) sind, die die besondere geniöse Qualität besitzen und auf ihre Produkte übertragen und in welchen Hinsichten sich die Qualität ausdrückt und sich kategorisieren lässt, ist erster Gegenstand der produktionsbezogenen Schemata".

[115] Ger. Orig. "Hinzu kommen die akzeptierten Materialien, Instrumente, die Aufführungs- und Ausstellungsformen".

[116] To avoid constant differentiation between 'textual-corpus' and 'band-corpus' in this introduction, I have substituted the former term with 'data sources'.

[117] Ger. Orig. "Die Zeitschriftenauswahl muss mit einer begründeten Annahme über die Distinktivität des darin organisierten Genre-Wissens beginnen".

online user-driven databases which reflect the main audience-groups constituting progressive metal, whereby their scope is reduced via a process of cross-referencing with two journalistic publications. As the core source of data for analysis, I selected a shared element between the two online databases, namely, album reviews contributed by the respective audience groups. Doing so allowed to examine the intersubjective processes in relation to the genre's evaluation as well as to extrapolate cultural objects, their properties, and associated discursive-framed expectations as potentially relating to the classical.

The second step consists of a surface analysis and the development of the open coding system which focuses on the identification of those "(cultural) objects and (cultural) practices around which the cultural world 'revolves'" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 202), as well as additional questions emphasising the "properties […] ascribed to the objects, producers and recipients [and] expectations related to them" or "*qualities* and *concepts* […] related to the objects" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 202, italics in original).[118] The central goal as outlined by Diaz-Bone is the "introduction of a series of codes instructed and empirically guided by the coding model" which are to be used for "a later identification of central dimensions, oppositions and classification principles" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 202).[119] Of note here is Diaz-Bone's emphasis on the need for "attention [to] be limited to the area that is addressed by the thematic complexes: production (and way of being), reception and reference to the lifestyle of the cultural world" whereby the limitation is to be "related to the aim of the investigation" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 202).[120] For the purposes of this study, this step of the discursive analysis process focused on the multiple read-throughs of the data sources and the generation of various codes that appeared in the audience perspectives. However, despite my own analysis to reflect on and examine practices that can be mapped to the thematic complexes, I elected not to organise the coding practice by associating codes to either of the aforementioned complexes. This decision was predominantly necessitated due to the layers of abstraction involved during the analysis. Considering that this study attempts to understand how the classical is discursively constructed, and without much pre-existing contexts as to the specifics of techniques in progressive metal, there is less potential to neatly divide between production and reception. Furthermore, whether a reviewer is suggesting that 'performer X played aspect Y because of reason Z', or simply acknowledges that they found 'aspect Y' notable, I consider both as valid perspectives towards framing the classical, and, indeed, the distinction becomes even more difficult as these perspectives are further refracted through my own interpretative lens. This ultimately blurs the line between production and reception, thus resulting in me not rooting the organisation of the codes based on such a thematic complex division.

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[118] Ger. Orig. "Oberflächenanalyse und Beginn der offenen Kodierung [.] Suche nach den auftretenden Objekten, Begriffen: welche (kulturellen) Objekte und (kulturellen) Praktiken sind diejenigen, um die sich die Kulturwelt 'dreht'? Welche Eigenschaften werden den Objekten, den Produzenten und Rezipienten zugeschrieben, welche Erwartungen werden auf sie bezogen? Welche Qualitäten, und Konzepte werden auf die Objekte bezogen?"

[119] Ger. Orig. "Entwicklung eines Systems von Kodierungen: durch das Kodiermodell angeleitete und empiriegeleitete Einführung einer Serie von Kodes […] Die Kodierungen sollen eine spätere Identifizierung von zentralen Dimensionen, Oppositionen und Klassifikationsprinzipien vorbereiten".

[120] Ger. Orig. "Dabei soll die Aufmerksamkeit auf den Bereich eingegrenzt werden, der durch die thematischen Komplexe angesprochen wird: Herstellung (und Seinsweise), Rezeption und Lebensstilbezug der Kulturwelt. Diese Eingrenzung hängt mit dem Untersuchungsziel zusammen".

The third step represents the one-half of a two-stage interpretative analysis of the data, and focuses on the initial attempts to reconstruct discursive relationships. The emphasis is on identifying expressed rules, considerations of "[i]n what way are terms, topics, objects addressed and how do ways of thinking and strategies appear?" as well as those "explicit and implicit classifications and scattering principles" contributing to the development of "the relationship system between the objects, concepts and problematizations" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 203).[121] Diaz-Bone further emphasises that in addition to efforts in inferring "regularities and principles of classification and dispersion", "the inclusion of the terms (concepts) used, but also the adjectives, metaphors, symbols can later serve to recognize more fundamental oppositions and to include the language style itself as a form" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 203).[122] Finally, this step is not to be seen as 'concluded' but also as subject to further adjustment even to the point of returning a step back in the analytical method and adding/removing new codes (Diaz-Bone 2010, 203). The application of this step in my study focused primarily on sorting the data and attempting to identify those aspects of the album reviews' writing that were relevant to the discussion at hand, including noting the intersubjective perspectives, be it similarities or contradictions as appearing in the discourse.

The fourth step represents the latter half of the interpretative analysis which is dedicated to the formalisation and completion of the discursive reconstruction, by identifying "discourse-bearing categories", the consideration of "problematisations [conveyed by] objects and concepts (terms)" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 203)[123] and the "dimensions […] used to organize contradictions and the poles normal versus divergent" (Diaz-Bone 2010, 204).[124] This step of the analysis allowed me to identify central codes as used by the genre's audiences thus operationalising Diaz-Bone's "discourse-bearing categories" for the purposes of this study's research questions i.e., the multiple 'key-terms' used in the discursive framing of the classical in progressive metal. The key-terms in question (i.e., 'symphonic/orchestral', 'operatic', and 'theatrical/dramatic') were selected due to their a high classical-signification potential as well as for allowing to examine culture-internal aspects in relation to the heavy metal and progressive music communities (i.e., 'rock-opera', 'theatricality in progressive metal', or 'symphonic arrangements'). After their identification, the terms were then examined in relation to the aforementioned aspects of classification, evaluation, or the language used in the album reviews, thus generating multiple sub-categories of ascribed meaning that were developed into the individual discourse-chapters constituting the second part of this study.

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[121] Ger. Orig. "In welcher Weise werden Begriffe, Themen, Objekte angesprochen und wie erscheinen Denkweisen und Strategien? […] Welche expliziten und impliziten Klassifikationen und Streuungsprinzipien lassen sich identifizieren? Beginn der Rekonstruktion des Beziehungssystems zwischen den Objekten, Konzepten und Problematisierungen".

[122] Ger. Orig. "Hier wird versucht, auf Regelmäßigkeiten und Prinzipien der Klassifikation und Streuung, die Ähnlichkeit und Unterschiede ermöglichen, zu schließen. Die Einbeziehung der verwendeten Begriffe (Konzepte), aber auch der Adjektive, Metaphern, Symbole kann später dazu dienen, grundlegendere Oppositionen zu erkennen und den Sprachstil selbst als Form einzubeziehen".

[123] Ger. Orig. "Was sind die 'diskurstragenden Kategorien' (Link)? Welche Problematisierungen vermitteln Objekte und Konzepte (Begriffe)?"

[124] Ger. Orig. "Anhand welcher Dimensionen werden Widersprüche und die Pole normal versus abweichend organisiert?"

In summary, this outline presented a limited overview of Diaz-Bone's discourse analytical methodology and outlined how the approach was incorporated and adjusted for the purposes of my own research.[125] As mentioned earlier, however, despite the complex network of meanings clearly observable in the audience perspectives – not to mention, the emphasis on the 'musical experience' that both sources prioritised – the discourses offered an insufficient level of detail with regards to the inner-workings of various aspects pertaining to the examined 'key-terms'. In order to more accurately examine the auditive events associated with the writers' ascriptions, a need arose for a further methodological step. Thus, I elected to expand my methodological toolbox by incorporating music interpretations to be applied on cultural artefacts emerging from the examination of the discourse analysis 'key-terms'.

5.2 Key concepts II: the utterance

A term that will appear in the main body of this study with as much of a frequency as that of the classical is the 'utterance', which I employ as a section of written text of varying lengths through which the album reviewer expresses perspectives with (potential) relevance to the investigation.[126] With that in mind, however, the term's utilisation in a variety of disciplines – often without a simple or accessible outline to a non-linguistic researcher such as myself (e.g. Crookes 1990; Leech 1983) – requires some contextual framing. When discussed from the perspective of discourse analysis contexts, Paul Baker and Sibonile Ellece define utterance as a "unit of speech", with the authors continuing:

> "Unlike sentences in written language, which are marked with particular features (capitalization at the start and a punctuation mark at the end), utterances can be difficult to delineate at times – some definitions of utterances note that they are marked by silence at their start and end, although in naturally occurring conversations, people can interrupt each other's utterances, so they appear to be cut off prematurely. In addition, pauses can potentially occur within utterances, for example, if someone forgets a word and pauses to

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[125] Discourse analytical approaches aimed to explore the perspectives of audiences have been employed in the past and in relation to contexts in close proximity to progressive rock (e.g. Atton 2001; Atton 2012), heavy metal (e.g. Herbst 2017), and as previously mention, to some capacity in relation to progressive metal contexts (Smialek 2008, 72–123). Whilst my work does not directly build on from these writings, I am familiar with them and wanted to disclose said familiarity so as to avoid inadvertently implying that my methodology as represents an approach without precedence in the field. Also, there have been several articles that have engaged with similar sources and/or similar data (i.e., album reviews). For example, Ahlkvist (2011) investigates how audiences discuss the progressive rock genre by using one of the main sources that this study engages in i.e. progarchives.com. However, whilst the text offers a similar large-scale overview of audiences engaging with genre-related discussions, the author's approach utilises a content analysis methodology, which seemingly prioritises the examination of more consistently appearing perspectives, thus contrasting with my efforts in balancing out smaller pockets of meaning-ascription. Additionally, Dowd, Ryan, and Tai (2016) survey what types of comparisons are made in album reviews from the community behind the Dutch Progressive Rock Page, whereby they utilised progarchives.com as means of contextualising the aforementioned reviews. Despite using the same type of data, the approach is much more focused on statistical/empirical and large-scale overviews, in contrast to the more focused readings of album reviews that the current study will present.

[126] I use the word 'potentially' simply to acknowledge that a reviewer may offer a variety of utterances pertaining to different topics as part of an album review, yet when appearing in this book, I will quote and/or examine only those utterances with relevance to the study's inquiry.

> remember it. The length of silence that is required to mark the end of one utterance and the
> start of another can also be contestable". (Baker and Ellece 2011, 156)

The general impression of this definition is that of 'utterance' as focused on speech, with its corresponding component 'sentence' appearing in written form, an idea that can be seen reflected in the contrast between the two terms in Gillian Brown and George Yule's foundational text on discourse analysis (1983, 19–20). With that in mind, however, when examining Baker and Ellece's summary of "sentence types" in their terminological compendium, the emphasis falls on "syntactic structure and communicative functions" that are being performed e.g., the authors mention the English language as including "declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory" sentence types (Baker and Ellece 2011, 127).

Far be it in suggesting that these publications are incorrect, I find the distinction of 'utterance' as pertaining only to the realm of spoken language a bit limiting, thus I instead prefer Mikhail Bakhtin's view that "language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity" (Bakhtin 1986, 60). More importantly however, I draw from Bakhtin's notion regarding the interrelation of utterances:

> "The desire to make one's speech understood is only an abstract aspect of the speaker's
> concrete and total speech plan. Moreover, any speaker is himself a respondent to a greater
> or lesser degree. He is not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence
> of the universe. And he presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using,
> but also the existence of preceding utterances – his own and others' – with which his given
> utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (builds on them, polemicizes with them,
> or simply presumes that they are already known to the listener). Any utterance is a link in a
> very complexly organized chain of other utterances". (Bakhtin 1986, 69)

Once more acknowledging that a 'speaker' is not limited to verbal speech, I found Bakhtin's argument a useful way in describing how different audiences introduce their voices into a (music) genre-related discussion. Returning to my initial mentioning of 'utterance' as a description of an audience member's perspective, considering that these writers have generated their album reviews as part of a genre-focused community, there is a reasonable expectation that their contributions are not simple 'statements' or 'observations', but rather 'utterances' that incorporate various aspects relevant to the pertinent discourse i.e., the 'preceding utterances' mentioned in Bakhtin's quote. Furthermore, whilst the corresponding databases discourage some forms of reviews engaging with one another – i.e. "Avoid referring to reviews of other members […] writing a review contradictory to a previous one just out of spite […] is not acceptable" (Metal-archives.com n.d.p) – constructive approaches to developing an argument based on another's writing is permitted. I encountered instances where a writer either mentions aspects that seemingly reflect the surrounding/preceding reviews, or mention broader aspects of the discourse related to the progressive metal genre, thus in either case clearly showcasing the 'link' and 'chain' mentioned above. From a rather banal perspective, the term 'utterance' strikes me as a better substitution for 'statement' or 'sentences' due to spatial concerns i.e., at times a reviewer would either offer multiple sentences discussing an aspect, or would return to and repeat/reiterate on the discussed aspect mid-sentence later on. From my perspective these types of

formations are much better grasped when described as 'utterances' rather than sentences. As a final note, the clarification offered here can be seen as somewhat paralleling Diaz-Bone's work as the author appears to prefer the term 'statement' [Ger. "Aussagen"] over 'utterances' [Ger. "Äußerung"] when discussing the interconnected perspectives constituting the discourse, which he draws from the work of Michel Foucault (Diaz-Bone 2010, 81–90) and Michel Pencheux (Diaz-Bone 2010, 100–109). Based on this context, I do not consider the adoption of 'utterance' to run against Diaz-Bone's methodological foundation.

5.3 Musical interpretation

"[N]o doubt about [that Redemption's] five amazing musicians have been able to combine great elements of prog metal and some power metal together adding along the lines with some great melodic harmonies and some very beautiful symphony arrangements here and there". (PA-Redemption-#17, 2007)

"[The album *Streets: A Rock Opera*] is Savatage's first true foray into the rock opera format, and they enter with a smash. Each song is memorable and melodic, symphonic and strong. Starting with the foreshadowing title track that leads into a (not so well) spoken word piece serving as the introduction for Jesus Saves, which is the first fiery rocker present in the album. [The song] Tonight he grins again has some emotional balladry being woven, before rocking it all over the place with Strange Reality". (PA-Savatage-#72, 2008)

The examined album reviews have suggested that writers are capable of offering substantial and often fairly detailed descriptions when examining the output this study's corpus of artists. However, the two quotations above showcase that, at times, an utterance will incorporate terms such as 'rock opera' or 'symphony arrangements', yet the lack of detail makes it difficult to understand what said terms potentially entail. In order to engage with these perspectives in an explorative, yet critical and accountable manner, I decided to more closely examine specific cultural artefacts, which requires methodological foundation towards how my interpretation is structured.

Before going over the specific texts influencing my work, I will briefly outline the musical interpretation process as well as some of its underlying principles. The main purpose of engaging with musical interpretation was to attempt to extrapolate what reviewers may have identified when applying a specific key-term, and then expand the initial mediation of meaning via offering additional classical-connotative contexts. The examples were predominantly chosen due to being explicitly pointed-out by reviewers as related to the key-term or, in rare instances, I chose examples with high likeliness to have been experienced by the audiences. The music interpretations attempted to navigate several positions. On the one hand, a central consideration was 'translating' the audiences' perspective i.e., identifying and describing the 'what' and the 'how' of a track that may have led to the key-term ascription. At the same time, given that research on listeners of progressive music has showcased that such audiences and musicologists focus on different things – the former expressing interest in "the musical surface, visceral effects, and elements such as timbre and texture" as opposed to the latter's focus on "large-scale patterns and meanings" (Hung, quoted in Ahlkvist 2011, 649) – I wanted to avoid generating readings that would resulting in 'overinterpretation'. On the other hand, in addition to balancing between a track exemplifying commonly shared or contrasting perspectives,

to avoid simply presenting a list of possibilities, as well as to situate the observations further, an additional consideration was the capacity for an offered interpretation to address or expand academic perspectives. Finally, I elected to take the process a step beyond offering a 'translation' of meaning by introducing an additional level of depth to the interpretation. To do so, I incorporated considerations as to how the discourse-derived observations can potentially be framed outside of the discourse-native cultural fields and presented parallels to practices, techniques etc. derived from the broader Western art contexts. This last step exists at the interface between discourse and music interpretation and as such will be briefly expanded upon in the last few paragraphs of this section.

To facilitate these steps, my interpretative approach implicitly drew from approaches based in both popular music studies research as well as from the work of scholars emphasising transgressive components of Western art music: the former is represented by David Brackett's work *Interpreting Popular Music* (2000 [1995]), and the latter by Michael Custodis' *Klassische Musik Heute* [Eng. Classical Music Today] (2009). As neither author explicitly aims at presenting a robust interpretative methodology, but rather offers perspectives on contemporary challenges to music interpretation or discuss performers exemplifying the erosion of cultural boundaries, my work was influenced more by some of their arguments, or approaches to presenting information. With regards to the music interpretative component in the gender-studies focused section of this work, some of the principles outlined in the following paragraphs are still 'at play' in the presented close readings, though additional tools such as Serge Lacasse's (2000) framework for examining intertextuality in music, were also included due to the specificity of the discussed material.[127]

Brackett's text represents one of the earlier contributions aiming at offering a wide-reaching approach towards the interpretation of popular music, as well as challenge notions about what aspects musicological research is to target or address (e.g., authorship in popular music) and modes of presentation (i.e., use of notation), to name a few. Brackett's book does not offer a method in the sense of a clearly outlined steps to be followed during interpretation but rather adapts perspectives based on the examined track. Nevertheless, I found the book to offer multiple core considerations as to the 'what' and 'how' of musical interpretation, and its emphasis on flexibility as highly influential.

Several of the aspects that I base on Brackett's broad argumentation have already been mentioned in previous chapters. Brackett expresses critical remarks in relation to the structuralist emphasis of Richard Middleton's "musical code", and argues through Gino Stefani's model of "musical competence" for the need to involve "context" as an important aspect when discussing the "text" (D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 9–14). Whilst the boundaries between 'text' and 'context' become somewhat blurred in more contemporary theoretical framings, and I was somewhat sceptical of some of Stefani's description of some competences.[128] The prioritisation of the listener perspective that sits

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[127] For an overview of Lacasse's framework see the theoretical section of my investigation into the work of The Great Kat.

[128] For example, Stefani suggests that the competence of musical techniques includes "theories, methods, and devices which are more or less specific and exclusive to musical practices, such as instrumental techniques, scales, composition forms, etc. It is at this level that one usually finds the definition of music as 'the art of sounds'" (Stefani, quoted in D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 12). Leaving aside the comment of the 'art of sounds', I

at the core of the 'context' to 'text' corelation remained a strong influence on my work. Furthermore, Brackett's approach positions discourse and more specifically "the discourses which circulate around a song, style, or genre" (D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 18) as a central point of consideration, so much so, that it would guide decisions regarding the interpretative emphasis. Indeed, the multiple analyses constituting Brackett's study are informed by various discourses, yet the author suggests that "analyses and interpretations for the most part go beyond those found within the discursive contexts" (D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 24). This combination of arguments was one of the motivators for introducing the aforementioned additional levels of interpretative depth i.e., once the interpretation has sufficiently outlined what could have led to the ascription of a key-term, this allows additional comparisons to Western art music context to be introduced. However, the guiding principle is not 'overwriting' the audiences' perspectives, but simply to extend them in a way that supports the general inquiry of this study.

An additional argument from Brackett's work proved particularly useful especially when engaging with some literature on progressive metal that was prone to dismissal due to the genre's lack of innovation:

"One way of theorizing […] aesthetic judgments is by emphasizing the importance of a synchronic analysis of a series of historical moments rather than by relying on a purely diachronic approach; this emphasis helps to develop an idea of conventions (or 'horizon of expectations') against which we may understand a specific work. These cross-sectional analyses permit the understanding of categories and hierarchies of styles and genres that gain meaning in relation to one another rather than in isolation, thereby avoiding the overprivileging of 'innovation' that often occurs in diachronic historical narratives about art".
(D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 6)

My work does not explicitly target a synchronic approach, and indeed, some may object to presenting the timeframe between the earliest submission date of album-reviews for this study's corpus of performers, and the point in which said reviews were extracted for analysis, to represent a specific 'period'. However, I found the notion of generating a 'horizon of expectations' a suitable methodological foundation towards the extension of the discourse analysis via music interpretation

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was not particularly convinced of the idea that some instrumental techniques can be seen as exclusive to musical practices. In the most basic sense, it is possible to suggest that playing a power chord-based riff on an overdriven electric guitar, with its associated connotations of power, is one of the characteristic aspects of heavy metal (e.g., Walser 1993, 2). However, this close association does not mean that it cannot be fruitfully utilized in other contexts. For example, one of the main riffs in Black Sabbath's "War Pigs / Luke's Wall" (see Black Sabbath 1970), ca. [00:52], was used by the rap (and later metal) performer Ice-T in his track "Intro/Rhyme Pays" (see Ice-T 1987), e.g. [01:50]; the implementation seemingly focusing on drawing from the quasi-percussive qualities of the riff's quick succession of power-chords. In another track by Ice-T titled "Midnight" (see Ice-T 1991), Black Sabbath is sampled once again, this time the riff of the eponymous track (see Black Sabbath 1970a) from the band's first album; sample drawn from ca. [00:38] in the original track. In this instance, it appears that Ice-T is attempting to integrate the slower, and tritone-based riff of Black Sabbath's song towards the main loop of his, equally as 'ominous' sounding track; sample first appears in Ice-T's track around [00:34]. The recontextualizations within the examples by Ice-T help to exemplify the challenges in suggesting that even a highly 'integrated' instrumental technique or a device such as the riff and/or power chords should be seen as only signifying heavy metal contexts or the original implications of power related to the power chord.

principles. By viewing the process of 'translating' the potential classical-connotative aspects identified by reviewers as aimed towards constructing a 'horizon of expectations' for progressive metal's engagement with the classical, this allows to meaningfully examine specific musical dimensions whilst sidestepping unnecessary genealogical critiques such as the accusations of progressive metal's lack of innovation. Also, this principle allows for the music interpretative section to be framed as a methodological parallel to Holt's aforementioned interest in "*understanding* rather than *defining* genres" (Holt 2007, 8, italics in original).

Similarly, Brackett's critique of notational centricity offers several considerations as to the presentation of the analysis and its contents. Namely he suggests that "[r]ecordings tend to foreground the *temporality* of the musical text, as well as to emphasize one particular (and frequently, in some respects, simulated) performance rather than an idealized set of instructions for a performance" (D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 24, italics in original), which he contrasts with the visual- and spatial-focus of notation. As a substitute for the visual-notation principle, Brackett utilises spectrographic imagery, though it should be pointed out that he is not fully averse to deploying transcriptions (D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 72-73, 94, 99, 129–133, 140–143, 174–181). However, these notational examples were used, for example, to compare two renditions of the same track, or were supplemented via non-standard symbols to indicate specific performance characteristics. Also, it should be noted that the contrast presented by Brackett is not as severe now, as it was in the late 1990s and early 2000s, as spatial/visual focused methods with relevance to popular music phenomena have been developed (e.g. Ruth Dockwray and Allan Moore's [2010] concept of the "sound box" comes to mind). Whilst I did not find the use of spectrographic imagery particularly useful for my work, Brackett's fundamental argument served as a major point in deciding not to engage with music transcriptions and to limit the use of music notation in this study. In short, notation is used only in the interpretative close readings in the output of The Great Kat as part of the diversity section of this book. I elected to integrate notation as a form of visual aid in showcasing aspects such as how the examined Western art music-transformative piece refers to and transforms instruments/arrangements found in a Western art music original. These are, however, by no means essential, and I would argue that a listener that is not familiar with reading standard notation can substitute these visual examples by engaging in side-by-side listening of The Great Kat's version and the Western art music piece she transforms.

I also noticed a parallel between Brackett's argument on the prioritisation of temporality and one of several writing practices adopted by members of the examined audiences, i.e., describing either an album in a track-by-track basis or as a sequence of notable (for the writer) events. This influenced my decision to adopt a temporal-focused prose form in the music interpretative sections so as represent the combination of meaning-translation and expansion in a manner that somewhat echoes the discursive field as well as offers a more accessible presentation for subject foreign, non-musicology trained, or even non-academic readers.

With regards to Custodis' work, beyond my immediately interest due to the inclusion of case studies on heavy metal bands that engaged with Western art music contexts, in the broadest sense, I found Custodis' writing style to be highly approachable in its ability to present complex yet clearly

followable musicological analyses. Given the effectiveness of this example, and my perception that the offered analyses would have functioned without employing notation, this further strengthened my own perception that there was no need to 'shoehorn' transcriptions in this study. Similarly, whilst Custodis' incorporation of direct discussions with the research subjects, both in this study as well as in several of his publications I encountered (e.g. Custodis 2009, 25; also Custodis 2016c, 1n1), is a somewhat less enticing approach, it nevertheless emphasised the benefit in reducing the distance between academic inquiry and what/who is being discussed, which in my case is exemplified via the positioning the audience perspectives at the core of the investigation, yet offering the musical interpretations in ways that is reflexive of the types of factors they are more likely to have identified.

The author's work also struck me as highly comparable to that of the theoretical foundation provided by Michael Long mentioned earlier. Specifically, in addition to incorporating broad contextual information that contributes to their focused analyses, both authors share the view that boundaries between 'classical' and 'popular' are continuously eroding. In contrast to arguments framing Western art music as engaging with a somewhat different value system such as by Julian Johnson (2002), Custodis and Long embrace and critically evaluate multiple examples representing forms of cultural-transgression. Of note here is Custodis' simple analogy regarding the co-relation between classical and popular music contexts, that I found a particularly useful line of thinking during the conceptualisation of this work:

> "If one understands the search for clues in rock music announced by the subtitle of the book as forays into a musical landscape, then in the individual chapters various bridges and trenches come across – in the metaphorical sense conceived as an alternation of mobility and persistence, challenge and constancy". (Custodis 2009, 19)[129]

For the purposes of this study, the 'trenches' and 'bridges' principle is reflected in multiple conceptual aspects. For example, choosing to investigate progressive metal's classical components allowed to frame a 'bridge' between classical and popular music contexts, an idea that is also reflected in my efforts for the musical interpretations to frame the discussed elements as relating to the classical as *also* having popular music-connections.[130] Similarly, engaging with both progressive music and heavy metal audiences intends to offer a 'bridge' addressing the supposed fundamental difference between progressive rock and heavy metal contexts and audiences. Simultaneously by engaging with literature from both fields, this helps to strengthen the 'bridge' as to how the genre's aesthetic contexts should

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[129] Ger. Orig. "Versteht man die vom Untertitel des Buches angekündigte Spurensuche in der Rockmusik als Streifzüge in einer musikalischen Landschaft, so begegnen in den einzelnen Kapiteln diverse Brücken und Gräben – im metaphorischen Sinn gedacht als Wechselverhältnisse von Beweglichkeit und Beharren, Herausforderung und Beständigkeit".

[130] To once again avoid the potential for implicitly mispresenting this study's approaches, I want to briefly point out the work of Mark Spicer (2008) whose flexible approach to the role of Western art music in a popular music setting can be compared to mine here. The author points out the ability to interpret elements of a progressive rock performer as resembling those of Western art music contexts without claiming intentionality, and also without the intention to convince the readers that the music has the same density as that of a Western art music (Spicer 2008, 313). With that in mind, what separates my work from that of Spicer is the author's strong connection and fandom towards the researched band (Spicer 2008, 336), which as previously mentioned I do not share though I do not view as an inherent flaw so long as properly disclosed and reflexively incorporated into the work, as was the case for Spicer's text.

be informed, as well as offering a substantial foundation that hopefully addresses the 'trench' that is the dismissive outlook that some critics hold towards the genre.

Beyond this principle, I took note of Custodis' work as an attempt to showcase Western art music's existence outside stereotypical perspectives, in my view, by highlighting the depth of process and consideration that takes place during the formative processes. For example, in his discussion of the US metal band Metallica and their work with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, the author briefly comments on the reflections that the band-performers (and their producer) engaged with as part of the mixing process (Custodis 2009, 114–15). Similarly, Custodis' examination of the output of the US power metal band Manowar, highlights their combining of heavy metal elements and contexts with the interest in drawing from the music and even philosophical ideas of Richard Wagner, with the author presenting a critical look at the band's ideas, presentation etc., but also provides considerations about the implications of said cultural overlap (Custodis 2009, 56–57). These discussions struck me as examples of how research on transgressive practices, including the framing of music interpretative close readings, can be represented in a fruitful and balanced manner, instead of the text falling into the trappings such as borderline (or even open) dismissal of some popular performers as not being 'innovative' or conversely framing such performers through acts constituting research 'ennoblement' as showcased by Anderton, Keister and Smith or Bowman's criticism of progressive music academic contexts.

Whilst the contributions by Custodis and Brackett served as methodological influences towards approaching the music interpretative sections, I want to briefly reflect on the motivations for the final step in the music interpretative component, namely offering additional depths of the interpretation by introducing comparisons to Western art-based contexts. One of the most significant challenges throughout this study was approaching and navigating the culture-specific classical-connotative ascriptions, together with their relation to contexts from Western art music or the larger category of the so called 'high' culture. As convenient as it may have been to simply assume that the examined key-terms not only offer classical-signification potential but are understood as directly related to Western art culture and its contexts, doing so presented an interpretative obstacle. In simple terms, whilst one can argue with some confidence that the ascription of a term such as 'opera' bears some Western art culture connotation, to automatically assume that the reviewer that utilised such term implied aspects such as dramatic stage behaviour, traditional vocal techniques or any other direct connection to traditional opera, would potentially steer the discursive interpretation towards cultural-normative meanings. At the same time, to completely ignore such pre-existing contexts would have been a significant issue, not only from a research perspective – i.e., presenting an overview about 'classical' components with no reference to literature on Western art music practices will have surely raised some eyebrows – but also given the realities of music education in Western contexts. In other words, regardless of one's opinion on the 'divide' between classical or popular music, given how deeply rooted the former's fundamentals are in most Western music-education settings, for this of all studies to ignore said fundamentals' ability to have influenced a popular culture-based discourse (however abstractly or indirectly this may have occurred!) would leave a great deal of interpretative potential 'on the table', so to speak.

Thus, reflecting on the critical discourses surrounding the co-relation between progressive rock and Western art music and my own perspectives on canonisation – not only in terms of progressive music, but also the (regrettably still perpetuated) notion of popular music as inherently less-complex, less-interesting, or less-refined than its Western art music counterpart – a decision was made to introduce comparisons to contexts derived from Western art music or culture. However, the implementation of such perspectives attempts to avoid normative practices, where possible. Specifically, after the process of engaging with and 'translating' the classical-connotative audience-perspective, an additional perspective is introduced in which the ability for the presented observations to be re-interpreted as presenting parallels to historical contexts, concepts and practices related to/derived from Western art music is offered. This by no means ensures that, in part due to my own Western art music education, the overall music interpretation is devoid from any pre-conceptions regarding, for example, the types of elements that are likely to have been implied when key-terms such as 'symphonic' or 'operatic' are ascribed to a track. However, it allows to both avoid skewering the discourse analysis through a set pre-conception regarding how 'the classical is supposed to sound', whilst the music interpretative segments first extrapolate the key-terms' potential meanings and then expand on their potential via the reintroduction of comparisons to Western art music contexts.

Overall, I believe that this summary offered sufficient insight into why I consider it necessary to expand the core discourse analysis methodology of this study with music interpretative sections, as well as provided perspectives as to how they are framed. In addition to summarising the broad steps of said interpretative sections, I outlined the principles underpinning the selection of cultural artefacts for examination, as well as presented the several academic texts that served as broad methodological guideline towards how I approach these close readings. Finally, I briefly elaborated on the broader challenges regarding my role as interpreter of a popular music discourse in relation to the identification of Western art music contexts, thus illustrating the balance between reducing normative pre-conceptions and offering in-depth discussions as part of this study.

5.4 Examining visual artefacts

The final methodological aspect that I wish to reflect on in this chapter is my decision to 'stray' from the usual auditive-focused topics that audiences discuss in their reviews, and instead introduce the examination of the classical-connotative potential of visual artefacts. To contextualise this methodological step, I will offer two arguments supporting my decision. Broadly speaking, 'conventional wisdom' might suggest that, based on its name, the most important aspect of popular *music* is the auditive level and the related sound qualities such as pitch, timbre, or formal aspects such as melody, harmony or the song's overall structure. Yet, popular music (and the broader popular culture field) is constructed in, and delivered via, inherently intermedial means, a perspective that scholarly work has long acknowledged (e.g., Cook 2004). To avoid generalisation however, it is also worth pointing out that both progressive rock and heavy metal cultures place emphasis on visual components such as the album artwork which can be supported via texts from the corresponding academic fields (for metal see e.g. Weinstein 2000 [1991], 27–29; Zuch 2012 [2011]; for progressive rock, see e.g. Alleyne 2014; Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 283–307; Edward Macan 1997, 58–61). From this perspective, a reasonable argument can be brought forward that for members of musical cultures

where the artwork is not an irrelevant component, visual components such as artwork can contribute to the reception of a musical album, which in turn can influence the album's discursive framing. As a provisional example to this effect, the presentation of visual aspects related to Western art music contexts or culture such as depicting performance venues associated with related musical traditions, the visibility of classical-connotative instruments (e.g. violin, clarinet), or the evocation of contexts that can relate to the broader 'high culture' field (e.g. use of specific fonts, framing artwork in ways paralleling formal letters etc.) may have implicitly contributed to reviewers to associate a performer/album/piece with the classical thus leading to the ascription of one or more of the key-terms this study investigates. To be clear, however, I do not mean to suggest that any such process of visual meaning-suggestion leads to positive forms of ascription, as, similar to the auditive level, the appearance of classical-connotative elements is not universally positively received by audiences.

Another argument can be offered from the perspective of Diaz-Bone's discourse-analytical foundation. The methodology's emphasis on examining media related to the investigated cultures led me to reflect on not only what audiences *expressed* but also on the implications of what they did not include. As shown in the following section on data collection, both databases suggest for album-review contributors to prioritise discussing 'the music', with other facets implicitly positioned as having somewhat secondary importance (see Metal-archives.com n.d.p; Progarchives.com 2005b). At the same time, however, examining the databases it is noticeable that each band/artist entry strives for completion e.g., listing current and past band members, including song lyrics, the performer's current record label, and most importantly, the inclusion of the album artwork for the listed albums. As such, the inter-medial principle of popular culture artefacts is preserved, though it is seemingly reduced based on the quasi-discouragement of examining less 'important' facets. Based on this observation, it is possible that reviewers may have internalised the visual aspects of a record, which in turn may have had some influence on their utilisation of classical-connotative terms in their review. Furthermore, the aforementioned inclusion of album artwork in the corresponding pages suggests that, whether community members or external site-visitors, any engagement with an album included on the platform inherently exposes said observer with a visual artefact, which in turn may include classical-connotative aspects. Therefore, to leave out the discussion of visual level of a cultural artefact may result in loss of interpretative potential in understanding progressive metal's engagement with the classical.

Having hopefully offered a reasonable justification for the inclusion of visual-based cultural artefacts, I want to offer a brief overview of my methodological approach. Visual artefacts discussed in this study constitute any type of artwork derived from a studio album found in the output of this study's corpus of performers. Due to the lack of specific classical-connotative ascriptions by audiences, the selection process for the visual artefact attempts to balance between introducing perspectives that expand the broad arguments presented in the respective discourse-analytical chapter and, wherever possible, to weave-in perspectives observed in the album reviews during the discourse analytical process. With that in mind, I did no explicitly pursue examples that will directly build on from tracks examined as part of the auditive interpretative sections.

In terms of the approaching the interpretative process, I attempted to retain the balance between framing classical components within the artwork as well as situating them in relevant contexts as was the case for the music interpretative counterpart. However, as the artefact's relation to the classical emerges from the author, rather than the audiences, this necessitates a small adjustment of the two-step contextualisation process. The visual artefact will first be examined for the purposes of establishing its classical-interpretative elements, thus constituting the aspect of 'translation'. This will then be followed by an element of meaning 'extension' which will attempt to situate the observations back to the contexts of other progressive metal and/or popular music performers. Doing so contributes in situating the classical's visual implementation in relation to the broader progressive metal genre, as well as helps to further academic understanding regarding facets of the genre's visual aesthetic.

To summarise the interpretative process, the examination of the visual artefact consists of a close interpretative reading of various elements depicted on the album artwork e.g., visible objects, the space in which they are situated, the artistic or architectural style of said objects/space, the visibility of persons and their attire/stance, the presentation of the track-list, and the used fonts. By drawing from the fields of art studies, architecture, or theatre studies, I outline how said elements' relation to classical-relevant contexts can be established. Once a sufficient level of classical-connotation is established, I consider whether the artefact can be related to the classical-focused discourse surrounding the performer, or if such a possibility is not available, I transition directly into contextualising the presented arguments through brief comparisons with performers from progressive metal or transgressive performers from the broader popular music field.

It is important to also outline that the examination of visual artefacts plays a substantial role in my investigation of classical and gender mixing aspects in the work of The Great Kat, whereby the different focus of the inquiry alters the interpretation by incorporating additional dimensions. First and foremost, discussions of visual components expand the examined type of album artwork to beyond the examination of album artwork and into presenting close readings of several music videos by the performer. Both types of visual artefacts are of greater importance to the investigation of the performer and are not examined in isolation. Rather, the visual artefacts are considered in conjunction with the examination of auditive aspects of either the video's corresponding track, or a track from the album from which the artwork is derived. Second, whilst the general interpretative principle of identifying relevant objects, peoples, etc., found within the visual artefact and situating them into classical-related contexts remains, there is a much stronger emphasis on the investigation of the performer's performative body and the gender-implications of its framing. As such, to properly evaluate the implications of said elements towards the performer's persona and her output, the interpretation is expanded via theoretical concepts derived from gender studies, art studies and also the theoretical framing of Gerard Genette on the paratext (2001 [1997]). Third and finally, in addition to preserving the emphasis on contextualising the observations derived from the visual interpretation in broader classical- and popular music contexts, an equal, if not greater, emphasis is placed on situating the included gender components. In practical terms this means that in addition to comparing The Great Kat's artwork to other performers' visual engagement with the classical, I am both

attempting to locate examples in which the artwork includes comparable overlap between classical-and-gender aspects, as well as to offer considerations as to how The Great Kat's self-framing can be contextualised in relation to other relevant gender framings derived from the broader field of metal culture.

In conclusion, this section summarised the justifications for introducing visual interpretations into the study despite the lack of such information in the discourse analytical data, as well as supported my argument via a combination of academic perspectives and individual observations on the role of visual artefacts in the progressive rock and heavy metal cultures. Furthermore, I summarised the process of identifying suitable cultural artefact as well as briefly outlined the steps constituting the interpretative process. Finally, I discussed the role of visual artefacts in the diversity part of this book, and specifically the co-relation between the needs of the research inquiry and the adjustment of the theoretical framing underpinning the visual artefact's examination.

6. Data sources and band corpus selection

Having elected to prioritise surveying how audiences of progressive metal discursively construct the classical, and motivated by a desire for accountability when applying the genre-label, I began the process of identifying specialist audience communities (or 'center collectivities' as per Holt's theoretical framing) that could provide sources of data. In addition, whilst I consider the process of selecting artists for examination to be inextricably linked to said communities, it was important to retain a critically reflexive position and engage with canonisation issues such as whether a band is already discussed in academic contexts, their country of origin, relative popularity (determined by the number of audience-generated review-texts for the band), as well as to identify artists that would help to survey the broader field, rather than engage with targeted and classical-saturated examples. To this effect, the following pages will outline several important aspects towards the identification of the study's data sources as well as the band corpus: the justification for selecting the specific online user-driven databases from which the analytical data is derived, including relevant aspects such as the databases' categorisation systems; the triangulation process and limiting factors through which the corpus of performers was generated, including the performer examined in the diversity part of this study; as well as the central data source of the study, namely the audience-generated texts (i.e., album reviews). Finally, I will briefly summarise the steps in examining the album review data as part of the discourse analytical process.

Reflecting on the common understanding of progressive metal as a site in which two larger meta-genre aesthetics overlap, I considered it necessary to conceptualise the genre's audience as reflecting the same principle on a cultural level. This perspective is not interested in continuing the segregating the genre's aesthetic as having 'progressive' and 'metal' components (e.g. McCandless 2010, 40–70), but rather so as to acknowledge the multiple "communities of listeners [that] lay claim to genres" (Toynbee 2000, 103) and moreover to represent the complexities of audiences' historical engagement with heavy metal and progressive music cultures, respectively. Whilst there are multiple online communities for both audiences, I elected to focus on two user-driven encyclopaedic/archival websites that, despite operating as separate entities,[131] share a common emphasis on cataloguing bands from both meta-genres: 'metal-archives.com' (also known as Encyclopaedia Metallum) and 'progarchives.com'.

The selection of both sites was influenced by several factors. First, on the most basic level, when conducing simple online searches for bands of either progressive- or metal- categories, the two websites are often amongst the first to appear in search results, especially when attempting to locate information on less-known artist. This enables the argument that the databases represent both an

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[131] This clarification is necessary as the progarchives.com website appears to be a part of a group of websites with similar purpose, including metalmusicachives.com, which operates with similar principles as the heavy metal-focused database chosen for this study (metal-archives.com). The close proximity of metalmusicachives.com to progarchives.com and its communities/members introduces issues of potentially misrepresenting heavy metal culture's more targeted sites of discourse, thus the utilisation of this sister website becomes rather problematic to this study. Furthermore, the website this study utilises can be viewed as representing a more encompassing database as, at the time of writing, its webpage suggests having nearly five-times more bands than the metalmusicachives.com webpage.

overlap between being accessible to wider audiences as well as potentially affecting the discourse if, or rather when, said websites are perceived as 'authentic' to the respective cultures' requirements. Furthermore, as the access to user-generated album reviews, or the profiles for the reviewers themselves, is not restricted to registered users, this helps to alleviate some general ethical concerns with regards to sourcing the written texts. However, in relation to preserving confidentiality, any utterance incorporated in this study has been anonymised and represented via a specific code rather than the user-name of the writer.

Second, beyond encountering the websites in my own research, I noted that both databases have been used as reference points or as signifiers of sites of fandom in either progressive rock-focused research (e.g. Anderton 2009; Anderton 2010; Anderton 2016, 156–57; Anderton and Atton 2020, 9–10; Dowd 2013; Dowd 2014a; Dowd 2014b; Dowd, Ryan, and Tai 2016; Dowd et al. 2021 [2019]; Lukanov 2008, 241; A. F. Moore 2016a, 7; Nurminen and Halonen 2008; Zahova 2016, 22), as well as heavy metal research (e.g. DeHart 2018; P. Grant 2017; Mayer and Timberlake 2014; Smialek 2008). This offers an academic strengthening of the claim that the sites represent Holt's "center collectivities" (i.e., communities with more substantial influence towards a genre's framing), yet as databases are not commonly subjected to such in-depth discourse inquiries this limits the potential for canonisation.

Third, both databases are fairly encompassing in the artists they include. At the time of writing (summer 2021), metal-archives.com lists just under one-hundred and fifty thousand bands of which the category of 'progressive' constitutes over eleven-thousand entries (Metal-archives.com 2021a; Metal-archives.com 2021b). Similarly progarchives.com includes over eleven-thousand entries of which the 'progressive metal' category includes over one-thousand and two-hundred entries (Progarchives.com 2012b), a number that increases to over two-thousand and three-hundred entries if additional metal-related categories are included (Progarchives.com 2012a; Progarchives.com 2012c). Similarly, the reported numbers of registered users suggest that these are not websites with marginal traffic: metal-archives.com states that it includes over eight-hundred-thousand registered users, whilst progarchives.com points to over sixty-four thousand members.[132]

Fourth and finally, both websites offered a similar basis from which observations regarding the audiences' perspectives can be derived, namely, the user-submitted (and vetted/moderated by specific community members) album reviews for various albums by the bands included in this study's corpus. I should point out that, despite the seemingly larger quantities of included artists and members in the metal-archives.com database, this study's corpus selection inadvertently 'counterbalances' this reality as, when comparing the numbers of written reviews, the submissions

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[132] A quick note on how these numbers are generated. The metal-archives.com includes automatically-updated counters on both its main page, as well as the statistics page I mentioned above. With regards to the progarchives.com website, similar counters are available only for the number of register users, and the presented number of artists is generated via manually copying the list of performers visible in the corresponding genre-pages (Progarchives.com 2012a; Progarchives.com 2012b; Progarchives.com 2012c) into an Excel table thus enabling a numbered overview. As such, the mentioned numbers should be seen as representative of the overall scope of the databases, rather than as means of precisely quantifying progressive metal's representation in the corresponding cultures.

from contributors in the progarchives.com site significantly outnumber those from the metal-archives.com. Regardless, great effort has been taken for perspectives to be evaluated in an equal manner, as well as for the utterances quoted in the work to balance representations of both communities.

As my work prioritises the audiences' perspectives in relation to matters of genre, I consider it necessary to briefly expand on the websites' somewhat different categorisation systems, as well as the guidelines provided to writers interested in participating in the album review process. Both websites utilise a community-driven system which enables registered users to submit information that is vetted/approved by higher ranking members of the community – 'moderators' in metal-archives.com, and members of the 'submissions team' for progarchives.com – before the artist/band is officially added to the database (Metal-archives.com n.d.o; Progarchives.com 2010b). The basic requirements for submission are similar between the two databases i.e., the user must submit some biographical and/or discography information, make suggestions towards the genre, and these arguments are expected to be supported through the inclusion of one or more sound examples.[133] As one might expect, considerations regarding the submitted band's genre play an important factor in the evaluative processes. For progarchives.com, the submission is first vetted for general completion and then forwarded to a small team of users constituting the evaluative group for the respective progressive sub-genre, which then approve the genre label (Progarchives.com 2010b). For metal-archives.com, the site includes multiple sections that present suggestions as to how users submitting a band are to determine whether "your submitted band [is] really metal" and, indeed, great emphasis is placed on (sub-)genres that are not deemed accepted in the database (Metal-archives.com n.d.o).

With that in mind, the two websites deploy different systems of categorisation. The metal-archives.com seemingly offers a series of 'core' metal genre labels – e.g. 'black [metal]', 'death [metal]', 'progressive [metal]', 'symphonic [metal]' etc. (Metal-archives.com n.d.d) – yet the database allows the users to input a variety of combinations between genre labels. This appears to balance between reflecting the accepted larger sub-genres in metal culture, yet also allows for more differentiated descriptions e.g., 'melodic progressive metal' or 'technical death metal'. When combined with the database's search function, site-visitors can filter the search to the genre of 'progressive' and thus include all combinations outlined above.

In contrast, progarchives.com employs a system that features a variety of seemingly more static genres and sub-genres within progressive music (Progarchives.com n.d.v). Out of the twenty-two larger categories, three are explicitly considered as metal-related genres, namely "Progressive Metal", "Tech/Extreme Prog Metal" and "Experimental/Post Metal" (Progarchives.com n.d.v).[134] The

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[133] Given the online nature of the website, these principles can, and to some degrees have been, adjusted thus it is possible that further qualifiers are included at a later date than the publication of this study. The current version of the submission requirements can be found in the following pages (see Metal-archives.com n.d.p; Progarchives.com 2010b).

[134] An additional category titled 'Heavy Prog' implies a tangential connection to heavy metal by mentioning that the genre represents "a marriage of the guitar-based heavy blues of the late 1960s and 1970s – artists such as Cream, Led Zeppelin, and Black Sabbath – and the progressive/symphonic movement represented by King

relation between these genre-labels appears somewhat convoluted as 'Progressive Metal' is discussed as the "core movement of what is called 'Progressive Metal'" (Progarchives.com 2012b) i.e. as the broadest principle of drawing from both progressive rock and heavy metal, whereby the two other categories represent significant metal-related sub-categories with their own specificities (see Progarchives.com 2012a; Progarchives.com 2012c). However, the definition-webpages focused on each of the three genre labels also suggest that each includes further sub-(sub-?)genres. For example, 'Progressive metal' is described as further subdivided into "traditional progressive metal", "power-progressive metal (American Style), "Power-Progressive Metal (European style) and "Modern Progressive metal" (Progarchives.com 2012b).

In terms of how these definitions are made visible in relation to the individual artists, each page will list the artist as 'within' to one of the aforementioned twenty-two progressive music categories, yet the short biographical entry often provides some additional information with regards to changes in the performer's genre. For the purposes of my study, in order to generate a representative sample of performers that reflect both communities' framing of progressive metal, yet to equalise the approaches of both systems, I elected to focus on bands to which both audience communities applied a genre-label that includes the terms 'progressive' and 'metal', yet for the purposes of generating a manageable selection, I disregard the use of terms that have been framed as comparable in meaning.[135] To exemplify this, I will briefly discuss the performers Savatage and Nightwish. Both bands are included in each databases, whereby despite listed in progarchives.com under 'Progressive Metal', examining the provided biographies suggest that neither is considered an absolutely 'core' representative of progressive metal (Progarchives.com n.d.p; Progarchives.com n.d.s). In comparison, the metal-archives.com website, Savatage is listed as "Heavy/Power Metal, Progressive Metal/Rock" (Metal-archives.com n.d.q), whilst Nightwish is listed as "Symphonic Power Metal (early); Symphonic Metal (later)" (Metal-archives.com n.d.m), thus technically situating Savatage as 'closer' to progressive metal contexts. Based on this contrast, despite both bands being positioned in the broader vicinity of progressive music, Nightwish is removed as a suitable example due to not being overtly situated within the progressive metal genre by the metal-archives.com audience. Whilst I by no means claim that this approach offers a 'perfect' solution to generating examples for the genre, it enabled to find some similarities by navigating communities' naming conventions. Also, as I will mention further, this was but one of several subjective decisions undertaken as means of reducing the volume of data to be analysed in the study.

With regards to the submission of reviews, both sites offer guidelines as to the structure and contents of submitted texts, though unlike the submission of bands, only metal-archives.com subjects

Crimson, Yes and Genesis" (Progarchives.com n.d.j). The definition also mentions important qualities such as "[t]he electric guitar, amplified to produce distortion (or 'overdrive') is a crucial element, providing the 'heavy' tone required for this aggressive style, and later for the British and North American heavy metal of the late 1970s and 80s" (Progarchives.com n.d.j). Despite the suggested connections to heavy metal contexts, I was interested in exploring those performers that are situated in, and closely associated with, the 'core' progressive metal category thus I elected to avoid engaging with performers listed under the category of 'heavy prog'.
[135] For example, Hegarty and Halliwell point out that "within metal, the word 'technical' is used to surrogate for something similar to progressive rock: hence 'technical black metal'" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 282).

each review submission to a moderation procedure (Metal-archives.com 2020). In contrast, the guidelines for progarchives.com do not include any verification prior to the reviews' publication, yet the guidelines indicate that that members designated as 'Prog Reviewer' or 'Special Collaborator'[136] are implicitly given a higher 'value' rating (Progarchives.com 2005b). Based on this contrast, despite the latter site's approach to be more inclusive, there is a comparable aspect of positioning more involved members of the culture at a higher 'step' of importance. Leaving aside common expectations of using proper grammar, avoiding inappropriate language or derogatory comments towards the examined bands, it is interesting that both sites' review expectations balance between what Fabbri describes as a genre's 'formal and technical rules' and their 'social and ideological rules'. The databases prioritise evaluation based on 'formal and technical rules' as guidelines advise potential reviewers to focus on a combination of the 'music itself' and/or non-auditive contextual information: progarchives.com lists "the style of music, notable influences, similar bands, best tracks […] production quality, musicians involved, album history" (Progarchives.com, 2005), whilst metal-archives.com points to "composition and songwriting; instrumentation; singing; lyrics; production; atmosphere and mood; emotions; ideas and themes; structure" (Metal-archives.com n.d.p).[137]

It goes without saying that emphasising 'the music itself' can also be viewed as a form of the genre's 'ideological rules', though said type of rule can be related to the intended readership. Despite both databased and their reviews to be accessible online without necessitating a registration in the corresponding website, the suggestions towards who the reviews are to target leave me with the impression that 'already involved listeners' rather than 'new and unfamiliar' listeners are being considered. Guidelines in metal-archives.com suggest that "[r]eviews should give the potential listeners a good idea of what the album sounds like" (Metal-archives.com n.d.p) whilst progarchives.com recommends reviewers to "[t]ry to write reviews that will be of real use and interest to other progressive music fans, who can benefit by finding new avenues for their musical exploration" (Progarchives.com 2005b).[138] The wording of the former of the two examples implies that unfamiliar readers may be addressed, however from the sample of reviews I examined, neither community (and by extensions those overseeing the reviews' submission) appears to see the need in offering clarification to more culture-specific and/or complex terms they may use. Coincidently, this challenge also extends to the key-terms terms that I will be examining in the analytical chapters of my work e.g., 'symphonic' or 'operatic vocals'.

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[136] The site's 'Frequently Asked Question' page outlines that the process of becoming a 'prog reviewer' is based on the merit of their continuous contribution i.e. "'Prog reviewers' are people who have been identified by the site's owners as regularly contributing high quality reviews of a diverse range of bands and albums" (Progarchives.com 2005a); whilst the category of 'Special collaborator' indicate a similar expectation of quality though also "they participate in (or have participated in) the running of the site" (Progarchives.com 2005a).

[137] These characteristics are presented in a bulleted list on the referenced webpage, however for the purposes of text-readability, I am quoting them in a 'flattened' manner.

[138] In the interest of fairness, these argumentations are seemingly motivated by differing reasons i.e. metal-archives.com advises against "show[ing] one's English vocabulary" (Metal-archives.com n.d.p), whilst progarchives.com emphasises longevity as opposed to attention grabbing: "[d]o not […] word your review with only the front page […] in mind. Consider whether the review will still make sense in 5 years time [sic] and more" (Progarchives.com 2005b).

The selection of these online databases offered the necessary combination of factors that my study is interested in: large, active communities from both progressive music and heavy metal contexts; engagement with a wide range of genres within the broader meta-genre fields, including the target genre of progressive metal; and a shared evaluation principle of offering reviews of the performers' output. As previously outlined, despite both databases' complex genre-label system, I developed a simplified principle through which suitable bands can be identified. That said, the sheer number of performers included in both websites, as well as the number of submitted reviews to some performers, remained a significant obstacle that necessitated a reduction in scope. Addressing that obstacle required a great deal of reflection as, in addition to my interest in side-stepping the investigation of highly-canonised performers, I wanted to avoid a potential 'self-fulfilling-prophecy' in restricting the corpus to performers (or albums/pieces) that outwardly signal a saturated connection to the classical. In other words, I was interested in investigating whether the classical appears in the discourses surrounding the genre, and if possible, in relation to 'typical' progressive metal output.

To achieve these goals as well as part of the scope reduction process, I developed a triangulation process which, in part, parallels the approach to gathering samples in Dietmar Elflein's study on heavy metal (Elflein 2010, 62–64).[139] Specifically, similar to the author, I elected to draw from several established journalistic publications from which a list of performers can be developed.[140] However, rather than to use said publications as more primary sources, I incorporated the bands appearing in said publications into the aforementioned triangulation process. Also similar to Elflein's approach, my aim was to draw from both English- as well as German-language perspectives, yet also to choose journalistic publications targeted towards different audiences, thus resulting in the selection of the German magazine *Rock Hard* and the British magazine *Prog*.

As a summary of the two publications' context, *Rock Hard* is a monthly magazine based in Dortmund, Germany which has been in print since 1983, and the publication focuses on a wide range of musical genres and styles from the "hard and heavy world" (Stratmann 2018).[141] The webpage of the magazine discusses its self-framing as "a critical mediator between fans, artists and industry"[142] as well as balances between suggesting its own critical self-positioning through metal culture-accepted notions such as being outside the 'mainstream' e.g., "[at] ROCK HARD [sic] there are still opinions (also on political or social issues) that go beyond the mainstream. […] The magazine wants to encourage the reader to do their own activities and not just to consume the music" (Stratmann 2018).[143] In

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[139] A similar approach of positioning several journalistic publications as a central source from which critical arguments towards the historical framing of the progressive rock genre can be found in Anderton and Atton (2020), as well as specifically drawing from *Prog* magazine see Dowd et al. (2021 [2019]).

[140] Elflein's approach focuses much more on examining a variety of academic, journalistic or metal-culture dedicated websites, and moreover on "lists with an over-temporal claim" (Elflein 2010, 62), or in other words lists that attempt to discuss the various metal genres in relation to a longer period of time.

[141] Ger. Orig. "Als eines der dienstältesten Rock-Magazine Europas gehört ROCK HARD auch international zu den angesehensten Publikationen der Hard-&-Heavy-Welt".

[142] Ger. Orig. "Das Blatt versteht sich als kritischer Vermittler zwischen Fans, Künstlern und Industrie".

[143] Ger. Orig. "Bei ROCK HARD finden noch Meinungen (auch zu politischen oder gesellschaftlichen Themen) jenseits des Mainstreams statt. […] Darüber hinaus will das Magazin den Leser zu eigenen Aktivitäten und nicht nur zum bloßen Konsumieren der Musik anregen".

contrast, the British based *Prog* magazine represents a much newer publication which developed as an offshoot of *Classic Rock* magazine in 2009 (Sweney 2017), eventually becoming an independent, but related, monthly publication. *Prog* magazine was chosen for its narrower focus on progressive music genres thus complementing *Rock Hard*'s wider selection. Whilst I was unable to locate a comparable 'mission-statement' as was the case for *Rock Hard*, *Prog*'s publishing house emphasises an interest in balancing the discussion of "the classic pioneers of the 70s through the 80s Marillion-helmed revival, to the impact of the likes of Radiohead and Muse in the 90s and today's vibrant and ever-developing scene spearheaded by the likes of Steven Wilson, Opeth and Anathema" (Futureplc.com n.d.).[144]

Beyond representing German- or English-speaking discourses, an additional factor contributing to the selection of these two magazines is their position as fairly significant for the, respectively "hard and heavy world" or progressive music contexts.[145] *Rock Hard*'s website claimed, at an earlier date, that "ROCK HARD has gone as far as licensing its brand name to interested parties in Spain, Italy, Greece, France, Brazil, Slovenia, Slovakia & Czech Republic" as well as that its scope reached "an average of 80.000 copies in Germany (Switzerland and Austria) alone" (rockhard.de n.d. via the Wayback Machine).[146] With regards to *Prog* magazine, in an interview with Jerry Ewing during the early years of the magazine, the editor states that the publication was selling "between 22-25,000 copies worldwide every issue" (Progarchives.com 2010a; see also Petridis 2010) and a follow-up question suggests that the magazine is available beyond Europe in countries such as Australia and the United States (Progarchives.com 2010a). Whilst it is unclear what sales numbers are achieved currently (see Sweney 2017), the visibility of websites offering subscriptions in both British as well as US contexts, suggests that the magazine is widely available in multiple major Anglo-American speaking countries. Overall, from this context it is possible to frame both *Rock Hard* as well as *Prog* magazines as having a not-insubstantial capacity to affect the discourse in relation to the primarily European- and

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[144] With that in mind, my examination of roughly the first fifty issues of the magazine left me with the impression that the publication leans more towards earlier, canonised progressive rock performers which can be supported by the predominance of said performers' visibility on the front cover (e.g., highlighting an Emerson, Lake and Palmer retrospective in issue March 2012, a The Moody Blues retrospective in issue March 2013 etc.). Similarly, examining the related *Progressive Music Awards* ceremony reveals the inclusion of the category of 'Prog God' which is awarded to highly canonised performers (usually) from the 1970s British progressive rock scene e.g., Rick Wakeman from Yes in 2012 (Masters 2012), Toby Banks from Genesis in 2015 (BBC.com 2015), or Nick Mason from Pink Floyd in 2019 (Munro 2019).

[145] Whilst during the initial drafts of this summary it was possible to suggest that the two magazines represented differing positions in terms of their availability, scale and sales numbers, given the changing nature of consumption of media, such the adoption of digital platforms as means of distribution (e.g., publishingexperts.de n.d.), as well as changing circumstances for the two publications, my discussion of such contexts intends to primarily reflect the initial considerations for selecting the two magazines.

[146] This page is no longer available, though comparable information regarding the current *Rock Hard*'s international availability is still available i.e. the pages mentions "independent magazines in France, Italy and the Czech Republic / Slovakia (print and digital), Greece and Slovenia (digital only)" (Stratmann 2018). Sales numbers are no longer included, though the page does mention that the magazine now spans "the renowned Rock Hard Festival and digital services from apps to web pages" (Stratmann 2018). [Ger. Orig. "Zum Vertriebsgebiet der deutschen Print-Ausgabe gehören die Schweiz und Österreich, eigenständige Magazine existieren zudem in Frankreich, Italien und Tschechische Republik/Slowakei (print und digital), Griechenland und Slowenien (nur digital)"].

English-speaking countries contexts they respectively appear in[147] and as such can be considered as relevant and appropriate journalistic sources from which a selection of performers can be derived.

Based on availability during the initial data gathering stage of this study, I was able to examine three-hundred and fifty issues of *Rock Hard* (available in part on their website), and fifty-four issues out of the (at the time total published) ninety issues of *Prog* magazine. Once the magazine issues were examined, the triangulation process between the community and journalistic sources consisted of two broad phases. First, I cross-referenced bands appearing on the pages of the journalistic publications with metal-archives.com and progarchives.com databases, and constructed a list of examples in which both websites include a band as 'progressive metal' (for prog-archives.com), or a more fluid combination between 'progressive' and 'metal' (for metal-archives.com). This process allowed to generate a relatively manageable number of fourteen performers, however I elected to employ as a second step of somewhat subjective (and practical) decisions so as to narrow the selection even further. As the aforementioned list of fourteen artists produced multiple highly canonised performers which have been subject to varying degrees of academic investigation (e.g., Dream Theater, Pain of Salvation, Symphony X), these performers were rejected in line with my critical stance on canonisation. Furthermore, whilst some performers met important criteria such as stemming from countries outside of progressive metal's typified geographical framing in 'US and Scandinavian countries', performers such as Riverside (as founded in Poland) were removed due to the inclusion of an unmanageable number of reviews to be analysed.[148]

Through these reductions in scope the finalised band corpus for this study constituted nine artists visible in Table 1,[149] whereby the selection manages to broadly fulfil my criteria for a representative selection that is derived from audience perspectives, yet minimises furthering issues of canonisation. The performers are drawn equally from US and European countries such as Germany, Italy or the Netherlands, thus representing a fairly wide selection of geographic regions, and based on their years of activity, they can be seen as representing three different decades from the genre's history. With that in mind, it should be pointed out that two of the performers – Shadow Gallery and Savatage – have been discussed by the progarchives.com community as part of multiple pioneering performers during the 1990s (Progarchives.com 2012b), and moreover both artists have appeared in

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[147] This argument focuses on the printed issues of both magazines, as the availability of digital platforms (e.g. see Apple.com n.d.a; Apple.com n.d.b) allows them to reach much wider audiences. That said, I am also aware of limiting factors that can counteract such openness e.g., lack of publishing rights on certain geographical territories or the audience member's lack of interest/funds to access the magazine via a digital subscription.

[148] To quantify this statement, in contrast to the remaining performers seen in Table 1 in which the highest number of reviews is Threshold (229), Riverside's reviews at the time of data collection included nearly double that (415). Similarly, bands such as Dream Theater would have been near-impossible to fruitfully examine, even if their framing in academic texts did not present canonization challenges, as the performer would have necessitated the examination of over two thousand additional reviews.

[149] For biographical data on these performers see: Arch/Matheos (metalblade.com n.d.); Atmosfear (Atmosfear.net n.d.); Crimson Glory (Sharpe-Young 2007, 299); Kingcrow (kingcrow.it ca. 2019 via the Wayback Machine); Redemption (Halbscheffel 2013g); Savatage (Sharpe-Young 2007, 319–23); Shadow Gallery (Halbscheffel 2013i); Star One (Halbscheffel 2013k); Threshold (thresh.net n.d.).

limited capacity in academic discussions.[150] However, acknowledging the canonisation potential of including these performers, I consider it a necessary concession so as to avoid limiting the study to performers with too restricted number of submitted audience-reviews. In terms of the quantity of available reviews, the numbers offered are based only on reviews of studio albums[151] as a shared type of release likely for reviewers to engage with, thus resulting in metal-archives.com to be represented by three hundred and seven reviews, and progarchives.com with six hundred eighty-seven examples. As a brief summary of the reviews themselves, the texts' scope tends to range wildly from a single paragraph with ca. 500 words, to examinations that come close to two pages in length.

Artist/Band	Country of Origin	Formed in	Genre (MA)[152]	Genre (PA)	MA Reviews	PA Reviews
Arch/Matheos	USA	2010	Progressive Metal	Progressive Metal	7	15
Atmosfear	Germany	1996	Progressive Metal	Progressive Metal	1	6
Crimson Glory	USA	1983	Progressive Heavy/Power Metal	Progressive Metal	28	44
Kingcrow	Italy	1996	Progressive Metal	Progressive Metal	1	10
Redemption	USA	2001	Progressive/Power Metal	Progressive Metal	12	74
Savatage	USA	1983	Heavy/Power Metal, Progressive Metal/Rock	Progressive Metal	88	142
Shadow Gallery	USA	1985	Progressive Metal	Progressive Metal	10	150
Star One	Netherlands	2002	Progressive Metal/Rock	Progressive Metal	7	45
Threshold	UK	1988	Progressive Metal	Progressive Metal	32	197

Table 1: Band corpus and relevant information on album reviews

[150] For example, Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl have discussed Savatage as an example in the authors' examination of the metal opera phenomenon (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 45–46), whilst Wicke and Ziegenrücker mention Shadow Gallery's album *Room V* as part of their discussion of rock opera's continuous existence during the 2000s (Wicke, W. Ziegenrücker, and K.-E. Ziegenrücker 2007, 621).

[151] Due to the large number of reviews to be analysed, and so as to avoid having to continuously expand the review-data, my selection omits reviews submitted beyond their dates of collection (22.07.2017 and 09.09.2017), as well as reviews of albums released after 2017 (e.g., Kingcrow's 2018 album *The Persistence* or Arch/Matheos' *Winter Ethereal* from 2019). With that in mind, a surface examination of said new additions revealed no notable utterances that required further addressing.

[152] The abbreviations 'MA' and 'PA' indicate metal-archives.com, and progarchives.com, respectively; for further information see the section 'A brief note on data presentation and abbreviations' .

An additional aspect emerging from the process of generating my band-corpus was that during the triangulation process I began noticing some tendencies with regards to gender in progressive metal, and more specifically female participation. Whilst both *Rock Hard* and *Prog* magazines are by no means excluding bands with female members, the fewer visible bands with such members left me with the impression that progressive metal was male dominated. As an example, out of the over three hundred bands cross-referenced as progressive metal in *Rock Hard* (as per the aforementioned triangulation process), less than ten percent of those featured female members, and moreover, not all bands included female members as permanent members of the ensemble. A similar challenge emerged in relation to *Prog* magazine which, whilst clearly including smaller and/or newer artists with female members, tended to repeatedly include canonised artists e.g., out of the over fifty issues of *Prog* magazine I examined, the band Nightwish, or its former member Tarja Turunen, appear rather prominently at least nine times in articles, interviews or reviews (e.g. L. Brown 2013; Dome 2015; Scharf 2011d; Scharf 2010; Scharf 2011b; Scharf 2011a; Scharf 2011c; Scharf 2012; Yates 2009; N. Wright 2010; H. Wright 2014).[153] Whilst I generally praise both publications for their inclusivity, my suspicion regarding the limited visibility of women was confirmed by Pauwke Berkers and Julian Schaap's study which highlighted the much lower number of female performers found in the genre (e.g. Berkers and Schaap 2018, 56). When taken together with the limited academic attention paid to gender-imbalance in the genre, I elected to dedicate a significant portion of my work to examining gender elements.

I initially endeavoured to pursue the same triangulation principle in determining suitable progressive metal bands with female members, however the limited selection made cross-magazine comparison near impossible. I was also keen on retaining the canonisation-disrupting principle of my work, thus whilst a band such as Nightwish initially seemed as a suitable example, it was rejected as can be considered as one of the more researched (or at least actively referred to) bands in academic contexts (e.g., Brizard 2006; Hillier 2018; Julliot 2018, n.p.; Karjalainen 2016; Strauss 2018). In addition, I maintain that until a focused discussion on the relation between the genres of symphonic metal and progressive metal is established in academic contexts, bands such as Nightwish remain in a somewhat difficult position in the discourse. As such, I elected to discuss a performer with much-less canonised status, yet one that engages with the classical as per the central inquiry of my study.

During the general triangulation process, I was exposed to the work of Katherine Thomas (stage name, The Great Kat) due to her name appearing in an article from *Rock Hard* magazine. Her output is not explicitly considered as within the progressive metal genre, however my suggestion for

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[153] In order to ensure that my critical perspective is clearly communicated, the challenge I am referring to is the tendency of the publication to more prominently present specific performers such as Nightwish and/or Tarja Turunen. In other words, whilst it is commendable that such performers are emphasized in various magazine issues, this not only raises some concerns regarding canonization, but can lead to a more limited perception of which female performers can be identified in the culture. To be fair, however, I will also reiterate that there were a number of other performers presented in smaller spaces that, usually through pictures, showcased the participation of female performers. Also, there is the possibility that some less-frequently featured performers were given prominence in the issues that I was not able to examine. As such, this critical perspective should be seen as a general observation that eventually led me to pursue gender aspects in progressive metal.

her suitability as example of progressive metal, and by extension the genre's gender-framing, is not based on wild speculation. Rather it resulted from considering her work from the lens of established academic, journalistic and audience principles ascribed to progressive music, as well as through comparison to other performers that can be seen as broad thematic 'precursors' to aspects handled in her output (see section '10.3 Justification for artist selection' for further details). With that in mind, my interest in including this performer does not aim to force my opinion onto the genre's discourse. Rather, I aim to contribute to the ongoing work related to progressive metal and gender such as by scholars such as Kevin Fellezs on progressive metal and issues of gender and race (2016a, 2018), or Sam Grant's discussion on female participation in non-Western contexts (2016), as well as to encourage other scholars to continue the investigation of gender aspects in the genre, whether it be mapping the large-scale female participation in progressive metal or through the focused examination on specific artists.

To conclude this section, I wanted to briefly reiterate on the steps undertaken to analyse the album reviews as a core data source in relation to Diaz-Bone's four steps of the discourse analysis. To briefly reiterate, the four steps can be summarised as: 1) selection of data sources and specific texts for analysis; 2) surface analysis, open coding of data and identification of themes, specific terms, problematisations; 3) initial step of interpretative analysis involving the reconstruction of discursive relationships, the similarities and contrasts within positions; and 4) completion of the reconstruction.

This section has already elucidated how the general data sources were identified as well as the triangulation process between the two audience-archives and the journalistic publications. A final aspect to mention in relation to this process, is my securing of a copy of the necessary reviews so that I avoid engaging with ever-changing material during the analytical process. To do so, I approached the manner pragmatically and utilised the website-copying function of the note-taking application Evernote, which allowed me to copy the review-based webpages in a manner that retained its organisation, whilst enabling search functionality; the reviews from metal-archives.com were copied on 22.07.2017, and the reviews from progarchives.com were copied on 09.09.2017.

With the data sources established and a safe copy of the texts to be examined, I proceeded with the surface analysis by extracting basic details for every review (e.g., the name of the reviewer, the year of publication, album addressed etc.) and numbering the reviews in a sequential manner reflecting their appearance on the respective website (i.e., for metal-archives.com this results in 'newest first' sorting, and for progarchives.com in 'oldest first'). This was followed by examining the reviews a series of times so as identify discursive elements such as what classical-connotative aspects were addressed, what terms were used, the types of observations, and the differing perspectives presented by the writers.

After several rounds of rereading the album reviews, I felt confident in having identified several of the classical-relevant 'discourse-pillars', namely the key-terms that this study investigates: 'operatic', 'symphonic' and 'theatrical/dramatic'.[154] It goes without saying that 'classical' was also

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[154] To avoid misinterpretation, I am referring not only to the key-terms as derived from the listed adjective-forms, but also from their noun counterparts.

considered at one point, though the majority of the observations offered in said category would end up repeating in the aforementioned key-terms, thus I elected to disregard 'classical' as its own term, and reintroduce some of its aspects into the various chapters. To facilitate the interpretative analysis and begin the process of discourse reconstruction, I extracted the relevant utterances and organised them in a series of sub-categories based on the main aspect they were addressing in preparation for the write-up process. The second portion of the interpretative analysis, and the finalisation of the reconstruction, involved both a write-up of the various discursive aspects together with musical and visual analyses, and a constant referral back to the previous step, as means of verifying whether the arguments are still valid beyond the quoted utterances that are used as examples. Once the write-up process was completed, the discourse analytical examinations were developed into the key-term focused chapters found in the next part of the study.

As a brief summary, this section offered an overview into the data sources as well as the band corpus that serve as the main data for investigation in the discourse-analytical part of this study. I outlined my selection of user-driven databases and presented brief overviews of relevant organisational principles such as the submission of a band to the website, as well as the guidelines for submitting album reviews. This was followed by a discussion of the triangulation process in reducing the large quantity of data found in the user-driven databases via a cross-referencing process with two journalistic publications. Said publications were briefly summarised in relation to their capacity to serve as heavy metal- and progressive music-relevant sources from which the band corpus can be developed, as well as the 'side-effect' of the triangulation process that was inducing my reflexivity towards the limited visibility of female performers in progressive metal. Finally, I reiterated the components of the discourse-analytical process, by briefly outlining how I approached the data-collection and data-analysis of the album reviews.

A brief note on data presentation and abbreviations

Before transitioning to the analytical results portion of this study, I want to offer some clarifications towards the utilisation of specific terms or coding-related abbreviations introduced for the purpose of more succinctly presenting information. Given that references to both metal-archives.com and progarchives.com databases will appear quite regularly in this study, to facilitate readability I have elected to represent them in a shortened manner, namely with the abbreviations 'MA' and 'PA' respectively. This principle also extends to the coding practice of the individual utterances. Referencing utterances from specific album reviews is a central part of presenting the study's results, thus I aimed to balance confidentiality when discussing an individual user's contribution with succinctly laying all relevant data. Based on these principles, I am employing a coding strategy towards the presentation of audience utterances. Each utterance is coded in a manner that reflects several important types of information: database which houses the review; discussed artists; sequential identification number; and the year of the review's contribution. When compiled, the code appears in the following manner: 'MA-Savatage-#1, 2004'; or 'PA-CrimsonGlory-#12, 2008' etc.

In terms of how the individual contributors will be referred to in text, I elected to deploy terms such as '[album] reviewers', 'listeners', 'audiences' or 'contributors' whilst explicitly avoiding the term

'fans'. The primary motivation for this decision was observing critical voices appearing in the album reviews of the respective artists, or in other words, writing a critical review is a perfectly acceptable behaviour by a member of the audience, yet it does not suggest that the writer wishes to be associated with the band's 'fandom'. It goes without saying that critical voices from within a fandom are undoubtedly still a part of said fandom, however to avoid overcomplicating these distinctions, the term 'fan' will be omitted throughout this study.

I also want to point the attention to three additional 'quality-of-life' adjustments that I implement for the purposes of incorporating the data into the text. First, regardless whether an utterance is used in a series of examples, or as a central point of discussion towards a specific song, if it does not provide sufficient information regarding the addressed song or album, I have included a small clarification as to which song or album the writer is referring (see Example 1, below). Second, whilst my own clarifications will follow a typical editorial principle in which albums are always written in italics, and songs as surrounded by quotation marks, to avoid editorialising the utterances, I am retaining any punctuation for indicating albums/songs that deviate from the aforementioned approach (see Example 2 below as representing an instance of an album written as surrounded by quotations). Care has been taken to offer clarifications when the probability for misinterpretation of the original utterance is rather high, yet I wanted to ensure that audience perspective will not be skewed towards native English speakers, or against those whose writing may be less grammatically accurate. Third and finally, whilst I will clearly outline grammatical errors that existed in the source material, some utterances include commonly utilised short-names album titles e.g., Savatage's album *Streets: A Rock Opera* is often referred to as simply 'Streets' (no quotation marks). These will not be corrected, but simply pointed out when misinterpretations may occur (see Example 3 below, as representing both grammatical correction and discourse-typical name-shortening).

Example 1:

> "The chorus [of the track "Digital Ghosts"] sounds very classically Shadow Gallery, and the harmonies are painfully pretty. Vocals absolutely dominate this track, and that is one hundred percent a good thing. And this time, rather than singularly metal instrumentation, we get a feel for jazz guitars in the middle and more of that wonderful classical piano as well". (PA-ShadowGallery-#136, 2009)

Example 2:

> "It´s not that Savatage hadn´t entered more sophisticated compositional territories before (their use of parts of pieces by the classical composers Edward Grieg and Gustav Holst on "Prelude To Madness" from "Hall Of The Mountain King (1987)" is an example of that), but now those elements are more fully incorporated in the band´s music". (PA-Savatage-#57, 2010)

Example 3:

> "This is the first Savatage's album with Paul O'Neill on production, who was looking in this time for a band with the capacity of make [sic] real their symphonic and operistic [sic] ideas (included one old idea called Streets…)". (PA-Savatage-#30, 2005)

PART 2: DISCOURSE

The second part of this study presents the results of the discourse analytical investigation, with each chapter focusing on a specific key-term that has been synthesised from said discourse. The included chapters are organised on a common principle in which the key-term is generally introduced, through a combination of outlining relevant perspectives from literature on progressive rock and heavy metal, as well as arguments supporting a general claim for their classical-connotative capacity. These are then followed by multiple sub-sections that discuss specific facets as derived from audience discourse and the music- and visual-interpretative sections.

7. Symphonic/orchestral

Amongst the key-terms identified during the discourse analytical process, 'symphonic/orchestral' quicky caught my attention as potentially signifying a connection to the classical. This was caused, on the one hand, due to my expectation in encountering such term given that its constitutive 'symphonic' can be broadly described as representing a recognisable ascription that has 'taken root' in relevant popular music contexts. These include the early use of 'symphonic rock' as a synonym for progressive rock (e.g., Covach 1997, 3), a genre that, as outlined in previous chapters, is often associated with Western art music contexts; as well as through the co-relation between orchestral/choral sonorities and the symphonic metal genre (e.g., Julliot 2018, n.p.). On the other hand, the term 'orchestra' has on several occasions briefly appeared in academic outlines of progressive metal (e.g., McCandless 2010, 132; Wierschem 2016, 92), which strengthened the potential for such ascriptions to draw from a more wide-reaching phenomenon.

An additional reason for inquiring into the term's classical-connotative possibilities stemmed from the perspective that, whilst scholarly literature has explored the signification behind the term 'symphonic', these framings rarely (if ever) explicitly draw from/refer to progressive metal contexts. Indeed, based on anecdotal observation on the genre, engagement with 'symphonic' aspects is not a foreign notion to progressive metal artists – whether it be the German band The Ocean and their quasi-regular incorporation of extended instrumentation e.g. in their album *Precambrian* from 2007 (The Ocean 2007), or Dream Theater's live album *Score* (2006), a compilation of pieces rerecorded with an orchestral backing – yet I am not left with the impression that these or other comparable approaches are particularly common. Together, the appearance of 'symphonic/orchestral' ascriptions in the discourse and the rather limited academic investigation can be seen as presenting both a sufficient 'agitator' in raising questions as to what constitutes a 'symphonic' element for the genre, what instruments (and in what utilisation) are associated with such ascriptions, but also potentially enables addressing a blind spot in the term's conceptualisations.

Before moving further with the discussion, I want to mention that whilst I frame the two constitutive terms 'symphonic' and 'orchestral' as related, based on both academic and audience-based definitions suggesting a level of coherence, as we will shortly see, I am viewing this relation as non-exclusive. Specifically, due to the complexity of the various ascriptions of the key-terms identified in this study, there are instances where orchestral elements have been ascribed to 'operatic' contexts. Indeed, other instances of 'wire-crossing' are also possible such as the contrast between Jason Julliot's framing of symphonic metal as incorporating choirs, and said element's ability to also be related to

operatic contexts as per my examination of the discourse. As such, the correlation between 'symphonic' and 'orchestral' offered here should be seen as signifying a strong tendency, rather than an unbreakable connection.

7.1 Establishing some contexts

Whilst the opening of this chapter provides some framing regarding the classical signification potential of the term 'symphonic/orchestral', I want to take a step back and establish some basic contexts by raising a series of fundamental questions: What does it mean, specifically, for a track to include symphonic components? How is the connection to the term 'orchestral' framed? Does said connection relate to a specific ensemble and if so, what size, instruments and type are to be involved? Also, does the ascription of the term imply a connection to Western art music and the associated historical concept of the symphony or, conversely, from broader orchestral sonorities-related phenomena? Addressing these questions will provide a framework informing my own investigation, and as research on symphonic or orchestral aspects in progressive metal is rather limited, I will primarily draw from broader progressive music-related contexts. Specifically, I will briefly summarise relevant sections from several recent publications by the German scholar Bernward Halbscheffel, namely *Lexikon Progressive Rock* (2013d) and *Progressive Rock: Die Ernste Musik der Popmusik* [Eng. Progressive rock: the serious music of pop music] Halbscheffel (2014 [2012]). However, I will also introduce perspectives from several other scholarly contributions as well as relevant audience definitions as means of contrasting extension.

Halbscheffel's *Lexikon Progressive Rock* is an encyclopaedic resource that includes several articles with relevance to the framing of the term 'symphonic' and thus will be of use to this examination. The author's summary of the term symphonic rock (2013m) is, to my knowledge, one of the few instances where the term has been explicitly and directly discussed beyond its common framing as a quasi-synonym to that of progressive rock, its relative brevity notwithstanding. The article offers a fairly straight-forward context, pointing to rock bands that have sought to model their output on "traditional European art music" (Halbscheffel 2013m, 476)[155] and further limits this broad framing to that of quotations or arrangements:

> "Symphonic rock is usually meant as a variation of progressive rock, though occasionally used synonymously. The term is applied to bands who have either quotations from, or arrangements of, works of traditional art music in their repertoire, or who imitate works of art music in their own compositions. The instrumentation – and this is the external characteristic of symphony rock – is either adapted from art music, so the bands for example perform with orchestras, or primarily based on keyboard instruments […] The word symphonic thus relates primarily to the instrumentation and the hearing effect it elicits". (Halbscheffel 2013m, 476–77)[156]

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[155] Ger. Orig. "Symphonic Rock, Bezeichnung für Rockmusik, die ihr [sic] Vorbilder in der traditionellen europäisch geprägten Kunstmusik sucht".
[156] Ger. Orig. "Mit Symphonic Rock ist in der Regel eine Spielart des Progressive Rock gemeint, gelegentlich aber synonym gebraucht. Der Begriff wird auf Bands angewendet, die in ihrem Repertoire entweder Zitate aus oder

In addition, Halbscheffel outlines a lack of direct connections to the Western art music's tradition of the symphony, both in terms of its underlying structural form, or as a full quotation, stating that there is "not a single symphony in all of rock music, nor is there an adoption or an arrangement of a complete symphony" (Halbscheffel 2013m, 477),[157] an argument also echoed in his discussion of the term "Sinfonie" (Halbscheffel 2013j). With that in mind, said latter article does suggest that a connection to the nineteenth century period in which the symphonic poem[158] was established can be theorised. Discussing the changing perception during the late 1960s of rock tracks presenting each instrument as clearly distinguishable to a fusion of sounds, and combined with the further development of the concept album format, Halbscheffel supports the notion that "progressive rock is linked to the music of the late 19th century, [taking] the 'symphonic poem' as a model and thus created an opportunity to leave the corset of three-minute songs" (Halbscheffel 2013j, 450).[159]

Halbscheffel's discussion of the symphonic metal genre (Halbscheffel 2013l) is also a perspective I consider relevant to this investigation as some reviewers have specifically pointed out the term in their evaluation of multiple progressive metal bands. The article frames symphonic metal as definable by a set of musical characteristics paralleling those outlined for symphonic rock i.e., "use of keyboards, often real choirs and strings as well as a solo female voice",[160] whereby said choirs and orchestras are utilised "for the sake of the sound effect",[161] as well as through the shared lack of relation to the (most likely) structural aspects of Western art music's symphony (Halbscheffel 2013l, 476). That said, the author argues that the genre's origins lie in "Gothic Rock, Gothic Metal and Death Metal but less from Symphonic Rock or Progressive Rock" and points to employment of "music common in fantasy- and sometimes also in horror-films"[162] as a defining characteristic of the genre's sound (Halbscheffel 2013l, 476). This latter aspect may initially imply that the term carries a lessened potential to relate to the classical, however the more contemporary relation between film music and its classical origins are emphasized both by Halbscheffel's examination of orchestral work in canonized progressive rock performers (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 208, 219–220) as well as in Custodis' discussion of the contemporary framing of Western art music (Custodis 2009, 111–56).

Bearbeitungen von Werken der traditionellen Kunstmusik haben, oder aber in ihren eigenen Kompositionen Werke der Kunstmusik nachahmen. Auch die Instrumentation – und dies ist das äußerliche Kennzeichen des Symphonie Rocks – wird entweder aus der Kunstmusik übernommen, die Bands treten also beispielsweise mit Orchestern auf, oder aber vornehmlich durch Tasteninstrumente […] nachempfunden. So bezieht sich das Wort Symphonic vor allem auf die Instrumentation und den durch diese hervorgerufenen Hör-Effekt".

[157] Ger. Orig. "Tatsächlich gibt es in der gesamten Rockmusik keine einzige Symphonie und auch keine Übernahme der Bearbeitung einer kompletten Symphonie".

[158] Hugh Macdonald defines the symphonic poem as "[a]n orchestral form in which a poem or programme provides a narrative or illustrative basis" (2001).

[159] Ger. Orig. "Das Entstehen von Konzeptalben spricht ebenfalls für die These, dass Progressive Rock an die Musik des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts anknüpft, die Symphonische Dichtung als Vorbild nahm und sich damit eine Möglichkeit schuf, das Korsett der Drei-Minuten-Songs verlassen".

[160] Ger. Orig. "Kennzeichen des Symphonic Metal sind der Einsatz von Keyboards, oft auch realen Chören und Streichern sowie einer solistisch agierenden Frauenstimme".

[161] Ger. Orig. "Chor und Orchester werden eher der Klangwirkung wegen eigesetzt".

[162] Ger. Orig. "Seinen Ursprung hat der Symphonic Metal zwar im Gothic Rock, Gothic Metal und Death Metal, weniger aber im Symphonic Rock oder Progressive Rock. Vielmehr spielt die in Fantasy- und teils auch in Horrorfilmen übliche Musik eine erhebliche Rolle".

A final contribution by the author that bears brief discussion is his dedicated chapter on the orchestra from his *Progressive Rock* book-length study, as it provides some useful contexts regarding the interaction between said ensemble and rock music contexts. Discussing George Martin's inclusion of orchestra sonorities as an expansion of timbres in The Beatles' music, Halbscheffel argues that "almost like wildfire, other rock musicians seized the new possibilities, through the instruments took over the terminology, then the instrumentation- and finally also the composition-techniques of art music" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 201)[163] and adds a succinct overview regarding the types of ensembles included in rock music contexts:

> "Essentially, there are actually only two types of orchestral arrangements that are important in rock music: On the one hand, a rather chamber music-like manned ensemble, often consisting exclusively of strings, and on the other, the symphonic orchestra of the First Viennese School". (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 201)[164]

This perspective helps in managing expectations as, given the author's earlier referral to The Beatles' music, a reasonable assumption can be made that either those creating the music, or those consuming it, may have had some familiarity with these two types of orchestral forces.

In addition to the two common types of arrangements, Halbscheffel offers a typology discussing the "Orchestra in the sphere of rock music" [Ger. Orig. "Orchester im Umfeld von Rockmusik"] which is useful in more cohesively describing the various interactions between orchestras of various sizes and rock music contexts (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 230–44). The author outlines several approaches to engaging with orchestral forces – be they real, or in some way synthesized – as identifiable in (and beyond) progressive music performers. These range from attempts to write pieces with a more direct connection to classical genres but with no rock music components (e.g., Paul McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio*); attempts to combine rock music and Western art music forms (e.g., Deep Purple's *Concerto for Rock Band and Orchestra*); rock bands re-arranging their pre-existing songs for performance/recording with an orchestra and/or choir (e.g., Procol Harum's *Live In Concert With The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra*); as well as adaptations of pre-existing songs but without the involvement of the original performer (e.g., Apocalyptica's *Plays Metallica by Four Cellos*). Of particular note here, however, is the category of "additional compositions to rock songs", through which the author designates tracks involving "arrangements with larger or smaller groups of musicians using traditional instruments" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 232),[165] and briefly mentions progressive metal or symphonic metal bands such as Dream Theater or Epica as contemporary examples. Halbscheffel points out that this category is by far the most widespread approach, and as my own interpretation will showcase, the majority of instances of symphonic ascription fall within such general

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[163] Ger. Orig. "Geradezu im Stile eines Lauffeuers bemächtigten sich andere Rockmusiker der neuen Möglichkeiten, übernahmen mit den Instrumenten die Terminologie, dann die Instrumentations- und schließlich auch die Kompositionstechniken der Kunstmusik".

[164] Ger. Orig. "Im Prinzip sind es eigentlich nur zwei Typen von orchestralen Zusammenstellungen, die in der Rockmusik von Bedeutung sind: Zum einen ein eher kammermusikalisch besetztes Ensemble, nicht selten ausschließlich aus Streichern bestehend, zum anderen das Symphonieorchester der Wiener Klassik".

[165] Ger. Orig. "Zahllose Musiker und Bands haben seit etwa Mitte der 1960er-Jahre auf Arrangements mit größeren oder kleineren Gruppen von Musikern mit traditionellen Instrumenten zurückgegriffen".

outlines. The same chapter also briefly discusses the notion of the "fake orchestra" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 239) by which the author is referring to various techniques in which an orchestra's inclusion as part of a song/album is, in some way, simulated. To this effect, in addition to early techniques such as George Martin's multi-track approach to generating larger ensembles out of the recording of a small number of (real) performers, the author briefly refers to several prominent progressive metal performers – Symphony X and Shadow Gallery – whose approach is summarized as "realiz[ing] their orchestral arrangements completely with the help of orchestral libraries" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 240).[166]

As the summary of these contributions has showcased, Halbscheffel's engagement with symphonic and orchestral aspects offers a substantial contextual foundation towards the examination of the combined key-term in relation to progressive metal contexts. Not only has the author's work generally confirmed the potential for both terms to be viewed as related, but it has also limited the horizon of possibilities away from the structure or reference to Western art music's symphonic tradition, yet leaving a notable opening in said terms' classical-connotative potential via the aspects of art music-derived instrumentation or arrangement.

With that in mind, there are some obvious limitations that should be pointed out. The entire *Lexikon* publication being completed exclusively by a single researcher[167] is not the most optimal situation when establishing context, an issue which is further exacerbated by the occasional (near-)complete lack of references for some articles e.g. in the discussion on symphonic metal (Halbscheffel 2013l). Furthermore, Halbscheffel has presented somewhat contradictory statements and quasi-dismissive outlook towards progressive metal[168] as well as symphonic metal,[169] which is both

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[166] Ger. Orig. "Aber auch einige Rockbands wenden diese Produktionsweise an, während andere, etwa Russian Circles ('Geneva', 2009), Symphony X ('Paradise Lost', 2008) oder Shadow Gallery ('Digital Ghosts', 2009) ihre orchestralen Arrangements komplett mit Hilfe von Orchester-Libraries realisieren".

[167] The book's bibliographical data does state that some of the topics are based on an earlier publication by Halbscheffel and Tibor Kneif from 1992 (*Sachlexikon Rockmusik* published by Reinbek), though none of the articles I discuss have been labelled as completed by someone other than Halbscheffel. Also, I am hesitant to ascribe any quality improvement based on such relation due to both the time-distance between said earlier publication and Halbscheffel's own lexicon, and the (near-)lack of references I observed in the examined articles.

[168] The author's examination of the progressive metal term (Halbscheffel 2013e) exemplifies my point quite well. Whilst I agree with Halbscheffel's criticism that progressive metal requires more rigorously derived conceptualization rather than its current perception as a term "coined without any further consideration of musical issues and is essentially based on obvious externalities such as concept albums and the distorted sound of electric guitars" (Halbscheffel 2013e, 382), the article on the genre regrettably does not offer anything more substantial than the same broad-strokes commentary that the author points out. Even more aggravatingly, Halbscheffel seemingly ignores existing academic literature that engages with specific musical characteristics (e.g. McCandless 2010; Pieslak 2007), thus further undermining the potential for the author's discussion to be of genuine benefit to further readers. [Ger. Orig. "Wie so häufig, wurde auch der Begriff Progressive Metal ohne weitere Rücksicht auf musikalische Sachverhalte geprägt und basiert im Wesentlichen auf augenfälligen Äußerlichkeiten wie Konzeptalben und dem verzerrten Klang elektrischer Gitarren"].

[169] Halbscheffel dismisses the "so-called symphonic metal" [Ger. Orig. "so-genannten Symphonic Metal"] category in his discussion of the band Epica (Halbscheffel 2013c, 152), most likely as a continuation of his argument that the term is a contemporary (and from my reading of his writing, an unnecessary) representation of what is essentially progressive rock (Halbscheffel 2013f, 384). Furthermore, he expresses an open disregard towards more complex genre formations such as symphonic power metal and symphonic black metal as "the

somewhat disconcerting as well as raises questions as to whether a more open perspective by the author may have contributed to generating more inclusive and differentiated contribution. And finally, despite the benefits from the author's two-type division of orchestral arrangements (Halbscheffel 2013d, 201), I am naturally suspicious towards the simplicity of such generalized statements, in part due to my critical perspective that there is little value in claiming that an observation can be valid for an entire field. These criticisms are by no means 'deal-breakers' in terms of utilising Halbscheffel's framing for this study, yet I believe that it is necessary to incorporate additional perspectives, in particular those emerging from the audience databases.

The PA audience-community has offered a definition of 'symphonic prog' that includes a notable perspective related to the classical signification potential of the term 'symphonic':

> "Symphonic [prog] is without doubt the sub-genre that includes the most bands in Progressive Rock because for many people it's almost synonymous [with] classic Prog, something easy to understand being that most of the classic and/or […] pioneer bands released music that could be included in this sub-genre". (Progarchives.com 2006, n.p.)

The same definition outlines the sub-genre's "main characteristic is the influence of Classical music (understood as Orchestral works created from the late Gothic to Modern Classical)", and a few sentences later addresses how different bands engage with the notion of said influence i.e. "YES and GENESIS are mainly influenced by the Baroque and Classical periods, while EMERSON LAKE & PALMER has a predilection for post Romantic and modern authors like Mussorgsky, Rimsky Korsakov, Bartok or Ginastera" (Progarchives.com 2006, n.p.). These quotations help to frame the audience definition as paralleling Halbscheffel's work on a broader scale, when referring to aspects such as the co-relation between 'symphonic' and 'orchestra', as well as notions of 'influence' from Western art music composers. However, it also highlights a broad consensus regarding the central importance of the symphonic prog category in progressive rock contexts, thus introducing implications towards the classical signification potential related to the ascription of the term 'symphonic',[170]

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differences are only apparent to the fan and are consistently marginal" (Halbscheffel 2013l, 476) which strikes me as both an overemphasis on the musical characteristics of a genre, not to mention a worrisome return to the 'ivory tower' academic disinterest in fan discourses. [Ger. Orig. "Wie beinahe zu Jedem Stil des Heavy-Metal-Rock zählen auch zu Symphonic Metal diverse Spielarten, so etwa Symphonic Black Metal, Symphonic Power Metal, Symphonic Gothic Metal und weitere mehr; die Unterschiede erschließen sich nur dem Fan und sind durchweg marginal"].

[170] Whilst the following argument positions the audience perspectives as including a more nuanced approach to the symphonic than that presented by Halbscheffel, I would be remiss not to mention that the former of the two carries some inherent ambiguities that are not to be left unaddressed. For example, the reviewer mentions that the influence of Western art music is understood as orchestral works which, whilst not incorrect, seemingly ignores some pieces that are prioritizing the solo piano e.g. the "High Level Fugue" track from The Nice's *Five Bridges Suite* (see Halbscheffel's discussions of the cycle, Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 206–11). Furthermore, the reviewer mentions the periods "late Gothic to Modern Classical" which leaves some challenges in terms of their framing e.g., it is unclear as to whether "late Gothic" refers to the Medieval period/music in some capacity. Whilst, in relation to "modern Classical" this may imply parallels in terms of progressive rock's interest in synthesisers and earlier electronic music-related compositional principles such as Musique concrete. Conversely, this may refer to film music as a form of 'modern Classical', which again, has been mentioned more explicitly by Halbscheffel as a notable influence on progressive musicians (e.g. Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 208, 219-220).

Ahlkvist's (2011) content analysis examination of reviews by the same PA-website showcases the observable process of continuously re-negotiated boundaries and understandings of progressive music. Of particular note is the author's observation regarding the authenticity-related normative capacity of the term symphonic when employed by more tradition-emphasising reviewers (Ahlkvist 2011, 655). In other words, the audience perspective suggests two possibilities for broadening the framing of the symphonic: On the one hand, it is possible that, when describing a performer (or their output) as 'symphonic', reviewers are signalling factors contributing to an adherence to the wide (and at times convoluted) variety of expectations as to what constitutes progressive music, e.g., an emphasis on keyboard instruments with less classical-specific relevance.[171] On the other, given that the variety of engagements with Western art music is considered one of several aspects commonly associated with the progressive rock genre (e.g. see Atton 2001, 30; Covach 1997; Edward Macan 1997, 3, 30–56; Sheinbaum 2002; see also Ahlkvist 2011, 641 for additional academic examples), the ascription of the term 'symphonic' may refer to a much broader selection of classical-connotative factors. From this perspective, despite the audience definition not offering a radically new perspective towards the framing of the term 'symphonic', it implies that the scope should be somewhat adjusted to a middle-ground position between, on one end, Halbscheffel's somewhat restricted framing of (orchestral) quotations or adaptations,[172] and on the other end, the overly broad potential as found in multiple classical-related aspects derived from academic investigations of canonised symphonic rock performers. In practical terms this means that Halbscheffel's perspectives can be purposefully utilised as part of the current investigation, and whilst I will focus on orchestral sonorities, my interest will not be limited to narrower symphonic rock framings in which only the reference or imitation of Western art music can be identified.

Referring back to Halbscheffel's framing of symphonic metal as quasi-unrelated to progressive rock or symphonic rock contexts, the author's perspective can be somewhat[173] contrasted to the writing of Hegarty and Halliwell who frame symphonic metal more directly as a sub-category of

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[171] To exemplify such potential as emerging from the examined album reviews, the following utterance points to the term 'symphonic' as more aligned with that of progressive music's emphasis on the keyboards as a solo instrument, rather than the classical connotative principles: "And unlike Shadow Gallery, I can't tell a true symphonic fan that they would enjoy [Redemption's *Snowfall on Judgement Day*] through & through. But if you're one that can imagine the guitar part played by synths or mellotron, you might appreciate this" (PA-Redemption-#49, 2009).

[172] Halbscheffel's symphonic rock definition does suggest a broader possibility, namely his pointing out that some "bands […] imitate works of art music in their own compositions" (Halbscheffel 2013m, 476). Whilst I doubt that the author meant imitation in the sense of a compositional approach found in canon or fugues, there is a certain lack of clarity here, namely, whether imitation is limited to the attempts by some performers in writing pieces (loosely) based around established Western art music genres (e.g., Deep Purple's *Concerto for Rock Band and Orchestra*) or the use of more classical-connotative compositional devices. Conversely, given the author's following sentences to refer to the symphonic as pertaining to the auditive effects of certain instrumentation, it is possible that imitation refers to any such auditive effect. [Ger. Orig. "Der Begriff wird auf Bands angewendet, die in ihrem Repertoire entweder Zitate aus oder Bearbeitungen von Werken der traditionellen Kunstmusik haben, oder aber in ihren eigenen Kompositionen Werke der Kunstmusik nachahmen"].

[173] As previously mentioned, Halbscheffel has presented quasi-contradictory perspectives towards symphonic metal, whereby, of relevance here is his argument that the term implies a contemporary permutation of progressive rock aesthetic (Halbscheffel 2013f, 384), which contradicts his stronger association between symphonic metal and Gothic rock/Gothic metal contexts (Halbscheffel 2013l, 476).

progressive metal based on the former's "recall[ing] the aspiration of progressive groups to incorporate classical music" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266). I am not particularly convinced by either argument towards the relation between the two genres, yet the contrast of perspectives exemplified by the authors can be identified in a variety of contexts. For example, Wagner's journalistic book frames the symphonic band Nightwish as "sometimes labelled a progressive act, but more rightly a grandiose power/gothic metal band" (J. Wagner 2010, 315); and my overview of the currents state of research on progressive metal highlighted another contrast between the genre and symphonic metal in the writings of Lambe and Sharpe-Young. A similar ambivalence can be identified in progressive metal's cumulative audience as whilst the MA website clearly outlines symphonic metal as a separate category from progressive metal (Metal-archives.com n.d.d), this is initially contrasted by PA's inclusion of multiple symphonic metal bands such as Nightwish or Epica being under the category of progressive metal. Despite this inclusion the provided biographical data for the same bands reiterates the relation to the symphonic metal genre thus marking them as quasi-separate from their designated category.[174] Similarly, despite the PA database's definition of progressive metal to suggest that the genre encompasses several sub-categories, the following clarification suggests a tension between progressive metal and the sources of some symphonic elements:

> "The symphonic and neo-classical elements (made popular by YNGWIE MALMSTEEN) also found their way through power metal with bands like RHAPSODY OF FIRE and NIGHTWISH, whose style does not qualify as being progressive for many people". (Progarchives.com 2012b)

On the one hand, the re-emergence of symphonic metal's somewhat ambivalent reception in progressive metal contexts can be considered as paralleling the aforementioned discussion by Ahlkvist in pointing out the re-definition of genre boundaries and traditionalist push-back expressed by different sub-groups of audiences. On the other hand, considering the discourse's use of the term 'symphonic metal', this presents an opportunity to examine the tension as part of an academic discussion, and thus offer an audience-derived perspective elucidating the space that can be extrapolated based on the contrast between Halbscheffel, and Hegarty and Halliwell's framings of the symphonic metal term.

In summary, despite the Halbscheffel's lack of direct co-relation between the terms symphonic and orchestral and progressive metal contexts, the author offers a solid foundation towards framing the current investigation. Specifically, the outlined contexts showcase relations between the two constitutive terms, thus allowing to frame them as classical-relevant, as well as sufficiently narrow engaging with parameters such as the (frankly overwhelming) complexity of the Western art music symphonic tradition. Furthermore, the typology of orchestra and rock interactions

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[174] For example, the mini-biography for the band Epica states that "[The band's album *Phantom Agony*] featured a real choir, authentic string orchestra and very complex songwriting compared to their peers in the genre of female fronted symphonic metal, such as Nightwish, Within Temptation or even After Forever" (Progarchives.com n.d.h). Similarly, the opening paragraph in Nightwish's biography points out that "Finland's NIGHTWISH has founded a medium where pure angelic vocal beauty combines with rugged metal guitars, and where intricate keyboard arrangements team up with driving rhythms, creating a soaring stylistic mix. 2'03's symphonic metal shining star Century Child has set the band upon a stunning adventure in crafting a unique and genre-defining sound" (Progarchives.com n.d.p).

offers a baseline-context as to the likely approaches in the interaction that some listeners may be familiar with.

Based on the preliminary examination of the reviewers' utilisation of the terms, multiple notable similarities can be identified to Halbscheffel's broad overview (e.g., relating the term to the appearance of Western art music instruments) thus by extension enabling to suggest that a connection to the classical can be broadly established. To avoid a genealogical argument that maps the transfer/reappearance of symphonic elements in progressive metal contexts, I will offer some inductively derived observations that implicitly showcase parallels between the reviewers' framing of symphonic and that of the pre-existing context. With that in mind, my examination of symphonic connections to the classical will emphasize addressing some of the gaps in the pre-existing concept.

I will offer three sections that help to flesh out the aspects that can be extrapolated in relation to the audiences' ascription of the term 'symphonic/orchestral'. The first section will outline the typical instrumentation that can be identified in tracks ascribed 'symphonic/orchestral' qualities, as well as offer music interpretative sections that illustrate how said instrumentation is incorporated into several progressive metal tracks. Doing so will help to go beyond Halbscheffel's somewhat superficial description of the incorporation of traditional instruments as "mere background that the orchestra […] provide[s]" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 232)[175] as part of his "additional compositions to rock songs" category, and moreover to consider how audiences perceive such 'simple' approaches to instrumentation/arrangement. The second section will expand on this discussion by examining a more structure-specific approach to incorporating 'symphonic/orchestral' elements, which sees them utilised at the outer portions of the track. The third and final section will examine instances where the term 'symphonic metal' appears and will focus on discussing the value placed by audiences to elements such as the music eliciting a sense of grandeur. This will provide a counter perspective to the somewhat dismissive observation by Halbscheffel regarding the symphonic component in symphonic metal as "not all that complex"[176] or that "a clear seam can be made out between metal-rock and whatever kind of 'symphonic' part of the music" (Halbscheffel 2013l, 476).[177]

7.2 Symphonic/orchestral as 'instrumentation' and 'arrangement'

The ascription of the 'symphonic/orchestral' aspects in progressive metal can be summarised as establishing a connection to the classical through several popular music-based 'symphonic' filters. These include multiple approaches/techniques associated in part with the symphonic rock sub-category of progressive rock, such as employing instruments associated with Western art music as well as how they are integrated into the arrangement. In addition, some reviewers specifically point

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[175] Ger. Orig. "Schon letztgenannte Songs zeigen, dass der Übergang zum bloßen Background, den ein Orchester bieten soll, in dieser Kategorie fließend ist".

[176] In order to avoid presenting unrealistic expectation towards the fairly compact format of a lexicon article, I am not implying that Halbscheffel's descriptions required multiple detailed analyses to convey his point. Rather, a useful extension to his broad summary would have been a referral to some shared characteristics of, symphonic metal's symphonic elements either at a purely musical level (i.e., different approaches to arrangement); or perhaps a brief discussion of the cultural significance of said elements and their overall effect on the perception of such bands.

[177] Ger. Orig. "Häufig lässt sich an der Musik einschlägiger Bands eine deutliche Naht zwischen Metal-Rock und dem wie auch immer gearteten 'sinfonischen' Teil der Musik ausmachen".

to symphonic metal characteristics that, whilst similar in execution to the former category, produce somewhat different connotations to the listeners e.g., the music signifying 'grandeur'. I will briefly discuss several aspects that help to exemplify the specific approaches, however as previously mentioned, I will try to balance between presenting my inductively derived observations with tailoring the perspectives so as to expand on the pre-existing symphonic concept.

Of the significant number of 'symphonic/orchestral' ascribing utterances, the relation between the terms and keyboard instruments (referred to often as 'synths') is by far the clearest indication as to the instrument reviewers perceive as primarily responsible for this auditive aspect. With that in mind, it is rare for a reviewer to discuss the specific sonorities generated by said keyboard instruments, and the examination of symphonic-ascribed tracks reveals several general approaches with relevance to the classical-focused investigation of this study. Despite the wording 'orchestral' to be somewhat interpretable as the incorporation of a combination of instruments, it is more common to identify a single type of instrument deployed at any time. The deployment of the instruments, broadly separates them into harmonic and single-voice categories. The harmonic category is by far the largest as it focuses predominantly on the generation of sonorities imitating synthesised upper strings performing in unison; however, other sonorities such as the organ can also be added:

> "Keyboards/piano play a more dominant role on [*Streets: A Rock Opera*] than on any Savatage release before it, but they rarely function as a lead instrument. They are rather used for atmosphere, orchestration, and harmonization". (PA-Savatage-#57, 2010)

> "Act II [of Shadow Gallery's *Tyranny*] kicks off with "I Believe" with choir intro in excellent symphonic music background, influenced with classical music". (PA-ShadowGallery-#41, 2005)[178]

The single-voice approach is much more sporadic (by which I am referring to both the selection as well as the regularity of appearance) whereby the identifiable instruments range from the use of woodwind (e.g., oboe/English horn), brass (e.g., French horn) to percussive (e.g., the xylophone) instruments. For both categories, there is a near-complete absence of a discussion whether the sonorities are produced by an actual group of performers, though where such an inquiry is raised, the reviewers are mostly positive in their evaluation and seemingly do not prioritise real players over synthesised sonorities: e.g. "If not real orchestra, synths [in Redemption's *Snowfall in Judgement Day*] provides [sic] sound faithful enough to resemble one" (PA-Redemption-#55, 2009).

The utilisation of the piano serves as a quasi-outlier here both as it exists at the border between the aforementioned two approaches (i.e., between purely 'harmonic' and 'single-voice' approach), but also due to its contributing to the 'symphonic/orchestral' framing in progressive metal contexts despite not being a typical part of Western art music's larger orchestral ensembles:

> "Songs [in Savatage's *Edge of Thorns* album] feature glimmers of symphonic nuance here and there (such as in piano interludes, and instrumentals) but largely feel stripped down, simplified, rockin', and very effective". (PA-Savatage-#90, 2009)

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[178] To avoid misinterpretation, the reviewers' reference of a 'choir' does not imply that such a sonority is generated via keyboard instruments, though as I will discuss later on, that is not outside the realm of interpretative possibility.

"[Threshold's track] Under The Sun is a pleasant Symphonic ballad based on piano, acoustic guitar and some flute-like keyboards and as such stands out from the other songs". (PA-Threshold-#26, 2009)

"The keyboards [in Threshold's *Extinct Instinct*] are largely organ and symphonic synthesisers in the background with some piano parts and occasionally some synthesiser solos". (PA-Threshold-#41, 2009)

The application of these instrumental sonorities follows two broad tendencies, namely harmonic strings' group sonority predominantly has a supportive role and is used as adding depth to the sound palette of a track, whilst the individual instruments most commonly serve as providing short (counter-)melodies at specific points of a track. Two tracks that showcase these tendencies (as well as highlight some notable variations) are Threshold's "Round and Round" from the album *Critical Mass* (2002) and Redemption's "Let it Rain" from their album *This Mortal Coil* (2011).[179]

Threshold's track "Round and Round" appears as the sixth track in the band's *Critical Mass* album with a length just under five and a half minutes. The song's instrumentation is based primarily on a typical metal-band ensemble with an emphasis on overdriven guitars, bass and drums, though it also features a substantial 'symphonic/orchestral' portion. The track opens with a restrained reverb-based guitar intro, with the first appearance of a symphonic instrument takes place at [00:31] during the main riff of the song through the appearance of a 'large' ensemble of upper-strings performing a series of sustained chords based on the pitches (E–E–D#–F#–E). At [00:45], the track returns to the calmer feel of the intro, and introduces the vocals; the strings have now mostly subsided, however at [00:53] they can be faintly detected towards the back of the arrangement. Shortly after, during the repetition of the song's verse [01:00], a counter-melody appears that can be described as a variation on the aforementioned strings-sustained chords (E–D#–E [pause] –E [pause] –D#), performed through an English horn-resembling instrument, whilst the strings can faintly be discerned towards the back of the arrangement shortly after at [01:07]. Of note here is that, despite its simplicity, the counter-melody in the English horn incorporates a subtle contrapuntal technique, whereby its initial movement downwards from E to D# appears during the main vocal line's ascending line (C#–D#–E). Beyond several instances of the aforementioned aspects reappear – e.g., the string-ensemble upper-mix effect on [00:31] returns at [03:30], and the English horn line from [01:00] is repeated at [04:13] – the only new notable symphonic-relevant aspect can be found at [04:00 – 04:28] which showcases the strings' group sonority utilised with a more mobile and quasi-independent melodic-line that, in turn, serves as an example of the occasional flexibility in employing these predominantly harmonic instruments.

In contrast, the employment of classical-connotative sonorities in Redemption's nearly seven-and-a-half-minute track "Let it Rain" utilises almost no single-voice instruments as part of its

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[179] In relation to the justification for selecting these tracks: whilst Redemption's track was clearly identified by a reviewer as incorporating "orchestrations" (MA-Redemption-#10, 2012), Threshold's track is referred to more indirectly as "sum[ming] up the album perfectly as there are so many different musical elements of hard rock, pop, prog metal, symphonic prog etc, but none of those elements overpower each other" (MA-Threshold-#15, 2016).

arrangement, and adapts the group-sonority of the strings in a more mobile, quasi-melodic role. The track begins with a short introduction based on a series of chords (Bb–A–D–C–A–Bb–A–G, repeated twice) performed on the synthesised strings [00:00 – 00:32]. It is noticeable that unlike Threshold's approach, Redemption's use of the lower keyboard register (lower end of the third octave) creates a fuller tone which may be interpreted as simulating a more varied group of string instruments, namely cellos in addition to the violins. Following an opening showcasing the track's main riff, [01:00] employs a more 'synthetic' sounding string sonority that provides much less mobile chordal support. Whilst at [01:16] a brief counter-melody can be heard, based on the third variation of the Bb-dominant seventh chord on what can be described as a French-horn reminiscent sonority. The band's chorus appearing at [02:20] showcases an additional potentially 'symphonic' element, namely the 'choir'-like vocalisations[180] which 'peek' between the electric guitar's amplified riffs. It is noticeable that the second appearance of the chorus [03:42] features a brief extension of this idea by introducing an organ sonority.

Despite both the strings and the 'choir' sonorities to have a primarily supportive function, their more substantial role in providing the accompaniment towards the latter half of the track creates the impression of increased mobility: in the section [04:32 – 04:57] the strings' accompaniment follows the general contour of the riff yet deviates slightly when adding small extensions to the main melody; the harmonic accompaniment provided by the 'choir' at [05:24] does not feature similar deviations, yet by following the bass line, the impression of mobility is strengthened. A final aspect of the track worth noting is the increased importance of the traditional piano sonority which is utilised both as providing a brief quasi-virtuosic rising piano passage at [05:49 – 05:52], as well as a longer transitional passage [05:11 – 05:23] which, whilst not as virtuosic, employs the piano with a fairly 'traditional' harmonic left hand and a more mobile (mostly) single-line right-hand delivery.

Beyond the illustrative capacity regarding the utilisation of common symphonic sonorities in progressive metal contexts, these brief examinations enable to develop a certain counterpoint to Halbscheffel's framing of orchestral instruments serving only as a 'background'. On the one hand, my interpretation has showcased that in some instances symphonic instruments have a more substantial role, whether in providing small counter-melodies, introductions and small quasi-soloistic passages based on their individual sonorities, or simply being utilised as the primary accompaniment for a section. On the other hand, even if one is to disregard these interpretation-based observations regarding subtle changes, there is a notable portion of the reviewers that present the utilisation of

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[180] I refer to this aspect as 'potential' as it serves as an example of the previously mentioned 'wire-crossing' challenge when it comes to the interpretation of what specific key-terms signify. On the one hand, this effect is produced via a keyboard instrument, thus enabling the possibility of a potential relation to a 'symphonic' interpretation based on how other synthesized 'symphonic' instruments are interpreted. On the other hand, 'choirs' are framed by multiple authors as an aspect of symphonic metal aesthetic and appear in the currently discussed track without the 'grandeur' component I will outline later on in this chapter. Thus, given the lack of an utterance specifically ascribing a 'symphonic metal'-type component to the band, the acceptance of 'choirs' as a 'symphonic/orchestral'-relevant becomes less likely. Though to avoid assuming that aspects are 'perfectly' divided into a categorical system, or to account for the potential of a 'cultural osmosis' from symphonic metal to have taken place, I do not entirely discount the possibility for 'choirs' to be a valid 'symphonic/orchestral' component.

symphonic keyboards as central to their perception of the tracks. These range from reviewers praising the 'atmosphere' that such sonorities provide for a specific track (PA-Threshold-#181, 2012; PA-Savatage-#80, 2004); as adding 'nuances' (PA-Savatage-#90, 2009; PA-ShadowGallery-#41, 2005); or contributing a specific texture to the sound (PA-Savatage-#118, 2011). Such utterances culminate in views that either directly refer to the keyboards as 'embellishing' (PA-ShadowGallery-#148, 2009), or 'enriching' a track (PA-Threshold-#102, 2005).

Of note here are some instances in which reviewers describe the symphonic keyboards as much more prominent, whether in relation to a specific track or even extended to the scope of an entire record. However upon closer examination they reveal no significant differences to that of the aforementioned analyses: e.g. "[Threshold's] 'Safe To Fly' is driven by symphonic keys and power chords" (PA-Threshold-#172, 2012); or "Only the symphonic and atmospheric elements [in *Subsurface*] are emphasised more into the sound. Especially the sound of the keyboards are more to the fore" (PA-Threshold-#140, 2006). Overall, this enables to suggest that despite its 'background' implementation, the usage of symphonic instruments is still perceived as substantial thus suggesting that the implementation of such orchestrations is more differentiated than some contexts suggest.[181]

As a quick aside, the examined material reveals another notable deviation from Halbscheffel's symphonic concept. Whilst the author is correct in discussing the individual term 'symphonic' as engaging with the arrangement of the piece, there appears to be very limited continuity between symphonic prog's supposed emphasis on mimicking/adapting established pieces of Western art music and progressive metal contexts. Out of this study's corpus, Savatage is the only band explicitly engaging with the adaptation of pre-existing Western art music pieces[182] – specifically "Mozart and Madness" from their *Dead Winter Dead* (1995) album and "Prelude to Madness" from the *Hall of the Mountain King* (1987b) record – however, the symphonic ascription for these pieces remains contradictory at best. For the former, several reviewers have discussed the band's choice for orchestrating a piece by Mozart (MA-Savatage-#75, 2004; PA-Savatage-#113, 2006), yet the term 'symphonic' is not applied. As for the latter, despite including several instances in which the term 'symphonic' is applied (PA-Savatage-#30, 2005; MA-Savatage-#27, 2009), some of the reviewers' 'symphonic' evaluations of the song either do not appear to stem from the symphonic prog contexts, or conversely do not consider the album as a whole to be progressive:

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[181] An additional parallel can be seen in the following utterance regarding Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* album which, whilst arguably based on criticising the overuse of the keyboards, highlights that listeners' expectations of what constitutes substantial symphonic elements are rather varied: "Gutter Ballet was symphonic enough in its extent without irreverently abusing the keyboard as an instrument, but almost every latter day [sic] album falls guilty of it" (MA-Savatage-#84, 2012). It goes without saying that this is a highly subjective statement, however it still supports the notion that a more prominent symphonic element implementation is not automatically perceived as an improvement.

[182] A different perspective quasi-supporting this argument is a reviewer describing Threshold's track "The Hours" from their 2012 album *March of Progress* (see Threshold 2012) as incorporating "classical symphonics" (PA-Threshold-#191, 2014), yet the track neither transforms nor quotes Western art music pieces. Rather the track is seemingly based on a chordal progression reminiscent of Romantic piano compositions by Chopin, which becomes explicit at the [06:43] mark through a small piano-centric segment with classical-interpretative combination between repeated chords in the left hands and a somewhat ornamented melody in the right.

> "This prelude [the track "Prelude to Madness"] lasting about three minutes is the first song recorded with symphonic and classical tunes". (MA-Savatage-#24, 2011)
>
> "The main composition [from *Hall of the Mountain King*], the title track no less, is based on Edvard Grieg's piece of the same name from the Peer Gynt symphony [.] The name of the title track really says everything about this album. It is a heavy, massive piece of music throughout. It is one of only five power metal albums worth having. But it is not prog rock". (PA-Savatage-#40, 2009)

As such, I am inclined to argue that, even though Halbscheffel's description of earlier symphonic rock performers as arranging pre-established Western art music pieces to remain valid, based on these observations such co-relation becomes somewhat less tangible in relation to progressive metal performers. It is also possible that this de-association stems in part from performers such as Yngwie Malmsteen, whose engagement with Western art music is closely associated with that of emulating pieces by Bach, thus leading to a stronger association to the neo-classical metal genre aesthetic. As such, given that said performer is considered as on the fringes of the progressive music spectrum, it may be that reviewers are attempting to position less referential-based approaches closer to progressive music's aesthetic.

7.3 Symphonic 'bookending' in progressive metal

The examinations up to this point have focused on tracks that fall into Halbscheffel's category of 'additional compositions to rock songs', however in several instances identified as 'symphonic/orchestral' in the discourse, a track's engagement with such elements can be described as 'in between' the aforementioned category and that of the author's notion of emulating Western art music without arranging/quoting a pre-existing piece. Specifically, the integration of symphonic elements in some tracks can be described as a quasi-'bookending', whereby a section appearing at the extremes of the track (i.e., opening or conclusion) is based almost exclusively on such instrumentation/arrangements, which contrasts the more limited (or the complete absence) of symphonic elements appearing in the remainder of the track. The reason I refer to such examples as 'in between' Halbscheffel's categories is that at times the distinction between a track's sub-section and a separate track is rather blurred, such as in Atmosfear's "Spiral of Pain", the concluding track from their second record *Zenith* (Atmosfear 2009).[183]

Atmosfear's track sports a length of just under thirty minutes and is listed on the back cover of the record as a 'suite-like' piece containing four sub-sections titled "Fall", "Joseph's Theme", "Elisa's Theme" and "Fatal Reunion". My interest lies in discussing the final symphonic-only portion of the track [24:25 – 29:47], however before engaging with a close reading, I want to briefly outline a certain difficulty in determining the track's 'intentions'. On the one hand, viewing "Spiral of Pain" as a whole,

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[183] Another track that broadly matches the symphonic 'bookending' principle is Shadow Gallery's "First Light" from the album *Legacy* (see Shadow Gallery 2001), which utilises a brief symphonic/orchestral introduction as well as a 'hidden' orchestral conclusion after some silence, whilst the remainder of the track utilises such sonorities more sparingly and in specific sections. Furthermore, one reviewer of Shadow Gallery's track suggests that the aforementioned 'hidden' orchestral conclusion consists of "boring and pointless pseudo-classical noodling" (PA-ShadowGallery-#76, 2006) which, whilst not indicative of the entire discourse surrounding the album, helps to support the association with the classical.

the track is recorded almost as a continuous piece with little in terms of observable transitions from one sub-section to another, with the exception of the aforementioned 'symphonic/orchestral'-only portion which appears after roughly a minute of silence. When taken together with the lack of thematic continuity – i.e., the 'symphonic/orchestral' section seemingly handles no material appearing in the main 'body' of "Spiral of Pain" – it is possible to suggest that the examined portion of the track represents a quasi-'hidden' track. On the other hand, just before the conclusion of the main body of "Spiral of Pain", the brief appearance of instruments such as piano and (lower) string sonority [23:04 – 23:32] hints at the 'symphonic/orchestral' instrumentation that follows after the minute of silence (i.e., flute, lower and upper strings and gong as representing the percussions). Regardless whether the track is viewed as a sub-section or a 'hidden track', I view this 'track' as independent based on its melodic basis and, moreover, the track is one of the few instances in which the entire arrangement consists exclusively of 'symphonic/orchestral' instruments (barring the vocalist's delivery).

The 'symphonic/orchestral'-only segment in "Spiral of Pain" begins with a combination of piano and a solo flute [24:25], followed shortly after [24:30] by the subtle introduction of the string section providing the accompaniment. The vocals enter with the first phrase of the opening verse at [24:49], supported by held notes in the strings and a chordal accompaniment in the piano. As the verse progresses, the piano and upper strings provide subtle melodic movement that complements not only the vocals but also each other. As the melody of the vocals move upwards and increases in dramatic tension, the strings and piano become more active in their melodic content, and begin moving more consistently to match the vocals in terms of intensity.

At the appearance of the second phrase of the opening verse [25:12], a deep gong sound is heard, the reverberations of which transition into a now more clearly separated lower- and upper-strings. The former providing the harmonic foundation of the piece due to their increased volume whilst simultaneously the upper strings and the grand piano provide a more mobile melodic content in the upper registers. The next notable developments take place at [25:46], where the repetition of the second phrase of the verse now features a faintly audible arpeggiated movement in the upper strings. A few moments later [26:13], a French-horn reminiscent sonority can be heard preceded by a downwards triadic movement of the lower strings whereby the French-horn re-appears in the next thirty seconds adding singular tones. Brass instruments appear once more at [26:36] where a trombone-like sound can be heard taking over the aforementioned singular entries by the French-horn.

At [27:12], after two repetitions of a verse and chorus sections, a brief instrumental-only transition appears which features the upper strings carrying a simplified version of the chorus' melodic content. Shortly after, at [27:20] the French-horn introduces a small three tone motif (A–Bb–D), which is quasi-responded to a few seconds later [27:27], by multiple instruments including new woodwind additions: first the flute concludes its short melodic motif with three descending tones (G–F–E), which are repeated immediately after by the strings, and finally by an oboe that slightly alters the pitches (C#–Bb–A).

With the conclusion of the purely instrumental section, [27:33] sees the return to the verse where vocals are now accompanied by the piano with a solo flute counter-melody, whilst the lower strings harmonically supporting the section. The upper strings are focused on adding pizzicato pitches from [27:45 – 27:58], before returning to a legato melodic support. As the final section progresses the flute moves in and out of prominence (e.g. [28:08] sees a quieter singular melodic line), and the transition towards the chorus at [28:19] is once again supported by percussions, namely a broad gong strike accented at the end via a singular quiet bass-drum strike, which re-appears (alternating with a double bass-drum strike) at the end of each half-phrase. Simultaneously at [28:32] the flute and oboe/English-horn introduce another component, emphasising a short upwards moving syncopated melodic line (Bb–C–D–E) that draws from the pitches of the main vocal line. At [28:43] the trombones single pitches re-appear, followed shortly by the flute subtly mimicking the main melodic line at [28:46].

Despite the increase in instrumental density, the intensity of the track remains relatively similar to earlier appearances of the verse. However, the transition to the final appearances of the chorus is slightly adapted so as to increase the intensity of the arrangement. In contrast to the chorus' consistently applied two-part principle of 'full-ensemble' instrumental swells supporting the lyrics "Deaf, dumb and blind" followed by a sudden drop to a voice, and upper-register piano providing single-tone support at the second half of this phrase ("Still nothing am I"), the final appearances of the chorus are much more direct. [29:06] is marked by more intense bass-tones of the lower strings, whereby the final iterations of the chorus [29:06] and [29:18] seemingly emphasise the lower-end of the string 'ensemble' providing a much 'boomier' and quasi-dramatic arrangement, whilst simultaneously brief cymbal rolls are employed for the appearance of the chorus' first phrase. Similarly, the intensity of the second phrase is increased by lacking the sudden change in texture at [29:12], thus making said texture change appearing even more sudden when accompanied by a brief cymbal roll at [29:24]. Shortly after [29:28] a final swell in the lower-strings, followed by a cymbal roll and large-drum and gong strike at [29:33] marks the final chords in the strings and piano, with the latter (or potentially a harp-like sonority) adding a few quick tones at [29:41]. Whilst it is possible that the desired effect was to leave this final full-ensemble sonority to 'reverberate' as in some orchestral performances, the effect is somewhat undermined by a studio fade-out, followed by a few seconds of silence.

As Illustrated in this interpretation, the concluding section of the track "Spiral of Pain" showcases the possibilities for progressive metal performers to generate pieces based almost entirely on classical-interpretative instrumentation. Whilst I would characterise the employed arrangements as generally mimicking common (if not stereotypical) usage in Western art music – namely the predominantly supportive role of the group violin sonorities, the use of individual woodwinds or brass for their characteristic timbre, or percussions' intensity-increasing application – there is almost no parallels to the classical on structural level i.e., the 'song' still follows a verse-chorus alternating principle. It goes without saying that tracks employing such an approach do not aim to match or replicate 1970s symphonic rock's efforts in combining Western art music and rock idioms – or for that

matter similar contemporary approaches such as by Steve Vai (see Custodis 2016b; also Custodis 2016a) – but rather seemingly prioritise the affective capacity of the instruments and arrangements.

Before transitioning to the next section, I want to briefly reintroduce the notion of genre-transgression as similar practices of including an orchestral composition/re-arrangement as a quasi-hidden track can be identified in the output of pop music performers e.g., Matchbox Twenty's "You Won't Be Mine" from *Mad Season* (2000). However, I would argue that neither this parallel nor the broad implications of the arrangements' simpler underpinning should be seen as a reason for negatively assessing progressive metal bands' engagement with symphonic elements. Instead, an alternative perspective may be offered. Custodis' examination of how Christian Kolonovits approached re-arranging the music of Scorpions during the band's collaboration with the Berlin Philharmonic includes a suggestion that the latter's arrangement took into account the potential audience as his approach drew from "the period between Handel, Bach, Haydn and Mozart with which begins the well-known concert repertoire for a large part of the audience, and prior to the detailed compositional treatment of chromatics and independent dissonances" (Custodis 2009, 97).[184] This not only enables to identify fairly contemporary instances of Western art music-related arrangement as a suitable context for progressive metal's approach, but rather than framing the genre's approaches as 'regrettable omissions' of complexity, it allows to frame them as a further step in normalising such practices to wider audiences, and possibly with the prospect that more dissonant or chromatic elements can be introduced and further normalised by these or other performers down the line.

7.4 Progressive metal and symphonic metal – identical twins or musical cousins?

Whilst the preceding interpretations framed the rather subtle implementation of symphonic elements by progressive metal performers as representative of the genre's de-emphasis on 'symphonic/orchestral' complexity, another way of discussing this principle is as one of the characteristics differentiating the aforementioned genre from the symphonic metal genre. To that effect, an unavoidable challenge during the discourse analytical process is the consideration as to whether the writer of an album review is specifically referring to 'symphonic metal', or to the appearance of 'symphonic' (i.e., broadly progressive music-related) aspects in a metal setting e.g., "[Shadow Gallery] have taken progressive/symphonic rock/metal & flown to the stratosphere" (PA-ShadowGallery-#145, 2009). These examples notwithstanding, there are multiple instances in which the ascription of 'symphonic metal' characteristics is clearly identifiable. Case in point, a noticeable pattern regarding the application of the term 'symphonic metal' to the output of progressive metal performers is the use of a series of related terms addressing a specific sound quality, namely the music's 'epic'-ness, 'grandeur', or as 'majestic' sounding:

"There is no complaint that I have about [Crimson Glory's eponymous first album]. There are no instances where the music gets the least bit hollow. I used to feel like it could have used

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[184] Ger. Orig. "Da Kolonovits der harmonische Spielraum durch den Stil der Scorpions vorgegeben war, reicht diese Ebene der Arrangements historisch weit zurück, vielleicht lokalisierbar in der Zeit zwischen Händel, Bach, Haydn und Mozart, mit der für einen großen Teil des Publikums das bekannte Konzertrepertoire erst beginnt und der die ausführliche kompositorische Behandlung von Chromatik und sich verselbstständigenden Dissonanzen noch bevorstand".

more symphonic elements, but this isn't about battle and war-feeling. This is as epic as it gets for progressive metal, especially complementing the mythological lyricism prominent throughout the music". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#5, 2016)

"[Savatage] is already able to vary with its symphonic influences. [*Gutter Ballet'*s tracks] 'Hounds' and 'The unholy' sounds [sic] very dark and atmospheric and have something truly majestic in their sound". (MA-Savatage-#34, 2011)

"The tunes [in Star One's *Space Metal*] are actually a bit more straightforward than the Ayreon ones, and since the individual song emphasis is not on establishing part of a grander concept, this may be a bit more accessible to those that usually are not too keen on Lucassen's rock operas. But it's still symphonic metal, so if you can't dig that subgenre, you won't be climbing aboard". (MA-StarOne-#1, 2008)

"[Savatage's *The Wake of Magellan*] album is the other side of 'Dead Winter Dead'. DWD was a very dramatic album, and it supossed [sic] an introduction of an evident symphonic increasing in the band, thing wich [sic] supposed the born of the Savatage's side project Trans-Siberian Orchestra. 'The Wake of Magellan' maintains these symphonic elements, but with an obvious change of mood. Here the music is more epic and less dramatic, agreed with the history of the album". (PA-Savatage-#125, 2006)

Despite addressing somewhat different aspects of what constitutes 'epic'-ness, the significance of these ascriptions stems from the possibility to conceptualise them as representing parallels to multiple recent scholarly discussions on symphonic metal. The third reviewer's (MA-StarOne-#1, 2008) framing of symphonic metal characteristics as "establishing […] a grander concept" echoes Hegarty and Halliwell's notion of "metal of the symphonic variety" as "develop[ing] a stronger narrative feel, both in its lyrics and its musical development" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266).[185] Similarly, the first reviewer's (MA-CrimsonGlory-#5, 2016) association between symphonic metal and "battle and war-feeling" echoes Simon Maria Hassemer's (2012 [2011]) ascription of "a tendency towards conceptual music" in symphonic metal in which "epic-fantastic themes are processes and, in this way, [also] motifs and figures from medieval literature and history" (Hassemer 2012 [2011], 256).[186] Indeed, some academic work position symphonic metal as focused on the 'epic' implications of the genre's musical output, such as the case for Jason Julliot's framing of the symphonic metal who argues that in symphonic metal "the orchestra is generally used in order to make the music epic, as if to further the cult of power theorized by [Robert] Walser" (Julliot 2018, n.p.),[187] itself facilitated by the genre drawing from the epic connotations of Hollywood symphonic film music.

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[185] Peter Grant (2017) offers a similar perspective discussing the track "Remembrance Day" by the NWOBHM band Demon as "a track of epic proportions, and one of the first symphonic metal songs" (P. Grant 2017, 60) though given that the latter part of this description is somewhat unsubstantiated, this example should be seen as representative of a broader perception relating progressive metal and 'epic'-ness.

[186] Ger. Orig. "Häufig ist bei Symphonic-Metal-Bands eine Tendenz zur konzeptionellen Musik erkennbar. Dabei werden insbesondere episch-fantastische Thematiken verarbeitet und über diesen Weg auch Motive und Figuren mittelalterlicher Literatur und Geschichte".

[187] Fr. Orig. "Dans le metal symphonique, l'orchestre est généralement utilisé afin de rendre la musique épique, comme pour aller toujours plus loin dans le culte de la puissance théorisé par Walser".

What can be derived from these parallels is that reviewers' perspectives deviate from some current scholarly arguments that suggest that progressive metal and symphonic metal are more or less identical phenomena (e.g., Hegarty and Halliwell) or that terms such as 'symphonic metal' represent an unnecessary re-naming of progressive rock (e.g., as per Halbscheffel's position). Instead, in addition to my earlier outline of progressive music's contradictory engagement with symphonic metal artists, I am inclined to argue that these, and other perspectives presented by the reviewers, more closely match Julliot's discussion of symphonic metal. The author's argument carries two notable points that I believe are reflected in the reviewers' ascription of the term symphonic metal. First, discussing the masculinist-centric authenticity that permeates much of metal culture, Julliot points out that both the lyrical style of singing and the visibility of women during performances causes friction to more traditionalist members of the culture as a whole:[188]

> "This new exhibiting of women on stage from the second half of the 1990s thus upsets the mores of a paradoxical culture in which transgression is the only instruction but where macho conservatism is strong. Even if it would be abusive to reduce the rejection of symphonic metal to a sexist reflex, the presence of women on stage is certainly problematic for some amateurs. This rejection seems more pronounced when the singer takes the posture of a diva: icon of femininity, the symphonic metal vocalist embodies the figure of the romantic singer – or at least that commonly accepted in the collective imagination –, as much through her lyrical voice, as by her outfits (long gothic dresses) and the relatively distant attitude towards the public". (Julliot 2018, n.p.)[189]

Whilst I did not identify direct disparagement found in reviewers' discussion of symphonic metal aspects, or of female members, I want to briefly return to my outlining of the conflicting reception of symphonic metal bands in progressive metal contexts such as the PA database. Specifically, some of the performers 'marked' for their symphonic metal origin included women, though following Julliot, to avoid essentialising the tension between symphonic and progressive metal, I would suggest that female participation will have likely had a part in the development of the tension.

To illustrate my point, I will draw from instances in which reviewers display a certain resilience to symphonic (metal) aspects. The utterances below help to present this principle in relation to Savatage, a band that is not listed as having female members, whereby whilst some reviewers position

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[188] To be clear, Julliot is not the only scholar to make such argumentation e.g., see Berkers and Schaap 2018 for a large-scale study on issues of female participation in metal culture.

[189] Fr. Orig. "Cette nouvelle exposition des femmes sur scène à partir de la seconde moitié des années 1990 bouleverse ainsi les mœurs d'une culture paradoxale dans laquelle la transgression est la seule consigne mais où le conservatisme machiste est fort. Même s'il serait abusif de réduire le rejet du metal symphonique à un réflexe sexiste, la présede femmes sur scène est certainement problématique pour une partie des amateurs. Ce rejet semble davantge prononcé lorsque la chanteuse prend la posture d'une diva: icône de la féminité, la vocaliste de metal symphonique incarne la figure de la cantatrice romantique – ou du moins celle communément admise dans l'imaginaire collectif –, aussi bien par sa voix lyrique, que par ses tenues (longues robes gothiques) et son attitude relativement distante vis-à-vis du public. Cette posture de la diva est fréquemment mise en avant dans l'imagerie des groupes (pochettes d'albums, visuels promotionnels, etc.), profitant à cette occasion d'un phénomène d'hyper sexualisation".

the band as a precursor to canonized symphonic metal performers (see first utterance below), contrary perspectives are developed based on (more or less) the same groups as representing a contrast to that of Savatage's approach (see second utterance below):

> "A long time before bands such as Therion or Apocalyptica made their groundbreaking symphonic or opera metal masterpieces, a long time before symphonic gothic metal bands such as Nightwish got into mainstream, a long time before bands such as Metallica would try to collaborate with big orchestras and a long time before epic metal all star [sic] bands such as Aina, Ayreon or Avantasia made their appearances, there was a young American band that decided to get away from their power and thrash metal roots and chose the hard path to follow instead of recreating an album in the key of their infamous "Hall of the Mountain King" record that got amazing critics and is considered nowadays as a cult album. The mentioned bands are all something like the intellectual babies of Savatage in one way or the other". (MA-Savatage-#34, 2011)

> "Gutter Ballet is also probably the beginning (with the exception of "Prelude to Madness", the awesome instrumental track included in HOTMK) of what we could call Savatage sound. Yes, a band with a unique sound. Savatage sounds like Savatage. Different from what has done before or since, because in fact how can we define the sound and style of Gutter Ballet? Is it US Power Metal? No it isn't. Is it Progressive Metal? Well, maybe. Is it symphonic metal? Don't think so, at least not the symphonic metal that would later on be popularized by bands like Therion, Nightwish and many other acts". (MA-Savatage-#35, 2010)

Despite the somewhat contradictory framings regarding how Savatage relates to symphonic metal, I would argue that both utterances share a rather normative underpinning that touches on canonisation and authenticity and, to some degree, include gender-normative perspectives commonly found in metal discourse. Savatage is framed as an 'authentic' metal performer that emerges from their 'power and thrash metal roots' and is praised for their uniqueness and individuality. This is contrasted with the subtle de-authenticating terms employed for the symphonic metal performers such as framing the female lead-singer including-band Nightwish as a 'mainstream' band which 'popularised' a different symphonic approach; as well as by referring to Nightwish as a symphonic *gothic* metal band, the latter genre of which is at times marked by its female-ness and thus gender-inauthenticity. At the extreme end of this reading, it is possible to argue that the referral to Nightwish's popularity serves as means of undermining said performer's central role in symphonic metal's own canon. Similarly, bands such as Ayreon are referred to as 'all star' which potentially includes a devaluing subtext due to implying parallels to commercial supergroups, as well as being an 'intellectual bab[y]' of Savatage, which implies an element of lack of originality on behalf of such later-emerging artists. As mentioned, gender is not explicitly the issue here, though I would argue that it is no flight of fancy to consider parallels between the gender-based negativity mentioned by Julliot and that of the co-relation between mainstream-connotations and female-led/female-participating performers

such as Nightwish or Therion.[190] These perspectives may not be widespread, though they showcase that, in some cases, the reviewers' acceptance of symphonic metal aspects aims to reframe performers they deem important.

The second aspect in Julliot's work I want to refer to is his discussion of symphonic metal not as a genre, but rather as a style.[191] An important point made by the author is that, based on a survey of over 200 musicians, "nearly 16% of those who ascribe legitimacy to the expression symphonic metal consider it as a simple indication of strength, which can be applied to any sub-genre of heavy metal" (Julliot 2018, n.p.).[192] Indeed, such perspectives are seemingly paralleled in progressive metal contexts, as exemplified by the following utterances, which frame the term 'symphonic' as either an 'additive' to that of progressive metal, or as an approach that is part of a complex mix in the latter band's progressive metal approach:

> "I can't say anything else but: Buy this CD [Threshold's *Clone*] if you're into Symphonic Progressive Metal, and I assure you that you will enjoy it. Threshold is Prog Metal at its best, and with this release I think they deserves the same attention as Dream Theater". (PA-Threshold-#49, 2004)

> "One of the other interesting things [in Shadow Gallery's *Carved in Stone*] is the big pile of styles thrown in the mix with the amazing tight musicianship these guys show. We have classical heavy metal, symphonic metal, progressive rock, jazz fusion and virtuoso shredding metal. As such, you cannot compare them to any particular band. Nevertheless, remarkable resemblance to the epic-lengthy progressive passages from Dream Theater and Symphony X can be found. This album in particular is quite amazing in every single sense". (MA-ShadowGallery-#5, 2010)

Whilst I do not exclude the possibility that the first of the two reviewers employ 'symphonic' in its traditionalist progressive meaning, an equally as valid interpretation is to suggest that it refers to the term in its 'symphonic metal' capacity. As such, these utterances create the impression that one way through which symphonic metal aspects are positively received in progressive metal contexts is via the former's stylistic aspects merging with the latter. To exemplify this possibility, I will refer to two quotations that suggest that Shadow Gallery's track "I Believe" from the band's album *Tyranny* (1998c) incorporates symphonic metal elements. I will argue that the track represents a combination between symphonic metal's aforementioned 'epic' sound, as well as the subtler 'symphonic' integration as well

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[190] I might even go as far to suggest that the connection goes much further than simply metal culture's masculinist tendencies and reflects the (sadly still persisting) idea of women as 'belonging' to pop genres, with rock or metal being more male domains.

[191] Julliot does not adopt a contrasting terminology here (i.e., style vs. genre), but rather attempts to limit his examination to one aspect, namely the stylistic features, and admits that in a relatively succinct article there is likely too little space to consider the network of economic, social, geographical factors contributing to the understanding of a genre (Julliot 2018, n.p.).

[192] Fr. Orig. "Toutefois, cette conception du metal symphonique en tant que simple étiquette mérite d'être considérée, tant elle est répandue parmi les musiciens et les amateurs: une enquête menée auprès de plus de deux-cents musiciens démontre que près de 16 % de ceux qui accordent une légitimité à l'expression metal symphonique la considèrent comme une simple indication d'effectif, pouvant s'appliquer à n'importe quel sous-genre de heavy metal".

as the 'bookend' principles discussed in relation to progressive metal's engagement with 'symphonic/progressive' aspects. Based on the quotations below of Shadow Gallery's track, I would argue that the reviewers are referring to the opening segment of "I Believe" [00:00 – 01:29] which serves as an introduction based on a series of symphonic-interpretable instruments/arrangements, and this segment will be the focus of my interpretation.

> "The 2nd part of [Shadow Gallery's *Tyranny*] begins with a big symphonic metal blast... "I Beli[e]ve" has everything that a perfect Song should have!" (PA-ShadowGallery-#47, 2005)

> "Act II [of Shadow Galley's *Tyranny*] kicks off with "I Believe" with choir intro in excellent symphonic music background influenced with classical music". (PA-ShadowGallery-#41, 2005)

The track opens with a low-pitched drone, which indeed 'blasts' at [00:05] with an accentuated entry consisting of the full metal band ensemble (guitar, bass, drums, vocals) utilising a power-chord at the first beat of every 4/4 bar and the effect is further accentuated by the drum and cymbals single strikes. In terms of 'symphonic/orchestral' sonorities, at first, the synthesised violins can be heard though with every next bar seemingly more instruments are brought in – first brass [00:11] and later woodwinds [00:15], though these instruments remain somewhat subdued. The vocals are delivered as a group sonority which follow a simple melodic line in unison, with some vocal 'sections' splitting at [00:19].

At [00:23], the vocals begin to diversify with the establishment of a main 'tenor' sonority and a larger group sonority, whereby their interaction has a quasi-antiphonal character e.g. [00:27]. Simultaneously, at [00:24] a trumpet-reminiscent sonority introduces an arpeggiated downwards moving fanfare-like motifs, which quickly dissipates in the increased complexity of the vocals, only for a rising sixteenth note arpeggiated motif in the violins to emerge at [00:29 – 00:31] which 'culminates' in several high pitches (C#6). The lower-end of the arrangement, represented via the bass-guitar line and the bass-drum, is used here to provide a counter melody (C#–B–A–G#) based around quarter notes, thus creating not only a specific underpinning to the violin melody but also a polyphonic countermelody which, whilst not by any means extravagant, can be seen as typical in some approaches to polyphonic voice leading. This polyphonic effect is continued in the next few bars, where the bass line extends further down to create an even larger space between the lower and higher ends of the 'symphonic' arrangement. [00:31] continues the separation of the vocals, though the 'supporting' voices are much quieter and appear as if 'peeking' with short vocal stabs and vocalised lines. At the same time the main vocals develop a melody which emphasises the pitch C# and focuses on pitches a fifth and up to a seventh away, to create an almost tonal tension (C#–G# (x3) –C#–A (x3) // B–A–G#–C#, B–A–G#–C#, C#–B–A–C#, C#–B–C#–C#).

[00:40] marks a new section based on a riff-based motif (F#–C#–D–B–G#–A–B) in which each pitch is delivered in an accentuated manner by the guitars and drums with the strings subtly audible in the mix. Of note here is that some parallels can be drawn to a common classical 'turnaround' based on the riff's latter sixteenth note-based part (B–G#–A–B) e.g., the opening of *Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93*, first movement, first theme. After two repetitions, the initial portion of the riff is expanded (from F#–C#–D to F#–G#–A–C#–D), with the secondary sixteenth note segment replaced by an antiphonal response, whilst from [00:57] the motif shifts to a new series of pitches (B– C#–D–B–F#–F natural), the repetition of which seemingly emphasise the lack of resolution. Said

resolution is not achieved until [01:01] which now sees the riff fully concluded (B–C#–D–B–F#–F natural–A–G#–F#). The aforementioned antiphonal response to this section's main riff can be identified at [00:51], whereby the upper register utilises the electric guitar in delivering a virtuosic sixteenth-note response based on triplets, first based on a fairly small melodic contour that at [00:55] expands to a triadic arpeggio; the latter response is mirrored shortly after at [01:00] by the synthesised woodwinds (most likely a flute). Finally, the antiphonal response of the main riff is supported by several fills by the timpani sonority based on two sixteenth notes on the off-beat, followed by two eight-notes on the next beat at [00:52], a variation of this fill where the off-beat is now based on a triplet, whilst retaining the two eight-notes in the next beat appears at [00:55], and with a full timpani-roll at [01:00]. Following some additional development of this riff-based motif, [01:13] transitions to a calmer section in which the guitar/drums are significantly reduced, and a combination of several synthesised sonorities including violins, vocalisations and an organ sonority emerges. The section now resembles a Bach choral due to the series of chords provided by its combination of the violins and organ, whilst simultaneously the vocalisations present a series of downwards-moving scalar pitches.

I hope that this interpretative close reading has exemplified that whilst Shadow Gallery certainly presents a 'symphonic/orchestral' sonority which matches the expectations of symphonic metal's 'epic' sound, their approach still adheres to the 'symphonic/orchestral' approaches outlined in this chapter's initial interpretative close readings: from the typical group/singular instrument deployment of violin, woodwind or percussion sonorities, to their still relatively 'background' role in the overall construction, to the 'bookending' approach. Furthermore, the track's examined selection seemingly incorporates several aspects that bear closer resemblance to compositional techniques that can be described as more directly borrowing from Western art music rather than symphonic metal's film music-inspired emphasis as per Julliot's (as well as Halbscheffel's) conceptualisation of the term. Both authors do mention symphonic metal's the close relation to Western art music though, as I am not well versed in the output of symphonic metal performers, I am hesitant to suggest that this latter aspect represents a substantial point of contrast between this genre and the aesthetic of progressive metal performers. As with most presented interpretations, I want to reiterate that I do not wish to imply that the observations somehow represent a definitive outline of the symphonic metal style combining with progressive metal approaches. Rather I hope to have inspired further research into the complex interactions between both genres.

7.5 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the ascription of the term 'symphonic/orchestral' as derived from the discourse analytical process and has argued that it reveals several means through which progressive metal engages with the classical. As I have showcased, reviewers' utterances point to aspects that parallel two established symphonic concepts, that of symphonic rock and symphonic metal, thus effectively causing said concepts to serve as lenses limiting the aforementioned classical engagement. The multiple interpretations constituting this chapter attempted to give voice to the perspectives of the album reviewers though to avoid threading familiar ground based on the pre-existing understanding of what constitutes 'symphonic' aspects, I elected to focus on perspectives that help to expand said concept's perspectives. As such, I have argued that, despite progressive metal's

engagement with orchestral sonorities to not stray far from the latter's established usage as 'background' components, there is substantial variety which is regarded by listeners as enhancing the tracks in which said sonorities are incorporated. Furthermore, I have pointed out that, in some instances, progressive metal can be somewhat adventurous when creating tracks that almost exclusively consist of symphonic sonorities in what I referred to as a 'bookending' principle. These perspectives can serve as a point of departure in (re-)considering progressive metal's utilisation of symphonic elements which should be evaluated not only on the merit of the 'complexity' of the arrangements, but also further reflect on the effects said instrumentation/arrangement elicits on its listeners.

With that in mind, my attempts to expand on the symphonic aspects were not limited to simply building on from existing understandings but also highlighted notable contrasts. I attempted to contrast the somewhat limiting and conflicting understandings which frame progressive metal as either not involving notable symphonic elements, or the notion that there is no difference between said genre and that of symphonic metal. I acknowledged the specific auditive aspects that some reviewers associated with symphonic metal, yet to avoid essentialising the division between the two genres, I provided some evidence towards the understanding that symphonic metal stylistic elements can mix with progressive metal's symphonic approaches. I hope that this has provided some perspectives towards a more detailed navigation of the fluid boundaries between the two genres and will encourage writers to further examine both musical as well as cultural factors in their framing of progressive metal and symphonic metal genres.

As I will continue to reiterate in my work, however, I discourage future researches in restricting their framing of 'symphonic/orchestral' aspects in progressive metal to those outlined in my work. Even if one leaves aside progressive music's oft-cited eccentricity, it would be highly beneficial for further research to examine other performers' work that engages with 'symphonic/orchestral' aspects thus formulating a broader foundation for the said aspect's role in progressive metal contexts. Conversely, if scholars are interested in furthering the shared contexts between progressive metal and symphonic metal and wish to pursue a more genealogical approach as per Hegarty and Halliwell, they may consider the framing of power metal as the genre from which both symphonic metal and progressive metal 'emerged' (Hillier 2020, 11, 14; see also Sharpe-Young 2003, i). It goes without saying, however, that such suggestion is offered as means of more broadly situating progressive metal (and symphonic metal) in relation to contexts with some classical-connotative potential,[193] as well as to engage with the, less-often academically examined, genre of power metal, rather than to establish a new or 'stable' historical continuity between the genres.

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[193] Sharpe-Young's (2003) catalogue of power metal performers offers several perspectives supporting the broader relationship between the genres of power metal and progressive metal exists. On the one hand, he includes a variety of performers examined in this study e.g., Crimson Glory (Sharpe-Young 2003, 86–87), Savatage (Sharpe-Young 2003, 383–88), Shadow Gallery (Sharpe-Young 2003, 397–98) and Threshold (Sharpe-Young 2003, 436–37) as well as highly canonised performers beyond this study's corpus e.g. Queensrÿche (Sharpe-Young 2003, 343–47). Based on the different terms by which the bands are referred to – e.g., Threshold's is described as "a hard edged Progressive Rock act", (Sharpe-Young 2003, 436) – the author is

8. Operatic

Amongst the multiple terms that I expected to encounter whilst exploring discourses and literature on progressive metal, stumbling upon reviewers' discussions of opera and/or operatic aspects was both surprising as well as exciting to me. Surprising, as I was expecting terms such as 'symphonic' to dominate classical-connotative contexts, but also as I was not aware of many examples in which progressive music and traditional forms of opera overlap. At the same time, I was excited as the term opera may be considered as potent in its ability to signify a connection to the classical. To be clear, whilst this latter perspective may be a result of my own early Western art music socialisation – e.g. myself (ca. 13-15 years old) and other students being encouraged by our music history teachers to attend opera performances in the local opera house, when I would much rather have stayed at home listening to some of Whitesnake's early records – as a researcher in the realm of popular culture, I consider it a necessity to briefly quantify why this chapter will (partially) equate opera with the signification of classical.

Critical discussions regarding opera's role and perception in contemporary culture have long argued that, despite the generalised correlation between opera and 'high culture', such framing does not reflect the historical and geographical contexts attesting to opera's accessibility to broader audiences. As well as, more broadly speaking, that the notion that opera as not 'belonging' to popular culture is markedly false. For example, John Storey's 2002 article[194] approaches the argument from a series of perspectives. First, he draws from several academic texts that aid in establishing that "[o]pera as 'high culture' is [...] not a universal given, unfolding from its moment of intellectual birth; rather, it is an historically specific category institutionalized (depending on which cultural historian you find most convincing) by the 1860s, 1900s, or 1930s" (Storey 2002, 36). Second, discussing the reframing of opera as "art that can be entertaining" he draws attention to the necessity for interested viewers/listeners to engage with "opera homework" or the adoption of tools necessary to "unlock the entertainment in the art" (Storey 2002, 37). Storey furthermore points to the existence of "introductory textbooks [...] offering to 'educate' the reader in what is required in order to be able to appreciate opera (even as entertainment)" (Storey 2002, 37), whereby the author discusses the discursive strategies employed by such literature in "reintroduc[ing] opera into the everyday world of popular entertainment", namely "(1) a welcoming irony; (2) an insistence that opera is a special kind of entertainment called art; and (3) a tactical anti-elitism" (Storey 2002, 38). And finally, the author discusses the negative reactions towards the recontextualization of opera as popular culture, touching

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seemingly including a variety of performers both in and beyond the power metal genre. On the other hand, Sharpe-Young is positioning power metal as a 'key-node' from which a variety of performers have emerged and/or moved through, including several with classical-connotative potential e.g. "[t]he Swedish guitar protégé Yngwie Malmsteen took his obsession with Deep Purple, Hendrix and the Classical masters, transferred it to the electric guitar and became God – at least in Japan" and that "[w]ith so much emphasis placed on the hedonism of Classical, Baroque and Renaissance institutions Opera was next on the cards. Arjen Anthony Lucasson, in creating Ayreon, triggered a plethora of imitators and pioneered the concept of Metal Opera [...] and (gulp!) the rebirth of the concept album" (Sharpe-Young 2003, ii).

[194] For a similar argument aimed towards the nineteenth century contexts of opera throughout Europe, see Zelechow (1993).

on broad criticism against the erosion of the lines between art and entertainment (Storey 2002, 40) and more localised examples such as the utilisation of 'surtitles' (i.e. projecting opera's translated text so as to enable attendees to engage with the narrative) being "dismissed by those for whom access is always a problem because it usually means access for 'other' people" (Storey 2002, 41). Or the media reception of a 1991 free Pavarotti concert in Hyde Park visited by nearly 100,000 large audience, whereby "[t]he obvious popularity of the event would appear to threaten the class exclusivity of opera as high culture" (Storey 2002, 42) as "[t]he apparently obvious cultural division between elite and popular culture no longer seemed so obvious. It suddenly seemed that the cultural had been replaced by the economic, revealing a division between 'the rich' and 'the thousands'" (Storey 2002, 42–43).

Storey's overall conclusion that "[t]o see opera as a cultural form (consisting of many different texts and practices) that is simultaneously popular and elite […] is an accurate description of contemporary articulations of opera" (Storey 2002, 44) is a perspective that I also share. However, to be clear, my framing of opera as signifying the classical does not suggest an interest (or furthering!) of the elitist tendencies associated with the elite i.e., "there is one key part which is still as socially exclusive as it was intended to be when opera was first institutionalized as high culture: opera in the opera house" (Storey 2002, 45). Rather, I am referring to what Storey and other scholars (e.g., C. Newell and G. Newell 2014; Toutant 2008; Summers 2017, 265) have broadly referred to as opera's generalised 'high culture' signification potential which may be evoked when a reviewer imagines a band, piece or a performative aspect as 'operatic'. In other words, whilst opera's manufactured association to 'high culture' may be clear to specialist audiences such as academic researchers, such perspectives may not be known by members of a broader audience with less interest in opera as a whole e.g., audiences of metal or progressive music writing reviews of a progressive metal band.

As this and all other chapters in this part of the study are based on presenting interpretations as to what is meant when a reviewer utilises a term such as 'opera' or 'operatic', to avoid the potential for essentialising the aforementioned association between opera and high culture, my investigation attempts to constantly balance any element discussed as relating to traditional opera (and thus to the classical) with said element's broader popular cultural framing. Furthermore, I draw from a different type of specialist meaning, namely those that the cultures of heavy metal and progressive music have developed when ascribing operatic qualities. Through this, I hope that even as I argue that an element can be considered as signifying the classical through traditional opera's high culture potential, such arguments present interpretative possibilities rather than reifying essentialist divisions regarding music and culture.

The following chapter is organised into several segments intending to exemplify the usage of the term 'operatic' (or the related 'opera') in reviews of progressive metal bands. The first segment, 8.1, will focus on outlining the different usages of the term, presenting a broad categorisation of the many and complex meanings ascribed to the term, which will be followed by a series of discussions intending to contextualise the reviewers' utilisation of the term in more detail. As rock opera is the most commonly discussed genre in relation to the term opera, in section 8.2 I present an overview of academic literature on the subject and argue that both existing examinations of the format, as well as less-explored examples beyond the Anglo-speaking contexts, offer some classical-interpretative

potential thus enabling a 'comparable' framing to traditional opera to that of album reviewers in progressive metal contexts. The subsequent two sections engage with reviewers' discussion of operatic vocals, whereby 8.3 includes two interpretative close-readings that examine how 'operatic' pieces stemming from non-rock opera albums in Savatage's output can be interpreted as including parallels to practices, musical settings and compositional devices associated with Western art music contexts. Section 8.4 engages with singular operatic vocals by first presenting a critical overview of academic/journalistic framings of 'operatic vocals' in heavy metal and progressive music genres, followed by an attempt to synthesise a culture-situated definition of the term, and concluding with a close reading of a track by the progressive metal band Crimson Glory which showcases the ability to interpret some aspects of the vocal delivery in relation to both metal- and Western art music-related 'operatic vocals' and associated vocal techniques or practices. After a brief discussion reflecting on the potential to relate reviewers' criticisms of excess to that of traditional opera's own complex history with employing excess in section 8.5, I conclude the key-term's examination with a visual interpretation of an album artwork by Savatage which illustrates classical signification potential based on the artwork's constitutive elements, as well as situate the practice in relation to a broader practice of popular musicians transgressing cultural boundaries.

8.1 Operatic – overview of the term's usage

Whilst each of the key-terms discussed in this study can be related to a network of potential meanings as ascribed by the reviewers, the utilisation of the term 'opera' was, arguably, the most complex. Broadly speaking, opera is discussed in relation to three large categories – vocal delivery, formal/compositional/signification aspects, and critical reception towards 'opera' – within which smaller sub-sets can be further differentiated. To establish a baseline of the perspectives and ascription from which my examination in this chapter will draw, I want to first briefly present an outline of the multiple aspects that reviewers evoke as part of each category and its sub-sets.

The category of utterances associating 'opera' with vocal delivery incorporates a variety of perspectives addressing phenomena ranging from individual voices through vocal choirs to some multi-voice choruses. Observing the category as a whole, it appears that each community understands different performers as exemplifying operatic qualities: MA reviewers point to the lead singers of Crimson Glory and Savatage, whilst PA reviewers comment more often on the performances of Damian Wilson from Star One and Mike Baker from Shadow Gallery. The division is by no means 'clear-cut' as isolated utterances in MA frame Shadow Gallery's vocal work as operatic, whilst PA reviewers also point to a specific vocal arrangement (vocal choirs) as an operatic element in the work of Savatage. However, the contrast does imply that the underlying characteristics associated with the notion of 'operatic' vocals, are not universal but rather constructed differently based on the separate cultures' expectations.

When describing individual voices as 'operatic', utterances imply multiple potential meanings related to vocal delivery. Several examples frame the term as pertaining to a specific 'style' or approach e.g., Crimson Glory's Midnight (stage name of John Patrick MacDonald Jr.) as having a "very operatic style of singing" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#23, 2013); or Shadow Gallery's *Tyranny* album as featuring both the primary singer Mike Baker utilising "operatic vocal in mellow style", as well as guest

vocalist D.C. Cooper "sing[ing] like an opera act backed with keyboard and excellent choir" (PA-ShadowGallery-#41, 2005). Other descriptions point out voice production and/ or vocal intensity related characterisations e.g., D.C. Cooper as using an "powerfull [sic], cold, evil operatic voice" (PA-ShadowGallery-#47, 2005); Jon Oliva's singing in the *Hall of the Mountain King* album as "forceful and oddly operatic" (MA-Savatage-#28, 2008); or in some cases, it is the perceived timbre of the vocalist that evokes 'operatic' comparisons such as the "operatic tone" of Star One's Damian Wilson (PA-StarOne-#28, 2010).

At times reviewers would provide more details in their 'operatic' ascriptions, such as outlining a singer's depiction of melodicism or emotionality e.g., Crimson Glory's Midnight is described as having "melodic and operatic vocals" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#22, 2016), whereby some praise the "range, charisma and sheer emotion" as well as his "sheer emotional calibre" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#6, 2013).[195] In other instances, such as Jon Oliva's delivery on the album *Hall of the Mountain King*, the connection to emotionality is related to the depiction of a wide range of psychological or emotional states: "I don't think I've ever heard Jon Oliva traipse along the margin of sanity and sorrow so closely, not even on the more 'emotionally' driven, accessible rock opera albums that followed [hall of the Mountain King]" (MA-Savatage-#22, 2012). As the Savatage quotation itself hints, despite the positivity of these perspectives, the examination of the category of criticisms against 'opera' will show that the reception of 'emotionality' tends to remain on the more negative side.

Beyond individual voices, 'operatic' vocals are identified in relation to phenomena that feature multiple voices. For example, one reviewer of Savatage's *Handful of Rain* praises the song "Chance", in particular its latter half as "the part where the different choruses sound so operatic all together" (MA-Savatage-#64, 2009), whilst another discusses the song as "ventur[ing] into opera territory", and pointing to the same latter section of the song, refers to it as including "goofy vocal melodies at the end" (MA-Savatage-#66, 2009). A similar perspective is presented in relation to Savatage's track "The Hourglass" discussed as featuring "multi-tracked operatic vocals" (PA-Savatage-#127, 2006). These examples tend to construct the multi-voice phenomenon via multiple-recordings of the lead singer or an interplay between the lead singer and additional performers with backing vocals duties. In contrast, a reviewer describes the Star One's *Victims of the Future* as "the use of many singers in a sort of rock-opera style" (PA-StarOne-#39, 2011), whereby the record utilises multiple singers with differing roles in the context of the album.

Additional differentiation in relation to multi-voice 'operatic' perspectives can be identified in several reviewers' utilisation of the term 'choir' e.g., the track "Morphine Child" from Savatage's *Poets & Madmen* is described as a "mini-opera, with the typical Savatage's choirs at the end" (PA-Savatage-

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[195] Some utterances that describe Midnight's performance as having an 'operatic flair' do not directly refer to 'emotionality', however seeing as emotional depth is mentioned relatively close to the descriptions of Midnight's performance, it may be interpreted that emotionality complements the framing of the term 'opera': "First and foremost we have Midnight, a singer fully worthy to stand with Tate and Arch. As a starting point, you could almost imagine Tate and Arch combined; operatic flair with nasal wailing and a lot of multi-tracking. Crank the range up to 11 and add some rock & roll sensibility (as heard on 'Queen of the Masquerade') and you've got an idea. Midnight's upper register simply has to be heard to be believed. His real strength however lies in his emotional depth, the power of his delivery is just astounding" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#9, 2009).

#138, 2006). Such typical adoption of a 'choir' by Savatage as mentioned by the reviewer is not always seen as a positive thing as exemplified by the following examples, framing the "operatic choirs" of the track "Streets: A Rock Opera" as "boring and extremely arrogant and pretentious" (MA-Savatage-#80, 2007); or in relation to the band's track "Temptation Revelation" in which the implementation of a vocal choir seemingly causes the song to be referred as "goofy in the operatic vocals" (MA-Savatage-#40, 2004). In all of these instances, the reviewers' use of the term 'choir' does not mean simply 'multiple voices', but rather point to phenomena closer to more traditional understandings of the term i.e., "Streets: A Rock Opera" includes a children's choir, whilst "Morphine Child" recreates a choir-sonority by using densely-layered groups of voices, which are further separated in the audio mix using panning.

Ascriptions of 'operatic' components extend beyond vocals to principles of form or composition. Reviewers tend to associate 'operatic' elements to the level of the entire record, and often in relation to specific formats such as the 'rock opera' e.g., "complexity and diversity of the grandilocuent [sic] rock operas of the '90s" (PA-Savatage-#3, 2005) or "several songs with different atmospheres form a tight union […] this is a rock opera in the true sense of the word" (PA-Savatage-#63, 2005); as well as mention 'metal opera' (MA-Savatage-#73, 2007). The rare descriptions provided for the term 'rock opera' are fairly short, however e.g., "[t]he album tells a story which could be understood for the *Rock Opera*-part of the album [*Streets: A Rock Opera*]" (PA-Savatage-#76, 2010). Conversely, reviewers would include brief comparisons to and/or the ascription of influences by well-known examples of 'rock opera' from either the format's early history – e.g., framing Savatage's *Power of the Night* album as the band's "early incantation [of] 'rock opera'" which is then ascribed an influence from Queen (MA-Savatage-#10, 2012) – or have connected the 'rock opera' term more with performers from the progressive metal scene, citing several examples such as Queensrÿche, Dream Theater or Avantasia (PA-Savatage-#64, 2005; PA-Savatage-#74, 2009).

Further comments addressing 'operatic' aspects on the album level include discussing the concept or topic of an album e.g. "lyrically […] a little bit of space opera" (PA-CrimsonGlory-#30, 2009); stylistic aspects related to songwriting e.g. the "operatic style of John [Oliva]'s songwriting" (MA-Savatage-#35, 2010), or "tracks in a Rock Opera style" (PA-StarOne-#26, 2017); or an album's ambitiousness or 'scale' e.g., Savatage's *Dead Winter Dead* album is described as "bombastic and powerful, operatic and emotional" (PA-Savatage-#115, 2009), whilst band's *Handful of Rain* is summarised as "an album that is not only melodic and operatic in nature but ambitious […]" (PA-Savatage-#96, 2005).[196] In relation to the last point, similar vocabulary is employed when describing individual tracks e.g., "the grand operatic instrumental 'Temptation Revelation' […]" by Savatage (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012); or Crimson Glory's "March to Glory" as an "imposing operatic entry of epic proportions" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#1, 2017). However, 'scale' should not be understood as an indicator

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[196] Utterances such as these reiterate the association between 'emotionality' and opera in relation to more broadly speaking the music e.g., "this album truly deserves the name 'rock opera' […] the music is wonderfully emotional" (PA-Savatage-#61, 2004), though it is difficult to determine as to whether by 'the music' the reviewers focus on exclusively instrumental aspects or the combination between instrumental and vocal aspects.

of the track's size, as both songs' length does not extend beyond three and a half minutes. Rather, the 'grand'-ness appears to reference aspects such as the strong-echo and orchestral synths in the case of Savatage or the seemingly classically connotated chord-progression and march-character of the Crimson Glory piece.

Whilst it is difficult to accurately extrapolate which instrumental sonorities are associated with 'operatic' qualities, one connection that can be suggested is that of the piano. For example, a reviewer for Savatage's *Poets and Madmen* considers the division between 'rock' and 'opera' to exist based on which instruments are used i.e., "[Savatage] pushed the 'opera' in 'rock opera', pulling back on the guitars a bit to add in more piano and classical-pops stuff" (MA-Savatage-#87, 2005). The association is seemingly not limited to the 'rock opera' format as others have commented on 'operatic' qualities in albums that do not follow said format such as the Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* album: "the piano is the guide of [the song "Gutter Ballet"] […] this song is the perfect definition of the newer operatic Savatage sound" (MA-Savatage-#35, 2010); or a reviewer describing the same album as "metal with some operatic elements", then proceeding to list songs with "dramatic development […] bringing shifts of pace and intensity and some piano melodies" (PA-Savatage-#54, 2008).

An additional aspect that can be considered as part of this category is the more abstract notion of opera's implicit signification to reviewers. To some, 'opera' is related to aspects such as sophistication e.g., "a perfect union between the aggressive attacks of past albums […] and the sophisticated elements of [Savatage's] 'rock opera' era" (MA-Savatage-#27, 2009) or in some instances the maturity of the compositional style is praised e.g. "a sober, more mature take on the rock opera style [Savatage]'d tried out on Streets [and] offers exactly the sort of serious consideration the subject matter at hand calls for" (PA-Savatage-#120, 2017). Other reviewers appear to relate (rock) opera to the expression of complexity, though the reception is somewhat contradictory. Specifically referring to Savatage's narrative in *Streets: A Rock Opera*, some criticise the lack of complexity e.g., "Savatage want their opera to be so comprehensible that even a child could approach it" (MA-Savatage-#49, 2008); whilst others are more accepting and emphasise the narrative's directness e.g. "The overall message of this rock opera is all about keeping the faith, never giving up and most of all believing in oneself. It might seem simplistic and maybe even pretentious to anyone who seeks something deeper but it's that brutal honesty of the song that touched me" (PA-Savatage-#76, 2010).

As hinted at in the previous paragraphs, many utterances dealing with the 'opera' term are accompanied by evaluative descriptions. Critical descriptions of 'opera' are of substantial enough numbers so as to be considered a category of utterances themselves, and whilst I cannot include all types, I will highlight three general aspects that have been criticised: excess, sentimentality and lack of 'metalness'. With that said, so as to clearly outline that 'operatic' reception is not universally critical, I have included some perspectives that showcase a more ambivalent reception of some aspects.

The first type of criticism centres on what reviewers view as 'excess', whereby such quality can be identified as applied to a variety of levels of the discussion. On the broadest level, some have criticised the excess of Savatage's general output and/or that of the band's members e.g. "Savatage had pretty much edged themselves into a neat little rut of boring, self indulgent [sic] rock opera excess" (MA-Savatage-#80, 2007). With that in mind, there are alternative perspectives such as a

reviewer praising Savatage's *Edge of Thorns* as "[t]he album that began deep rock opera/progressive drama obsession in the composition stance" (PA-Savatage-#89, 2008). In a similarly broad-level context, several writers have suggested that the rock opera format is perceived as "overblown" (PA-StarOne-#14, 2012); or expressed a culturally-founded pre-knowledge regarding the term 'rock opera', pointing to the perceived "stigma" associated with the term, albeit without discussing what that entails (PA-Savatage-#61, 2004). This can be extended to the criticism of a 'rock opera' album seen as excessive such as Savatage's *Streets* album, and specifically that the record has "too many fillers" (PA-Savatage-#75, 2009). At the lowest end of scope, one can identify individual tracks described as 'excessive' e.g., Shadow Gallery's track "Comfort Me" being described as "bombastic in the negative sense" (PA-ShadowGallery-#135, 2011); or even narrower, as a specific element within a piece such as a track's chorus: "[o]ver the top rock opera intro titled 'Welcome' [from Savatage's *Wake of Magellan*], this song is just not metal enough, the chorus is way too over the top" (MA-Savatage-#81, 2003).

The second type of criticisms discusses musical elements that are considered as not adhering to the technical rules of the metal genre, whereby reviewers frame 'opera' as an element foreign to the culture and its inclusion leading to a reduction of metal's heaviness. Once again, a fairly full gamut of perspectives can be identified here, such as predominantly negative e.g., "[o]n later albums, the operatic stuff would really mess up anything sense [sic] of metal credibility" (MA-Savatage-#23, 2012); or "opera influences have totally overshadowed the metal in [the album *Dead Winter Dead*]" (MA-Savatage-#72, 2009). Some users have expressed a middle-ground disinterest in the practice e.g., "the rock opera bore-athon of [Savatage's] next few albums" (MA-Savatage-#67, 2007), to more positive formulations of the distinction e.g., "Operatic and heavy all in one, it shouldn't work, but it does" (MA-Savatage-#82, 2003). As can be expected from the understanding that heaviness in metal is a highly valued factor that tends to be closely associated with the use of the distorted electric guitar (among other factors) (e.g. see Berger and Fales 2005), harsh criticism can be identified in relation to the reduced importance of the guitar: "the rock opera shit hadn't totally eclipsed the guitar work […] the orchestration, rock opera capella [sic] chorus la-la-la singing really rapes the shit out of otherwise good material, coming across as totally preposterious [sic] and obnoxious" (MA-Savatage-#71, 2009).

The third and last critical type I will outline is aimed at the perceived sentimentality. One example that already hinted at this criticism praised Oliva's vocal sentimentality, yet also was critical of "the 'emotionally' driven, accessible rock opera albums that followed [*Hall of the Mountain King*]" (MA-Savatage-#22, 2012). However, occasionally reviewers would only criticise specific tracks within a record associating their sentimentality to that of opera e.g. "There are some who absolutely loathe the rock opera-styled tearjerkers coursing through [*Gutter Ballet*]" (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012). The last two examples are relatively direct in their criticism, though other instances imply the sentimental aspect by using specific terms such as "cheesy", as a "camp topic" or by comparing the album's name to a "soap opera" in the review title (MA-Savatage-#43, 2012; MA-Savatage-#68, 2017; PA-ShadowGallery-#135, 2011; PA-Savatage-#78, 2013). An interesting example appears in a review of Savatage's *Handful of Rain* record, where the mix of the album is praised as improved, particularly with regards to the vocals, with the reviewer, somewhat underhandedly, stating: "I no longer feel like

I'm sitting in the studio booth next to some nervous guy trying out for a Broadway rock opera" (MA-Savatage-#63, 2012).

The presented broad summary of perspectives helps to outline several large categories of utterances related to the ascription of the term 'operatic' that can be identified within the discourse analytical sample. Whilst my work cannot address the entirety of the term's complexity in detail, the following interpretative sections have drawn from several notable aspects as outlined above. First, in section 8.2, I will argue that the most commonly referred to format of the 'rock opera' within the formal/compositional/signification category outlined above, can be situated as potentially echoing the classical-connotation of traditional opera. The following two examinations will focus on vocal phenomena as per the variety of perspectives discussing vocal aspects in relation to 'opera', though will also implicitly engage with the piano's role as well as some compositional/arrangement perspectives. Specifically, section 8.3 offers two perspectives focusing on the ability to interpret vocal choirs as relating to various opera-related Western art music contexts together with implicitly outlining the use of piano as a classical-connotative aspect. Also it includes an additional interpretation that examines a multi-voice phenomenon that is seemingly equally as 'operatic' due to the underlying compositional/arrangement techniques. The following section 8.4 will extend the general vocal-focused line of inquiry by examining instances in which individual-voice 'operatic' perspectives were ascribed, attempt to situate the terminology of 'operatic' vocals in the progressive and metal cultures, and offer interpretations discussing parallels that can be established to traditional operatic vocal techniques. Section 8.5 will reflect one of the critical perspectives towards the term 'opera', and specifically by offering an interpretation that considers the ascription of 'excess' as paralleling similar perceptions in relation to traditional opera. Finally, it is worth pointing out that as a substantial number of reviewers positioned 'operatic' aspects in close proximity to performers such as Savatage, Crimson Glory and to a lesser extent Shadow Gallery, this broader scale association influenced my decision to prioritise drawing examples from their output for closer examination throughout the chapter.

8.2 What is so classical about rock opera?

When attempting to situate rock opera in contemporary contexts, the format appears somewhat at odds with traditional opera's 'high' broad cultural-framing I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. Discussions of rock opera often mention bands/albums such as The Who's *Tommy* or Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which certainly evoke a comparable sense of (popular) canonisation, yet I am hesitant to suggest that these pieces are viewed as of the same magnitude (or importance) as operas by Rossini, Mozart, or Wagner. Canonisation or elitism remain general challenges in face of such comparisons, what likely furthers the gap between the two is that, whilst rock opera's name implies some similarity to its Western art music counterpart, both general (e.g., larockopera.com n.d.) as well as academic discussions on rock opera contextualise the term as a phenomenon with strong ties to popular music, specifically as a sub-category of the concept album.

Despite the prevalence of perspectives framing rock opera as a popular music phenomenon, I would argue that the format's relation to the classical can be suggested in two ways. First, academic texts include multiple perspectives highlighting subtle connections between rock opera and Western

art music contexts, thus allowing to suggest that rock opera is not *exclusively* connected to popular music contexts but can be related to classical-connotative contexts. Second, I will argue that this signification potential increases further when considering rock opera examples emerging from non-Anglo speaking contexts that have been overlooked in typical definitions of the format. To be clear, however, the following argumentation is intended to neither disregard/disprove the general understanding of rock opera as a popular music phenomenon, nor to re-instil a co-dependency that positions popular music as inherently 'requiring' Western art music as a source for 'raw content', cultural prestige or otherwise. Rather, my goal is to offer an alternative perspective that, by introducing relevant and overlooked contexts surrounding rock opera, highlights the potential for parallels between more subtle classical (music)-related elements as found in ascriptions of 'operatic' aspects to the examined progressive metal artists; as well as aids in addressing some of the blind-spots of the current understanding of rock opera in Western European academic contexts. Also, a final part to this chapter will include additional reflections as to how more localised instances of a performer associated with rock opera and their engagement with Western art music aspects may have offered contexts furthering the association between rock opera and the classical, and more broadly the perception of 'operatic' qualities in progressive metal as implicitly pointing to the classical.

As mentioned, during my attempts to establish a context for rock opera, the majority of literature I examined make clear that the format is an extension of the concept album (e.g. see H. M. Brown et al. 2001, n.p.; Elicker 2002, 300; Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 274; Halbscheffel 2013h, 422; McLeod 2001, 191; Rockwell 2002, n.p.; Wicke, W. Ziegenrücker, and K.-E. Ziegenrücker 2007, 619; E. L. Wollman 2006, 76).[197] However, despite such strong co-relation, it is noticeable that many authors' discussions do not completely separate rock from its Western art music namesake. Martina Elicker suggests that rock opera can be defined in at least two ways i.e., "[t]he broad view places 'rock opera' within the field of nineteenth-century operetta, the English ballad opera, vaudeville and music hall, revue, melodrama, minstrel, and of course opera" (Elicker 2002, 299), whilst the author's own preferred "narrow view […] considers rock opera as separate from the traditional musical. Hence, rock operas are seen as song cycles in the mold of popular music concept albums […] rather than sidekicks of traditional operas" (Elicker 2002, 300). The author further adds that "[s]ome operas are formally linked to oratorios and number operas" (Elicker 2002, 300) referring to (among others) the text by Wicke and Ziegenrücker as a source for such argumentation, and indeed discussing rock opera as relating to number opera/oratorio is a perspective also shared by Halbscheffel's own lexicon-definition of the format (Halbscheffel 2013h, 422, 423).

Halbscheffel (2014 [2012]) dedicates a substantial chapter of his large-scale progressive rock investigation on the discussion and historical contextualisation of the concept album and rock opera, whereby he states that "a rock opera is always a concept album, but not every concept album is also a rock opera. A sharp demarcation [between the two] is not possible" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 260). As such, one can argue that some of the classical-related components he mentions in relation to both

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[197] For an additional discussion of the rock opera phenomenon, specifically focusing on The Who's *Tommy*, *Quadrophenia* and Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, see Christian Jooß-Bernau's chapter "Theatrale Großformen auf der Pop-Bühne" [Eng. "Large-scale theatrical forms on the pop-stage"] (Jooß-Bernau 2010, 333–71).

formats can be seen as contributing to the current argument. For example, the author describes Frank Zappa's complex musical style (most likely referring to the album *Freak Out!* Mentioned by the author a page earlier in the text) as "[d]oo-wop alternates with blues, passages from orchestral compositions with rock, all of which interwoven in collages" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 253).[198] Similarly, his discussion of The Beatles' *Sgt Pepper* frames the album as "[m]usic, organization of the music and the presentation of the cover – together this resulted in a 'total work of art' that had not existed in rock and pop music until then",[199] whereby implying a comparison to the Western art music framing of "Gesamtkunstwerk" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 258–59).[200]

Halbscheffel offers an additional perspective in relation to The Beatles' album by arguing that it both represents rock music's "growing" as a more complex musical expression as well as a process of "growing up" in relation to the changing themes rock music addresses (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 254-255, 256). Yet he also attempts to do so whilst distancing such processes from the association with Western art music suggesting that "[i]f one takes 'A Day in the Life' as a prototype [of the rock-suite], then rock music no longer needs the model of the baroque suite of traditional art music in order to be able to design larger formal constructions" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 266).[201] Whilst pointing to a different period in Western art music history, I am reminded of Macan's characterisation of The Beatles' album which is described as a "modern-day recasting of the nineteenth-century song cycle" (Edward Macan 1997, 40), a perspective shared by John Rockwell who frames rock operas as "closer to the song cycles of classical tradition than to opera" (Rockwell 2002, n.p.).

Other notable factors mentioned by Halbscheffel are his discussion of Brian Wilson's contribution to the increased importance of the studio as a compositional and creative device used by the performers. The author alludes to the potential for Wilson to have been influenced by Western art music in his work on the song "Good Vibrations" through the "technique of delimiting molded parts by changing instrumentation [which] has been a common practice in traditional European art music for centuries" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 264). It should be pointed out, however, that Halbscheffel clearly outlines this as a possibility, suggesting that due to having no clear indication regarding Wilson's listening interests, the performer may have simply "rediscovered the wheel" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 264)[202] and thus the similarity to Western art music becomes coincidental rather than intentional. In addition, Halbscheffel's framing of The Who's *Tommy* album as an example

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[198] Ger. "Doo-Wop wechselt mit Blues, Passagen von Orchesterkompositionen mit Rock, all dies in Collagen miteinander verschränkt".

[199] Ger. "Musik, Organisation der Musik und die Aufmachung der Hülle – zusammen ergab dies ein 'Gesamtkunstwerk', wie es dies in der Rock und Popmusik bis dahin nicht gegeben hatte".

[200] Beyond the significance of *Sgt Pepper* to the framing of a concept album, the idea of The Beatles' album as including a connection to the classical can be supported more generally through Covach who has argued that one of the main aspects that progressive rock performers took from said record was that "rock could appropriate features drawn from classical music" (Covach 2000, 17).

[201] Ger. Orig. "Nimmt man 'A Day in the Life' als Prototyp, dann bedarf die Rockmusik nicht mehr des Vorbilds der barocken Suite der traditionellen Kunstmusik, um größere formale Konstruktionen entwerfen zu können".

[202] Ger. Orig. "Es ist nicht bekannt, welche Musik außer Pop- und Rockmusik Brian Wilson hörte oder kannte; möglicherweise hat er in diesem Fall tatsächlich 'das Rad noch einmal' erfunden, denn die Technik der Abgrenzung von Formteilen durch Wechsel in der Instrumentation ist in der traditionellen europäischen Kunstmusik seit Jahrhunderten gängige Praxis".

of rock operas paralleling traditional opera as the former offers the same potential for "individual arias [to be extracted from] an opera and [to] perform them in concert or collect them on sound carriers" which does not result in the extracted song to "los[e its] meaning" (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 274).[203]

Arguably, the strongest support towards the classical potential of rock opera stems from the work of Elizabeth Pölzl-Hofer and Susanne Sackl (2010) who examine the term metal opera as not only representing the resurgence of the rock opera format in metal contexts, but also as showcasing a significant development that pushes rock opera's drawing from traditional opera's cultural connotations into the adoption of more direct generic aspects. The authors establish a general context in which, drawing from Roccor's study on heavy metal culture, argue that rock opera's resurgence in progressive metal contexts can be related to the genre's drawing from the "compositional diversity of classical music",[204] as well as a broad increase in the variety of sonorities found in heavy metal such as "the use of string instruments and choral singing, but above all by the synthesizer" (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 46).[205] To support their argument, Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl conduct a series of analyses on concept albums by progressive metal artists examining facets such as conceptualisation of the album, compositional elements of individual songs, levels of complexity of the subject manner, stage realisation and instrumentation (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 46–47). In relation to this, the "dramatic stage-realisation [of a piece as] a core element of the metal opera" (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 48)[206] is framed as a central principle that they emphasise when considering a concept album's relation to the metal opera format.

Whilst the albums examined in Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl do not universally engage with said principle, the authors nevertheless showcase several notable aspects supporting their argument regarding metal opera's adoption of more direct traditional opera-relatable generic aspects. For example, the authors note that "[t]he chronology of the songs [in Ayreon's *The Final Experiment* album] clearly shows a parallel to the opera: the album begins with a prologue, which includes an overture, in which the main musical motifs of the entire album are presented, and ends with an epilogue" (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 48).[207] A similar observation is made for Dream Theater's *Metropolis Pt. 2: Scenes from a Memory* album in which "[t]he album begins with an overture which, in keeping with traditional opera, presents the most important musical motifs as a purely instrumental

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[203] Ger. Orig. "Aus einer Rock-Oper lassen sich leicht, ohne jeden Verlust an Sinn, einzelne Songs herauslösen, 'Pinball Wizzard' aus 'Tommy' bietet ein Beispiel. Hierin unterscheidet sich die Rock-Oper nicht von der traditionellen Oper der europäisch bestimmten Kunstmusik, denn auch hier ist es ein gängiges Verfahren, einzelne Arien aus einer Oper zu entnehmen und im Konzert darzubieten oder auf Tonträgern zu versammeln".

[204] Ger. Orig. "In den 1990er Jahren erfuhr der Progressive Rock eine Wiederbelebung, die vor allem mit der Entstehung des neuen Genres Progressive Metal in den 1980er Jahren einherging, in dem nach Roccor ‚die kompositorische Vielfalt klassischer Musik mit der Technik und den Harmonien des Heavy Metal' verbunden wurden".

[205] Ger. Orig. "Darüber hinaus wurde im Laufe der Zeit das Repertoire der Heavy-Metal Sounds durch den Einsatz von Streichinstrumenten und Chorgesängen, vor allem aber durch den Synthesizer, erweitert".

[206] Ger. Orig. "Da die dramatische Bühnenrealisation als Kernelement der Metaloper hier noch keine Rolle spielt, kann das Projekt Ayreon trotz einiger Novitäten innerhalb der Strukturen und Stoffe noch nicht zur Gänze der Kategorie Metaloper zugeordnet werden".

[207] Ger. Orig. "Die Chronologie der Songs lässt durchaus eine Parallele zur Oper erkennen: das Album beginnt mit einem Prolog, der eine Ouvertüre beinhaltet, in der die wesentlichen musikalischen Motive des gesamten Albums präsentiert werden, und endet mit einem Epilog".

piece", and the authors noting that the album is broadly structured in a manner paralleling the number opera (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 48).

As an example of a fully-fledged metal opera, the authors showcase Avantasia's album *The Metal Opera*, which includes a combination of multiple traditional opera-relating perspectives. Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl outline the inclusion of "many choral-based passages and orchestral parts which is why Avantasia is partly included in the heavy metal sub-genre *symphonic metal*",[208] the appearance of "purely instrumental pieces that function as Intermezzi",[209] paralleling formal organisation in acts and scenes as well as the album's inclusion of a combination between dialogues and inner monologues suggest that "one can speak of characters in the operatic sense"[210] (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 49, italics in original).

Based on these perspectives, the authors' examination can be framed as an example that supports my argument on the potential to frame a popular music-situated form of opera as signifying relations to traditional opera. Also, Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl's suggestion that "[t]he British rock opera was thus superseded by the metal opera in the course of time" (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 49–50)[211] should, in my view, not be seen as undermining the preceding rock opera-based argument, but rather as emphasising the strengthened classical-connotative potential of opera-related formats as well as highlights such phenomena's closer position to progressive metal contexts. With that in mind, in order to retain a critical perspective to this investigation, it is important to acknowledge that the authors' examination of Savatage's *Streets: A Rock Opera* frame the album as a step between rock opera and fully-developed metal opera due to lack of stage-realisation, the narrative being delivered exclusively by Oliva, as well as the lack of a Western art music-interpretable naming scheme such as overture (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 47), as showcased in previously outlined examples. Despite this seemingly situating Savatage at the far end of the rock opera's classical-connotative potential, I will return to this perspective in the next section and offer a complementary examination in which reviewers' description of choral/classical instruments-related phenomena in Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* can be interpreted as relating to elements that can be related to traditional opera contexts.

At this point, I will transition to the second part of my argument by bringing forward a critical perspective with regards to the discussed literature, and specifically its tendency to present a somewhat historically and geographically restricted viewpoint on rock opera. A number of the authors I previously referenced and/or examined, have discussed rock opera as a predominantly British phenomenon that lost its relevancy in the early 1980s (e.g. Elicker 2002, 301–2; Halbscheffel 2013h, 423; Rockwell 2002, n.p.; Wicke, W. Ziegenrücker, and K.-E. Ziegenrücker 2007, 620, 621; E. L. Wollman 2006, 76–78). Most discussions comment on bands such as The Who or The Kinks as direct representations of rock opera, or mention The Beatles as an important step in the development

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[208] Ger. Orig. "Das Album beginnt mit einem Präludium und beinhaltet viele chorisch angelegte Passagen und orchestrale Teile, weswegen Avantasia teilweise auch dem Heavy-Metal-Subgenre Symphonic Metal zugerechnet wird".

[209] Ger. Orig. "Daneben finden sich reine Instrumentalstücke, die als eine Art Intermezzi fungieren".

[210] Ger. Orig. "Der erzählerische Stil wird durch Unmittelbarkeit erzeugende dialogische Texte und innere Monologe ersetzt, womit von Figuren im opernhaften Sinn gesprochen werden kann".

[211] Ger. Orig. "Die britische Rockoper wurde somit im Laufe der Zeit von der Metaloper abgelöst".

of the concept album and by extension rock opera. In addition, some of the studies make clear that rock opera as a phenomenon should not be confused with, or simply equated to, the rock musical as exemplified by the work of (equally as canonised as the previous performers) Andrew Lloyd Weber and his work *Jesus Christ Superstar*, pointing out that the methods of composition and delivery tend to differ quite significantly. In short, rock operas constitute a collaboratively written series of interconnected musical tracks created by a band (usually in a studio-related environment) and achieved via rock music-related means that may not initially be intended for stage performances. In contrast, the rock musical represents a piece by a specific (usually non-rock musician) composer who draws from rock music-elements with a stage production in mind, which, if recorded, is not performed by the aforementioned composer (see e.g., Elicker 2002, 300–301; Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 260–61; Wicke, W. Ziegenrücker, and K.-E. Ziegenrücker 2007, 620).

These perspectives outline rock opera as a phenomenon situated in relation to a rather specific geographic setting as well as a specific period, that are seemingly reflected in the limited outlines of the format's continued existence after the 1970s e.g. Rockwell points to the Pet Shop Boys as having "reinstated [the British penchant for rock spectacle], as in their lavish 1991 tour staged by the American opera director David Alden" (Rockwell 2002, n.p.); Halbscheffel mentions Green Day's own concept albums in the 2000s (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 278), and Wicke and Ziegenrücker mention several progressive metal artists as contributing to a "renaissance of the rock opera"[212] (Wicke, W. Ziegenrücker, and K.-E. Ziegenrücker 2007, 621).[213] However, what the majority of summaries appear to overlook is the existence of a plethora of rock operas created in a variety of countries in mainland Europe and the former USSR/Russia since the mid-1970s.[214] The importance of this omission is twofold. On the one hand, this presents a rather limited overview of the rock opera phenomenon that focuses on its Anglo-speaking contexts; and on the other hand, the examples below feature both instances in which not only a dedicated composer can be identified, thus somewhat destabilising the aforementioned definitional distinction, but also present a variety of perspectives that can be considered as strengthening rock opera's relation to Western art music.

Some early examples I located in (and beyond) academic discussions include: the concept album/rock opera *Dialog s Vesmírem* [Eng. Dialogue with the Universe] (1978) by the Czech

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[212] Ger. Orig. "Zeitnahe Veröffentlichungen von Spock's Beard (CD 'Snow', 2002), Magellan (CD 'Hundred Year Flood', 2002) und Shadow Gallery (CD 'Room V', 2005) könnten von einer Renaissance der Rockoper zeugen".

[213] It is worth pointing out that even restricted to Anglo-speaking contexts, the provided examples are far from representative of how rock opera continues to exist: e.g., Rian Fertel (2019) has showcased the emergence of a rock opera-styled piece beyond the examples listed above such as in the southern rock genre as exemplified by the album *Southern Rock Opera* by the US country band Drive-By Truckers; Takala, Häyry and Laing outlined a concept for a rock opera that is intended to be used as a form of bioethics educational tool (Takala, Häyry, and Laing 2014); and in 2015 multiple established heavy metal performers contributed to *Karmaflow: The Rock Opera Videogame* (Lach 2014) which not only opens questions as to the aspect of theatricality raised by some of the scholars, but also showcases the inclusion of an interactive development in the genre as *Karmaflow* was intended to be as flexible in terms of its interactivity both as a video-game as well as when performed in a live setting (see Crecente 2014).

[214] A similar argument, though aimed at the dissemination of progressive rock in Central/Eastern European and Soviet/Russian contexts, can be found in Näumann (Näumann 2016a, 14–19) as well as in Zahova (Zahova 2016, 21–33).

progressive rock band Progres 2 as pointed out by Klaus Näumann (Näumann 2016a, 16); the multiple rock operas released by the band Ариэль [Eng. Ariel] titled *Сказание о Емельяне Пугачёве* [Eng. The Legend of Emelyan Pogachev] from 1978, *Мастера* [Eng. Master] from 1981, and *За землю русскую* [Eng. For the Russian Land] from 1985 (Näumann 2016a, 15);[215] the rock opera *Trumpet Call* recorded in 1983 by a Christian rock group of the same name in the former USSR (Bourdeaux 1985);[216] the Hungarian rock opera *Istvàn, a kiràly* [Eng. Stephen, a King] from 1983 created by the popular musicians Levente Szörènyi and János Bródy[217] (see Bülgözdi and Réti 2016; Povedák 2015; Wąsowicz 2015); as well as the rock operas by the Latvian rock/synthwave band Jumprava, *Black Power* (Ramet, Zamascikov, and Bird 1994, 201)[218] and the more contemporary *Izredzētais (Rokopera)* [Eng. Valentine (Rock Opera)] released in 2007 (Jumprava 2007).

As hinted by the last example, more contemporary releases can also be located. These include the Polish *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a rock opera from 2001 by jazz pianist and film-music composer Leszek Możdżer and the actor Wojciech Kościelniak (see Romanowska 2018); Bulgarian releases such as *Nikolo Kotzev's Nostradamus*, a rock opera by the guitarist/violinist Nikolo Kotzev in 2001 (Krannila 2012), or the concept album *Свети Патриарх Евтимий* [Eng. Holy Patriarch Euthymius] released in 2004 by the Bulgarian heavy metal band Епизод [Eng. Transliterated Epizod; Eng. Translated as Episode] (Epizod.com n.d.); the Italian *Dracula – Opera Rock* (2005) by progressive rock band Premiata Forneria Marconi (see Del Castello 2014); another contribution by the Hungarian popular musician Levente Szörènyi, the 2006 released rock opera *Árpád Népe Misztikus Opera* [Eng. Mystic Opera of the People of Árpád] (Agócs 2006, 9n26); and the French *Mozart, l'opéra rock* [Eng.

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[215] Näumann's mentioning of the rock opera *Die sixtinische Madonna* released in 1980 by the GDR band Electra (Näumann 2016a, 18) serves as an example of German contributions to this phenomenon, to which Halbscheffel's brief mention of Amon Düül's "Made in Germany Record" from 1975 (Halbscheffel 2013h, 423) can be added. These examples only partially match the Central- and Eastern-European-centric context of this argument, yet for the purposes of inclusivity, I wanted to acknowledge the potential for these rock opera contributions to be framed in the same general argument.

[216] The article refers to the opera only through the English name *Trumpet Call*, which is likely a translation of the Russian Трубный Зов. I was able to locate a record titled *Трубный Зов. XX лет Юбилейное издание* [Eng. Trumpet Call. XX year anniversary edition] from 2002 by the band's leader Валерий Баринов [Eng. Valeri Barinov] and Трубный Зов [Eng. Trumpet's Call] (see ARK / Трубный Зов / Валерий Баринов 2002) which showcases the name of the band, the rock opera and all included songs in Russian. Of note is also an intriguing release from 1985 by The Dave Markee Band titled *Trumpet Call – A Rock Opera by Valeri Barinov* (*The Trumpet Call – a Rock Opera by Valeri Barinov* 1985), which performs the piece (or a variation of Barinov's original) entirely in English and the front cover frames the piece as simply presented by The Dave Markee Band.

[217] The authors quoted in relation to examinations of this rock opera provide contradictory descriptions of who the second composer of this piece was i.e., the texts by István Povedák as well as by Imola Bülgözdi and Zsófia Réti point to János Bródy (Bülgözdi and Réti 2016, 11; Povedák 2015, 102), whilst Magdalena Wąsowicz discusses Sándor Bródy (Wąsowicz 2015, 121). I am inclined to suggest that Povedák and Bülgözdi and Réti's description is the correct one as additional references (e.g. see Szörényi Levente, János Bródy 1988) frame János Bródy as the co-contributor of this piece, as well as the fact that general searches of Sándor Bródy suggest he was a Hungarian author living at the end of the nineteenth century.

[218] Sabrina Ramet's brief mentioning of this band causes some verification issues as the text does indicate when the *Black Power* album was released nor whether this is, in fact, an album (as per the standardised italics used to designate an album title) or a song. This issue is further exacerbated by the perspective that most websites I encountered that list the band Jumprava do not feature an album with such a name (either in Latvian or in English). Based on sites such as Discogs.com, Jumprava was formed towards the late 1980s (see Discogs.com n.d.b) thus the release date of *Black Power* (whether album or a song) will likely not be earlier than 1988.

Mozart. A Rock Opera] (2009) by Jean-Pierre Pilot (a former member of the new wave band Indochine) and Dove Attia (a producer of musicals), a piece described somewhat hyperbolically by Prazdnova as "the most known [sic] and successful modern rock-opera" (Prazdnova 2016, 258).

Prazdnova's brief (and somewhat confusing)[219] mentioning of the Belarusian rock-opera "Kurgan" (Prazdnova 2016, 258) can serve as a transition to a potentially separate category of rock operas with more direct involvement of Western art music composers, in this case "[c]omposer of this play was Igor Luchanok" (Prazdnova 2016, 258).[220] Other examples include the Latvian rock opera *Lāčplēsis*[221] by the classical composer Zigmars Liepiņš from ca. 1988 (see Kruks 2004; Lāms 2011; Šmidchens 2006); multiple examples from former USSR such as Alexey Rybnikov's *The Star and Death of Joaquim Murietta* from 1976 and *Junon and Avos*[222] from 1982 (Pratl 1984, 125; see also Grabarchuk 2015), Alexander Zhurbin's *Orpheus and Eurydice*[223] from 1975 (see Schmelz 2009) written in co-operation with/for the rock band Поющие гитары [Eng. The Singing Guitars] (Grabarchuk 2016, 38; Näumann 2016a, 15), the rock opera *The Stadium* written by the composer Alexander Gradsky in 1985 (see Vinichenko 2019); as well as *The Cuckoo's Scream*[224] by Tatarstan composer Rashid Kalimullin from 1989 (Saidascheva 2020). In addition, scholars have pointed that Rybnikow's rock opera and an additional rock opera by Zhurbin – *Monk, Harlot and Monarch*[225] from 1990 (Schiukina 2020, 111) –

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[219] In my view, there are several potentially misleading details within Prazdnova's contribution which require further clarification. First, whilst the author is not incorrect in referring to the piece as composed by Igor Luchanok, she does not mention that it was originally written for (and performed by) the Belarussian band Pesnyary (Näumann 2016b, 192). This is not a minor detail to be omitted, as such quasi-symbiotic relationships can be found in a variety of Central and Eastern-European ensembles during Communist times, whereby the interactions between the ensemble and the composer may provide important context for a piece and/or the band's reception (see Näumann 2016b, 173, 173n5, 174; see also Golovin 2019, 257–58 for a brief discussion of similar instances in Bulgarian rock music contexts). Second, Prazdnova's discussion of the title of the piece as "Kurgan" may have been correct for the 2011 rendition she is referring to, however the title of the original rock-opera is listed as *Гусляр* [Eng. Guslyar] in 1979 (see Песняры [Eng. Pesnyary] 1979), or *"Гусляр", Поэма-легенда По Произведению Янки Купалы "Курган"* [Eng. "Guslyar", Poem-Legend Based on Yanka Kupala's piece "Kurgan"] in 1980 (see Песняры [Eng. Pesnyary], Игорь Лученок [Eng. Igor Luchenok] 1980). Third, she suggests that the piece was "put [on] in 2011 in Belarus" (Prazdnova 2016, 258, square brackets added), which again, is correct for said rendition (see BelaPAN 2011, n.p.) though it does not reflect that the original recordings date as back as 1979/1980 as just mentioned.

[220] Klaus Näumann's recent examination of the band's history and output (Näumann 2016b) includes a partial analysis of the piece "Guslyar", and although the author acknowledges some instances in which the piece is referred to as a rock opera (Näumann 2016b, 179), he discusses it as more of a concept album, and his analysis' goal is determining the extent to which the band can be considered representative of progressive rock (Näumann 2016b, 192–96). As such, despite providing a significant starting point in understanding the piece's inner working, it is not a sufficient contribution so as to consider it fully explored as an example of rock opera from non-Western European contexts.

[221] Lāčplēsis is the name of the central character in a Latvian epic of the same name. Sergei Kruks' analysis of the epic includes a full summary, though for the purposes of context, the following section will hopefully provide a sufficient introduction: "[t]he epic story of Lāčplēsis begins in the thirteenth century, as German knights arrive and impose their Christianity on the Latvian tribes. Lāčplēsis is the son of a man and a she-bear, from whom he inherited bear ears, which are the source of his exceptional physical strength" (Kruks 2004, 2).

[222] The original Russian titles of these pieces are respectively *Звезда и смерть Хоакина Мурьеты* and *Юнона и Авось*.

[223] The Russian title of this piece is *Орфей и Эвридика*.

[224] The author presents the name of the piece in Russian as *Крик кукушки*.

[225] I refer here to a translation of the title from Schiukina's article which only references the piece in German as *Mönch, Hure und Monarch* and I was unfortunately unable to locate the original title in Russian.

were adapted and/or recreated by the music comedy theatres in the Ukraine in the mid-1980s (see Schiukina 2020).

Beyond these examples, Consuela Radu-Ţaga's (2020) discussion of a Romanian children's opera briefly mentions a piece by the composer Laurenţiu Profeta titled *Povestea micului Pan* [Eng. The Story of Little Pan] and describes it as "representing a model for later rock opera" (Radu-Ţaga 2020, 171), suggesting the potential for rock opera pieces to have been written in such contexts as well; Krasimira Fileva-Ruseva's 2020 contribution considers rock opera as one of several opera-related genres in relation to music textbooks for the Bulgarian educational system (Fileva-Ruseva 2020); and I was able to find several examples of Russian-/Ukrainian-language academic literature which have seemingly explored the importance of rock operas in various contexts. As my limited overview of the articles' contents is based on the provided English abstracts, I am simply including several references that mention rock-opera related perspectives for interested readers familiar with such languages (e.g., Andrushchenko 2019; Donchenko, Zaitseva, and Tatarenko 2017; Savitskaya 2019; Tsihan 2020).

As mentioned, the outlined list of rock operas is of note as, on the one hand, it helps to exemplify that the format includes a large number of examples outside of Western-European/US contexts after 1970s that should be explored in more detail. On the other hand, this extension highlights that in multiple instances rock operas were created or arranged by composers working in the field of Western art music (or film music) which, together with ongoing difficulty to consistently separate rock opera from the varieties of musical and the latter's utilisation of rock music sonorities in quasi-classical contexts, may have also contributed to the strengthening of contemporary general associations between rock opera and the classical. To reiterate, I am by no means discouraging the efforts of scholars such as Halbscheffel or Wicke and Ziegenrücker in more accurately describing the specificities of the rock opera format, but rather aim to suggest two things: first, that academic discussions on rock opera need to be expanded to reflect the myriad of other examples that have – by one standard or another – been titled as a 'rock opera' in contexts outside of Western Europe or the US; second, even if many of the aforementioned examples do not conform to existing definitions of the format, their existence under the same title and incorporating elements associated with the classical may have had some influence on the global perception of the format.

To put this in a different manner, heavy metal is a worldwide phenomenon (see Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011), and as such taking USSR/Russian context as an example, is it possible that established Russian heavy metal musicians may have experienced not only The Who, but also some of the Russian rock operas by Zhurbin or Rybnikov. Such argument remains in the realm of conjecture, though it is noticeable that it is not difficult to find Russian metal bands of varying levels of popularity that can be related to rock-/metal-opera in some capacity e.g., Mikhail Seryshev, the lead singer of the band Master, contributed to a 1991 Russian-version recording of the rock-opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Afanasyenko 2020); Vladimir Kholstinin from the Russian heavy metal band Aria "offered the studio 'Aria Records' for recording" the 2004 metal opera project *Elven Manuscript* by the Russian power metal band Эпидемия [Eng. Transliterated Epidemia; Eng. Translated Epidemic] (Epidemia.ru n.d.); as well as very recent examples such as symphonic metal band Imperial Age having recorded the

metal opera *The Legacy of Atlantis* in 2018 (Imperial-age.com n.d.)[226] and several other Russian (and in some cases European) examples of rock-/metal-opera are featured in the journalistic article by Dmitry Koshelev from 2018 (Koshelev 2018). To be clear, I am not advocating for establishing whether Russian metal bands have been directly influenced by Russian-composed rock operas, but rather that such pieces may have informed the broader discourse around the format either from the perspective of heavy metal musicians being familiar with them or from the perspective of music listeners' familiarity.

This broad contextualisation of rock opera and metal opera has hopefully exemplified that the format includes multiple aspects that can be considered as contributing to a broad perception of the terms' classical signification potential. This includes both the commonly discussed examples from Western European/US contexts, as well as examples from the variety of Central-, Eastern-European and former USSR-related contexts. As mentioned, my intention is not to position the classical as an inherent component to the rock opera genre, but to argue that the format's subtle potential to signify the classical can be used as context to frame those reviewers that perceive rock opera as a combination between "rock" and "opera" components: "[Savatage's *The Wake of Magellan*] evens out the rock and opera a bit" (PA-Savatage-#131, 2009); "[*Streets a Rock Opera* i]s a rock opera… duh. It straddles the line between rock and opera, and pretty much fails at both" (MA-Savatage-#44, 2012). In addition, certain reviewers perceive an association between "rock opera" and Western art music e.g. "[Savatage] really pushed the 'opera' in 'rock opera', pulling back on the guitars a bit to add in more piano and classical-pops stuff" (MA-Savatage-#87, 2005); "Jon Oliva, the leader of the band, decided to show us his real influence as a musician, classical music" (MA-Savatage-#46, 2009); "the only way you can really love [Savatage's *Dead Winter Dead* album] is if you love opera or classical music more than metal" (MA-Savatage-#72, 2009); or "Savatage progresses even farther along the operatic/classical path" (MA-Savatage-#75, 2004).

With that in mind, to inject a somewhat critical reflection towards this line of inquiry, it is important not to overstate and/or position rock opera's classical signification potential as the only possibility for the classical to be perceived in relation to the term. Rather, I would argue that it is possible that the ascription of 'operatic' qualities in the discourse surrounding the examined

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[226] It is worth noting that the band's biography page (as well as the page highlighting the album specifically) emphasise a connection to symphonic metal (and one may argue by extension metal opera-related) personnel: "[Imperial Age was f]ormed in 2012 by Alexander Osipov and Jane Odintsova in Moscow and endorsed by [symphonic metal] genre founder Christofer Johnsson (Therion) himself"; and regarding *Legacy of Atlantis* "[t]he album was recorded, mixed and mastered by Sergei Lazar (Arkona) with guests such as Nalle Pahlsson, Christian Vidal and Thomas Vikstrom of Therion and the Moscow Conservatory Chamber Choir" (Imperial-age.com n.d.). This connection is important not only in relation to Imperial Age's general authentication attempts by emphasising the involvement of Therion's members, but also as Therion is framed as having strengthened operatic qualities in metal contexts through the inclusion of female/choir voices (see section 8.4, specifically 'Operatic vocals in progressive music and heavy metal contexts: a critical overview'), thus suggesting that newer bands may be seeking to establishing (metal) opera-related connections to contemporary artists such as Therion. Also, the note that the band has worked with Moscow's Conservatory Chamber Choir can be related to arguments regarding the relation of choirs and opera signification (see interpretation of Savatage's "Temptation Revelation" in section 8.3) and the signification of the classical through working with established Western art music related ensembles (see discussion of Savatage's artwork in section 8.6).

progressive metal performers may have implicitly drawn from the classical-connotative potential of some performers' history. To illustrate this possibility, I will briefly discuss several musical and para-musical elements that can be extrapolated from Savatage's output.

Of this study's corpus of artists, Savatage is the only band which reviewers have discussed as overtly borrowing from Western art music by pointing out specific composers of pieces from the corresponding canon. Indeed, Duxbury's encyclopaedic investigation on Western art music quotations in popular music contexts shows that the band has borrowed from Western art music pieces as early as 1988 e.g., the track "Prelude and Madness" includes a brief quotation of Gustav Holst's *Planets, Op. 32, Mvt. 1 (Mars)* whilst the album title *Hall of the Mountain King* echoes Edgar Grieg's eponymous scene in his suite *Peer Gynt, No. 1, Op. 46, Mvt. 4* (Duxbury 1991, 42); the band's *Dead Winter Dead* album borrows from Mozart's *Symphony No. 25, G-minor, K. 183* in the track "Mozart and Madness" as well as includes a quotation of movement four from Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9, D-minor,* Op. 125 in the album's intro; and finally the album *Streets: A Rock Opera* includes a quote from Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute,* K. 620 (Duxbury 2000, 189–90).

It is also noticeable that Savatage are described through terms such as creating "compositions" and the performers as "composers" which implies the perception of more involved music-creating processes at play:

> "I must say it: attempting to follow up a mighty masterwork like [Savatage's] Hall of the Mountain King would be a daunting prospect for even the most practiced composers". (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012)

> "Power of the Night, the sophomore effort of the (at this stage) 80s proto-prog metal band Savatage, is quite a solid step up from their debut, and shows much more of the band's creative potential in pioneering the use of new artistic devices of composition ('progressiveness') in their music". (PA-Savatage-#16, 2012)

The language used in these utterances can be generally situated as an approach to praise by no means exclusive to Savatage i.e., expressing admiration and support to the 'artistic content' of the performers or as means of criticising undesirable tendencies in the progressive metal field such as empty virtuosity.[227] Nevertheless, the combination of these perspectives allows to situate the band in close proximity to contexts with a strong classical-connotative component. For example, given the band's drawing and transforming pieces by Western art music contexts into their own output, a parallel can be presented to Walser's examinations of heavy metal guitarists drawing from Western art music idioms (Walser 1993, 63–102). Furthermore, the suggestion of the band's "progressiveness" through "pioneering the use of new artistic devices of composition", can be interpreted as potentially relating to progressive rock's near-stereotypical framing of engaging with Western art music contexts or

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[227] As examples of both approaches, a reviewer of Threshold's *Subsurface* album described it as "smart, involving, highly-compositional metal for connoisseurs of the style, and stands not only as Threshold's crowning achievement, but also as one of prog-metal's truly essential albums" (MA-Threshold-#19, 2014). In contrast, the discussion of Redemption's *Fullness of Time* album suggests that "[p]rogressive metal is fast becoming overcrowded, with bands trying to complicate their compositions by relying all too often on instrumental noodling. You won't find any of that [in Redemption's *The Fullness of Time*]" (MA-Redemption-#6, 2005).

aspects of 'high' culture. In turn, the statement helps to frame Savatage's praise as "composers" to strengthen a (para-)musical classical-connotative potential.[228]

Additional arguments can be derived in relation to the band's late producer Paul O'Neill (†2017), who is discussed as a figure supportive of Savatage after their negatively received *Fight for the Rock* album, becoming their producer for the more widely positively received *Hall of the Mountain King*. Specifically, O'Neill is framed as having fostered Jon Oliva's supposed classical training as well as providing some Western art music related impulses on this album, as the quotes below illustrate:

> "Paul O'Neill brought out the dramatic element of Jon's classical training just enough to give this album a larger than life feel. On later albums, the operatic stuff would really mess up anything sense of metal credibility, but here it works to create one massive, epic slab of dark power metal". (MA-Savatage-#23, 2012)

> "When musicians started to work with new songs on the album, one day Paul O'Neill suggested performing a metal interpretation of Edvard Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suite". He always loved this piece of classical stuff and finally has found the right band and musicians able to perform it". (MA-Savatage-#24, 2011)

> "This is the first Savatage's album with Paul O'Neill on production, who was looking in this time for a band with the capacity of make [sic] real their symphonic and operistic [sic] ideas (included one old idea called Streets…)". (PA-Savatage-#30, 2005)

A similar idea appears in a rather 'roundabout' way through perspectives viewing O'Neill as contributing to Savatage's move away from their 'traditional' heavy/power metal sound by providing the narrative components to some of the band's rock operas. Or through the perception of O'Neill having 'created' Trans-Siberian Orchestra, a large-scale ensemble which includes several members of Savatage and that consistently engages with Western art music quotations or para-textual elements:

> "Streets is so important because this album sets the pace for most of Savatage's releases after 93. Inspired by a Broadway play written by Paul O'Neill back in 1979 that Criss Oliva found stored in some forgotten drawer in O'Neill's home and suggested that it should be the next Savatage's album, Streets debuts Paul as one of Savatage's main composers and has the basic structure of all the band's next concept albums". (PA-Savatage-#73, 2008)[229]

> "Paul O'Neill […] who is also the mastermind in Trans-Siberian Orchestra". (PA-Savatage-#125, 2006)

> "I'm guessing this all can be attributed to the inclusion of producer Paul O'Neill, who inspired the band's more symphonic direction and remains involved with them to this very day, though

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[228] With that in mind, in some instances it is possible that reviewers meant 'composition' in the term's meaning related to the constitutive parts of something, in these instances albums/songs, e.g., "Multiple changes in pace, sound and intensity are the compositional weapons of choice [in Atmosfear's *Zenith* album.]" (PA-Atmosfear-#6, 2010), or "[A]lmost each and every song [in Crimson Glory's *Transcendence*] is based on a solid composition scheme" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#21, 2016).

[229] It is highly likely that it is the perception of *Streets: A Rock Opera* 'origins' as a Broadway play to have contributed to the appearance of the term 'musical' in relation to Savatage's discussion of rock opera, in addition to the overlap between rock opera and rock musical I referred to earlier in this chapter.

> the band now plays Christmas rock and prefers to be called the Trans-Siberian Orchestra…".
> (MA-Savatage-#27, 2009)

> "With the side project of the Trans Siberian [sic] Orchestra, it's no surprise that Paul O'Neill
> and Jon Oliva have transferred some of that classical touch to [*Dead Winter Dead*], injecting
> excerpts of Mozart and Beethoven". (MA-Savatage-#75, 2004)

The utterances quoted above offer an additional perspective to Savatage's classical-signification potential by further strengthening the idea that the aforementioned division between 'rock' and 'opera' aspects potentially reflects the perception of the band members' interest in Western art music and/or Western art music training, as well as the influence of Paul O'Neill to both Savatage and the related Trans-Siberian Orchestra ensemble.[230]

Finally, I'd like to once again draw the attention to the following excerpt from a review of Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* which situates the album in a key position to multiple phenomena associated with the interconnection between metal music and Western art music:

> "A long time before bands such as Therion or Apocalyptica made their groundbreaking
> symphonic or opera metal masterpieces, a long time before symphonic gothic metal bands
> such as Nightwish got into mainstream, a long time before bands such as Metallica would try
> to collaborate with big orchestras and a long time before epic metal all star [sic] bands such
> as Aina, Ayreon or Avantasia made their appearances, there was a young American band that
> decided to get away from their power and thrash metal roots and chose the hard path to
> follow instead of recreating an album in the key of their infamous "Hall of the Mountain King"
> record that got amazing critics and is considered nowadays as a cult album. The mentioned
> bands are all something like the intellectual babies of Savatage in one way or the other". (MA-
> Savatage-#34, 2011)

Whilst I remain critical at the genealogical argument presented by the writer, what is important to highlight here is that the ascription of an important 'precursor' role to Savatage can be interpreted as retroactively aligning the band's utilization of classical-interpretative contexts/references discussed in the last pages with contemporary efforts of metal musicians to incorporate classical elements in their output. These include the reference to Metallica, which Custodis frames as a modern collaboration between a metal band and a film music composer (Custodis 2009, 111–56); to Avantasia as presented by Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl as a fully-fledged example of metal opera, which as previously mentioned, is a format that draws more heavily from the generic aspects of traditional opera (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 49); and finally the mention of *Hall of the Mountain King*, which was already discussed as incorporating borrowings from Western art music. It should be pointed out that the album discussed by the reviewer – *Gutter Ballet* – is not a rock opera, however as I will argue in the next section, it has been ascribed operatic qualities interpretable as relating to Western art music contexts. Thus, based on the central positioning of Savatage as influencing other performers associated with the

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[230] The importance of Western art music education of Oliva is briefly mentioned in Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl's text on metal opera which the authors frame as representation of progressive metal performers' socialisation (Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl 2010, 46n28).

engagement with Western art music contexts, the argumentation can be used as example supporting Savatage's classical-interpretative potential, which also includes their rock opera related output.

In conclusion, the preceding discussion outlined a series of perspectives that argued for the classical-connotative potential of the rock opera format, as means of situating some of the 'opera'-focused ascriptions found in the progressive metal discourse. This argument was pursued by three approaches: first, I drew from multiple perspectives found in academic writings on rock opera, which showcased the ability to relate either the broad format to the context of traditional opera, or through the classical-connections via the strongly associated concept album. This was also extended via an examination of the text by Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl that helped to present a more contemporary context in which the newer, and progressive metal situated, format of the metal opera exhibits stronger connections to traditional opera via aspects such as instrumentation, organisation of the record's structure, stage realisation etc.

Second, I offered a critical perspective towards the more limited framing of rock opera that seemingly ignores a large number of pieces written since the late 1970s in Central-, Eastern-European or Russian/former USSR contexts, whereby of particular note were instances where pieces were created in whole, or in part, by composers associated with Western art music, or film music. This presented a broader context that increases rock opera's classical signification potential, and to some degree can be seen as paralleling other rock- or metal-opera pieces created in such contexts.

Both of these perspectives were used as means of situating the framing of some album reviewers that suggested that rock opera can be understood as incorporating both 'opera' as well as 'rock' components. However, I also included a summary of perspectives that, in relation to the output of the band Savatage, allow to suggest additional classical-connotative potential based on said band's output, as well as framings such as their Western art music training or the importance of their former producer.

8.3 Multi-voice operatic phenomena in the output of Savatage

With the previous sections approaching the discussion of 'operatic' ascriptions on a broader level, I am certain that readers will be interested to finally get a taste of what is *actually* taking place 'under the hood', so to speak. Indeed, in the following section I will more closely examine instances of operatic vocal phenomena, and with reference to Savatage as arguably the most commonly featured performers throughout this chapter up to this point.

Referring back to Pölzl-Hofer and Sackl's discussion of metal opera, I commented on the authors' framing of Savatage as not fully adhering to the aspects positioned as central to the format's construction. The authors' decision to specifically examine Savatage's *Streets: A Rock Opera* is, indeed, pragmatic and focused approach to framing rock opera phenomena, yet at the same time this limits the examination to only one album. To be clear, I am not interested in overturning or challenging the authors' perspective. Rather, I am interested in exploring a complementary argument that emerges from an interesting 'anomaly'. Namely, when examining album reviews related to the term 'operatic' an interesting trend can be identified in which reviewers ascribe 'operatic' qualities to songs that are not part of a rock opera-framed album. More importantly, as I will outline in the following interpretative readings, some of the tracks to which such qualities are ascribed include aspects that

can be interpreted as implicitly paralleling Western art music contexts, and specifically operatic forms or practices. To illustrate such potential, I will examine two tracks by Savatage that emerge from non-rock opera framed albums: "Temptation Revelation" from the band's *Gutter Ballet* album showcases parallels to Western art music and operatic contexts through the implemented vocal choirs, the use of piano and an orchestral instrumentation; whereas the track "Chance" from Savatage's *Handful of Rain* album features a multi-voice vocal phenomenon that seemingly relates to the classical through the utilized arrangement and compositional approaches, in addition to once again including some orchestral elements.

Vocal choirs in Savatage's "Temptation Revelation"

As mentioned a few paragraphs ago, Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* album has been described as a site of 'operatic' elements despite neither matching academic descriptions of rock opera nor is it described by reviewers as a rock opera – e.g. "metal with some operatic elements" (PA-Savatage-#54, 2008); or as representing the "theatrical and operatic style of Jon's songwriting" (MA-Savatage-#35, 2010) and "Savatage's operatic ambitions" (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012) – whereby I will explore the track "Temptation Revelation" as it is specifically described as the "operatic instrumental 'Temptation Revelation'" (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012).

"Temptation Revelation" is the third track of Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* (Savatage 1989d) album, a (predominantly) instrumental piece just under three minutes of length, that can be roughly divided into two segments: an opening segment featuring an extended lead guitar solo with a piano accompaniment [00:00 – 01:26], and a second segment that greatly expands on the audible ensemble, yet focuses on a short chromatically descending melodic motif (D#–D–C#–C) repeated twice, followed by the same chromatic motif extended upwards only to return back to its C starting point (D#–D natural–F–D#–G–F–D#–D natural–C#–C natural). Whilst the opening segment can be seen as rather typical introduction of a somewhat restrained instrumental piece – e.g. Joe Satriani's "Always With Me, Always With You" (Joe Satriani 1987) strikes me as a comparable contemporary track – "Temptation Revelation" as a whole is not arranged in a strophic form with the guitar substituting the vocal line, nor am I left with the impression that the aforementioned two-part approach to the piece's structure can be related to classical-music composition techniques. Rather, I would argue that the track's ascription of operatic qualities can be related to the utilisation of specific instruments and their direct as well as indirect association to the classical as well as the choir-reminiscent vocalisations as echoing the use of such aspects in opera contexts.

The two large sections that constitute this track incorporate elements that either have been described by reviewers as operatic, or may be interpreted as incorporating relations to the classical. Taking the first section as an example, the song's introduction [00:00 – 00:17] can be discussed in relation to this context, namely the opening slow and quasi-melancholic line performed on a (grand?) piano and supported by sustained notes on what appears to be a synthesised cello; the inclusion of the cello is not mentioned by any reviewers, which is understandable as the instrument is subtly mixed in the section and does not (independently) appear for the remainder of the track. As with many instruments that may be considered as representing the 'classical' side of music making, multiple

examples can be identified in which the cello becomes a central instrument for a popular music ensemble in both broad (e.g., the Croatian cello duo titled 2Cellos) as well as heavy metal-specific contexts (e.g., the Finnish band Apocalyptica). Even beyond the existence of such dedicated ensembles, the availability of pieces derived from opera and arranged for cello (be it solo, with piano accompaniment or as part of a smaller string ensemble) strengthen the association between the instrument and opera, yet do so by further blurring the lines between classical and popular e.g. Daniel Morganstern's arrangement of "Cello Solos from Opera and Ballet" (Morganstern 1999), the reductions of Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera* for cello (Hart 2008) or Prague Cello Quartet's highly produced videos and four-cello arrangements of Webber's piece (Soukup, Pavel 2017).[231] From these examples, it can be argued that even if not directly mentioned by reviewers (specifically for this piece, as well as in general), the cello can be considered as having the potential to contribute to the piece's 'operatic' character through the instrument's classical and opera-signification potential.

With regards to the utilisation of the piano, as previously mentioned, some reviewers have associated the instrument with the signification of operatic qualities, and whilst the instrument is not commonly utilised in traditional operatic repertoire there are different perspectives through which such association may have been developed. The first, most obvious (though also highly oversimplified) context considers *Gutter Ballet* as being co-associated with operatic qualities due to directly preceding Savatage's first rock opera, namely the *Streets: A Rock Opera* album. Whereby the association between opera and piano may stem either from *Streets*' increased utilisation of the instrument or potentially through the aforementioned context that *Streets* was supposedly originally developed as a Broadway play. Furthermore, the association between piano and opera may also stem from both the instrument's appearance in bands mentioned by reviewers as having supposedly provided influence on Savatage's rock operas such as Queen (e.g., in their track "Bohemian Rhapsody") or The Who (e.g., in their canonised rock opera *Tommy*), as well as the not-insubstantial role that keyboard instruments (including a traditional piano) play in the metal operas by Avantasia or in concept albums such as those by Ayreon. Finally, genre-related contexts provide further possibilities such as the retroactive comparisons between Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* and the symphonic metal genre, the latter of which utilises keyboard instruments quite commonly; or conversely, parallels can be drawn between the ascription of classical education of Jon Oliva and that of keyboard players from early heavy metal bands such as Jon Lord from Deep Purple.

Beyond the perspective of the piano's appearance in "Temptation Revelation" as signifying the classical, its role as an accompanying instrument also enables some notable operatic parallels. For example, Ken McLeod's (2001) article on popular music artists drawing/paralleling opera techniques includes an observation regarding "Bohemian Rhapsody", and specifically the author describing the opening section of the track as an aria in which Mercury's voice is accompanied by the piano (McLeod 2001, 192). The piano's utilisation in the first half of the track [00:00 – 01:26] can be described as serving a similar, though a bit more differentiated, accompaniment function. In the piece's opening

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[231] Please note, all references to music videos can be found as part of the 'Videography' section of this study's bibliography.

[00:00 – 00:16] the piano's role is initially fairly central (itself being supported by the cello) and the instrument performs a simple melody (C#–B–C#–B–C#–D–F#) in the right hand with the left hand playing a single tone chromatically-descending melodic line starting at B and ending at G#, whereby each consecutive tone appears just before each statement of the aforementioned right-hand melody. With the electric guitar entering the track at [00:17], the piano transitions to providing accompaniment role, playing a melody consisting of alternating between singular low-pitched tones in the left hand and chords in the right hand, whereby at [00:25] the piano shifts to a fully chordal-based accompaniment the rhythm of which following the main melodic line played by the guitar. Whilst up to this point a rudimentary comparison to an accompanied aria can be made, the shift at [00:56] to a virtuosic soloistic passage on the electric guitar with a piano accompaniment drawing from the latter's opening melodic line – with an added chord at the beginning of each 4/4 bar as strengthening the Cm and Gm harmonic progression – enables more specific parallels to be drawn to the aria di bravura, a format combining the aria's operatic context and accompaniment property (see Westrup et al. 2001, n.p.) and bravura's "brilliant display in vocal or instrumental music that tests the performer's skill" (Jander 2001, n.p.).

The second part of the track [01:26 – 02:56] is where one can move beyond the discussion of the piano, and into aspects that most likely have led one reviewer to discussing the track as including "operatic vocals" (MA-Savatage-#40, 2004) and have possibly contribute to another reviewer's perspective describing "Temptation Revelation" as a "grand operatic instrumental" (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012). The second part of the track can be further divided into two sub-sections: first section [01:26 – 01:54] focuses on alternating between two eight notes – though audibly closer to an eight note followed by a quarter note – delivered in what can be described as a lower-string section, and separated predominantly in the left channel of the mix, which are then followed by a sustained tone held for roughly three quarter notes delivered in the right channel of the mix by what can be described as (synthesiser generated) multiple-voice choral-reminiscent vocalisations and singular sustained tones by the electric guitar. In addition, at [01:43] a subtle sonority that either represents upper strings or a pipe-organ is added to the arrangement. I refer here to the two sides of the mix as throughout this section there is a distinct panning effect that emphasises the volume of the two eight note entries which is then reduced when the vocalisations are introduced with their own volume increase.

The latter section [01:55 – 02:56] utilises the same building blocks as the first section though with faster rhythmic patterns and a steady increase of the tempo. The two eight notes constituting the 'lower strings' appear here accompanied by timpani strikes, though they can now be described as much faster due to a combination of the steady tempo increase and their more frequent appearance e.g., not only at the start of the D# descending motif, but also at every higher pitch in the motif's extended version (underlined letters) – D#–D–**F**–D#–**G**–F–D#–D–C#–C. This 'energising' effect is also strengthened by the 'lower strings' eight note entry being immediately followed by triplet-based descending melodic line performed on the electric guitar and combined with the choral vocalisations. This section presents little notable melodic development beyond the chromatically descending melodic motif, however, as the section progresses new instruments are added to the much more 'centralised' mix i.e., the 'lower strings' now occupy a left-and-centre position in the mix, the electric

guitar predominantly the centre of the mix and the vocalisation a centre-and-right position in the mix. Whilst at [01:55], there appears to be a focus on the electric guitar supported by the vocalisations, at [01:57] the pipe-organ-reminiscent sonority is reintroduced, followed by a clarinet-like instrument at [02:03] and a (most likely piccolo) flute at [02:12]. At [02:14] upper strings performing in their high register can be clearly identified and finally, at [02:27] it can be argued that the combined sonority is intended to represent a full orchestra and, as such, it may be posited that some brass instruments can be (subtly) inferred from the sound. On a final note, the increase in tempo I mentioned earlier continues throughout this second section until roughly [02:24] when a distinct ritardando can be identified, leading to a separation of the electric guitar at [02:27] to a high-pitched sustained tone seemingly positioned a seventh away from the tonal-core of the piece, which is then resolved at [02:33] by a concluding chord that is then sustained and slowly fades away until the piece's conclusion.

Based on this description, it is possible that the aforementioned choral-reminiscent vocals in conjunction with the synthesised orchestral instruments has led some reviewers to discuss the piece as containing operatic elements, and more specifically as 'operatic vocals' and as an 'operatic instrumental'. Similar to the discussion of piano's operatic signification potential, it is possible to frame these vocalisations as operatic through a variety of contexts. From the perspective of Western art music, a choir or a chorus understood as "a group of singers who perform together either in unison or, much more usually, in parts" (J. G. Smith and P. M. Young 2001, n.p.) is an ensemble with a long and complex history in relation to a variety of musical genres. That the chorus can be related to operatic contexts can be supported by James Smith and Percy Young's perspective that "the chorus […] played a structurally important role, dramatically and musically, in early opera" (J. G. Smith and P. M. Young 2001, n.p.). But also through the framing of its continuous role in operatic contexts e.g. "[i]n the late 17th century and in the 18th, the chorus flourished briefly in French operas by Lully, Rameau and their contemporaries, as it did also in English theatrical music of the Restoration, especially in the works of Purcell", as well as "[i]n Romantic opera the chorus played an increasingly important role [and] by the end of the 19th century there was no adequately appointed opera house without a resident chorus, just as today there are few major orchestras which do not possess an affiliated symphonic chorus" (J. G. Smith and P. M. Young 2001, n.p.). In addition, Savatage's utilisation of chorus-like vocalisations – noted by some reviewers as representing a typical compositional characteristic of the band – enables to suggest a parallel to the genre of the oratorio described as having "a greater emphasis on the chorus […] the musical forms and styles of the oratorio tend to approximate to those of opera in any given period" (Smither 2001, n.p.), which complements Halbscheffel's argument that most (early) rock operas' lack of focus on stage-dramaturgy elements suggests that the format is more akin to that of the oratorio (Halbscheffel 2013h, 423).

With that in mind, James Smith, Thomas Brawley and N. Lee Orr's (2012) overview of choral music points to opera as one of multiple genres which "use choral forces but are not customarily referred to as 'choral'" (J. G. Smith, Brawley, and Orr 2012, n.p.) e.g. the cantata (see also Orr 2014), its "nearly synonymous counterpart", the ode (Jurgensmeier 2014, n.p.), and even "[the] wave of choral symphonies in the wake of Beethoven" (J. G. Smith and P. M. Young 2001, n.p.), whereby in each of these contexts the respective authors also mention the potential involvement of the orchestra.

The audibility of a pipe organ together with an orchestra in some of sections of "Temptation Revelation" enables comparisons to pieces from the genre of the mass such as Leoš Janáček's *Mša glagolskaja* [Eng. *Glagolitic Mass*], Franz Schubert's *Mass No. 2 in G major*, or Anton Bruckner's *Missa solemnis, Bb minor,* WAB 29 to name a few (see also J. W. McKinnon et al. 2001), though the combination between orchestra, choir and organ is also found in orchestral suites (e.g. Gustav Holst's *The Planets, Mvt. 7 "Neptune The Mystic"*), requiems (e.g. Antonín Dvořák's *Requiem* in Bb minor, Op. 89) as well as tone poems (e.g. Richard Straus' *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Op. 30).

Before transitioning to the next example in this section, in order to avoid essentialising any element as only relatable to Western art music contexts, I will briefly echo Smith, Brawley and Orr's mention of choral music being present in multiple (yet unnamed) popular music contexts (2012, n.p.), and go a step further by pointing out some examples that help frame choruses in relevant contexts. McLeod's (2001) discussion of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" as one of several examples representing the overlap between operatic and popular music contexts, mentions the framing of the piece as featuring "over 180 vocal overdubs to achieve the sonic choral effects described in the liner notes as 'operatic vocals'" (Hodkinson, quoted in McLeod 2001, 192). Whilst Queen's approach of overdubbing sung lines is markedly different than "Temptation Revelation" in its likely synthesiser-derived effect of generating choral-reminiscent vocalisations, referring back to reviewers mentioning the band as a point of 'influence' on Savatage, it is possible that the highly canonised piece by the former artist to have informed the association between 'operatic' and the concept of a sonority produced by a large body of voices.

Furthermore, in more recent years, several examples of the utilisation of choruses in popular culture contexts from the realm of video games can also be brought into the discussion. I am offering these less as showcasing instances from which reviewers may have drawn context, but rather the appearance of chorus-related vocalisations in popular culture that can serve as ongoing contexts to the current discussion. Jeremy Soul's track "Dragonborn" from the 2011 video-game *The Elder Scrolls V – Skyrim* (Jeremy Soule 2020),[232] serves as an example of a (most likely male) choir employing quasi-shouted vocalisations at [00:07 – 00:29] – likely to draw comparison to one of the game's main mechanic of 'shouting' – together with an orchestral accompaniment. It is noticeable that at [00:36 – 00:50] the vocalisations shift to a more clearly describable choral delivery however due to the inability to identify the language in which the lyrics are delivered, the syllables and slightly elongated vowels remain the primary aspect through which the vocal work can be related to choral singing. In other words, the audible result of Soul's track is a series of short syllabic and vowel-centric vocalisations that can be framed as comparable, yet differing from Savatage's approach in terms of the vocalisation's sustained duration. Another notable comparison stems from the recent video game *Doom Eternal* (Mick Gordon 2020) the soundtrack of which is notable for the inclusion of a "heavy metal choir" (Besztocha 2020). Specifically, in tracks such as "Final Sin" (e.g. [01:38 – 02:00]) the soundtrack's composer Mick Gordon employs a series of aggressive growled/shouted vocalisations recorded by a choir consisting of heavy metal performers, whilst in tracks such as "Prayer of the Diminished" the

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[232] All references to video games can be found in the 'Ludography' section of this study's bibliography.

composer employs a chorus of voices delivered through 'guttural' bass singing, which strikes me as a combination between vocal overdubbing of a "main" voice as well as additional supporting voices. Whilst in both instances the choral delivery is much more syllabic and involving discernible lyrics of some kind than Savatage's broad vocalisation, I am highlighting Gordon's employment of a "heavy metal choir" as it represents not only the appearance of choral elements in a quasi-heavy metal context but also as a piece that more directly overlaps the otherwise disparate heavy metal and choir elements.

Vocal arrangements in Savatage's "Chance"

In contrast to Savatage's practice of employing choral-reminiscent and opera-relatable vocalisations as exemplified in the interpretation of "Temptation Revelation", it was noticeable that in some instances a track framed as operatic included mentions of a 'chorus' yet the exhibited vocal phenomenon bore little resemblance to the multiplicity of voices and their traditional opera connotations as described above. Instead, closer examination revealed (amongst the appearance of quasi-orchestral elements) the utilisation of compositional/arrangement techniques that seemingly draw from a broader Western art music context. An example of this phenomenon is Savatage's track "Chance" from their album *Handful of Rain* (Savatage 1994). I will examine Savatage's track outlining several aspects that may have been pointed to by reviewers when describing the song as operatic, whereby the utterances below help not only to exemplify said descriptions but will also serve as general guidelines that I will use to contextualise some of my observations after the initial outline of the track:

> "[The song "Chance"] will amaze and leave you speechless […] especially the part where the different choruses sound so operatic all together. It is very interesting how they managed to make some classical themes sound so heavy". (MA-Savatage-#64, 2009)

> "Savatage produced an album that is not only melodic and operatic in nature but ambitious and completely engrossing […] 'Chance' it doesn't get any better than this. The fact that this and many of the songs were co-written by Jon Oliva and Paul Oneil [sic] helps to explain why they sound like the music from Paul Oneil's [sic] future rock opera, Beethoven's last Night". (PA-Savatage-#96, 2005)

> "'Chance' [is] their one big rock opera type song on this album [.] There is even the first canon-passage on a Savatage album on it". (PA-Savatage-#99, 2006)

> "'Chance' starts off light, then gets heavy, before it ventures into opera territory, which I really don't dig". (MA-Savatage-#66, 2009)

The track "Chance" is the third song in Savatage's 1994 album *Handful of Rain* with a duration of seven minutes and forty-nine seconds, which the band utilises so as to construct a reasonably varied yet not overly complex song-structure. Broadly speaking the track can be divided into three sections, with one or more sub-sections, that can be summarised based on their presentation of the musical material: an opening piano and orchestra section, followed by a heavy metal-based middle section, and the track concluding with a polyphonic vocal section.

The first piano and orchestra section of the track commences with a vocal melody supported via a simple piano accompaniment [00:00 – 00:46], the latter consisting of widely-spaced chords in the lower register of the instrument and an arpeggiated melodic line in its upper register, followed by a short transition [0:46 – 1:06] that utilises what can be described as synthesised bells presenting chimes-like sonority. The next abruptly introduced sub-section [01:07 – 01:44] consists of two contrasting motifs: a longer motif utilising synthesised strings, concert piano and timpani – likely intended to partly mimic an orchestral sonority – that circles around the tone B (i.e. B–C–A–C) and concludes with a series of perfect forth jumps[233] between A and down to E which is resolved to B once again; this is contrasted with a shorter and significantly quieter motif on the chimes that focuses mostly on a single pitch. The appearance of the electric guitar at [01:44] signals a series of changes: one, the 4/4 meter of the section up to this point is retained, however, a shift occurs from predominantly eight notes to triplets-based rhythm in the larger ensemble; two, the perfect forth jump-aspect heard prior to the guitar's entry is retained though is now directly preceded by an extension based around an accented eight note repeated pitches motif appearing in a rhythmic pattern that subtly implies a change of meter when non has taken place.[234] Furthermore, this new combination changes in each iteration whereby the repeated pitches (and the perfect fours-based jumps) begin at a higher tone starting at B, C#, D and E, respectively. Whilst this is performed on a combination of the previously mentioned quasi-orchestra, timpani and electric guitar, at [01:57] the guitar breaks away from the unison pattern to play a simple recurring sixteenth note scalic passage (using the pitches B–C#–D–E–F# and then in reverse order), which after several repetitions [02:03] is simultaneously performed a third higher by an additional guitar sonority. The combined effects of the rising pitches, the increasingly faster rhythmic patterns (and implied metric change) introduced in this sub-section, as well as the additional instruments create not only a sense of urgency but also a sense of the ensemble and composition increasing in scale and complexity. The accumulating tension is resolved at [02:09] by a held tone by the guitar and the orchestra, though only briefly as at [02:15] the second (heavy metal-based) section of the track begins.

The middle section of the track [02:15 – 05:00] can be described as much more popular music-reminiscent, as it is based around a distorted electric guitar riff performed on the lower guitar-strings and alternating with brief power chords as well as vocal delivery utilising vocal distortion, all of which supported by a steady rock beat on the drums. In addition, it can be argued that this section contains more easily discernible verse and chorus sub-sections. After a brief introduction of the guitar riff [02:15 – 02:26], the same riff is utilised in the verse – identifiable by the appearance of different lyrics

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[233] Despite the aforementioned jumps to be based on a perfect forth intervals, the use of the timpani leaves some impression of a function V-I transition (i.e., G–C pitches in a C major tonality) whereby I would characterise such timpani strikes as comparable to the instrument's use in the conclusions of pieces by Mozart and especially Beethoven.

[234] The pattern accents the following eight notes over two 4/4 bars: downbeat of beat one, upbeat of beat two, downbeat of beat four, followed in the next bar by the upbeat of beat one, and then both eight notes of the third and fourth beat. Due to the accents creating the impression that every entry constitutes a new beat, one may be misled to read them as incomplete triplets (barring the last two pairs of eight notes) which when metrically counted, creates a quasi-6/4-meter impression.

with more expositional content as opposed to the chorus and its near identical lyrics in each iteration (A. F. Moore 2016c, 83) – whereby the riff's shift from single tone to larger chords includes subtle hints of synthesised brass instrument deeper in the mix (e.g. [02:27 – 02:28]). The brass instruments, as well as a piano, become more clearly audible during the pre-chorus sections (e.g. [02:48 – 03:07]), providing brief changes of the ensemble sonority during the sustained chords at the end of some guitar phrases. I would argue that the lines "Take a chance" appearing first at [03:11] constitute the song's short chorus, not only due to its repeated lyrics but also due the change to a different riff – in simple terms the 'chorus' riff begins with chords alternated with some low-string tones rather than the other way around – performed in unison by the electric guitar as well as the brass instruments. The brass' location is shifted from the back of the mix to a more central position,[235] with the guitars positioned wider in the extreme left and right portions of the mix, allowing for the former group to provide a certain 'depth' to the sound rather than the more subtle change in tone-colour as in the verse sections. After a full repetition of this verse, pre-chorus and chorus sections, [04:33] shifts back to a texture similar to that of the track's opening, namely a calmer piano and (clean) vocals-focused melodic line with brief country music-tinged upper register guitar interjections (e.g., on [04:42] and [04:48]). Yet another abrupt transition at [05:05] signals the end of the second section and the beginning of the final polyphonic vocals section of the piece.

The opening of this final section can be described as an orchestral-styled transition that reintroduces the synthesised strings and focuses on alternating singular low-pitched tones with repeated upper-register chords. In addition, the electric guitar appears to be heavily mixed in, providing a full-bodied and subtly 'jagged' sound due to the use of distortion, whilst the timpani found in the opening piano and orchestra section of the piece are now replaced by the drums and more specifically on alternating between the bass drum and the snare drums. At [05:24] the transition is now completed, leading to the guitar, bass and piano performing a repeated low-pitch eight note (G#), followed by a brief sixteenth note descending scalic motif [05:30 – 05:36] the staggered "two" renditions (most likely by the use of an echo effect) of which begin in the left channel and transition to the right channel of the mix, thus subtly hinting at the upcoming vocal polyphony. The vocals introduce a new triadic and arpeggiated melody on [05:36] with the lines "pictures at an exhibition", a likely intentional intertextual reference to Modest Mussorgsky's eponymous piece, or rather the recognisability of the piece's title in popular culture, including in progressive music circles e.g., Emerson, Lake and Palmer's highly canonised progressive rock interpretation of Mussorgsky's piece.[236] It is possible that the described elements are intended to be perceived as collectively signalling broadly classical-connotative elements from the intertextuality of the lyrics to the triadic and arpeggiated structure of the melody to the G# based bass line that can be likened to not only an ostinato but also as providing the lower voice of a quasi-contrapuntal series of intervals with the vocal melody.

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[235] I am referring here to a spatial change not to a change of the brass instruments' importance overall.

[236] To be clear, I am not suggesting that Savatage is referencing Emerson, Lake and Palmer – neither as a quotation nor as an intertextual allusion – but rather that similar to the latter, the former draws from the recognisability of the title of Mussorgsky's piece.

The rhythmically energetic, yet relatively restrained clean vocal line, shifts to utilising vocal distortion at [06:02 – 06:14] accompanied by a return of the piano and electric guitar with a series of wide low-pitched chords thus creating a much more intense (and aggressive) connotations of the overall sound, whilst the conclusion of some phrases (e.g. [06:06] and [06:12]) is now extended by a larger group of (likely overdubbed) vocal sonorities. The section reverts to a singular vocal line with the quasi-ostinato bass line at [06:14] but with two changes: the main vocal line is now delivered with more pronounced vocal distortion, and whilst the ostinato is still performed by the guitar, bass and piano, rather than singular note in unison, a faint higher pitch (likely an octave higher) can be heard though whether the instrument that performs it is the piano or perhaps the earlier chimes is difficult to ascertain.

At [06:26], the arrangement changes from a singular vocal line with ostinato to a four-part cyclical polyphonic vocal melody: the first two vocal parts are introduced at both ends of the mix – extreme left at [06:26] for the first group, and the extreme right at [06:39], whereby the voices are at first singular, becoming overdubbed a third apart upon the repetition of their respective melodic content. The remaining two vocal parts are introduced at [06:51] in the right side of the mix, and in [07:03] in the left side of the mix, though unlike the previous vocal parts these do not 'multiply' instead remaining singular. It should be noted that the respective parts perform melodic lines sharing a broad tonality, though the actual content is unique for each part.

The introduction of the final voice at [07:03] serves as a return to the line 'pictures at an exhibition', both in terms of lyrics as well as the respective melodic content, whereby shortly after at [07:17], the voices escalate to a conclusion that reintroduces the orchestral motif from [05:05] weaving vocal and instrumental content together i.e. the orchestral instrumental content is identical as at the beginning of this polyphonic section of the track, with the vocals being integrated (a singular vocal chord in relation to the lyrics 'Chance') at the beginning of each repetition of the orchestral motif; several repetitions of the chordal component of said phrase together with a ritardando signal the end of the section and the end of the track as a whole.

With this overview of the track's structure, arrangement, included musical groups etc., providing some context, I want to now return to the four quoted utterances and the aspects they broadly point to as 'operatic'. From the perspective of reviewer one (MA-Savatage-#64, 2009) 'operatic' aspects are identifiable in the 'choruses' of the track, which may be interpreted as discussing sections involving multiple groups of singers thus pointing to the polyphonic vocal section of the piece. Conversely, if one accepts the earlier discussion of the lines 'Take a chance' in the vocal/orchestral section of the track as representing the chorus of the piece, the reviewer may be referring to the multiple structural choruses of the track, in which case their framing of 'operatic' may incorporate the utilisation of extended instrumentation such as the (synthesised) brass instruments. This perspective partially overlaps with the suggestion by the fourth reviewer (MA-Savatage-#66, 2009) who describes the track as moving into 'opera territory' after a 'heavy' section the latter presumably matching with the section I refer to as the heavy metal-focused section of the track. Whereby, it can be argued that by separating the opening and its quasi-orchestral components as simply 'start[ing] off light', it is the

vocal work in the third section of the piece that is considered as signifying 'opera', though I do not exclude the possibility for the reviewer to consider the vocal and instrumental aspects as relevant.

Whilst these utterances discuss the final section of the track as operatic, thus reaffirming some earlier observations regarding (in the broadest sense) vocal choruses as indicators of operatic qualities, the third reviewer's (PA-Savatage-#99, 2006) description of a 'canon-passage' is of interest here. I am confident that when referring to a 'canon-passage' the reviewer is pointing to the same portion of the track containing the four-part polyphonic vocals [06:25 – 07:17], though such a description would be incorrect from the perspective of Western art music's definition of 'canon'. Whilst historical overviews of the term 'canon' such as by Alfred Mann, J. Wilson and Peter Urquhard highlight a long history of the term's utilisation as well as the complexity resulting partially from the many changes in terms of meaning inflection, it is the principle of imitation that is central to modern understanding of the term: "Strict ('canonic') imitation was so common and useful a procedure that the word 'canon' eventually came to mean the polyphonic texture of two or more voices created by the procedure, which is its primary meaning today" (Mann, J. Wilson, and Urquhard 2001, n.p.). As such, whilst the melodic lines performed by the four-part polyphonic vocal section share a common tonality, these parts are not based on imitation from a primary material thus making it highly unlikely that the section can be described as a canon as understood in Western art music contexts. Conversely from the perspective of the "fugue [being] inextricably linked with [the history] of canon" (Mann, J. Wilson, and Urquhard 2001, n.p.), the lack of thematic development after one or two statements of each vocal part's material, or the lack of a change of tonality so as to answer the initial voices' expositional statements, make it difficult to describe the section broadly as a fugue (see P. Walker 2001 for a historical overview of the fugue).

With that said, this clarification is not intended to denigrate the reviewer for utilising an incorrect term, but instead can serve as developing the argument in three different perspectives. First, the reviewer's borrowing from Western art music terminology suggests that what is being heard elicits a strong and potentially more directly connotative connection to the realm of the classical.[237] Indeed, if one leaves the terminological inaccuracies aside what is being pointed out by the reviewer is the polyphonic development of musical material at equal temporal intervals i.e., each voice enters roughly eight bars after the previous entry, the melodic content is in the same tonality resulting in predominantly consonant intervals. Furthermore, some of the melodic material is based on triadic jumps or ascending and descending lines giving them somewhat 'structured' feel that perhaps vaguely resembles one of Bach's fugues to said reviewer; in other words, a saturation of elements that broadly sound 'classical'.

Second, whilst the described section does not terminologically qualify as a canon, the material presented in the polyphonic vocal section is reminiscent of the melodic content underpinning the lyrics 'pictures at an exhibition' at [05:36], and enables the possibility to suggest that that the former (vocal section) draws some of its characteristics from the latter (melodic content). Comparing the

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[237] This principle is not an isolated occurrence as another reviewer has suggested that "Arrangements prove strong on [Savatage's *Handful of Rain*], especially on songs like 'Chance', featuring the first counter point harmonies in the history of rock" (PA-Savatage-#98, 2006).

section starting at [05:36] with the polyphonic vocal section starting at [06:26] several aspects strike me as similar: the first voice that begins the polyphonic section is based on an eight note arching melody the ascending part of which is highly reminiscent of the melodic content at [05:46] ('all the times believing'); the second voice of the polyphonic section entering at [06:39] is based on triadic quarter note movement reminiscent of the material from [05:36] ("pictures at an exhibition"); the third voice entering at [06:51] can be described as commencing from the same pitch (D#) on which the melodic line at [05:49] ends ("chance"), or even that the predominantly whole tone-steps motion that defines the third voice (e.g. D#–F#–G#/G#–F#–D#/D#–F#–G#/G#–A#) is reminiscent of the melodic composition at [05:46 – 05:50] ('all the time believing / that it now came down to nothing but this chance'); finally, the fourth voice is an exact replica of the initial "pictures at an exhibition" phrase thus requiring little additional description. With that in mind, whilst it is possible to suggest that a quasi-canon is, in fact, being constructed whereby the notion of imitation is related to deconstructing the initial 'pictures at an exhibition' line, this may stretch the definition a bit too much. Instead, I would suggest that what Savatage constructed and what the reviewer perceived as a canon, is more akin to a theme and variation, the latter constructed from the former's melodic and rhythmic elements utilising a polyphonic quasi-contrapuntal principle. Admittedly, such description does not 'roll of the tongue' as succinctly as describing the same section as a canon, though it provides an accurate description based on what takes place in the song thus matching (and adjusting) the classical-connotative implications that the reviewer's drawing from Western art music terminology may have suggested.

Third and finally, it should not be ignored that what this reviewer perceived as a 'canon' takes place during a section that others have framed as 'choruses', a much more direct point of connection to opera – both traditionally and as discussed throughout this chapter. This is of note as, even if other reviewers have brought the term 'classical' into their discussions of the song as a rock opera, the connections they suggest are fairly tentative e.g. the third reviewer's (PA-Savatage-#99, 2006) discussion of a 'canon-passage' simply points to the first appearance of such a perceived device in Savatage's output, which happens to take place in a rock opera-styled piece; whilst with regards to the first reviewer (MA-Savatage-#64, 2009), despite his/her comment's introducing of classical-connotative elements to appear immediately after the sentence in which he/she frames "Chance" as a rock opera, some ambiguity exists in stating 'it is interesting how they managed to make some classical themes sound so heavy'. Specifically, are the classical themes something not commonly found in rock operas thus making their incorporation interesting? As such, whilst I have shown that some connections to the realm of the classical take place in the piece itself, on the one hand I am hesitant in suggesting that reviewers present a causal and consistent relation between their discussions of opera and less directly opera-related classical techniques. On the other hand, I do not wish to disregard the connection as entirely arbitrary as it is possible that for some reviewers such 'classical themes' and 'canon-passages' have an equal relevance as does the role of the piano for others, an element absent in the direct vicinity of all four utterances' ascription of operatic qualities to the track.

Section conclusion

In summary, this section presented a series of music-interpretative close-readings that attempted to situate multi-voice vocal phenomena in Savatage's output, as derived from progressive metal discourse, in Western art music contexts. The interpretation of Savatage's "Temptation Revelation" showcased the band's inclusion of a vocal choir effect, that was contextualised in relation to several broader Western art music vocal forms with relevance to the world of opera. I extended the examination by offering a brief perspective towards more contemporary framings in which similar vocal choir-phenomena can be identified in popular culture settings. In addition, the interpretation of the track "Chance" highlighted a quasi-contrasting perspective in which the multi-voice phenomenon was achieved not via a 'vocal choir', but through a combination of both the use of a smaller vocal-ensemble arrangement as well as several compositional techniques/approaches that can collectively be described as evoking a 'classical' connotation. This was also extended by a more expansive engagement with the reviewers' framing of the track, including a specific utterance that implied the emergence of a 'canon' passage. Despite the focus of the interpretations was to extrapolate the incorporated auditive perspectives, I also specifically identified the instrumental aspects that appear in the track, such as the use of piano in "Temptation Revelation", and attempted to weave them into the resulting observations.

Overall, the ability to interpret Savatage's use of choral-reminiscent vocalisations as well as the classical connotative compositional/arrangement practices in relation to Western art music-related contexts offers a general parallel to Pölzl and Sackl's argument regarding the (progressive metal situated) metal opera and said format's more active drawing from the generic characteristics of traditional opera. As I outlined in this section's introduction, my pointing of this parallel serves not as a contradiction to the authors' framing, but rather as means of offering a complementary argument that showcases an additional way through which some progressive metal performers can be framed as more directly engaging with generic characteristic associated with traditional opera.

To that effect, before moving on, I want to briefly touch on the potential relevance of the presented observations beyond Savatage's output. For "Temptation Revelation", the presented parallels between vocal choirs and traditional operatic contexts allows to open similar inquiries to the ascription of 'operatic' characteristic through vocal aspects to bands such as Shadow Gallery, whose work is known less for rock operas and more for its concept albums. For said band, some of the polyphonic vocals (i.e. reminiscent of a vocal quartet rather than a choir) the band utilises in its (structural) choruses can be compared to examples such as "the designation 'coro' was sometimes used in […] early [Italian] operas to refer to an ensemble which, although it functioned dramatically as a chorus, was composed of only one singer for each part" (J. G. Smith and P. M. Young 2001, n.p.). With regards to the track "Chance", despite the track to not emerge from albums discussed as representing the rock opera format, similar relations between 'operatic' and classical-connotative techniques (e.g., a continuous bass ostinato) can be observed in tracks such as Savatage's "The Hourglass" in their concept album *The Wake of Magellan*, thus suggesting that these types of elements may further continue the parallels to Pölzl and Sackl's argument. That said, such argumentations have to be properly investigated before more concrete relations to metal opera contexts should be added.

8.4 Singular operatic vocals – towards a classical framing

Having discussed a variety of perspectives relating to multi-voice sonorities as emerging from ascriptions of 'operatic' qualities, I want to devote the next section on exploring in more detail how ascriptions of 'operatic singing' may be understood, and especially focusing on the delivery of an individual, rather than a group of singers. The investigation of the individual 'operatic' quality in relation to vocal phenomena is somewhat 'trickier' than the previously mentioned multi-voice phenomena as (similar to the examination of the term 'symphonic'), despite the Western art music-interpretable component invoked in the name, 'operatic vocals' has attained a fairly distinct connotation in relation to popular music contexts. More specifically, both heavy metal and progressive rock contexts employ the term 'operatic' and, as briefly mentioned in the overview of usages of the term, there appear to be different singers identified to this effect.

From this perspective, the framing of this section requires a small alteration in order to more accurately address this conceptualisation. First, I will present a brief overview of academic and journalistic texts that have engaged with the term 'operatic vocals'; second, this will be followed by a brief attempt to synthesise the characteristics that are likely to be invoked when applying the term, through a limited comparison between several heavy metal singers. This limitation is introduced so as to allow considering a wider selection of vocal techniques, as well as means of counterbalancing the emphasis on progressive rock perspectives in the 'symphonic' investigation. Third, with the synthesised 'operatic' characteristics in mind, I will examine the delivery of Crimson Glory's late lead singer Midnight, as well as offer perspectives as to how the performer's delivery can be contextualised as paralleling Western art music contexts and practices. Finally, this will be supplemented by a shorter interpretation of a piece by Shadow Gallery as means of comparing and contrasting the observations.

Operatic vocals in progressive music and heavy metal discourses: a critical overview

In order to offer an interpretation of what album reviewers frame as 'operatic vocals', it is worth considering how pre-existing journalistic and academic discourses discuss this phenomenon. The following overview will deal with literature from both progressive rock and heavy metal contexts, and will attempt to balance the search for relevant context with the presentation of critical perspectives.

Beginning with the examination of operatic vocals framings in metal culture, it can be argued that at least two (and not so easily differentiated) meanings can be identified. Both scholarly and journalistic writings refer to various (predominantly male) vocalists as utilising operatic vocals. Examples of academic studies include Weinstein's framing of Ronnie James Dio's vocal delivery as an example of heavy metal's broad category of "operatic voice [but not] pure toned" (Weinstein 2000 [1991], 26), a notion that is echoed in Michelle Phillipov's discussion of 1980s NWOBHM development and its "almost operatic singing style popular in heavy metal at the time" (Phillipov 2012a, 75). Further discussions include Andrew Cope who mentions on multiple occasions the operatic vocals of Rob Halford from Judas Priest, referring to them as a "central feature [of the band]" (Cope 2010, 111); Joseph Blesin who discusses Bruce Dickinson's "use of operatic vocal production" (Blesin 2010, 314; see also Fast 2014, n.p.); and Keith Kahn-Harris comments briefly that "bands such as Ulver and Arcturus have incorporated […] operatic singing […] into their music" (Kahn-Harris 2007, 133).

Journalistic book-length studies suggest a somewhat different selection of performers as exemplifying operatic characteristics such as Sharpe-Young's encyclopaedic book on heavy metal which mentions Eddie 'Messiah' Marcolin (lead singer of Candlemass) as having a "near-operatic vocal style" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 248), through King Diamond's singing which the author described as "shrill operatics" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 237), as well as Queensrÿche's initial lead singer Geoff Tate as having an "operatic style" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 314). In contrast, Christe's book outlines "[t]he drum machines and operatic vocals that sounded so bizarre when introduced by Celtic Frost in the late 1980s had become standard issue for progressive black metal" (Christe 2004, 282), and presents several instances in which extreme metal bands have incorporated operatic vocals such as "the Prague group Master's Hammer, which ventured from operatic black metal toward modernist electronic music" (Christe 2004, 254), or the inclusion of "operatic vocalist Attila Csihar from the Hungarian group Tormentor" as a session musician for the recording of Mayhem's *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas* album from 1993 (Christe 2004, 275).

That said, there are clear overlaps between the two types of studies e.g. Cope and Blesin's perspectives are paralleled by Christe's discussion of the "operatic vocal styles of Iron Maiden and Judas Priest" (Christe 2004, 136) as well as with Wagner's brief comments on Halford's singing as having an "operatic influence" (J. Wagner 2010, 16, 17). Sharpe-Young's framing of Marcolin is mirrored by another journalistic encyclopaedic study on heavy metal by Daniel Bukszpan (Bukszpan 2003, 37), and Wagner's pointing to the "operatic quality" of Kristoffer Rygg's vocals from Arcturus (J. Wagner 2010, 155–56) somewhat echoes Kahn-Harris' observation. This overlap between performers may serve as a useful point of comparative examination, however, a regrettable shared characteristic is the lack of context as to what is meant when describing a singer as 'operatic' in both academic as well as journalistic descriptions. In turn, this illustrates the lack of terminological clarity on the matter, a critical perspective I share with Susanna Mesiä and Paolo Ribaldini (2015) who attempt to develop a terminological compendium on vocal phenomena in heavy metal singing;[238] I will return to this definitional challenge shortly.

The other major category of metal-related operatic vocals focuses on a (comparatively) newer phenomenon, namely that of female vocalists with Western art music training in relation to symphonic metal and gothic metal genres e.g. Tarja Turunen (former lead singer of the Finnish symphonic metal band Nightwish) is framed by Sharpe-Young as the prototype of an "operatic female lead vocal[ist]" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 276; also Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 386) or Simone Simons from the Dutch metal band Epica (Sharpe-Young 2007, 279). That the principle exemplified by Turunen and Simons is considered a broad phenomenon can be supported by discussions in other academic texts e.g. Weinstein's framing of the changing gender norms in contemporary heavy metal culture, points out that "[m]ainstream metal's women, mainly in symphonic metal, resemble classical music singers with

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[238] For additional publications engaging with vocal techniques in heavy metal see Smialek, Depalle and Brackett (2012a, 2012b) which respectively presents a spectrographic analysis-focused approach and a discussion of vowel formants, as well as Heesch (2019) who focuses on the vocal technique of Angela Gossow (former singer of the Swedish death metal band Arch Enemy) and specifically on furthering the co-relation between voice, aggression and gender aspects.

their long flowing dresses and their strong well-trained soprano voices" (Weinstein 2016, 20); or Berkers and Schaap's (2018) large-scale gender study which echoes the perspective on "bands like Within Temptation, Nightwish and Evanescence [i.e.] bands fronted by women who sing in an operatic style, and whose voices are in the soprano or mezzo-soprano range" though an important comment added by the authors is that such performers "have been genre-classified as 'female fronted metal'" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 30–31).

I place emphasis on Berkers and Schaap's discussion as, in my opinion, it presents an important continuation to Mesiä and Ribaldini's critical remark that "operatic voices […] are left out of [heavy metal] canons" (Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 386). Berkers and Schaap's discussion of female fronted metal (drawing points from a journalistic piece that articulates aspects of the problem) argues that "bands with female singers are placed into this genre based on gender similarities, ignoring differences in musical style" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 31) which is a significant issue of (often negatively) gendering certain metal genres, yet can also be related to the smaller-scale context of the role of 'classical training' in relation to operatic vocals.

Taking as an example Vibeke Stene, the former lead vocalist of the Norwegian symphonic/gothic metal band Tristania, the singer is described in the band's website as having "operatic vocals" (Tristania n.d.). However, the lack of academic investigations on the band as well as the lack of plentiful interview-examples more specifically discussing Stene's supposed classical training[239] makes it difficult to determine whether her work is labelled as 'operatic' due to training similar to that of Turunen/Simons or conversely due to the effects of being associated with other 'female fronted metal' singers and related gendered perspectives e.g. Berkers and Schaap's text mentions Tristania, together with Norwegian gothic metal band Theatre of Tragedy, as having contributed to "[the] combination of growling male and 'angelic' female vocals" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 73). To be clear, my interest here is not to dismiss or devalue Stene's work in any way, nor do I call for the distinguishing between 'properly trained' operatic singers and those that are approximating the vocal delivery or range of the soprano/mezzo-soprano voice. Rather, similar to Mesiä and Ribaldini, I advocate for a very much needed further research on female participation in metal music, but also to be mindful that reiterating (at times without providing sufficient evidence) that most, if not all, female vocalists are, or sound as if they are, 'classically trained'[240] may

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[239] I located one interview in which a band member described Stene as the only member of Tristania with Western art music training (vampster.com 2001b), which whilst sufficient evidence leaves much context out of the discussion. Most broadly accessible online sources seemingly echo Wikipedia's article on Stene which features unreliable sources (i.e., interviews transcribed in a forum post) in terms of outlining the singer's musical training and interest in Western art music.

[240] An example illustrating my point is a paper by Hillier (2018) whose examination of symphonic metal's music cover-practices in relation to Western art music, presents interesting points regarding operatic vocal delivery in metal. However whilst the author refers to the sound of Bruce Dickinson and Rob Halford as "pseudo-operatic" (Hillier 2018, 64) – a statement that can be seen as 'correct' from the perspective of Western art music vocal delivery practices – Hillier's argument places in the same context "a female operatic singer" and "the power of the voice that is essential for projection in large opera theaters" (Hillier 2018, 64), thus implicitly equating the broad category of female operatic singers with Western art music traditions. As Hillier's only example of a performer in this category is "Turunen, the classically trained opera singer" (Hillier 2018, 70), Turunen becomes the de facto example of any female operatic singer, with or without actual training.

inadvertently strengthen the observation that "female musicians and vocalists [...] adher[e] to operatic or classical vocal, characteristics traditionally coded as feminine in the overall musical canon" (Jocson-Singh, quoted in Berkers and Schaap 2018, 15). In other words, being more accurate in such descriptions may aid in demystifying the implied association women and having Western art music vocal-training as eligibility factor in their involvement as vocalists in metal bands; or even more importantly may hopefully contribute in women considering taking up non-feminine connotated instrumental-roles instead.

My division of these phenomena as per the gender of the performer is not an arbitrary decision, rather – referring back to my comment on difficulties in distinguishing between the two – it hints at a generally observable principle regarding the culture framing of male metal singes as operatic, whilst female performers are described as operatic *and* classically trained. To be clear, this division is not universal as the examined literature features some examples that (however tentatively) suggest connections between male singers and classical singing techniques. For example, Wagner's discussion of Geoff Tate's vocal style suggests a combination of training and familiarity with opera singing techniques through his family: "[f]ormal training with Maestro David Kyle in Tate's early days had sharpened his talent. His mother had also sung professionally, and his cousin sang in the Cincinnati Opera" (J. Wagner 2010, 49). News articles drawing from Bruce Dickinson's autobiography present a similar, albeit questionable, connection by describing the singer as utilising a notebook of voice-training tips, left over by a former partner with some form of classical training (Magnotta 2017). And Sharpe-Young's book mentions on multiple occasions that, during the late part of Black Sabbath's career (i.e. early 2000s), "[Ozzy Osbourne] was being coaxed through the shows by Ron Anderson, a retired opera singer, who monitored Ozzy's diet and lifestyle and even spoke directly to him on stage through an earpiece" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 30). This activity does not imply the adoption of classical singing techniques, but perhaps access to the same breathing techniques/off-stage precautions to preserve one's voice.

However, arguing that the difference stems from gendering of certain practices can be supported by, at least, two examples that express negative associations between male performers and classical singing techniques. First, during a 2012 performance, an exchange between Iron Maiden's initial singer, Paul Di'Anno, and a member of the audience, led the former to (supposedly) exclaimed "I don't sing opera. [That's] too fucking easy, and I'm not gay" (blabbermouth.net 2012, n.p.). And second, one of the participants in Melissa Cross's metal-singing instructional DVD *The Zen of Screaming 2* (2007) – Lou Koller from the US hardcore punk band Sick of It all – mentions that upon sharing the idea of going to vocal lessons (presumably with his peers), some would quasi-tease him by suggesting that "they [will] teach you how to sing operatic [sic]" or that "they [will] put you in a corset", the latter of which Koller finds bizarre and interprets as a practice that may "have had something to do with opera training in the old days" (Koller, in Korycki, Denise 2007, timecode [00:29:28 – 00:29-42]). It is unclear as to whether the references to wearing a 'corset' indicated associating such singing with women, as per the item of clothing's feminine connotation. Or conversely, whether the peers with which Koller conversed were addressing Cross' programme specifically, seeing as she is female and some of her experience as a singer and coach comes from Western art music contexts

(Singers.com n.d.). However, the issue may also stem from a broader conflict between vocal coaching as associated with formal/classical training practices and the 'naturalistic' perception that there is "emotion in the screams" as outlined by Trevor Phipps, lead singer of the US metalcore band Unearth (Phipps, in Korycki, Denise 2007, timecode [00:03:55 – 00:04:13]). As such, even if we disregard Di'Anno's comments as homophobia, the implication that 'sing[ing] opera' represents an effeminising act can be identified in equal parts in the reactions of Koller's peers as mentioned in Cross' instructional DVD. In both instances it can be suggested that a certain hesitation can be identified in relation to male performers engaging with 'operatic' vocal delivery when perceived as stemming from Western art music, itself a feminine connotative element as mentioned earlier.

From a different perspective, several journalistic books frame the emergence of operatic female performers as a result of early efforts by bands such as Celtic Frost and specifically their album *Into the Pandemonium*. Christe frames the album as "joining thrash with choirs" and as recorded with "classical musicians and opera singers" (Christe 2004, 197), whilst Wagner expands on this argument by describing the "operatic track 'Tristesses de la Lune' presaged future gothic doom pioneers Paradise Lost and My Dying Bride, with its female opera vocals" (J. Wagner 2010, 120) as well as suggests that modern experimental metal's interest in "female vocals and operatic elements, all point […] back to Frost" (J. Wagner 2010, 124). Wagner also discusses bands such as Believer whose track "'Dies Irae' took characteristics of bands as disparate as Kansas, Celtic Frost […] and foreshadowed the operatic approach of future metal bands such as Therion and Nightwish" (J. Wagner 2010, 155) and involves "[Violinist Scott Laird's] sister, who was opera singer at the time" (J. Wagner 2010, 156) whereby "Dies Irae" is discussed as a track exemplifying the broadly defined "opera metal"[241] genre, the supposed pioneers of which are the band Therion (J. Wagner 2010, 8, 235).

Whilst Christe and Wagner's contributions are of note in their attempt to historically situate an aspect pertaining to metal's Western art music-transgressive practices, and more specifically the incorporation of singing techniques derived from traditional opera, the phenomenon they are describing is implied to be somewhat separate from the symphonic metal bands with operatic female lead singers. This can be supported by observing that Christe's publication, as a whole, does not include symphonic metal bands, whilst Wagner's book mentions Nightwish in passing on several occasions, though beyond the aforementioned framing of Believer's track as predating Nightwish's own operatic-developments, there are no attempts to further contextualise the work of other symphonic metal bands featuring operatic lead singers. Also unaddressed are Turunen and the broad cultural perception of her role as amongst (if not *the*) first female operatic singers in metal contexts, whereby Wagner instead re-contextualises Nightwish as "sometimes labelled a progressive act, but more rightly a grandiose power/gothic metal band – an extremely successful one, at that" (J. Wagner

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[241] My use of quotation marks around the term 'opera metal' is not intended to dismiss its relevance but to acknowledge that although also used by Sharpe-Young regarding Therion as "operatic metal" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 356), this is not as widely spread naming convention as, for example, symphonic metal or even neo-classical metal. That said, a search of the MA website reveals the inclusion of just over twenty artists in which the terms "opera" or "operatic" appear in relation to their genre descriptor, whereby the German series of compilations *Opera Metal* by Golden Core records (Discogs.com n.d.d) also contributes to the argument that such terms have some broader relevance.

2010, 315), a statement that can be interpreted as somewhat negatively co-relating a female led-band with a 'mainstream as inauthentic' perspective. To be clear, I am not advocating for canonising Turunen's role in relation to discussions of operatic female vocals, and indeed neither of these authors intended to provide an all-encompassing overview of the term 'operatic'. However, by simply mentioning bands such as Nightwish and failing to contextualise their relation to genres such as 'opera metal' or even as contributing to the continuously changing understanding of the term 'operatic vocals' in relation to metal,[242] the perspectives of authors such as Christe and Wagner become interpretable not as 'simply' filling in historical gaps, but also as presenting revisionist tendencies that (whether intentionally or not) separate early 'opera metal' bands (e.g. Celtic Frost or Therion) from later symphonic metal bands with operatic lead singers such as Epica or Nightwish.[243]

With regards to progressive music-related contexts, Macan suggests that "despite the style's ties with classical music, the progressive rock lead singer seldom resorts to the rick chest tones and heavy vibrato of singers of Italian opera" (Edward Macan 1997, 39); however, there appears to be both academic as well as lay definitions of progressive singers which refer to singing style as 'operatic'. From the academic side, Klaus Näumann (2016a) briefly touches on the "influences from opera singing combined with a smooth transition to Italo-Pop" in the vocal work of bands such as "Area, J.E.T. or the titles 'La donna e il bambino' by Dalton or later 'Amico di Ieri' by Le Orme" (Näumann 2016a, 13n10).[244] He further points to Lambe's journalistic book on progressive rock which, in turn, frames the "operatic tenor Francesco di Giacomo of Banco del Mutuo Soccorso" and praises the band's music as "work[ing] far better sung in Italian, where the full operatic flavour and romanticism is allowed to shine through" (Lambe 2011, 151). Beyond these, other journalistic/lay descriptions can also be identified, for example, in sites such as Rolling Stone who have mentioned bands such as Van Der Graaf Generator and their *Pawn Hearts* (1971) album in which "Peter Hammill showed off his operatic chops" as well as point to the French band Magma whose album *Mëkanïk Dëstruktïẁ Kömmandöh* (1973) is described as a "manic opera" (Dolan et al. 2015, n.p.), whilst a thread in PA's own forums briefly mentions Annie Haslam having "studied under a classical instructor for a time" (Progarchives.com 2011).

Returning to a recurring perspective in this study, the positioning of symphonic metal in relation to progressive metal contexts, Lambe's work frames symphonic metal as one of the metal genres influenced by progressive (rock) aesthetic whereby the author highlights bands "fronted by

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[242] Sharpe-Young provides an example here in stating that "Nightwish pushed to the fore the idea of operatic female lead vocals, until then restricted to the avant-garde and experimental" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 276).

[243] As a quick aside, Cope's musicological discussion of heavy metal includes a discussion of Rob Halford's "operatic approach to heavy metal vocals", with the author suggesting that the combination between "deep vocal chants double-tracked with high-tessitura lines [and] banshee wails" in some of Judas Priest's early output "provid[ed] a blueprint for the theatrical vocal parts of bands as widely ranging as Cradle of Filth and Nightwish" (Cope 2010, 113; see also 117). Despite the somewhat different terminology used in Cope's quotes, this provides a contrasting argument that, genealogy aside, situates bands such as Nightwish in relation to core metal-specific characteristics contributing to the framing of 'operatic vocals'.

[244] Ger. Orig. "Es hat für mich den Anschein, als ob der italienische Gesang im Progressive Rock u.a. Einflüsse aus dem Operngesang mit einem fließenden Übergang zu Italo-Pop in sich vereinigt (siehe z.B. die Gruppen Area, J.E.T. bzw. die Titel 'La donna e il bambino' von Dalton oder später 'Amico di Ieri' von Le Orme)".

women who sometimes sing in operatic style" (Lambe 2011, 146–47), a statement that provides as little clarification or contextualisation as that of the heavy metal-related discussions mentioned above. One issue that emerges in relation to Lambe's discussion is that whilst the aforementioned quote frames female operatic singers in symphonic metal contexts as a notable type of contemporary genres influenced by progressive aesthetic, a few pages later the author points out that "[i]n Progressive Rock the vocalist often – but by no means always – takes a back seat" (Lambe 2011, 149). As well as that one way for a band to ensure "a strong vocalist was to hire a woman" clarifying that "some singers [may] have won their places entirely on the basis of sex appeal, but in an environment like Progressive Rock [sic] where the music comes first, the voice takes precedence" (Lambe 2011, 152).[245] I highlight this combination of perspectives as it can be interpreted as somewhat contradictorily framing female-led symphonic metal bands, not to mention presenting a questionable alignment between women's contribution being predominantly important as vocalists.

A similar perspective is presented by the academic study of Hegarty and Halliwell which also relate symphonic metal bands with female lead singers with operatic singing characteristics:

> "This direction of metal progressiveness stands out, though, for featuring female vocalists within bands. The style of voice and dramatic presentation emphasizes the connection to gothic metal, and is much more sexualised than female vocalists of progressive bands in the 1970s. There is still a strong suggestion of folk vocal styles, along with hints of operatic style which were common to metal from its inception. The role of the female singer in symphonic metal is often as a counterpart to the lead guitar or within a duo of singers [.] This counterpart is substantial, though. Far from making the female figure ancillary, it puts the female singer at the centre, as she alternates between fighting and communing with the metal instrumentation, representing a figure of excess both within and outside of the whole".
> (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 267)

Several aspects related to this quote should be addressed. First, the quote exemplifies the authors' more reflexive consideration of the relation between the depiction of femininity as a tool in subverting gender norms through Sharon Den Adel's live performance and the band's "attempt to alter the notion that rock is an exclusively male preserve" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 268). However, Hegarty and Halliwell do not quantify what constitutes a 'much more sexualised' dramatic presentation, nor is the significance of this aspect elaborated on. Second, whilst I agree with their observation that women receive a central role through their involvement in symphonic metal bands, the authors do not properly explore the contradictory implications of the aforementioned (male) growling and (female) 'angelic' voices when claiming that a female singer takes a centre position in multi-vocal instances. Third, a lack of contextualisation can be identified in this quotation similar to my overview of heavy metal research/journalism, namely, female singers are described as 'operatic' without much detail as to what that entails, whereby the claim that this singing style is "common to metal from its inception"

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[245] The author's mention of a female singer's sex appeal is not an offhand remark, but rather a part of his quasi-contextualisation of the perspective that "[w]henever a band hires a female singer, they are required to sidestep the typical taunt that 'she's only in the band for her looks'" (Lambe 2011, 152).

is not supported by any reference, nor does it constitute a sufficient historical contextualisation of the involvement of female operatic singers.

Fourth and finally, the quote is also associated with a footnote that whilst correctly pointing out "a rare example of a female musician who is not a vocalist in this period", the musicians in question – Eva Gardner (the first bassist of The Mars Volta) and Chloe Alper (a multi-instrumentalist one of several vocalists in Pure Reason Revolution) – are segregated as "should […] be considered differently to female singers in prog bands" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 282n3). Whilst it is possible to consider the framing of these performers as "rare example[s]" to be a poor choice of words regarding the limited visibility of women in progressive music, the manner through which the general argument is brought forward is problematic. On the one hand, by focusing on briefly summarising the work of female operatic singers the authors implicitly strengthen Lambe's perspective that in progressive music the voice is only important in relation to female performers, itself a problematic gendering of music practices. Yet on the other hand, Hegarty and Halliwell balance between the negative polarities of what Helen Davies identifies as the practice of representing the appearance of women in popular music genres as "a perpetual novelty" (Davies, quoted in Strong 2011, 402); and the exclusion of an already small group of progressive female instrumental performers, instead incorporating an extensive analysis of a highly canonised band such as Dream Theater.

This broad yet by no means exhaustive overview has hopefully helped to contextualise the different meanings of the term 'operatic singing' as employed in both heavy metal and progressive music academic and journalistic contexts. Given that I was unable to locate a direct definition as to what academic or journalistic writers imply when applying the term operatic, and especially outside of the contexts where formal vocal training is not a factor in the singer's performance persona, in the following section I will attempt to outline a limited definition based on a series of characteristics extrapolated from the previously mentioned academic/journalistic discussions of operatic vocals.

Synthesising operatic vocals characteristics

In order to reach a general description of the 'operatic vocals' practice, I will attempt to synthesise a horizon of expectations by extrapolating and comparing information from other reoccurring characteristics; however, before I engage with my discussion, I want to briefly outline two important limitations. First, out of the examined literature, it was heavy metal-focused sources that provided a more saturated potential for extrapolating information; thus, the presented observations will be of more benefit to those 'operatic' singers that the MA progressive metal community has identified, including the Crimson Glory example discussed in the next section. In an attempt to situate my observations more broadly, however, I introduced an additional perspective by briefly examining a track by Shadow Gallery ("Don't Cry, Just Remember"), as an example of 'operatic' ascription that is shared and more inclusive to the PA-based members of the progressive metal community. A lack of more thorough engagement with progressive rock's framing of 'operatic' is a regrettable omission that causes the discussion to appear somewhat one-sided, however, I consider it an acceptable 'flaw' that balances the focus on 'symphonic rock' contexts in the previous chapter.

Second, the discussion will draw from characteristics observable to male performers-focused examples rather than from both genders. This is not done as means of segregating female operatic singers but rather as reflecting the majority of performers in this study that have been ascribed operatic vocal tendencies are male. Nevertheless, given that the next section's interpretation will offer an interpretation situating Crimson Glory's male singer in close proximity to Western art music contexts, this can be framed as beneficial to undermining the 'classical as feminine' aspect outlined earlier; furthermore, in future research I hope to expand my perspectives by also drawing from aspects pertaining to female operatic. Due to these limitations, the following summary makes no claims in providing a comprehensive overview of characteristics contributing to the framing of 'operatic vocals'. Rather, it is an attempt to offer some considerations so as to move away from unclear utilisation of the term, and hopefully leading to further research on more precisely exploring the phenomenon.

Based on the examination of literature's somewhat indirect framings of 'operatic singers', I noted the following performance characteristics: the employment of high-pitched vocals, the use of vocal effects such as the vibrato, as well as vocal virtuosity,[246] which I will briefly expand on. Having referenced the work of Mesiä and Ribaldini, my observations (and later on, the music interpretative close reading) will utilise the vocal terminology established in their 2015 publication.

The association between high-pitched vocals and the 'operatic' adjective can be extrapolated in relation to direct descriptions such as King Diamond's vocals framed by Sharpe-Young as "shrill operatics" (Sharpe-Young 2007, 237), or Wagner's framing of Geoff Tate's vocals as "having "out-wailed Maiden's 'air-raid siren' Bruce Dickinson" (J. Wagner 2010, 49); but also through indirect means such as Sharpe-Young's mentioning of comparisons between Tate's vocals and "primetime British metal" during the early 1980s (Sharpe-Young 2007, 314); or Wagner framing Tate as continuing the "high-register singing" that Bruce Dickinson or Rob Halford (supposedly) established (J. Wagner 2010, 49). Halford's approach is briefly discussed by Cope in relation to Judas Priests' early album *Sin After Sin* which "displays Halford's range and eclectic style, 'Here Come the Tears' contains deep vocal chants double-tracked with high-tessitura lines, whilst 'Dissident Aggressor' features banshee wails" (Cope 2010, 113).

Despite some authors' attempts to present historical continuities (e.g. between Dickinson/Halford and Tate) there are at least two issues with assuming that high-pitched vocals are the exclusive characteristic that leads to the ascription of operatic characteristics: first, in the literature I examined singers in the glam metal genre are rarely described as having operatic vocal qualities despite adhering to the general description of high-pitched vocals, not to mention a fair share of exaggerated stage behaviour. Second, other singers described as operatic – such as Ronnie James Dio or Eddie 'Messiah' Marcolin – sing in significantly lower pitches[247] than King Diamond or Geoff

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[246] For this discussion I will purposefully disregard any mention of theatricalised components within literature, as such perspectives in relation to progressive metal will be discussed in the eponymous chapter of this study.
[247] Arguably the lowest-pitched vocalist I encountered (indirectly) referred to as operatic is Rammstein's Till Lindemann, as discussed in the journalistic book by Wiederhorn and Turman: "Rammstein's six albums are packed with militaristic guitar riffs, operatic vocals, melodic keyboards". Though as the authors mention Rammstein "add[ed] a new level of theatrics to industrial metal" (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 402), thus it is possible that said theatrical factor may have had a substantial role in the ascription of operatic qualities.

Tate, thus suggesting that a different characteristic is at play here. Exploring a selection of tracks that represent singers that the aforementioned literature frames as 'operatic' such as Dio ("Holy Diver" from *Holy Diver*, 1983), Marcolin ("Bewitched" from *Nightfall*, 1987), Tate ("I Don't Believe in Love" from *Operation: Mindcrime*, 1988) and even Dickinson ("Run to the Hills" from *The Number of the Beast*, 1982),[248] it is noticeable that whilst employing varying degrees of vocal distortion[249] throughout the tracks, these singers do not consistently utilise growling/grunt techniques common in extreme metal genres (see Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 388). Rather they employ either the modal part of their voice, either through the speech register, head register or a combination of both, thus resulting in a rounder and full-bodied sound. More importantly, a characteristic shared by all performers is the utilisation of vibrato applied at either the end of phrases or sustained notes e.g., "Holy Diver" at [01:50], "Bewitched" at [00:40], "I Don't Believe in Love" at [00:28], and "Run to the Hills" at [01:13], thus allowing to suggest that said aspect can be related to the framing of 'operatic' characteristics.

A few clarifications should be made here: first, Mesiä and Ribaldini's aforementioned attempt at systematically exploring heavy metal vocals suggests that in the "most successful and well-known traditional HM [heavy metal] repertoire [...] *distortion*, *vibrato*, and *twang* are very common and are often combined with the desired register to create the trademark sound of a successful HM [heavy metal] singer" (Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 391, italics in original, square-brackets clarifications added). Thus, it is possible that in addition to the aforementioned and/or unrelated elements of vocal delivery, describing singers as 'operatic' encompasses a semiotic component that aligns said singer's employment of auditive signifiers of traditional heavy metal aesthetic. In other words, similar to my earlier argument that discussions of rock opera may associate the term with its traditional opera counterpart, it is possible that at a certain point in time, to some observers the description of an 'operatic heavy metal singer' implicitly signified adherence to the tradition of heavy metal singing during the genre's earlier periods. In addition, I mention the appearance of vocal distortion to avoid misrepresenting the otherwise 'clean' vocal delivery approach (i.e., not growled as in extreme metal contexts) that is potentially associated with the ascription of operatic characteristics.

Second, Mesiä and Ribaldini differentiate between the "operatic voices [of] former Nightwish vocalist Tarja Turunen" as representing vocal techniques drawing from Western art music tradition, and the phenomenon "loud chest register sound [...] conventionally called *belting*" (Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 390, italics in original) to which the authors point to Dickinson's song "Tears of the Dragon" (timecode [01:19]) as an example. From this perspective, I acknowledge that my mentioning of a full-bodied sound produced by, amongst others, Marcolin should not be equated with formal

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[248] It is important to comment on the reproducibility of these observation by members of both archives. MA reviewers of the bands Iron Maiden, Queensrÿche, Candlemass and Mercyful Fate/King Diamond fairly consistently (though not universally!) refer to the vocalists of each band as 'operatic'. Whilst Candlemass and Mercyful Fate/King Diamond are not present in the PA database, bands included in said website such as Iron Maiden and Queensrÿche are also discussed as 'operatic singers'.

[249] Mesiä and Ribaldini suggest that there exists a "clear difference between *distortion* and *grunt*: although they both produce very aggressive timbres, the former is an effect and still leaves audible the fundamental pitch of the tone, whereas the latter may be considered as separate from vocal registers, and doesn't have a fundamental pitch, therefore producing sounds which are not really 'tuned' (Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 391).

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Western art music techniques producing a comparable sonority e.g., bel canto singing (see Jander and Harris 2001). Similarly, it goes without saying that whilst "vibrato as a device can be found throughout Western music with descriptions dating from early medieval sources to the present day" and furthermore that "[i]n opera abundant use is made of the measured vibrato for dramatic effect until the very end of the 19th century" (Moens-Haenen 2001, n.p.),[250] the effect by no means connotates exclusively Western art music, and can be identified in a variety of genres. This is as exemplified by the study by Guilherme Pecoraro, Daniella Curcio and Mara Behlau (2013) who compared the variability rate of opera, Brazilian country as well as rock, whereby the authors analysed the vibrato employed by established hard rock/heavy metal singers such as the aforementioned Dickinson and Dio, Ian Gillan as well as Jeff Scott Soto (known for his work with a variety of bands including Yngwie Malmsteen's Rising Force and Axel Rudi Pell). As such, whilst I relate the use of vibrato as an element relevant to the ascription of operatic characteristics, I do not suggest that the technique is exclusively relating to the realm of the classical.

With regards to the vocal virtuosity characteristic, I draw this perspective from McLeod's discussions of similarities between opera singers and heavy metal singers in terms of the high regard to "[e]xtreme vocal virtuosity, expression, and attention to nuances of vocal timbre" (McLeod 2001, 189) whereby the author goes to suggest that "the impassioned growls and screams of almost every heavy metal singer display vocal expression in much the same manner that an opera singer might deliver an ornamental aria or impassioned recitative" (McLeod 2001, 189–90). The author's perspective is based on a generalised comparison that hints at parallels in technical and/or semiotic rules of opera and some genres of heavy metal – i.e., the employment[251] and subsequent cultural valuing of singers with highly expressive and technically complex vocal delivery – and as such should be considered as an interesting point of departure in relation to the current discussion. McLeod's comparison can be seen as already encompassing the co-relation between high-pitched singing and operatic characteristics, as well as the utilisation of vibrato and vocal distortion in genres within the traditional metal category as effects contributing to metal singers' expressivity, however I would argue that exploring the suggested parallel in more details may reveal that, in certain cases, the similarities go beyond the surface level.

As previously mentioned, whilst this overview does not intend to frame itself as a fully encompassing to all potential characteristics invoked in relation to the term 'operatic', I believe that it can serve as a fruitful point of departure towards interpreting what reviewers of progressive metal may imply when ascribing the term. As such, in the following section I will offer a music-interpretative

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[250] Moens-Haenen frames measured vibrato as primarily utilised "in orchestral music to underline passages" (Moens-Haenen 2001, n.p.) in much of 17th and 18th centuries, though the author also points that this is a technique utilised by singers, thus connecting it to this discussion; and through his mention that "measured vibrato has strong emotional connotations; its use survives well into the 19th century, most clearly in opera" (Moens-Haenen 2001, n.p.) connects the term to the investigation of the term opera.
[251] It should be pointed that McLeod touches on the idea that whilst virtuosity is a common element between opera and rock singers, "an opera singer is typically more concerned with technically hitting the correct notes at the correct time in a composition […] A rock singer is perhaps typically more concerned with direct visceral expression of the body" (McLeod 2001, 201n3).

reading of the work of Crimson Glory's late first lead singer Midnight, stage name of the late John McDonald (†2009) as a performer identified by album reviewers as employing operatic vocals (see quotes below), and more specifically I will discuss the track "Valhalla" arguing that it not only incorporates the aforementioned metal-specific characteristics, but also that the included vocal techniques can be contextualised as within the contexts of Western art music.

> "There are two things that stand out to me the most on this album [*Crimson Glory*]. One is the guitar work [...] The other thing is the vocals. Midnight s [sic] an absolutely incredible singer. He has some rough, yet highly melodic and operatic vocals and he has a lot of power. His range just compliments this. When he wants to, he can give us some of the most haunting sounds to have ever slithered from the vocals [sic] chords of a human being in the history of rock music (or contemporary music in general)". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#5, 2016)

> "The vocals by Midnight are really next too flawless, the screams and the shrills add a variation to the abilities of his very operatic style of singing". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#23, 2013)

Crimson Glory's "Valhalla" and operatic vocals

The following section discusses Crimson Glory's track "Valhalla" and examines aspects that can be framed as engaging with the idea of 'operatic' vocals. The interpretation will be structured in three parts. First, I will briefly discuss the structure and instrumentation of the piece; second, I will examine Midnight's vocal work specifically, and will offer perspectives towards the framing of 'operatic' vocals as per the previous section, as well as present argumentations about said aspects paralleling Western art music practices and contexts. Third, and finally, I will offer an additional brief summary of a track by Shadow Gallery titled "Don't Cry, Just Remember" from their *Carved in Stone* album (Shadow Gallery 1995b), which will serve as means of comparison and self-validation of the observations.

Before commencing I want to make clear that, as the discourse did not produce tracks specifically identified as sites of vocal operatic qualities in Crimson Glory's output, the decision to examine "Valhalla" was motivated by the fairly consistent praise by a majority of reviewers towards the track (see below), and also a broad assumption that, as the first track on the album, listeners are likely to have experienced this track even if they have disregarded the remainder of the album.

> "There are a few highlights on this debut album. Valhalla is a power metal anthem from the gods, with screaming guitars and vocals that are sure to make the average maiden fan smile". (PA-CrimsonGlory-#12, 2007)

> "Also "Valhalla" is arguably one of the best openers right up there with "Aces High" (Powerslave duh) and "Electric Eye" (Screaming For Vengeance)! Yep I fucking mean that one hundred percent. The intro with its chugging chords and the harmonizing sizzling leads should be enough to send you into one hell of a maniacal heavy metal frenzy". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#4, 2016)

> "I have four main highlights for this release. One is the opening track, "Valhalla". This one delivers a just-under-mid-paced, gloomy feel and it is accompanied by a badass solo and some pleasantly haunting vocals. The chorus is pretty simple, but its [sic] pretty damn cool to listen to. I love its multi-layered vocals. Sends shivers down my spine". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#5, 2016)

"From the very first second you're hit with one of the most badass, epic riffs ever written. 'Valhalla' is what Crimson Glory is all about: no bullshit intro, no screwing around, just pure metal, just like we like it. All at least seems normal until Midnight arrives and makes his divine presence felt". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#8, 2011)

"Valhalla" is the opening track from Crimson Glory's 1986 eponymous first album with a length of just under 4 minutes. The track is based on a 4/4 meter and utilises an altered and somewhat irregular strophic form. The overall structure can be described as an instrumental intro [00:00 – 00:19], followed by a verse [00:19 – 00:43] and pre-chorus [00:47 – 01:00], another instance of a verse [01:06 – 01:34] and a pre-chorus [01:39 – 01:56], a chorus [01:56 – 02:12], two guitar solos [02:13 – 02:50], a final chorus [02:58 – 03:23] and an outro [03:24 – END]. Part of the challenge is that each of the components – "verse", "pre-chorus" and "chorus" – are not identically constructed: the initial verse can be divided into two phrases – phrase one [00:19 – 00:29] and phrase two [00:33 – 00:43] – whilst the second verse is based on a third, longer phrase [01:06 – 01:17] and reuses phrase one with slightly altered lyrics.[252] However, since each of the phrases have (more or less) identical accompaniment and are transitioned by the main riff, it is possible to suggest that these are four separate verses, whereby the 'reused' phrase one becomes a separate verse, seeing as half of its lyrics are now changed. With regards to the pre-chorus, whilst the initial appearance only presents two lines from the song's lyrics, the appearance of the second pre-chorus is doubled in length including four lines of lyrics that, on the basis of the arrangement, constitute two statements of the pre-chorus; in other words, the first pre-chorus may have been equally an independent unit or a 'half-length' statement. Finally, the chorus of the track is fairly short in terms of incorporating the singing of the lyrics 'Valhalla!' though I discard the possibility for the pre-chorus section to be considered a chorus as, despite being nearly identical in accompaniment, the pre-chorus (as currently identified) is based on generating harmonic tension which becomes resolved through the chorus' vocal line. That said, the simplicity of the lyrics and the manner of vocal delivery – 'Valhalla!' sung once by a single voice, and again by chorus-effect voices – raise the question as to whether appearance of the chorus at [02:58 – 03:23] should be considered as two statements of the chorus as the delivery is now based on "Valhalla" sung by a singular voice twice in a row, followed by chorus-effect multiple voices sung twice in a row. These variations are reflected in the table below, as well as include a reference to the lines of the song's lyrics which are listed in the following table. Having outlined some of the challenges of this song's structure, for the sake of comprehensibility, my interpretation will predominantly refer to the simpler of the two structures (labelled as "basic").

CRIMSON GLORY – "VALHALLA" (SONG STRUCTURE)											
BASIC	INTRO [00:00 – 00:19]	VERSE 1 (LINES 1-5) [00:19 – 00:43]		PRE-CHORUS 1 (LINES 6-7) [00:47 – 01:00]	VERSE 2 (LINES 8-13) [01:06 – 01:34]		PRE-CHORUS 2 (LINES 14-17) [01:39 – 01:56]	CHORUS 1 (LINE 18) [01:56 – 2:12]	SOLOS [02:13 – 02:50]	CHORUS 2 (LINES 19-20) [02:58 – 03:23]		OUTRO [03:24 – END]
DETAILED	INTRO [00:00] - [00:19]	PHRASE 1 (LINES 1-2) [00:19 – 00:29]	PHRASE 2 (LINES 3-5) [00:33 – 00:43]	PRE-CHORUS 1 (LINES 6-7) [00:47 – 01:00]	PHRASE 3 (LINES 8-11) [01:06 – 01:17]	PHRASE 1 (NEW LYRICS; LINES 12-13) [01:20 – 01:34]	PRE-CHORUS 2 (LINES 14-17) [01:39 – 01:56]	CHORUS [01:56 – 02:12]	SOLOS [02:13 – 02:50]	CHORUS 2 (SINGLE VOICE; LINE 19) [02:58 – 03:15]	CHORUS 3 (CHORUS-EFFECT VOICE; LINE 20) [03:16 – 03:23]	OUTRO [03:24 – END]

Table 2: Crimson Glory – "Valhalla" (song structure)

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[252] Throughout this examination I will make references to specific words from the lyrics situated in specific lines, which can be found outlined in Table 3.

From an arrangement perspective, the overall focus lies on the electric guitar and voice, with the drums and bass guitar providing a rhythmic background, though it is notable that, even when serving such a function, the bass guitar employs fairly independent lines throughout the track (rather than doubling the electric guitars) and can be summarised as standing out in the overall mix. It should be also pointed out that the vocal lines take precedent in the track as, despite the virtuosic qualities of the 'twin-axe' guitar approach, as well as the more independent bass line, the instruments are fairly restrained during verses' sung lines. Specifically, the guitars provide several slowly strummed chords and single-tone interjections whereas the song's recurring riff can be described as serving as connective tissue between verses and pre-chorus sections. The instruments have a more dominant role in the pre-chorus and chorus sections, by which I am referring both to the aforementioned main riff as well as including more defined melodic lines – though even if presenting a sustained tone, the vocals are always a bit more prominent in the mix.

Crimson Glory – "Valhalla" (lyrics)	
1	Winds of Odin guide us
2	Over violent seas, the silent grave
3	Gods of thunder
4	Roaring, crackling power
5	In flashing light, they pound the night
6	Rising winds and howling fury
7	Towering shadows crashing down
8	As we awaken and behold
9	The crystal seas and ships of gold
10	To the colored winds our sails arise
11	The distant shore before us lies
12	Winds of Odin whisper
13	Over silent waves, no trace remains
14	We have found a new horizon
15	Far beyond the stars that shine above
16	Thrashing wings Valkyries rising
17	To hallowed halls of Valhalla
18	Valhalla, Valhalla
19	Valhalla, Valhalla
20	Valhalla, Valhalla

Table 3: Crimson Glory – "Valhalla" (lyrics)

Midnight's delivery can be described as utilising a combination of two somewhat contrasting vocal approaches: one, melodic lines based on a relatively narrow contour delivered in the speech or head registers of the singer's voice, whereby, at the beginning of some phrases, the singer employs a short yet noticeable vocal distortion; or two, sudden jumps to sustained high pitches utilised by his falsetto register and without applying vocal distortion. The extensive upper range of the performer is exemplified by the extremely high pitches he produces e.g., the words "thunder" and "roaring" in lines three and four respectively [00:34 – 00:35], "remain" on line thirteen [01:28 – 01:34], and the final repetitions of "Valhalla" are most likely performed using the performer's falsetto register [03:28 – 03:33]. Interpreting these aspects, the vocal breaks – i.e., "moving from any register to another with a sudden and aurally clean change of the sound" (Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 389) – that constitute the sudden extremely high jumps in pitch to the falsetto register can be described as an example of the vocal virtuosity of the vocalist. From a different perspective, McLeod's broad discussion on operatic influences in popular music suggests that "in both [pop music and heavy metal] there is a distinct aesthetic preference for artists who exhibit ability in upper registers. Opera has traditionally manifest [sic] a preference for star tenors, counter-tenors or sopranos" (McLeod 2001, 190), which enables to connect high-pitched vocals with opera sensibilities on a larger scale.

Several vocal effects may also be added as contributing factors in suggesting Midnight's vocal virtuosity. Vibrato is utilised fairly consistently throughout the song, whereby it is noticeable that it ranges in both rate "the number of undulations per second" as well as extent "how far the vibrato pitch departs up and down from the original" (Mesiä and Ribaldini 2015, 389). As examples, the singer applies fast and narrow vibrato over the relatively short duration of the tone for the word 'roaring' in line four; whilst for the word 'night' in line five the duration is longer allowing the singer to apply a slower yet wider vibrato which discontinues towards the end of the tone [00:41 – 00:43]. The singer does not utilise extensive vocal growling as in extreme metal genres, however his predominantly 'clean' delivery involves multiple instances of short vocal distortion, which may be considered as contributing to the perception of a high level of control over the application of the effect. Though, as previously mentioned, the widespread application of vocal distortion in heavy metal vocalists may negate the 'impact' of such argumentation.

These approaches help to exemplify Midnight's paralleling of characteristics previously discussed as within the context of heavy metal-relatable ascription of operatic qualities, however, in addition I would argue that the singer utilises several techniques that can be contextualised in relation to Western art music-related contexts such as word-painting and parlando. Word-painting is described by Tim Carter (2001) as "[t]he use of musical gesture(s) in a work with an actual or implied text to reflect, often pictorially, the literal or figurative meaning of a word or phrase", whereby the scholar also points out that the term is more commonly applied to vocal music, being well established in both "16th-century chanson and madrigal" as well as in opera through "opera composers almost always resort to pictorialism" (Carter 2001, n.p.). Out of the variety of aspects, techniques and historical contexts mentioned by Carter as constituting word-painting, the techniques of onomatopoeia, figurative melodic movement as well as scoring-related techniques strike me as relevant to this discussion, as it can be argued that such aspects are identifiable within the confines of Crimson Glory's track "Valhalla".

Onomatopoeia-reminiscent effects appear as early as the word 'thunder' in line three [00:33] which is vocally accompanied by a sudden jump of two octaves, accentuating both syllables of the word; the combination can be seen as implying the sudden and sharp sound produced by lightning's appearance in nature. The following line strengthens this idea through a strong emphasis of the 'c', 'r' and 'k' consonants of the word 'crackling', whereby shortly after [00:38], a low-pitched thunder-reminiscent sound can be heard in the back of the mix. Other examples include line six in which the words 'howling fury' [00:48 – 00:51] are delivered through longer durations with the singer potentially mimicking a 'howling' effect through the elongated vocalisation of each vowel. Perhaps the most obvious example can be found at line twelve [01:22], where the singer changes from his declamatory style to a spoken and somewhat hushed delivery emphasising the word 'whisper'. That said, as the effect is applied with more reverb and is panned to quickly appear in both left and right channel of the mix, the result strikes me as somewhat comical, reminding me of someone attempting to whisper, only to create a much more audible set of sounds due to the 'hissing' sound produced when whispering. I highlight this latter observation as it can be argued that it parallels Carter's framing of

some word-painting techniques as "decried [due to being perceived as] childish and naïve" by sixteenth century theorists (Carter 2001, n.p.).

Figurative word-painting devices can also be identified through song, specifically in the combination between lyrics and music and their representations of 'scale' and 'movement'. For example, in line six in which the word 'rising' is accompanied by an upward melodic jump [00:47], as well as line seven in which the words 'towering' [00:51] and 'down' [00:55 – 01:00] begin at higher pitches only for the singer to then slide the pitch in a downward direction. One may even go as far as to suggest that the entire line contains an interesting approach to word-painting as, whilst the downward slide on the word 'towering' is rather short in duration, the much longer downward slide of the word 'down' creates the implication of a long fall, which can most likely refer to the scale of the waves in the 'violent seas' mentioned in line two of the lyrics.

Another example can be found in lines fourteen to sixteen [01:38 – 01:51] in which despite the vocal melody to move both upwards and downwards, it gradually rises supported by a chromatic half-step movement in the bass line (D#–B–C–C#). The highest points of the melodic contour correspond with the lyrics presenting the strongest association with height: in line fifteen on the word 'above' [01:46] as part of the line 'stars that shine above', as well as in relation to the expression 'Valkyries rising' [01:49 – 01:51] found in the next line. It can also be argued that the conclusion of a melodic line at the highest point at A#, followed by the repetition of said melodic line which starts at the lowest point of the melody at D# creates an additional spatial effect based on the distance between the two pitches. The chromatic tension caused by this rise is resolved in the first word of line seventeen ('To the hallowed halls of Valhalla'), and whilst the melodic line then moves downwards it is possible to argue that a figurative device is still at play: either as representing the implied reaching-of-Valhalla that the lyrical speaker hints at in line fourteen, or conversely as means of suggesting that whilst the Valkyries mentioned in line sixteen are 'rising', them reaching Valhalla still necessitates some form of landing. In addition, whilst the repeated word 'Valhalla' at the end of the song is not delivered through the highest pitches in the vocal line – the word 'remain' is where such pitches can be found – nevertheless the pitches of 'Valhalla' are clearly much higher than most other sung lines earlier in the song, thus the potential for a figurative component remains plausible.

Finally, scoring word-painting techniques can be identified in line eleven, in which the opening words 'the distant' are sung by a singular voice, whilst the words 'shore' [01:13], 'us' and 'lies' [01:14 – 01:16] are delivered as if by multiple voices which is achieved through a chorus effect. Two aspects can be related here: with regards to the words 'we' and 'lies', these examples can be interpreted as paralleling traditional scoring techniques in which multiple voices were used so as to signify entities consisting of multiple parts e.g., Carter summarises this scoring effect as "a single voice for 'all alone'; three for the Trinity" (Carter 2001, n.p.). With that in mind, the effect is not universally applied as the appearance of the word 'we' in line eight [01:06] is delivered by a singular voice which may be caused by a combination between the word 'we' appearing near the opening of the line, but also to an onomatopoeic effect associated with the previous word, 'as'. Namely, in the line 'As we awaken' the 'breathy' delivery of the higher pitched word 'as', followed by a head- to speech-register vocal-break to the lower pitched word 'we', creates the implication that the 'awakening' of the lyrical 'we' was

sudden, whereby the forceful exhaling of the word 'as' may be interpreted as an inverted representation of a sudden inhale associated at times with the depiction of a person unexpectedly awakening. As for the word 'shore', it is possible that the utilisation of multiple voices was intended to vocally represent the lyrical characters reaching dry land after their travel. To that effect, I was reminded of a scene in the film *The 13th Warrior* (1999) in which a group of Norse-warriors undertake a naval journey (most likely towards the shore of England). Most importantly, due to the mist surrounding the island, the travellers navigated closer to land whilst shouting and listening for the echo, in what can be described as a crude-variation of echo-location ([00:21:30 – 00:22:28]). Undoubtedly this comparison stems from over a decade after the release of Crimson Glory's album – though the Norse-related context and the connection to sea travel serve as (at least thematically appropriate) points of interpreting the effect in relation to the word 'shore'.

It is also possible to argue that the repetition of the word 'Valhalla' towards the end of the track features not only scoring techniques but also figurative ones: with regards to the former, the appearance of multiple voices at [03:16] echoes the appearance of words such as 'we' and 'us' and supported by multiple voices, the simultaneous opposing movement of which implies some connection to the use of contrapuntal movement in word-painting. As for the latter, if one considers that 'Valhalla' stems from Norse mythology and represents a mythical place to which fallen warriors ascend when they perish in battle, the simultaneous move in both upwards and downwards directions may be read as signifying both the death ('fall') of the lyrical 'we' as well as their simultaneously 'rise' to Valhalla, being brought up by the aforementioned Valkyries.

Outside of the word-painting devices, it can be argued that the song includes several lines delivered in a recitative-resembling approaches, mostly in the verses of the song. Lines one to five [00:19 – 00:43] are delivered in a manner that resembles the performance direction of parlando namely, "the voice should approximate to speech" (Fallows 2001, n.p.) whereby Midnight incorporates almost spoken lyrics – such as the words 'guide us' (line one), and 'flashing light' (line five); yet at the same, the singer time elongates the vowels of several words (e.g., the 'o' in 'Odin', line one) as well as concludes individual phrases with sustained tones. Through this combination, the verse creates an impression that the lyrics are neither entirely sung nor spoken but rather somewhat freely delivered which, together with the high levels of expressivity, enables it to be interpreted in the same broad context as recitative in opera i.e., "a type of vocal writing […] with the intent of mimicking dramatic speech in song" (Monson, Westrup, and Budden 2001, n.p.). Beyond this broad comparison, the combination between slow chord progression and simple and consistently repeated bass line that underpins the verses can be compared to what Dale Monson, Jack Westrup and Julian Budden describe as one of recitative's early types, namely "the Florentine Camerata['s] typical traits: […] an overall slow harmonic rhythm unfolded over a generally static bass line (which gave the impression of declamatory freedom" (Monson, Westrup, and Budden 2001, n.p.).

With regards to the second verse, as mentioned in my outline of the song's structure, its latter half (lines twelve to thirteen) is identical to the opening of the first verse (lines one to two) and as such retain the opera-resembling spoken/sung approach. More interestingly however, its first half (lines eight to eleven) includes an ostinato-based vocal melody that strengthens the declamatory

properties of the track by alternating the speed of which some words are pronounced – e.g., 'to the colored' (line ten) is delivered by far the fastest due to the number of syllables, 'awaken' (line eight) and 'arise' (line ten) have their second syllables slightly elongated whilst the words 'before us' (line eleven) are slowed down to both conclude the ostinato and to allow a more elongated delivery of the (sung) word 'lies'. It may also be argued that the quasi-spoken manner of the vocal delivery throughout the entire track is influenced by the vocal melody's tendency to be arch-shaped i.e., rising at its beginning and (similar to common English language phrasing) moving downwards at the end of some phrases (see 'grave' at [00:28], 'lies' at [01:14] or 'Valhalla' at [01:55] as examples of downward concluding phrases). However, such a perspective is not universally present due to the conclusion of other phrases in small upwards steps (e.g., 'night' at [00:41]) or the somewhat ambiguous conclusion of a phrase in an upwards direction with the singer sliding the tone downwards (e.g., 'down' at [00:56]).

Overall, I hope to have showcased that Midnight's vocal delivery in the track "Valhalla" can be considered as incorporating a combination of salient features discussed in relation to (literature-defined) operatic metal singers such as high-pitch singing, the use of vibrato and vocal distortion as well as vocal practices such as practices such as multiple word-painting devices and some parlando-reminiscent delivery which can be compared, however tentatively, to the recitative practices found in opera. Based on the results of the interpretation, the provided observations can be seen as supporting the claim made in the beginning of this section, namely that in some instances the ascription of operatic qualities can reveal not only a surface level similarity to other metal operatic singers as discussed in academic/journalistic discourse, but also the inclusion of techniques relating to Western art music contexts. With that in mind, as "Valhalla" has not been specifically framed by album reviewers as a site of vocal operatic elements, this interpretation can only serve as provisional evidence supporting the claim that vocal virtuosity has relevance to the ascription of operatic qualities to (male) singers – whether by album reviewers discussed in this study, or more broadly as a characteristic relevant outside of the context of Midnight's vocal delivery.

In addition to, once again, emphasising the need for further validation, I want to provide a brief point of comparison that moves beyond considering characteristics pertaining predominantly heavy metal singers by suggesting that some of the discussed characteristics can also be identified in performers identified as 'operatic' predominantly from the PA side of the progressive metal audiences. An example of this, I will briefly examine the delivery of the late lead singer of Shadow Gallery, Mike Baker (†2008), whose performance in the track "Don't Cry, Just Remember" (*Carved in Stone*, 1995) has been framed within the context of operatic vocals: "a great showcase for the vocal talents of Mike Baker in both his operatic soar and his artful, almost playful singing approach he frequently used" (MA-ShadowGallery-#3, 2012); or in relation to a different track "Mike Baker again shows how awesome his voice is! Some moments are allmost [sic] Operatic!" (PA-ShadowGallery-#47, 2005).

Baker's vocals in this track do not utilise vocal distortion (or conversely, growling) of any kind, instead singing exclusively 'clean' in a combination of the speech-register for the lower-pitched portions of the melody, switching to the head-register (or possibly falsetto) for the higher-pitched

segments. Whilst the use of 'operatic soar', as described by the reviewer, implies a parallel to the operatic characterisation of higher-pitched singing, the singer's relatively higher voice-type should be noted here, as the intermittent sudden falsetto jumps appear less extreme, thus potentially reducing their impact as exemplifying vocal virtuosity. In addition, Baker's utilisation of vibrato can be characterised by a faster rate of vibrato which is much narrower as a result, however contrasting heavy metal performers discussed up to this point, the effect is used much more extensively throughout the track. Vibrato can be identified both within as well as at the end of vocal lines, whereby the singer utilises a fairly intricate delivery e.g., individual lines incorporate elongating vowels on to which the vibrato is applied as well as changing the shapes of the sound, whereas choruses feature longer sustained lines with vibrato applied, though much of the effect appears to be rendered less audible due to the multi-tracked voices; this intricacy may be considered as an element of vocal virtuosity supplementing the aforementioned reduced effects from sudden and extreme jumps in pitch.

Overall, whilst some of the differences between Baker's vocal delivery and the previously discussed performers will likely be accounted through a combination of genre conventions and individual performance style, the appearance of vibrato, the predominantly high and 'clean' delivery of the performer as well as some elements describable as vocal virtuosity in the context of an operatically-framed performer suggest that such effects may be considered as signifiers of operatic vocals on a broader level.

Section conclusion

In summary, this section offered an extensive, yet foundational, attempt to situate the framing of 'operatic' vocals as pertaining to phenomena focused on individual voices. In the opening segment, I presented a critical overview of academic and journalistic writing that includes brief mentions on 'operatic' vocals, and noted both their lack of details as well as issues such as potential segregation of the 'operatic' ascription based on the singer's gender. Due to the absence of clearly outlined definition of the phenomenon, in the next section I outlined a series of characteristics that I extrapolated from additional descriptions provided by the aforementioned literature. The observed characteristics of high-pitched vocals, vibrato and vocal virtuosity were observed in several heavy metal performers, and considered as partially representative of the aspects that may be framed when the 'operatic' ascription is made.

With these contexts in mind, I returned to examination of the album reviews-based discourse, and drawing from their specific discussion of 'operatic' vocals, I and offered a close reading of one such track, Crimson Glory's "Valhalla". The purpose of the track's interpretation was not only to verify whether the extrapolated characteristics outlined earlier can be confirmed, but to also consider the potential for paralleling Western art music contexts. I was able to locate such parallels in a combination of word-painting interpretable devices, as well as sections reminiscent of the opera-relatable technique of parlando, which collectively offer a notable potential for this type of 'operatic' ascription to be seen as contributing to the genre's framing of the classical. As a final step, I also included a brief 'self-validation' example represented by an interpretation of an additional 'operatic' track, namely Shadow Gallery's "Don't Cry, Just Remember". This was motivated by a desire to verify

whether the observer perspectives in Crimson Glory's track have bearing on other performers in the progressive metal field. The interpretation offered some positive potential, though as previously mentioned, I urge additional discussions or close readings to take place before presenting a firm connection to the broader progressive metal framing.

8.5 Opera as signifying excess

The examination of reviewers' opera ascriptions as potentially revealing aspects relating to the classical has thus far leaned predominantly on performance-related perspectives and supported via music interpretative close readings. However, it is also important not to disregard a broader semiotic connection that can be identified as relating progressive metal artists with traditional opera, namely the accusations of 'excess'.

That traditional opera can be associated with the concept of excess is not a difficult argument to make, as debates reflecting the connection(s) between these two terms are plentiful and span a fairly long period of time. An article by Michael Burden (2014) explores "'excess' [as] the perceived extravagance of foreign opera in London in the eighteenth century, an excess which is usually expressed through a language which reflects the contemporary debates on 'luxury'" (Burden 2014, n.p.) and showcases the shifting implications (i.e., at times positive, but mostly negative) in relation to the excesses of opera. Mary Ann Smart's (2014 [2000]) recontextualization of Verdi's *Aida* contains multiple examples of nineteenth century operatic excess in the composer's output from the overlap between financial and expressive excesses in said opera i.e. "[t]he elephants traditionally called for in the Act II triumphal procession have become a symbol for all of opera's most gaudy and expensive excesses" (Smart 2014 [2000], 135) through the opera "*I due Foscari*['s] motivic excesses" (Smart 2014 [2000], 140) as well as in relation to a character in said opera, Lucrezia, whereby "the orchestral motive that 'mimes' [her] entrances and draws attention to her body is also marked as the site of her power, suggesting that doubling of stage action and music can […] signify an *excess* of power or voice" (Smart 2014 [2000], 145, italics in original). Finally, twentieth-century examples of the association can also be identified such as Chris Walton's (2005) discussion of neo-classical opera who mentions both Ferruccio Busoni's concepts of opera as published in a 1921 article "[w]here, he held up the example of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* as the operatic ideal, castigated the erotic and with it all excess of expression" (Walton 2005, 110), as well as Stravinsky's opera *Oedipus* "as having internalized those very late-romantic excesses that Stravinsky supposedly despised" (Walton 2005, 112). Johanna Ethnersson Pontara (2013) offers a similar perspective on Swedish composer Lars Jolhan Werle's opera *Die Reise* from 1969 as "an opera of 'excess'" arguing that its "musical pluralism of styles is not only a means of narrating a story, but where it also functions as a means of reflecting the musical consciousness of the contemporary listener and spectator" (Pontara 2013, n.p.). Whilst by no means representing the myriad of other possibilities and/or examples that relate opera to the concept of excess, the outlined perspectives can serve as representation of the broad association between the two aspects. As such, it is possible to argue that the expression of criticisms against a band's ascribed operatic aspects however tentatively echoes the broad connection between opera and the principle of excess. Thus, by extension, it enables to consider criticisms aimed against progressive metal performers discussed as 'operatic' as also establishing a connection to the classical through traditional opera.

That said, scholarly work such as that by Leslie M. Meier (2008) has shown that 'excess' can be identified as levelled against popular music examples, whereby the term becomes an underlying principle informing critical perspectives emerging from at least two categories of observers that the author examined, the critic and the 'concerned' parent.[253] Drawing from Linda Williams' film-related discussion which frames the "body genres" of horror, pornography and melodrama, Meier transfers the discussion to popular music by examining "the types of excesses that characterize the musics disparaged by the PMRC (excessive sex and excessive violence) and *Blender* [magazine] (excessive sentiment or emotion" as well as aims to explore "how certain performers stand in for certain audiences, and, hence, cultural values and practices" and poses the question of "*which* audiences and values are valorized or dismissed and why" (Meier 2008, 243, italics in original). Of note here is Meier's comment that "[t]he centrality of excesses associated with women's bodies relates to the melodramatic body genres of music" (Meier 2008, 250) and as well as his framing that "the categories of sob pop and arena rock to classify music that targets females (and sometimes males) in the role of love interest, often triggering 'irrational' displays of emotion" (Meier 2008, 250–51).

Despite the authors' discussion to focus on critics devaluing the excessive sentiment or emotion and associated feminine-connotations to involve a primarily popular music context, it is possible to argue that close proximity between some opera-related discussions and criticisms of emotionality in reviews of progressive metal bands, reveals a parallel in the rejection of the feminine perceived as brought over by opera's inclusion:

> "There are some who absolutely loathe the rock opera-styled tearjerkers coursing through [Gutter Ballet]". (MA-Savatage-#33, 2012)
>
> "Over half of [*Streets: A Rock Opera*'s] songs are ballads, and not good ones. Stupid, Broadway piano singing crap! Maybe I just am not in touch with my inner dude, or my vagina, or my secondary sphincter muscles, but most of it is not touching, just insipid and self indulgent [sic]". (MA-Savatage-#44, 2012)
>
> "The second track of [Shadow Gallery's *Room V*] is already a letdown, though. The male-female duet Comfort Me is cheesy and immediately gives the listener the impression that he is hearing a Rock Opera or Musical. Some people like this, I suppose, but for me it becomes somewhat bombastic in the negative sense". (PA-ShadowGallery-#135, 2011)

Several terms included in the utterances quoted above serve as exemplify this principle. The first utterance relates some rock opera songs with the term "tearjerker", revealing a connection from the context of Williams' (as quoted in Meier's work) pairs of colloquialism and the aforementioned body genres, namely between melodrama and the term "tearjerker". The second utterance fairly unambivalently relates the ballads in Savatage's rock opera *Streets: A Rock Opera* to femininity, whilst the third utterance criticises Shadow Gallery's track "Comfort Me" describing it as "cheesy" (i.e.

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[253] Another observation worth briefly including is that progressive music has historically been subject to authenticity-related criticism due to the perception of excess associated, amongst other aspects, with Western art music borrowings (e.g. see Sheinbaum 2002, 22–23). As such, I do not discount the possibility for such perspectives to have been absorbed in the larger discourse and thus have re-emerged in the more general criticism of 'excess' of opera.

"cheap and of low quality", [Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 295]) and "bombastic" (i.e. "high sounding language but with little meaning", [Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 191]). Moreover, said third utterance points to a ballad that, from my examination of the track, can be described as highly emotionally charged. One additional way through which such criticisms may be contextualised is in relation to Richard Middleton's (1995), admittedly somewhat essentialist, concept of a gender map of musical genres, and more specifically, his framing of the ballad as representing the fully 'feminine' side of the gender scale (Middleton 1995, 474). In other words, it is not only the fact that some pieces are referred to as melodramatic and thus feminine, but also through the perspective that the ballad itself is often associated with feminine characteristics.

An interesting contrast that can be identified is that whilst criticism against what is considered melodramatic pieces or albums ranges from bands discussed as operatic (Savatage), through bands having created concept albums (Redemption), to bands whose output does not appear to have produced either format (Threshold), it appears that Crimson Glory is the only band whose output is positively described as having melodramatic qualities. Moreover, if the last example is any indication, it is the melodrama's inability to undermine the 'metal-ness' of the tracks (and potentially their masculinity connotations) that enables the more positive evaluations:

> "And in a way [the tracks "Lady in Disguise", "She's Only Rock and Roll" and "Out of the Streets"] are a harbinger of the stuff that Savatage would begin propagating with Streets; melodramatic, quasi-grandiose and a bit pretentious". (MA-Savatage-#17, 2012)

> "Redemption's previous album, The Origins of Ruin, while far from perfect, was certainly a step in the right direction from the mire of sappy melodrama that was the Fullness of Time". (MA-Redemption-#3, 2010)

> "Threshold's March of Progress sees them knocking out a brand of prog metal which draws on the same sort of melodramatic emotional hysteria that Muse have made their own". (PA-Threshold-#186, 2013)

> "'Heart of Steel', a magnificently pompous slice of melodrama" (PA-CrimsonGlory-#8, 2005)

> "Yet [Crimson Glory] shows its real strength when performing melodramatic pieces". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#21, 2016)

> "Crimson Glory exemplifies the most typical 'white collar sound', with its clearly NWOBHM and traditional metal influenced riffs, flashy guitar leads, progressive touches and wailing melodramatic vocals filtered through an undeniably 80s and jus [sic] as undeniably awesome production". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#9, 2009)

The expression of criticism against ballads or other pieces considered as melodramatic are to be expected not just in the context of a metal genre, but also popular music as a whole, thus making it possible to broadly suggest that the utterances outlined above may criticise the feminine-underpinning of melodrama and by extension opera by virtue of criticising rock opera albums or pieces within said albums.

That said, the positive reception of Crimson Glory's melodramatic aspects strikes me as comparable to Susan Sontag's (2009) discussion of Camp which suggests that "whole art forms become saturated with Camp. Classical ballet, opera [...] have seemed so for a long time" (Sontag

2009, 278) and moreover her suggestion that "it seems unlikely that much of the traditional opera repertoire could be such satisfying Camp if the melodramatic absurdities of most opera plots had not been taken seriously by their composers" (Sontag 2009, 282). As aspects of Crimson Glory's melodramatic performance are framed as operatic, yet positively due to the band seemingly not abandoning metal's technical (and semiotic) rules, this suggests that reviewers perceive the band as taking themselves (and their melodramaticism) seriously. In other words, reviewers may be ascribing 'operatic' elements due to associating the Campiness of the band with that of opera. Such an argumentation moves away from the association between melodrama and femininity, and may potentially be considered as extending the argument by Amber Clifford-Napoleone regarding the gay-culture origins (and continued queer-interpretability) of elements such as leather and spikes in heavy metal culture (Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 25–48) to the realms of Camp expression through Sontag's framing of "not all homosexuals have Camp taste. But homosexuals, by and large, constitute the vanguard – and the most articulate audience – of Camp" (Sontag 2009, 290).

Overall, I consider the interpretation to have illustrated the ability to relate some excess-related comments as presented by reviewers of progressive metal bands to both direct opera-related contexts through the latter's long history of association with forms of excess, but also through somewhat deeper connotations that either seemingly criticise the connection between melodramatic-elements and femininity. Conversely, the limited praise of melodramatic elements can be related to operatic contexts through bands such as Crimson Glory seemingly incorporating Camp elements, and furthermore based on Camp's own fairly close association with homosexuality – the Campiness of the melodramatic performance may be seen as an extension of queer-interpretable elements in heavy metal contexts.

8.6 The classical as visual element in the album artwork of Savatage's *Gutter Ballet*

As concluding segment of my exploration of the term "opera", I would like to expand the discussion to include an aspect that – due to the regulations of the database websites – is not commonly discussed by reviewers, namely that of the album artwork. As previously mentioned in the theoretical overview of this work, I elect to go beyond the auditive level most often referred to by reviewers from a combination of the perspective of popular music as an inherently inter-medial phenomenon and the knowledge of the importance of the visual level in most popular music albums (and especially for progressive- and metal-music contexts). As such, album artwork that connotates the classical should not be ignored as meaning generating aspect of the discussion. This broad notion can be supported by the circuit of culture model and its presentation of artefacts as involving a heavily interconnected network of meaning i.e., the creation of artefacts (visually) alluding to the classical can be influenced by listener/observers' engagement with such aspects; as well as from theories from genre studies as the visual element of an album contributes to the development of specific semantic relations pertinent to a genre such as progressive metal. As such, I wish not to ignore the possibility that discussions of the classical-connotative elements may have been influenced by the perception of an album artwork. I will continue this chapter's focus on the work of Savatage, by exploring what connections to the classical can be identified on the visual level of the artwork for their album *Gutter Ballet* (1989d),

whereby similar to the previous sections in this chapter, I will argue that such connections may have contributed in contextualising the utilisation of the term opera to said bands by reviewers.

Discussions on the artwork of progressive metal is fairly limited (e.g. McCandless 2010, 52), often providing little useful information for the investigation at hand. For example, Rainer Zuch's discussion of heavy metal's aesthetic practices includes a brief mention of an album artwork by the German progressive metal band The Ocean. However, despite mentioning that most overlaps between progressive metal and other genres (including Western art music) include some parallels on the visual level (Zuch 2012 [2011], 82), the author suggests that the aforementioned band (and thus the entire progressive metal genre) have not developed their own aesthetic program (Zuch 2012 [2011], 83). The first part of this notion can be contrasted with a perspective by a reviewer of Savatage's *Gutter Ballet*, that not only discusses album's artwork, but also suggests that the cohesion that Zuch suggests was lacking in the genre can be identified here:

> "Never has an album cover been more appropriate for the actual music on the album. The Greatness of the interior of a beautiful baroque theatre, the presence of both piano and guitar in the centre of the hall, the mystery of the ghost ballet dancer and the phantoms of the background, the gargoyle…even the back cover has its important significance here". (MA-Savatage-#35, 2010)

This description serves as a point of departure for my own interpretation of the band's artwork – for which I extend my gratitude to the reviewer for partly inspiring this inquiry – whereby my attempts in contextualising the elements found in the artwork can be seen as both an attempt to frame the observations of the reviewer in a more formal manner, as well as to offer additional interpretations as to how this approach to album artwork can be contextualised in larger contexts.

Exploring Savatage's album artwork throughout their career, it can be argued that the band's visual aesthetic – both in terms of depicted subjects as well as style of depiction – is well situated in the visual conventions of heavy metal, whether it be the brightly coloured, often fantasy-reminiscent artwork of albums such as *Edge of Thorns* (1993b) – created by American artist Gary Smith (Jutze [username] 2003) – or the equally as stylised, yet more gothic-relatable, cover of *Poets and Madmen* (2001b) by (also American) artist Edgar Jerins (Roth 2012). That said, compared to 1980s contemporary heavy metal bands employing a similar style (e.g. Dio, Iron Maiden etc.), it appears that Savatage's covers seemingly follow their changes of musical genre[254] as their album cover for the more hard rock-focused *Fight for the Rock* (1997b) and its recreation of Joe Rosenthal's "Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima" picture (Rosenthal 1945), strikes me as comparable to established performers from said

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[254] I do not wish to misrepresent the two bands referenced as points of comparison here as the lack of variety in Dio's artwork throughout the band's career parallels their output remaining fairly consistent in the category of traditional heavy metal. A similar argument can be made to Iron Maiden, though I both acknowledge their greater degree of genre flexibility, as well as their consistent use of the 'Eddie' mascot on album artwork. Nevertheless, in both instances, there are no dramatic shifts in overall visual aesthetic, nor can any modest changes of album artwork design be contextualised as representing either band signalling a new approach even when considering such approaches as potentially reflecting the act of combining traditional heavy metal with elements from other genres.

genre[255] e.g., Led Zeppelin's *Led Zeppelin* (1969b), Uriah Heep's *Conquest* (1980b) etc. Whilst this principle is not universal in Savatage's output – e.g. the album artwork for their *Streets: A Rock Opera* (1991b) album can at first glance be framed as a somewhat restrained rock album cover comparable to Nazareth's eponymous first album (1971b), or Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Gimme Back My Bullets* (1976b)[256] – it can be argued that *Gutter Ballet*'s album artwork represents a similar change of musical output. Specifically, despite the inclusion of fairly complex direct and indirect transformations of Western art music-related material in several tracks from their previous album *Hall of the Mountain King* (1987b), the artwork strikes me as more easily Interpretable as a traditional heavy metal album cover, whilst *Gutter Ballet*'s artwork parallels the juxtaposition of classical- and popular-connotative elements identifiable in the tracks included in the album. As such, I would argue that this combination of visual and auditive juxtaposition can be contextualised as participating in a broader aesthetic practice of transgressive albums that aim to signal their position 'on the border' between the (supposedly) separate worlds of classical and popular music.
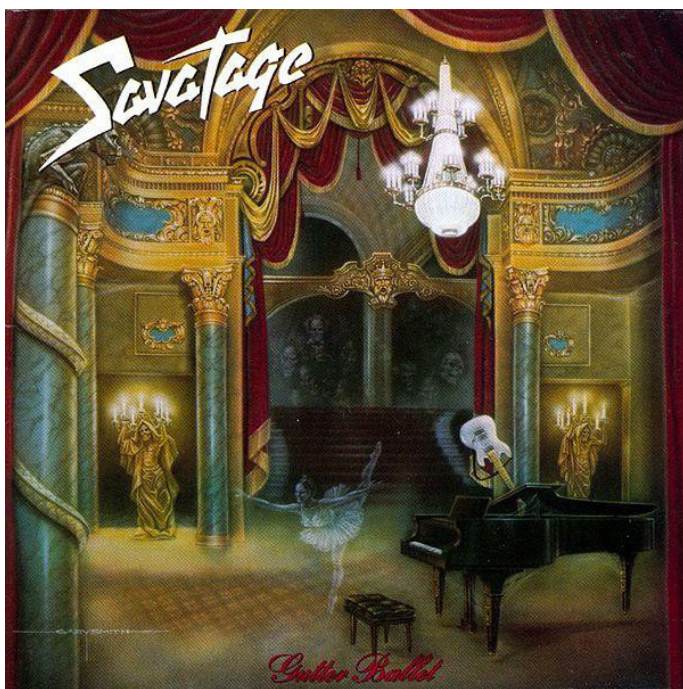
Figure 1: Savatage – *Gutter Ballet* (1989), front artwork

As a first step, I want to briefly describe *Gutter Ballet*'s artwork (see Figure 1),[257] as it is fairly densely packed with elements relevant to the discussion. *Gutter Ballet*'s album cover is seemingly based on an airbrushed style, that combines a fairly wide colour palette – primarily gold, burgundy and black colours, with smaller green and light blue accents – in its depiction of an indoor space similar to a large hall with a tall ceiling. The hall can be described as having two main sections: a large open space and a smaller inner hall. The large open space is surrounded by several smooth surface columns seemingly

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[255] To be very clear, I am not interested in resurrecting outdated debates about the difference between heavy metal and hard rock genres, as I am well aware of the possibility in pointing to albums by Led Zeppelin or Uriah Heep that can be as easily framed in the context of early heavy metal aesthetic. Instead, I mean to point out that Savatage's visual aesthetic is varied, whereby changes seemingly follow the change of genre.

[256] Examples of the artworks of the mentioned albums can be found in the corresponding online addresses from the following bibliographical entries: *Edge of Thorns* (Savatage 1993a); *Poets and Madmen* (Savatage 2001a); *Fight for the Rock* (Savatage 1997a); *Led Zeppelin* (Led Zeppelin 1969a); *Conquest* (Uriah Heep 1980a); *Streets: A Rock Opera* (Savatage 1991a); *Nazareth* (Nazareth 1971a); *Gimme Back My Bullets* (Lynyrd Skynyrd 1976a); *Hall of the Mountain King* (Savatage 1987a).

[257] For source of the image, see Savatage (1989c). Bibliographical entries outlining sources for images directly included in this study can be found under the category of 'Image sources'. All other instances of referring to a specific image that are not directly included, will be listed in the 'Referenced webpages' section.

constructed from a green-grey marble, the walls and visible portion of the ceiling are decorated with Baroque-reminiscent ornaments, and towards its back two large (i.e., body-size or larger) candelabras resembling a hooded skeletal figure are depicted; the floor of the hall is covered in a low-hanging mist whilst the ceiling incorporates a large seemingly crystal chandelier. At the centre of the hall, a black cobweb-covered grand-piano (and a square piano stool) "pierced" by a white Fender Stratocaster-comparable guitar is depicted, next to which a ghostly ballet dancer in motion can be seen, whilst the outer edges of the hall – perspective-wise the closes to the observer – are framed by heavy red curtains. At the top of one of the columns at the left side of the image, a gargoyle-like creature can also be identified whose tail circles down the body of the column.

With regards to the inner hall, it is located towards the centre of the image, whereby beyond some of the aforementioned marble columns, a stairwell surrounded by additional heavy red curtains leads to a series of arches above which a comparably-intricate ceiling can be seen. The space beyond the arches can be described as engulfed in darkness, though discernible are multiple transparent disembodied heads with somewhat aggressive facial expression, as well as a human skull visible to the right of the marble column in this second space.

From this description it can be suggested that the artwork of *Gutter Ballet* visually echoes the genre transgressive practices taking place on the auditive level, due to many of the mentioned elements having the potential to signify the classical. Taking the inclusion of the piano as an example, whilst it is difficult to determine whether the grand piano is of the 'concert' type (i.e., the physically longest variation of a grand piano), it can be argued that its visibility in the image is interpretable as signalling the classical. Even if one ignores the strong association between the instrument and Western art music, or the implied connection of its use together with the classical interest by Jon Oliva that is at times mentioned by reviewers, the implication that the instrument signifies the classical may be supported by the propped-up note stand on the piano which implies the use of notation of some form, be it for performing or for composing. Furthermore, the lid of the piano is open which creates a contrast to most examples of piano depiction use in popular culture I examined (e.g. Elton John's video for "Something About The Way You Look Tonight" [Royes, Tim 1997] or Guns n' Roses' video for "November Rain" [Morahan, Andrew 1992]) in which the lid tends to be closed. I am not excluding the possibility that the open lid of the piano was a practical decision in creating an angle for the piercing guitar as a guitar sticking out at a 90-degree angle from the lid of a closed piano would appear, in my opinion, more comical than anything else.[258] As previously mentioned, I am not presuming that the instrument universally, or exclusively, relates to the classical, as keyboard instruments have been utilised extensively in both heavy metal (e.g. the importance of Jon Lord's Hammond organ to Deep Purple's sound; or the role of the keyboard in genres such as symphonic black metal gothic rock/metal etc.) as well as progressive rock contexts (e.g. bands such as Yes or Emerson Lake and Palmer) though in most cases such instruments are electronic in nature, with the acoustic piano being a rarer occurrence.

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[258] The open lid may also be interpreted as emphasising the acoustic sound production of the piano, though once again, recording or amplifying piano would normally also require an open lid to avoid issues during the mixing process.

Whilst the electric guitar strikes me as an instrument that is quite far from the potential of a 'classical' music connotation, its inclusion may not only be relevant as representing popular connotations – be it heavy metal specifically, or popular culture as part of the album's transgression. It is also possible to consider it as bringing forward a connection to the 'classic' in relation to representing the 'typical example of its kind' general definition, namely, as a 'classic' Fender Stratocaster-resembling guitar and in one of the most common colour combinations (white and white). That the guitar 'pierces' the piano may not only visually imply that the genre-transgression of the album is one of combining seemingly disparate elements[259] – as opposed to including multiple images that may signify an album referencing the somewhat indirect co-existence of two traditions (see my discussion of the *Jazz & Beethoven* album artwork in section 11.3 of this study). But also, I am left with the impression that the implied violence of the act suggests an imbalance of the perceived traditions, as the depiction of equality or unity between classical and popular elements could have easily been achieved by a guitar leaning against the piano.[260] The imbalance may also be implied by the cobwebs that have accumulated at the piano's legs which outside of a literal 'stationary' or even 'unused' meanings, may also create the impression of an effort by the guitar to 'reinvigorate' the dusty piano-related (i.e., classical) music.

Beyond the two visible musical instruments, the ghostly figure that appears at the centre of the image, is clearly a ballet dancer performing a traditional ballet dance move resembling an

arabesque penchée (see Clarke and Vaughan 1977, 368). Whilst the transparency of this 'apparition' obscures some of the details regarding her costume, some general observations can nevertheless be made. The costume resembles a combination of a ballet skirt (also referred to as a tutu), a leotard with tights/leggings and pointe dance shoes, whereby the combination of clothing, the length of the tutu (above the knees) as well as ballet dancing using the pointe-technique, can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Clarke and Vaughan 1977, 370, 371, 372) thus suggesting somewhat contemporary contexts. The ballerina's inclusion presents the strongest association to the term 'ballet', and whilst it may serve as a visual component echoing the album's title, the only other linguistic interpretation I can offer is the potential word-

Figure 2: Corinthian capital

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[259] The penetrative implications of the two instruments also suggest that – whether intended or not – their respective gendered connotations appear to be extended through this image i.e., guitar as masculine and as an extension of the male phallus (especially in some interpretations of heavy metal depictions of virtuosity) and the piano as a feminine instrument that even feminizes some of Savatage's work, the latter factor mentioned by the band's reviewers.

[260] Given that the piano and electric guitar are performed by Jon Oliva and Chris Oliva respectively, it remains unclear as to whether the instruments' direct engagement was artistic liberty of Gary Smith, or whether some comment was made not only about the genre transgression, but also regarding creative direction within the band.

play in relation to the word 'gutter' which not only relates to 'rain gutters' but also "(of a candle or flame) flicker and burn unsteadily" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 775). Thus, when taking into account the skeletal candelabras that contribute to the illumination of the hall, the term 'gutter ballet' may imply a dimly lit ballet performance or that the ballerina's own 'ghostly' nature may imply that her performance is 'flickering' due to her transparency.

Moving my attention to the imagined space that the album artwork depicts, several architectural elements can be contextualised as presenting a connection to the classical. If we take the marble pillars as an example, the design of the capitals and its integration of smaller volutes/helixes (i.e. the circular protrusions at the top of the capital), and the utilisation of acanthus (and potentially caulicoli) decorations (i.e. the rows of downward-curving leaves at the bottom of the capital) all suggest a similarity to the capitals in the Greco-Roman Corinthian[261] style (see Figure 2),[262] one of the classical orders of architecture (see Chitham 2005 for an overview of all orders; for the Corinthian order specifically, see Chitham 2005, 45–47, 82–91; see also Tzonis and Liane 2014 [1987]).

In addition, rather than using fluting (i.e., the vertical channels on the column's shaft), the columns here completely smooth and are made of what appears to veined dark-green marble, a material that may be considered as creating a strong association to tradition, but also to power and the financial ability to possess such a material. The use of marble and its association with classical sculpture is also a possible interpretation, though the intense colour leads me to suggest that such reading may border on overinterpretation. However, the use of marble as a material of the columns may be viewed as a self-referential element, as similar columns (albeit of dark orange colour but retaining the strong veining) appear in the *Hall of the Mountain King* album artwork.[263]

Taking a step back to consider the depicted space as a whole, the implied high ceilings together with the decorative round arches (and the possibility of the vault above them), and specifically the utilisation of heavy red curtains, enable comparisons to the design of some Baroque-styled opera stages (e.g. see Figure 3)[264] whereby both images share a variety of details such as the rococo style[265] of the heavily ornamented wall and ceiling decorations, as well as the pastel-blue

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[261] The intricate design of the capital makes it possible for another classical order to have been referenced, the Composite order, though to determine this more accurately, characteristics such as the height of the column, the diameter of the shaft, the type of pedestal etc. need to be taken into consideration.

[262] For source of the image, see Desgodets (2003 [1682]).

[263] Example image of such artwork can be found in the following bibliographical entry: Savatage (1987a).

[264] For image source see, castle.ckrumlov.cz (n.d.).

[265] The implication that the style is rococo can be inferred by the image's implied lack of symmetry i.e., whilst it is clear that the hall as a whole is symmetrically designed in terms of architecture and decoration, the slightly left-shifted observer's perspective, as well as placement of objects (e.g., the chandelier, piano and ballerina) relate more to rococo's transition away from symmetrical aesthetic (see e.g. Bycroft 2017, 364; Makovicky 2016, 226; H. Osborne 1986, 81). Michael Bycroft's discussion offers an additional point of consideration that despite the term 'rococo style' to "be construed in ways that are conceptually confused or historically inaccurate" he suggests that "there was such a Pattern in Paris in the period 1710 to 1740, and […] the qualities that made up the pattern included irregularity, superficiality, and imitation" (Bycroft 2017, 364). From this perspective, the relation to the rococo style in this image may be suggested due its inherent 'imitation', and potentially its 'superficiality' if one considers the inclusion of ghosts or references to fantasy in general to be describable in such a manner. With that in mind, I offer such a perspective as an intriguing interpretative potential, that will not be explored further.

Figure 3: Baroque Theatre at Český Krumlov Castle, City of Český Krumlov, Czech Republic

accents on the wall heavily ornamented gold rococo style. That said, the staircase in the middle of the stage also enables to draw some comparisons to such decorations used in older buildings such as palaces or chateaus, whereby all mentioned settings can be connected to the intended effect of evoking grandeur or even imposition.[266]

From a slightly different perspective, whilst the inclusion of elements such as the ghostly ballet-dancer, the skeletal candelabras, the gargoyle creature or the apparitions in the darkness-filled section at the back of the depicted space may be considered as representing popular music-related elements, and more specifically the band drawing from its 'native' heavy metal-aesthetic, I would argue that it is possible to view them also as expressions of a different tradition with implications on the image's reception, namely the Gothic. The individual outlined elements (gargoyle, skeleton, ghost) can be seen as representing different concepts informing the Gothic and its effects. Maria Parrino frames the gargoyle as a common element of Gothic architecture and includes such creatures in her discussion of the grotesque, the latter defined as "[the] distorted or unnatural forms set in an extravagant arrangement aiming at a disturbing comic effect" (Parrino 2016, 306). By describing gargoyles as "grotesque waterspouts, representing animal or human figures, projecting from the gutter of the building" (Parrino 2016, 308) the author's context hints at both the creature's inclusion as an element in transforming the space from quasi-Baroque to evoking Gothic elements, but also as yet another word-play based on its utilisation on a building's gutter.[267]

The skeletal candelabras (and by extension the ethereal skull visible in the back of the image) can be framed as representing the macabre, a term summarised by Alison Milbank as "a gruesome effect in a work of art [...] used especially when elements of death and life are brought into close

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[266] Another term that may be useful in framing the desired emphasis of the image is an attempt to evoke the atmosphere associated with spaces saturated with classical-connotative elements as outlined above. For a discussion on the relation between architecture or visual arts [Ger. "Freie Kunst"] and atmosphere as a communicative/evocative component in said disciplines, see Hofmann (2017).

[267] From the same perspective, the crowned and bearded faces seen at the centre of the arch above the staircase leading into the darker portion of the space (and above the two pillars surrounding said entryway) can be seen as not only self-referential elements, drawing from Savatage's depiction of the mountain king in the artwork of their *Hall of the Mountain King* album, but may also be interpreted as an extension of the Gothic architecture and its more intricate depiction of figures above Gothic-styled cathedral entrances.

proximity" (Milbank 2016, 408). The author relates the medieval dance of death (*danse macabre*) "in which grinning skeletons invite the living […] into the equalizing democracy of the grave" as an "important musical subject for Saint-Saens and Liszt and is used by Edgar Allan Poe most effectively in 'The Masque of the Red Death'" (Milbank 2016, 408). Thus, whilst the skeletons' inclusion helps to support the claim that the image relates to Gothic concepts, the fact that they are not depicted as dancing but rather as surrounding a ghostly dance, makes it possible to draw very broad parallels to Western art music's engagement with dance of death subject.

The ghostly ballerina can be seen described as an apparition i.e., "a sudden visual manifestation of an ethereal and transient figure, most often someone who is deceased" (Bartlett 2016, 35) and whilst apparitions "predate what is traditionally identified as Gothic fiction" (Bartlett 2016, 36) Mackenzie Bartlett frames them as a fairly common narrative device in Gothic fiction with a variety of complex signification purposes. Of note here is the author's contextualisation of apparitions "in modern literary and cultural history scholarship [being] read in terms of Freud's theory of the return of the repressed" (Bartlett 2016, 36) which may be related to some of the ascriptions of classical education to Jon Oliva. Specifically, to some familiar with Freudian theory, the ballerina's classical-signification potential may be related to the supposed re-emergence of interest in Western art music by Oliva, though even if such a reading stretches the interpretation, the combination between Gothic- and classical-signification of the figure remain unchanged.

In addition to their separate allusion to Gothic-relevant concepts within the image, their combined effect can be described as contributing to the element of the Sublime into the image. Whilst the Sublime can be succinctly described as "refer[ring] to immense ideas like space, time, death, and the divine" (Nesbitt 1995, 95) it remains a somewhat abstract philosophical concept, needing further contextualisation. Max Fincher's overview of the sublime suggests that Edmund Burke's 1757 essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* serves as a worthwhile point of departure as "[Burke] advances the idea that the Sublime is both a set of aesthetic criteria that are immanent within natural objects and phenomena, and an affective response of the mind to these objects and phenomena" (Fincher 2016, 655). Furthermore, Fincher discusses Immanuel Kant's contribution to the concept as separating the Sublime from "exist[ing] in the individual properties of objects. Rather, the Sublime is an effect of the mind's inability to reason through those ideas that cannot be expressed or contained by any adequate form of representation" (Fincher 2016, 655).

Two aspects are of note in relation to the discussion of Savatage's image: first, returning to Burke's framing of the Sublime, Fincher points to Burke's "identif[ication of] terror as 'the ruling principle of the Sublime' […]" whereby terror is described as derived from multiple "conceptual sources […] that create the Sublime states of astonishment and rapture. These sources are obscurity, power and excess, privation, vastness, infinity, darkness, loud and intermittent sounds, and pain" (Fincher 2016, 656). Second, Fincher also connects the Sublime to that of Gothic architecture suggesting that "[the] vast height and florid ornament, [Gothic cathedrals] create a sublime effect through inspiring feelings of awe and astonishment at their excess" (Fincher 2016, 656), a comment relevant not only in relation to the "religious sublime [and] its spiritual dimension" (Nesbitt 1995, 95) that is evoked by a Gothic cathedral, but also as "the scale and permanence of the architecture, the

terror and wonder of the sublime, all become important features of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel" (Botting 2005 [1996], 16).

Considering Savatage's artwork through this context, the visibility of terror-inducing unexplainable phenomena such as the ballerina apparition enables a rudimentary form of the Sublime to be established, however I would argue that the image's connection to the Gothic tradition is more complex due to its simultaneous drawing from Gothic architecture's evocation of the sublime, and the imagined and, at times claustrophobic, elements derived from some Gothic writings (e.g. Poe's short story "Cask of Amontillado" 1993 concludes with one of the characters being walled-in alive, presumably to their death). With regards to the former, not only is the building rife with examples of Burke's sources of terror such as the excess of the interior and its decorations, the associations of power as to whoever person or persons would have been able to construct such a building.[268] The artwork also hints at the size of the building by leaving much of its roof, sides and further interior outside of visible range i.e., implying that this building cannot be 'seen' directly but requires the person to look around in order to see everything, an implication that evokes the Sublime in the same manner as a Gothic cathedral's towering over its observers or the enormous spaces it houses. Furthermore, the additional space hinted at through the visibility of other rooms beyond the depicted stairs is not only a source of terror due to being enveloped in darkness, but also borders on simulating the effects of the natural fear from dark spaces. As for the latter elements, whilst Gothic novels drew from the medieval architecture as a source of its Sublime effect, scholars have pointed out that for authors "historical accuracy was not a prime concern" (Botting 2005 [1996], 2) which helps to align the image discussed in this section as Gothic-'authentic' by being an imagined space with Sublime characteristics. With regards to my comments about claustrophobic qualities, it is noticeable that the image presents no windows, no view outside of this mist-covered, quasi-'haunted' space and, as mentioned, the only way of direction offered is towards the darkness and its own set of apparitions. This perspective also matches Burke's notion of terror drawing from 'obscurity', in this case the observer's lack of knowledge as to where this place is, and whether the place is 'real' or 'imagined'.

Overall, the artwork's echoing of Gothic sensibilities is of importance not only due to its connection to a revered literary tradition, but also as it enables to view the image as transgressive from a different perspective. As Fred Botting outlines with regards to the content of Gothic fiction, "transgression, like excess, is not simply or lightly undertaken in Gothic fiction, but ambivalent in its aims and effects" continuing that in the context of eighteenth century "[t]he terrors and horrors of transgression in Gothic writing become a powerful means to reassert the values of society, virtue and propriety: transgression, by crossing the social and aesthetic limits, serves to reinforce or underline their value and necessity, restoring or defining limits" (Botting 2005 [1996], 5). This perspective is extended by the work of Isabella van Elferen (2012) who suggests that "the desolate spaces and spectral appearances of Gothic offer their readers a form of cultural critique", namely that the "Gothic

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[268] Another perspective here is to view the expression of excess as paralleling Gothic's tradition of "plundering the past for artefacts and ideas that will anachronistically express current tastes" (Spooner, quoted in Peirson-Smith 2012, 89), whereby in this instance one way to visually signify the classical is to relate to its contemporary association with 'high' culture.

ghost story addresses the anxiety that arises when familiar values are transgressed and exchanged for the borderland of the unseen" and that ghost stories "question and subvert the false securities of patriarchy, imperialism, capitalism, law" (Elferen 2012, 14). In other words, the ability to interpret Savatage's artwork's as incorporating Gothic content or sensibilities carries with it the genre's transgression in terms a re-evaluation of cultural values. Whilst such questioning of value originally addressed the "well-organised surfaces of self and society" (Elferen 2012, 14), here it can also be interpreted as paralleling the band's transgressing boundaries of 'popular' and 'classical' in relation to music, yet also as a 'reassuring' component that implicitly signals to heavy metal listeners that, classical-looking or not, the transgression does not lose sight of the 'familiar values' prised in heavy metal such as the potential subversion of cultural authority.

Having contextualised individual components of *Gutter Ballet*'s artwork as well as its cumulative potential to relate to the classical, I want to move to framing said image in a broader context of classical-signification images by popular music performers. If one agrees that the depicted space is interpretable as a Baroque-styled opera stage, then the framing of such metal-culture abnormal performance venue allows *Gutter Ballet*'s artwork to be contextualised as participating in a broader genre- and culture-transgressive aesthetic practice through which a 'popular' musician's engagement with aspects of the classical is communicated. The practice can be summarised as the utilisation of classical-connotative intertextual elements throughout the album artwork thus not only paralleling the genre-transgressive practices taking place on the auditive level, but also visually signalling that the record challenges the boundaries between classical and popular. Examples can be identified in a variety of popular music genres (including both heavy metal and progressive rock). Whilst the elements I will point to may be considered as salient features of the practice – from referencing a classical element in the album's title, through contrasting the popular-ness of the performers against the classical-connotative performance venue, to broadly organising an album in 'acts' or employing specific fonts – the varying aesthetic principles of different genres and the continuous adjustments that take place as any genre develops makes it difficult in pointing out one element (or a specific combination of elements) as concretely representing this practice.[269]

The selection of artworks presented below (Figure 4 to Figure 8)[270] aids in contextualising the utilisation of a classical-connotative performance venue and/or the utilisation of an extended performance ensemble (i.e., orchestral players and/or choir members) as part of the practice. The artworks for Rage's *Lingua Mortis* (1996b) and Paul McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio* (1991b) present a

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[269] I do not suggest that this practice is universal as a plethora of examples exist in which such a visual contrast is either absent (e.g., Sting's *Symphonicities* [2010]) or only a partial intertextual connection to the classical can be inferred (e.g., Emerson, Lake and Palmer's *Pictures at an Exhibition* [1971]).

[270] For sources on the included images, see *Lingua Mortis* (Rage and Symphonic Orchestra Prague 1996a); *Liverpool Oratorio* (Paul McCartney and Carl Davis 1991a); *Concerto Suite for Electric Guitar and Orchestra in E Flat Minor Op. 1 "Millennium"* (Yngwie Johann Malmsteen 1999b); *Concerto for Rock Band and Orchestra* (Deep Purple and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 1970a); *Bat Out of Hell Live with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra* (Meat Loaf with The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra 2004b).

view of the additional performers situated in (presumably) a church as the performance venue;[271] Deep Purple's *Concerto For Group and Orchestra* (1970b) and Yngwie Malmsteen's *Concerto Suite for Electric Guitar and Orchestra in E Flat Minor Op. 1 "Millennium"* (1999) present views from within and outside the implied performance venues (Royal Albert Hall and a Gothic-styled cathedral respectively); whilst Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell Live with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra* (2004c) somewhat inverts the perspective by positioning the symphonic orchestra's traditional visual order in a fantastic/hellish landscape that borrows from Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell*-related imagery. It should be pointed out that when I refer to a 'performance venue' I do not imply that the album must be recorded/performed in that venue (as is the case for Deep Purple's example) but rather that it presents a visual element that adjusts the expectation from projecting the album's liveness (i.e., 'this is a recording of a live performance') to that of projecting a transgressive practice.

Whilst the contrast between the popular and classical aspects may be considered as identifiable due to the popular performer's name and the Western art music-related terms (such as the piece being a concerto, oratorio or being performed with an established classical ensemble and/or a conductor), the contrast is also established by additional elements. The most common example is the emphasised 'other'-ness of the popular music performers within these otherwise classical-connotative settings e.g. both Deep Purple and Yngwie Malmsteen's are positioned on the 'edges' of the venue (the former group sitting in the audience, the latter outside the implied[272] venue), as well as contrasting the long hair and non-(Western art music)-typical outfits against the concert/evening wear typical for classical music performances in their booklet/inlet artwork. Malmsteen and Meat Loaf's booklet and back artworks respectively also present a contrast as to the implied importance of the popular performer. Malmsteen is presented at the front of the orchestra, though unlike instances where the soloist is to be positioned at an angle allowing him/her visibility to the conductor, Malmsteen's back is fully turned to the conductor/ensemble suggesting that the performance is less a dialogue between the soloist and orchestra but rather the orchestra is intended to *follow* the soloist (see Yngwie Johann Malmsteen 1999a). Meat Loaf's back artwork presents a similar framing depicting the popular music band as positioned in front of (and better illuminated than) the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (see Meat Loaf with The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra 2004a).

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[271] Paul McCartney's inclusion here is a quasi-outlier as his work falls under Halbscheffel's category of "original composition without central references to rock music" [Ger. Orig. "Originalkompositionen ohne vorrangigen Bezug zur Rockmusik"], whilst the remaining examples match the author's category of "supplementary compositions to rock songs" [Ger. Orig. "Zusatzkompositionen zu Rocksongs"] which addresses the combination between rock music and Western art music ensembles/sonorities or, in Meat Loaf's case, "arrangements of older rock songs for orchestra with the participation of the respective band" [Ger. Orig. "Bearbeitungen älterer Rocksongs für Orchester mit Beteiligung der jeweiligen Band"] (Halbscheffel 2014 [2012], 230–31). Despite these differing auditive categorisations, the implications of the artwork can be seen as comparable.

[272] Malmsteen's example is somewhat more complex as the front artwork depicts the performer in front of the Prague's Metropolitan Cathedral of Saint Vitus (see hrad.cz n.d.). However, the additional images in the booklet (see Yngwie Johann Malmsteen 1999a) suggest that the recording/practice sessions took place in the Rudolfinum building (see rudolfinum.cz n.d.), the historical seat of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra performing on Malmsteen's album. It is possible that the architecture of the Rudolfinum (see prague.eu n.d.) may have been too modern for the purposes of the photograph – still connotating the classical but lacking the heavy ornamentation of Prague's Gothic-reminiscent cathedral – however I still consider the (potentially desired) effect of the image to be was similar to other discussed examples.

Figure 4: Rage – *Lingua Mortis* (1996), back artwork

Figure 5: Paul McCartney – *Liverpool Oratorio* (1991), back artwork

Figure 6: Yngwie Malmsteen – *Concerto Suite for Electric Guitar and Orchestra in E flat minor Op. 1* "Millennium" (1999), front artwork
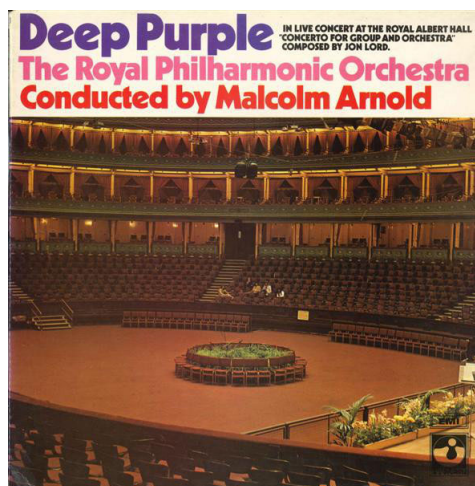
Figure 7: Deep Purple – *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* (1970), front artwork
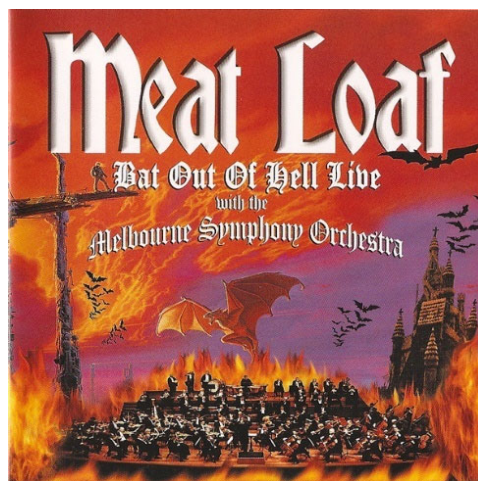
Figure 8: Meat Loaf – *Bat Out of Hell Live with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra* (2004), front artwork

Savatage's depiction of an imagined Baroque-styled opera/theatre stage can be contextualised as situated in close proximity to this specific practice though with some notable differences. In contrast to most of the aforementioned examples, *Gutter Ballet*'s album cover does not utilise a photograph of a real venue, but rather imagines a theatrical stage on to which the album auditive contents are projected.[273] Furthermore, Savatage bypasses both the implied 'liveness' as well as the 'performing in a classical venue/with a classical ensemble' aspects, as their album falls into the category of a 'studio' record which utilises synthesised instruments/voices.[274] However, I would suggest that the visibility of the piano serves as a quasi-substitution to the orchestral ensemble in the examples above.

That said, it is possible to argue that the approach to imagining the theatrical stage reflects the changes that take place in accommodating the visual aspect of an operatic/theatrical performance i.e., changes of the set to reflect dramatic development in different scenes or acts of an opera. In other words, the theatrical stage represents a locale necessitating a process of 'imagining', namely, the sets and artistic approach to said sets. Taking this idea further, theatrical sets tend to be subordinate to the dramatic action and as such they may be incomplete (from the perspective of realism or historical accuracy) or are presented in a manner that informs yet does not obstruct the actions of the performers. Therefore, it can be suggested that for observers there exists an element of co-'imagining' some aspects of the set: filling in the (realistic/historically accurate) details left out by the production; contextualising the scene in relation to other locales within the confines of the narrative (should they exist); or from the perspective of opera's canonicity even bringing with them pre-knowledge about the piece i.e. raising questions as to how this specific production will handle the environmental element in relation to the narrative. I would argue that not only does Savatage's artwork manages to encapsulate this process of the theatrical stage's 'imagining' analogy, but also to do so whilst raising its own questions: What is the (external) location of the place? Is it a 'stage' or a gloomy castle? Why is there a ghost In the main hall, and why are there apparitions beyond the darkness in the back of the hall? etc.

With regards to Savatage's band members, similar to some the aforementioned examples, *Gutter Ballet*'s artwork showcases them on the inside sleeves, and continuing the segregation between 'liveness' components, they are not depicted in relation to a Western art music ensemble. I would like to offer two interpretations to this perspective as exploring *Gutter Ballet*'s artwork on its own or in relation to the next album by the band presents two intriguing perspectives. For the former, it can be argued that the album artwork presents not only an imagined space on its front cover (i.e., the theatrical stage) but also on its back cover which seemingly depicts a back alley in which a guitar's neck can be seen protruding from a garbage can, and two ballet-shoes can be seen nearby (see Figure

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[273] Whilst it is possible to suggest that Savatage's artwork takes a step further than that of Meat Loaf (i.e., fully imagined rather than half-imagined and half-photographed) the former's album was released over a decade before the latter's record. As such, to avoid anachronistic (or even worse needlessly canonising) arguments regarding a potential connection, I would suggest that both performers draw from rock/metal's utilisation of fantasy-reminiscent artwork and combine them with the classical through different approaches.

[274] I am aware that studio work is involved in many albums framed as 'live', including examples in this category. As such, I am not suggesting of a fundamental difference between the recording or studio-preparation method but only in the framing of the record as belonging to a different category within an artist's discography.

9).[275] This image is significant not only as presenting the album's title as a synecdoche (i.e., the visibility of a rain gutter and ballet shoes), but also as contextualisation of the front cover as a theatrical space. In other words, examining the back of the album enables a view 'behind' the metaphorical building that is inferred as house the theatrical stage at the front of the artwork. If this interpretation is accepted then the depiction of the band members in the sleeve of the record (see Figure 10) can be interpreted as not only echoing the visibility of popular performers in/around the suggested performance venue in this practice, but also based on the similarity between the back cover and the background against which the performers were photographed, and thus blurs the lines between what constitutes a 'real' place and what is 'imagined' i.e. is the brick wall against which the performers are photographed the 'back alley behind the theatre' or is it a set itself?

Figure 9: Savatage – *Gutter Ballet* (1989), back artwork
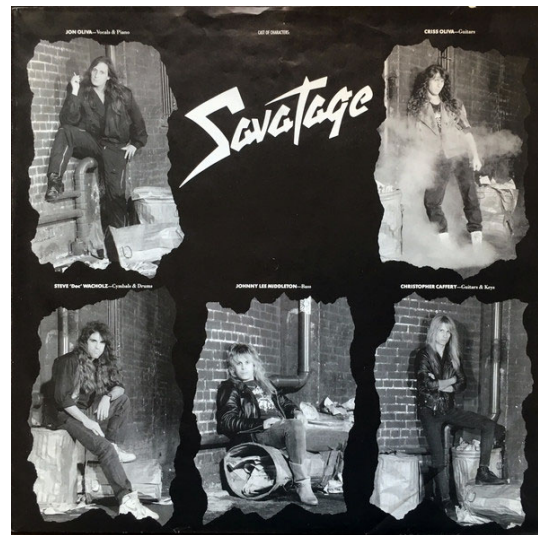
Figure 10: Savatage – *Gutter Ballet* (1989), inner sleeve

From a different perspective, it is noticeable that the artwork for the following album by Savatage, *Streets: A Rock Opera,* presents the band on the front cover whereby their background incorporates elements that are comparable to that of *Gutter Ballet*'s setting e.g., a dimly lit space featuring smaller yet heavily ornamented square arch at the visible end of which a quasi-column and capital can be identified. Whilst this is perhaps a case of self-referentiality, some of its implications such as the band occupying a space that signals the classical through a quasi-real environment is of note here as it suggests that the band has 'moved' closer to a classical-connotative space previously only imagined on their artwork, and furthermore the band's long-hair and typical metal-stances present the contrast between popular and classical elements discussed in the contextualising examples above. The relation between the front covers of *Streets* and *Gutter Ballet* can thus be described as somewhat symbiotic: *Gutter Ballet*'s album artwork becomes more-relatable to the context of the classical due to the

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[275] For sources on the images: Figure 9 (see Savatage 1989a) and Figure 10 (see Savatage 1989b). Please note, whilst the front artwork seen in Figure 1 is derived from the US release of the album (see Savatage 1989d), the back artwork and inner sleeve are derived from the European release (see Savatage 1989). This decision was taken in favour of better quality of the images of the latter release. However, both editions were carefully checked, and there are no notable differences between the two artworks that will have any bearing on the interpretation.

implications that a rock opera piece such as *Streets* carries its own suggestive potential to that of a traditional opera; simultaneously, the album artwork of *Streets* draws from the earlier album's classical-connotative elements thus enabling observers familiar with the visual aesthetic of the band's previous album to identify the band as 'closer' to said classical-connotative elements.
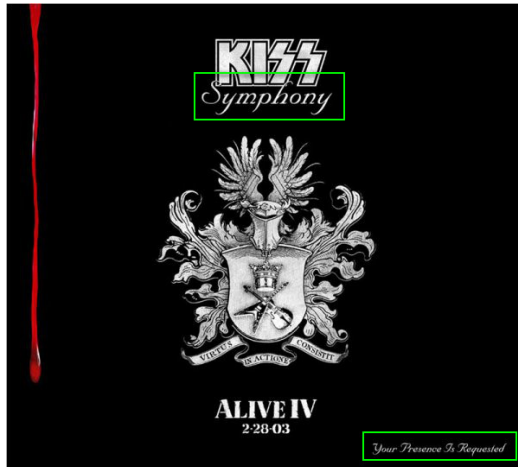
Figure 11: Kiss – *Kiss Symphony: Alive IV* (2003), front artwork

Figure 12: Queen – *A Night at the Opera* (1975), front artwork

Figure 13: Kiss – *Kiss Symphony: Alive IV* (2003), back artwork, selection
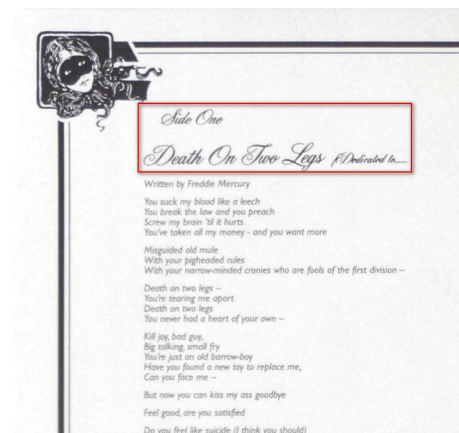
Figure 14: Queen – *A Night at the Opera* (1975), gatefold, selection

I also wish to briefly touch on some additional intertextual connections to the classical identifiable on both front and back[276] covers of *Gutter Ballet*, which can also be connected to the practice of a popular performer visually signalling its engagement with the classical: the utilisation of the font for the album's title and the separation of the album into two 'acts'. The utilisation of a font reminiscent to that of the calligraphic/handwriting style of 'round hand' may be considered an element of 'sophistication' in a similar manner to that of the utilisation of the heavy Baroque ornamentation for Savatage's front cover. Other examples that feature a potential connection between such fonts and

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[276] The font utilised for the album's title is identical on the front and back artwork, however it made more sense to transition to the back cover due to its inclusion of the track-list aspects that are relevant to the discussion at hand.

the classical are the artworks for Queen's *A Night at the Opera* (1975c)[277] as well as Kiss' *Kiss Symphony: Alive IV* (2003c),[278] whereby in both instances similar fonts are utilised to strengthen the titles' more direct (i.e. referencing an opera and a symphony) connections to the classical: Queen utilises a very similar font for the band- and album-names on their front album artwork, whereas Kiss emphasise the word symphony with a comparable font.

I would argue that such fonts' ability to signify the classical is enabled through its implied 'sophistication' aspects and additional intertextual framing devices i.e., connecting the album not only to Western art music -related elements but also to the broad genre's stereotypical association as a 'high culture' artform. For example, in addition to the more obvious aspect of referencing a 'symphony', Kiss' front cover features the line 'Your Presence Is Requested' (see Figure 11, green outline), a phrase which may be interpreted as alluding to the formal/aristocratic invitations to courtly events. Similarly, the visual arrangement of the track-list on the back cover may be compared to that of a 'sophisticated' concert programme through its use of the aforementioned font and the division of the CD into 'acts' (see Figure 13, green outline); whilst examining the booklet reveals its self-framing as a "Programme", as well as lists "Members of the Cast" and having a "Curtain Call" section (i.e., listing non-music personnel) – all of these quotations are written using the same font as on the front cover. Queen's approach is similar in presenting their album and band name with the classical-connotative font (see Figure 12, red outline); and the gatefold employs the 'round hand' font for the names of all songs on the album, as well as utilises a surrounding border, at the top left and bottom right corners of which masked heads reminiscent of the theatrical masks found in Greek theatre (see Varakis 2010; Vovolis and Zamboulakis 2007) can be identified, thus hinting at the connection between opera and the tradition of theatre (see Figure 14, red outline).

Savatage's approach is somewhat reduced in scale, yet utilises a similar combination of elements: both covers of the album feature a 'round hand' font, whilst the back cover also integrates that as part of a poster, whereby the included list of tracks is divided into two 'acts' (see Figure 9). Whilst a far cry from the 'courtly invitations' suggested by Kiss' album, it can be argued that Savatage's poster echoes the same 'high culture' connotative principle that may be evoked when a classical concert's poster is designed, including the 'sophistication' elements of the font. As for framing an album's contents as organised into several 'acts', this suggests that such approach is not intended to simply incorporate Western art music-related terminology – or in the case of Savatage as emphasising the album's operatic/theatrical connotations – but perhaps also parallels the potential for changes in narrative mood when an opera transitions from one act to another. Whilst on first glance the change is related to the storage limitations of the medium, it is possible that the band was either referencing the earlier ideas of singles having an 'A' and a 'B' side, the latter associated with less-popular or less-

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[277] A recent contribution by Nick Braae (2016, 122–23) has provided a brief analysis of several tracks from this record, showcasing classical-interpretative components thus supporting the argument for Queen's relation to progressive rock genre. With that in mind, the author focuses exclusively on the auditive level, thus potentially ignoring the ability for the visuals to contribute to the same classical-connotative potential.

[278] For sources of the images see corresponding bibliographical entries: Figure 11 (Kiss 2003b); Figure 12 (Queen 1975a); Figure 13 (Kiss 2003a); Figure 14 (Queen 1975b).

likely to be listened songs, or as an attempt to recontextualise said idea i.e., their record has two 'acts' that imply the equal importance of the contents represented on both sides of the record.

To summarise, the section presented a visual-interpretative reading of the artwork for Savatage's *Gutter Ballet* album, a rare instance in which a reviewer has discussed an image and with an emphasis on parity between auditive and visual transgressive elements, and argued that said artwork can be viewed as saturated with perspectives signifying different framings of the classical. My examination allowed to relate the depiction of specific a variety of elements such as presented figures (e.g., the ballerina) as well as items (e.g., the piano) as relating to Western art music practices such as ballet or Western art music; similarly, I considered the implications of the type of space and its architectural components as relating to the concepts of classical architecture. I also argued that the general framing of said space, as well as its included elements, can be interpreted as reflecting a number of Gothic-related concepts, which in turn contributes to the image's transgressive potential. As an additional step, I expanded the interpretation by situating the album artwork as paralleling a broad practice in which popular musicians visually signify their transgressive practices, and presented notable parallels based on *Gutter Ballet*'s framing of a performance venue, the visibility of traditional instruments, the used fonts and terminology, as well as the framing of the performers. Whilst I make no claims regarding this image as fully representative of progressive metal's visual engagement with the classical, the presented arguments can contribute in building a foundation towards ways through which the classical is visually connoted in the genre.

8.7 Chapter conclusion

In conclusion, this portion of the investigation engaged with the term 'operatic' as identified in the discourse surrounding progressive metal performers, and helped to illustrate that even when within its application to a handful of performers, a complex network of meanings can be discerned. The multiple included sections were constructed as an attempt to outline one or more of the perspectives noted in the overview of the term's usage, through a combination of broad contextualisation, interpretative close-readings aimed at 'translating' the potential meaning behind the ascription, together with how the observations may be framed as signalling the classical. Furthermore, each section attempted to offer a combination of meaningful contexts so as to balance situating the progressive metal audiences' perspectives in both popular music as well as Western art music contexts.

The large-scale discussion of the 'rock opera' audience-ascription was framed in relation to the formats rock- and metal-opera. Specifically, I argued that despite the format's continued association with popular music contexts, both the existing academic discussion, as well as the woefully unexplored rock opera contributions since the mid-1970s created in Russia and other Central and Eastern-European countries, include aspects that strengthen the constitutive 'opera' as pertaining to Western art music contexts. This perspective was extended via a consideration of the classical-connotative potential of Savatage, as the band most commonly associated with the format in the current discourse; these combined observations were used as situating some of the reviewers' understanding of Savatage's rock opera as a combination between 'rock' and 'opera' elements.

My examination of Savatage's work continued through the following section which framed multi-voice vocal phenomena related to 'operatic' qualities. I focused my investigation on two non-rock-opera tracks ascribed 'operatic' qualities, in which vocal choir-related perspectives or multi-voice arrangement and compositional techniques were framed in relation to Western art music contexts such as opera and choral related formats, settings, or compositional practices. I also pointed out the classical-connotative potential of instrumental aspects that can be extrapolated from the examined tracks. Furthermore, in an effort to avoid essentialising any observation, both interpretations offered brief supplementary comments regarding the examined elements' appearance in popular music culture.

The following section shifted the attention to the examination of singular 'operatic' vocal deliveries and, once again acknowledging the existence of specific popular culture understandings of said practice, I offered a critical examination of academic and journalistic literature, noting issues such as lack of terminological clarity and potential quasi-segregated framing of male and female 'operatic' performers. Due to the lack of clearly outlined definition, I drew from additional characteristics presented to multiple 'operatic' metal singers in an effort to synthesise a horizon of expectations towards the practice. This was followed by a close reading on a track by Crimson Glory, whereby in addition to observing whether track echoed some of extrapolated 'operatic' vocal characteristics, I offered a reading situating the performance as a site in which traditional Western art music techniques such as word-painting, and parlando can be identified. An additional step I presented an additional summary of an 'operatic' vocal track, as means of balancing the metal-focused selection of practices I utilised during the synthesising process.

Finally, I took a step away from predominantly music-interpretative approaches to discuss how reviewers' criticisms of elements such as excess (and the related melodrama) reveal not only a connection to traditional opera's own historical excesses but also the potential for opera-related elements to have been criticised due to their association with feminine gender connotations. This was followed by a concluding discussion offering an in-depth examination of visual components within the artwork for a Savatage album. I argued that said artwork can be interpreted as independently invoking multiple association with the classical via housing a complex network of architectural, interior design, music instrument-related elements with classical-connotative potential. This was also extended via considering the Gothic-interpretative potential of many of the aspects, which can be seen as also contributing to visually signifying the transgressive potential found in the music.

Whilst the provided larger contexts were operationalised predominantly as framing to the various discourse-derived 'operatic' ascriptions, it is worth briefly mentioning the 'feedback' effect that this study can have on said contexts. My discussion of the rock opera context can be viewed as a significant independent argument towards necessity in broadening the musical and cultural sources from which the format's definition is constructed. This argument is offered, again, not to instil a co-dependency between rock opera and the suggested classical-connotative elements, but to acknowledge the specific practices found in non-Anglo speaking contexts and incorporate them into broader discussions. The framing of Savatage as including 'rock'/popular and 'opera'/classical components can serve as some evidence of the cultural perception of classical connection in relation

to rock opera, yet I am offering this suggestion in a tentative manner. With that in mind, my examination of Savatage's 'operatic' capacity in relation to multi-voice phenomena, in addition to my brief comment on the ability to relate the observation to further progressive metal performers, I pointed out that the observations can serve as paralleling Pölzl and Sackl's framing of metal opera as a progressive metal-related phenomenon, and broadening the authors' argument regarding progressive metal's drawing from formal aspects of traditional opera.

With regards to the framing of individual 'operatic vocals', the contextualisation drew from a series of culturally situated perspectives that, as mentioned, did not provide a clear definition of the phenomenon and some framings hinted at issues such as gender-specific framing of 'operatic' performers. The extrapolated characteristics as to the specific meaning of metal-contextualised 'operatic vocals' are by no means an exhaustive account, though they can be used for the development of a more detailed definition that continues the efforts of Mesiä and Ribaldini by further considering the specific components of the technique and/or the historical contexts informing the term's broad ascription. To that effect, my work's situating of Crimson Glory in close proximity to Western art music techniques, practices and contexts may be a step in said direction, but will also hopefully contribute to eroding some of the negative connotations in the distinction between male 'operatic' vocalists and the female 'classically trained and operatic' vocalists I outlined in my discussion.

Finally, in my examination of Savatage's album artwork I offered an interpretation that positions the presented combination of visual elements such as a classically-connotated performance venue, the visibility of classical instruments such as the piano and the use of aspects such as specific fonts and 'formal' framings as approaches paralleling a broader tradition in the context of popular music in which artists visually frame their cultural- and musical-transgressive records.

As I have continuously emphasised throughout this chapter, the results summarised in this conclusion may be seen as exemplary of the classical signification potential of the term opera, and whilst informing the fundamental question regarding progressive metal's relation to the classical, the perspectives should not be taken as pre-made moulds against which an artist's 'classical-ness' can be directly compared or verified. Rather, these results should be taken as points of departure that not only require additional validation against other progressive metal (or even broader) operatic framings before any claim for broader relevance can be sufficiently established, but also hint at the large variety of meanings that will most likely emerge when progressive metal artists are further examined.

9. Theatrical/dramatic

I would like to begin this discussion by posing the following question: What mental images are conjured when 'progressive metal theatricality' is discussed? Despite commonly being referred to as drawing from heavy metal and progressive rock – where visual spectacles are by no means a foreign concept (e.g. see Bowman 2002, 188; Weinstein 2000 [1991], 199–235) – in both my experience as well as that of other scholars such as Fellezs (2018, 121),[279] the genre[280] is seemingly not known for explicitly engaging with typically understood theatrical aspects such as masks, costumes or live-shows involving fights with fire-breathing mechanical dragons. Instead, I tend to associate the genre with performers that, whilst not immobile or inexpressive, are more static in their delivery and seemingly aim to project an almost stereotypical music-centric introspection e.g., see Animals as Leaders' video for their track "CAFO" (Hansen, Scott 2010) as example of the parallel in a video, rather than a live setting. A 'static performance' is certainly a valid approach, and one that can be broadly contextualised as signalling the same emphasis on the difficulty of the music that parallels from progressive rock's own tendencies (e.g., see Borthwick and Moy 2004, 69). However, whilst such a perspective addresses concert- or music-video behaviours, one can argue that theatricality is a much more complex phenomenon than putting on a costume or being highly mobile during a concert.

I am left with the impression that a gap exists between the terms 'progressive metal' and 'theatricality', both in terms of a general corelation as well as discussions on the subject as neither academic (e.g. Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011]) nor most journalistic (e.g. Sharpe-Young 2007; Stump 2010 [1997]; Weigel 2017) publications discuss the genre in a manner that suggests that theatricality is of importance.[281] However, as I will showcase, reviewers of progressive metal albums

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[279] Fellezs discussion of US progressive metal guitarist Tony MacAlpine points out that "unlike many of his peers [he] evinces little physical movement in his performances, preferring to stand still much of the time, focusing on his instrument" to which the author offers two interpretations "an artist unconcerned with the rest of world, enthralled by the technical brilliance of his own music making" or as "embodiment of discipline, rigor, and an intellectualism that belies racialist assumptions effectively dispac[ing] whiteness as the unmarked standard for serious music making" (Fellezs 2018, 121). It should be mentioned, however, that whilst Fellezs does not overtly describe MacAlpine as a progressive metal performer, he does mention that MacAlpine has "performed progressive metal instrumentals as a key member of the band, Planet X" (Fellezs 2018, 110); as well as suggest that performers such as him can be influenced by progressive rock musicians (Fellezs 2018, 117). Moreover, both databases that this study engages with have presented MacAlpine as part of the genre, thus allowing to relate the author's observations with cultural framings of the performer.

[280] This generalized observation addresses primarily the 'central' progressive metal genre, rather than the several other larger progressive metal categories identified in the PA categorization (i.e., tech/extreme prog metal and experimental prog metal).

[281] It is important to emphasise that this argument is based on the lack of theatricality aspects in the mentioned authors' discussion of progressive metal artists. The lack of a clear theoretical framework as to what constitutes progressive metal exacerbates the challenge in discussing theatricality as, for example, it is possible that Sharpe-Young positions a theatricality-emphasising band in a different category than progressive metal thus contrasting more contemporary fan framings of the same artist. Similarly, Stump's somewhat haphazard discussion of progressive metal identifies System of a Down as representative of the genre (Stump 2010 [1997], 333) though he does not address their highly dramatic delivery on stage and on videos. This makes it unclear as to whether theatricality has any relevance to the author's discussion of the genre, not to mention that, by virtue of the band's exclusion from both databases this study examines, their perception as within progressive metal aesthetic by the community is also somewhat debatable.

have commented on some performers' theatricality – intriguingly towards performances within studio albums and tracks – and moreover do not frame the aspect as an anomaly to the genre or suggest that the phenomenon is localised to only a limited number of records. As such, the various 'theatricality'-related perspectives observable in the reviewers' utterances suggest that the component has some relevancy to progressive metal and that their examination may offer a possibility in addressing the aforementioned gap. To that effect, I will argue that some of the presented perspectives offer possibilities in expanding on the genre's 'theatricality' framing, and more importantly, that some ascriptions of 'theatricality' seemingly echo an understanding of the term that, implicitly, reveals a connection to the classical.

The structure of this chapter will be divided into three sections. The first section will focus on drawing from academic and journalistic texts so as to establish cultural-relevant contexts through which 'theatricality' can be related to the classical, including briefly addressing the framing of 'theatricality' as separate from 'opera' contexts. The second section will focus on discussing 'vocal theatricality' in relation to the genre by examining relevant characteristics shared between three progressive metal tracks. The presented observations will then be situated in relation to culture-relevant contexts, in addition to offering an interpretation which frames the perspectives of album reviewers as expressing a traditional understanding of theatricality thus establishing a relation to the classical. The third and concluding section will offer a visual-interpretative close reading which will argue that the artwork for Shadow Gallery's eponymous first album can be interpreted as paralleling the historical concept of 'classical theatre' as outlined by Erika Fischer-Lichte, and that the classical-transgressive practices presented on a visual level can be interpreted as contributing to the development of the band's audience.

9.1 Theatricality as classical?

To state that 'theatricality' has some relevance to the meta-genre precursors of progressive metal would be an understatement, as exemplified by the large variety of theatre-related perspectives found in academic literature on heavy metal,[282] as well as, to a lesser degree progressive rock (see Bowman 2002, 188; Holm-Hudson 2008, 29–34, 36; Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 436). With that in mind, the

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[282] As an example of said variety: see Walser (1993, 10–11), as well as A. R. Brown (2016b, 79) for broad remarks regarding criticism against theatricality in heavy metal contexts; see Waksman (2009, 70–103) for a discussion on the influence of glam contexts to heavy metal theatricality; see Avelar (2011, 138), Berger (1999b, 70), and Dee (2009, 56) for performers/fan perception of theatricality as an expression of commercial tendencies; see Elflein (2016, 44–45) for an academic perspective on theatricality and commercial approaches by performers; see A. R. Brown (2015, 264) for co-relation between theatricality and gender-critical remarks; see Cope (2010) for a multifaceted (albeit fragmented) consideration of theatricality including vocal aspects (Cope 2010, 68, 113), visual spectacle and gender consideration (Cope 2010, 72), as well as paramusical elements and expressive vocalisations (Cope 2010, 105, 126, see also 54 for additional context); see Grünwald (2018, 57) for a consideration of the role of facial paint-related theatricality as authenticating tools in black metal; see Manea (2016, 84) for Viking metal's use of theatricality as means for developing Nordic identities and leisure communities; see Weinstein (2000 [1991], 229–30), and Henry and Caldwell (2007) for discussions relating theatricality during concert performances and fans' developing identity (see also Sinclair 2011 for a related discussion that does not explicitly point to theatricality); see Hillier (2018, 64–66, 69–71) for a brief discussion of musical theatre-influences on symphonic metal; and see Kahn-Harris (2007, 15) for a comment on the theatrical metaphor origins of spatial concepts such as scene in extreme metal contexts.

question emerges – why frame discussions of theatricality as relating to the classical? I consider the answer to exist in the space between the broad cultural framing of theatre, and some instances of classical-connotated theatricality identifiable in writings related to heavy metal/progressive music contexts. As I emphasise throughout this study, the following argumentation is developed based on existing precedents, and thus does not mean to imply an inherent relation between theatre and the classical.

From a broad perspective, the possibility to frame 'theatricality' as an aspect relating to the classical emerges when considering theatre's association with 'high culture'. For example, Roy Shuker's discussion on policy briefly outlines theatre, ballet and Western art music as ascribed to the realm of 'high culture' by "elites in government, administration, intellectual institutions, and broadcasting to justify and represent sectional interests as general interests, thereby functioning as a form of cultural hegemony" (Shuker 2005 [1998], 194). This perspective enables the rudimentary argument that in some instances the ascription of 'theatricality' may contain classical-related subtexts, whereby to support this claim, I will refer to several academic and journalistic contributions from both progressive music and heavy metal that exemplify this potential.

Kevin Holm-Hudson's (2008) book-length academic study on Genesis and their album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, presents an overview of the band's formation during their early days as pupils in the English public-school Charterhouse, the latter described as "thoroughly steeped in British tradition and rigorous (some would say cruel) discipline" (Holm-Hudson 2008, 20). Of note here is a quote by Peter Gabriel who, reflecting on the influence of the school's environment and its possibilities/limitations, suggests that "it gave [Genesis] a classical influence, it gave us a sort of the idea of using the intellect in rock music, if you like" (Gabriel, quoted in Holm-Hudson 2008, 23). The quasi-'high culture' implications of these contexts allow to interpret Genesis' theatricality as relating to the classical in a manner that parallels the Western art music references in the output of bands such as Emerson, Lake and Palmer or Yes. Moreover, given Genesis' highly canonised status in progressive music audience discourses, this perspective strengthens the argument that in the context of progressive genres some ascriptions of 'theatricality' may be echoing such a connection.[283]

An example drawing from the perspective of metal music studies, Benjamin Hillier's (2018) article on cover practices in the symphonic metal genre[284] also showcases that some forms of

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[283] A brief note on this comparison. Scholars such as Macan have argued that "[t]he continuous references progressive rock musicians make to classical music are, in turn, emblematic of the musicians' middle- and upper-middle-class backgrounds" (Edward Macan 1997, 13), and whilst there are perspectives highlighting the more diverse class-backgrounds of the performers and genre's audiences (e.g. Bowman 2002, 185; Johnes 2018; Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 447–48), Genesis is, at times, mentioned as not stemming from working-class origins (e.g. Bowman 2002, 185; Johnes 2018, 119). As such, to avoid perpetuating a somewhat essentialist relation between middle-class and 'high culture', my comparison explicitly focuses on relating Genesis' supposed influence from their education to that of borrowing from Western art music in the mentioned performers. In other words, I aim to emphasise only the similarity of outward perception as engaging with the classical, rather than to further somewhat questionable class/culture co-dependencies.

[284] Theatricality-related discussions in symphonic metal can be framed as a valid point of comparison to progressive metal contexts based on Halliwell and Hegarty's positioning of the former genre as a contemporary site in which progressive (rock) elements were adopted and further developed (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013

theatricality can be associated with the classical. The author argues that for symphonic metal performers "histrionics are [an] aesthetic concern" (Hillier 2018, 65)[285] and, through his analysis of the band Nightwish and their cover of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*, he suggests that the dramatic performance – delivered in part by the classically trained singer Tarja Turunen – is to be considered an element influenced from musical theatre (Hillier 2018, 69–70). Hillier's perspective is of note as it relates the component of dramatic delivery with (Western art music) vocal phenomena. Though it should be pointed out that the author also considers instrumental and more broadly compositional approaches such as "greater sizes and varieties of classical ensembles" (Hillier 2018, 66) to strengthen the perception of theatricality as classical. For example, Nightwish's piece includes the "characteristically bombastic, theatrical style of musical theatre" whereby the "'orchestral' material is produced from a synthesiser emulating a choir and a strings section, rather than Webber's original, lavish orchestral setting" (Hillier 2018, 69). Whilst the text includes some unclear phrasing regarding the role of the orchestral ensembles (e.g., "appropriating elements from musical theatre, *along with* greater sizes and varieties of classical ensembles", Hillier 2018, 66, emphasis added) Hillier's argument can be taken as supporting the claim of theatricality's classical interpretative potential.[286]

Other examples implying a relation between theatricality and the classical can also be found in journalistic literature in relation to performers from the 'tech/extreme prog metal' category (as per PA's website's categorisation of progressive metal sub-genres). For example, Dayal Patterson's (2013) journalistic book on the history of black metal includes several remarks from both the author and the interviewed musicians suggesting that theatricality is part of several classical connotative elements in the sub-genre of symphonic black metal.[287] Moreover, there appears to be a fairly consistent mentioning of the term 'progressive' in the same contexts as well, thus allowing to connect the presented perspectives to progressive metal contexts. For example, Patterson's discussion of the Norwegian black metal band Arcturus frames the band as rather experimental in its approaches:

> "*Aspera* [*Hiems Symfonia* (Eng. 'Harsh Winter Symphony')] presented symphonic black metal
> in an aggressive and catchy vein, yet with obvious progressive aspirations. Displaying

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[2011], 266–68). As I have maintained throughout this study, however, I do not consider the symphonic metal genre as synonymous with (or an inherent part of) progressive metal – thus the argument should not be taken as implying a validity for the entirety of progressive metal.

[285] As the author does not present a description of the term 'histrionics', it is worth pointing out its dictionary definition i.e., "excessively theatrical or dramatic in character or style" or "of, or concerning actors and acting". That said, as Hillier uses the term 'histrionics' as a noun, this technically entails "melodramatic behaviour designed to attract attention" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 823).

[286] To avoid suggesting an essentialised relation between musical theatre and the classical, it is worth acknowledging the former's relation to popular music contexts (e.g., West End or Broadway productions etc.). However, Zachary Dunbar's (2013) historical discussion frames musical theatre as a "sub-species of music theatre" (Dunbar 2013, 203) the latter's origins going as further back in time as the Florentine Camerata (Dunbar 2013, 198). Moreover, the author argues that the two terms, whilst differentiated, are not to be considered entirely separate traditions but rather "developed as a result of cross-breeding between 'high' operatic shows and 'low' popular music theatre" (Dunbar 2013, 208). This allows for musical theatre to be interpreted as contains some historical relation to the classical, without disregarding its broader popular music associations.

[287] Both Patterson as well as the PA website page from which I quote in this section refer to Arcturus as a symphonic metal band.

sophisticated, twisting songwriting, remarkable performances, and a sense of gothic theatricality that had rarely been explored before in extreme metal". (Patterson 2013, 422, clarification added)

Leaving the somewhat inflated language aside, the quote frames Arcturus' album as a site in which progressive elements, theatricality and the classical – as per the symphonic genre label[288] – come into contact. Based on Patterson's discussion of the band, the perspective is not limited to Arcturus' first album but rather can be identified in a significant portion of their output. The author frames the contribution of guitarist Steinar Johnsen on the following album, *La Masquerade Infernale,* as "[having] only listened to Dream Theater and classical at this time, explaining the heavy progressive and classical leanings", whilst Arcturus' "2005 album *Sideshow Symphonies*, […] saw the band forging ahead in an epic prog metal direction, with less obvious experimentation but a similarly flamboyant theatricality" (Patterson 2013, 424).

These descriptions suggest a certain co-relation between classical-interpretable theatricality and progressive metal contexts, which is further reflected in some theatricality-related audience discourse. For example, the definitions page of the PA website lists "progressive black metal" as including "the slightly more accessible theatrical Symphonic Black Metal of ARCTURUS" (Progarchives.com 2012c); whereby another broad perspective frames the band as influenced by the "leading Avant Metal band of the 80s, Celtic Frost" whose "eclectic mix of Thrash, Doom, Symphonic and Goth Metal created a dark theatrical mystique that became a major influence among the experimental Extreme Metal bands of the 90s" (Progarchives.com 2012a). As such, the discussion of classical-related theatricality in "progressive black metal" not only parallels the PA community's framing of theatricality as a notable element of "traditional progressive metal" but may have influenced the perception of theatricality as containing some classical elements in the discourse as a whole.

Whilst some texts allow to infer additional relations between 'theatricality' and the classical, by way of (rock) opera contexts, before discussing these possibilities I want to briefly reflect on the question of why I separate theatre from the discussion of opera, given that the latter is music-specific permutation of the former. Taking as an example Wagner's progressive metal-focused publication, it is noticeable that a certain co-relation between performers described as 'operatic' and theatricality can be observed. The author discusses Queensrÿche's initial lead singer Geoff Tate and seemingly relates the latter's theatricality with formal training as well as the professional and/or opera singing practices of his family members:

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[288] Sónia Pereira comments that the black metal genre can be broadly framed as including "experimentation with elements of electronic, folk and classical music" (Pereira 2012, 177) or with avant-garde genres/forms beyond the context of the symphonic black metal sub-genre. This aspect is acknowledged by Patterson himself when stating that "black metal had already boasted of its classical aspirations" (Patterson 2013, 423) though he also considers the Arcturus' track "'Ad Astra' […] to offer the most credible example [of such aspirations] yet" (Patterson 2013, 423, square brackets clarification added) thus enabling the argument that the association between the classical and the black metal genre is most clearly observable in its symphonic variety.

"Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson and Judas Priest's Robert Halford had made high-register singing into a metal art form – now Tate brought it to a theatrical new level. Formal training with Maestro David Kyle in Tate's early days had sharpened his talent". (J. Wagner 2010, 49)

Of further note here is that Wagner also positions theatricality in close proximity to several performers that this study has already examined in relation to ascriptions of 'operatic' characteristics, namely, Crimson Glory (J. Wagner 2010, 64–65) and Savatage (J. Wagner 2010, 65–67). These can be seen as relevant as there are instances derived from this study's data source where theatricality is ascribed to both performers:

"Magellan is the [Savatage] last studio record with Zak Stevens on the vocals. For sure the best one, his voice is deeper, fuller, theatrical sometimes". (MA-Savatage-#78, 2011)

"Before they became comfortable releasing rock operas full of theatrics and orchestrations, Savatage were a straight forward heavy metal band". (PA-Savatage-#9, 2017)

"The existential angst is totally intact however, and just taking one look at the chrome masks the guys [of Crimson Glory] wore onstage will let you know they weren't afraid of a little theatrics [sic]". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#9, 2009)

"'Queen Of The Masquerade' [by Crimson Glory] opens with some great guitar and also features some theatrical vocals". (PA-CrimsonGlory-#11, 2007)

Whether in relation to Tate's canonised position in progressive metal discourse as seen in Wagner's text, or through the examples drawn from the discourse, the parity between 'operatic' and 'theatrical' – as well as the tentative connection to the classical – suggests that the two terms are, indeed, related. However, there are other instances emerging from within the examined album reviews that outline that the connection is not exclusive. On the one hand, in some cases 'theatricality' is ascribed to performers with no relation to operatic contexts (see quotes below) thus suggesting that the relation may express the broad and complex interaction between theatricality and heavy metal/progressive rock:

"Kingcrow makes good usage of atypical rhythms, flamenco acoustic guitar work, and a sense of drama that are right in line with the best of [the albums] The Perfect Element and Remedy Lane". (MA-Kingcrow-#1, 2015)

"['Paradox' is] the only lighter piece in this otherwise dramatic album [*Wounded Land* by Threshold], so it adds a little variety and a bit of playfulness to the gravity that surrounds it". (PA-Threshold-#12, 2009)

Furthermore, there are instances in which theatricality is ascribed, yet the discussions suggest that it does not intrinsically relate to rock opera contexts. For example, the band Star One is formed by Arjen Lucassen, a prolific performer that is also the central figure of the concept album/rock opera-focused ensemble Ayreon. Whilst this may imply that the ascriptions of 'theatricality' to Star One implicitly draw from Ayreon's rock opera contexts, some reviewers have discussed Star One as moving away from complex narratives associated with the Ayreon's rock operas, as well as presenting an overall simpler sound (see quotes below). From this perspective, it is possible to argue that the ascription of theatricality to Star One's tracks can be discussed as partially separate from the rock opera contexts related to Ayreon's output.

"Unlike Ayreon's often messy and incoherent albums, Star One's [album] Space Metal sticks pretty much to a single musical style throughout; a highly melodic and spacy progressive (Power) metal […] The music of Star One is more direct and to the point, which I think is preferable to the overblown Rock Opera format". (PA-StarOne-#14, 2012)

"Like Ayreon [Star One's *Space Metal* album] features many guest performers. The difference is that it doesn't have a set story". (PA-StarOne-#23, 2009)

"[Star One's *Space Metal*] is a bit different from how Ayreon works: less complex music and lyrics, less famous people working on it and a less female voices [sic] (only Floor Jansen) and this fact disappointed me a bit". (PA-StarOne-#24, 2009)

"While I found the lyrical content on most of his work with Ayreon to be very clever and effective, the lyrics [on Star One's *Victims of the Modern Age*] are generally kept simplistic and contribute little to the overall enjoyment of the work". (MA-StarOne-#6, 2010)

"The tunes [on Star One's *Space Metal* album] are actually a bit more straightforward than the Ayreon ones, and since the individual emphasis is not on establishing part of a grander concept, this may be a bit more accessible to those that usually are not too keen on Lucassen's rock operas". (MA-StarOne-#1, 2008)

These perspectives help to support the argument that, whilst undoubtedly related, 'theatrical' and 'operatic' contexts are not universally and/or intrinsically connected, thus informing my perspective in framing them as quasi-separate entities. Furthermore, I elected to combine observations on the terms 'theatrical' and 'dramatic' as whilst the latter term can be framed as reflecting a common understanding of "sudden and striking" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 527), it's relation to theatre contexts (i.e., "relating to drama or the performance or stud of drama", Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 527) makes it a suitable extension to the current discussion. As I view 'theatrical' and 'dramatic' as fairly close in their connotative meaning, I will not be differentiating between them in the remainder of the chapter.

Having said that, I want to outline several possibilities in which the aforementioned non-exclusive relation to rock opera contexts may serve as context towards framing 'theatricality' as a classical component. As previously mentioned, Wagner has engaged with Crimson Glory's theatricality and suggests that their emphasis on masks "harken[s] to Genesis's theatrical stagecraft" (J. Wagner 2010, 64).[289] On the one hand, without wishing to instil a genealogical argument, this perspective can be seen as useful given that I already mentioned the ability to interpret Genesis' theatricality as related to classical/traditional contexts. On the other hand, my discussion on rock opera highlighted the format's ability to connote the classical, as well as the potential to identify Western art music-interpretative contexts in relation to the delivery of Crimson Glory's lead singer. Thus these rock opera perspectives can serve as contexts with some 'influence' on the discourse and the ascription of 'theatricality', and by extension the relation to the classical:

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[289] For a discussion on the use of masks as part of heavy metal's visual identity see Hickam (2015).

"Although [Crimson Glory] don't borrow specifically from any classical pieces as far as ''m aware, I can imagine a fan of classical music, theatre, or musicals would enjoy [the album *Crimson Glory*] more than they'd enjoy most other metal". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#6, 2013)

The discussion of Savatage presents a similar potential as, again referring to the Opera chapter, the ability to suggest that Savatage is viewed as a metal band with Western art music-derived components allows to situate some perspectives as potentially co-relating the theatricality to such contexts:

"[Savatage's *Dead Winter Dead*] can roughly be described as a heavy metal rock opera. The guitar is nice and melodic (the focus is not chugging), the synths create a symphonic texture, and the vocals are theatrical". (PA-Savatage-#118, 2011)

However, to retain a critical perspective to such arguments, I will offer these perspectives tentatively, given some of the alternative and 'distancing' arguments that can also emerge from rock opera contexts. For Crimson Glory, despite the suggestion about a co-relation between the ascription of 'operatic' vocals and 'theatricality', the previous chapter also mentioned that, on the one hand, 'operatic vocals' is a broadly framed term with potential capacity to designate a singer adhering to (metal) traditional vocal practices. And on the other, unlike their female counterparts, most male operatic metal singers are framed as quasi-unrelated to classical contexts. In other words, it is possible that, in some cases, Crimson Glory's Midnight is ascribed the same operatic/theatrical correlation that parallels Judas Priest's Rob Halford who is discussed as operatic due to his dramatic vocal delivery.

With regards to Savatage, it should be pointed that whilst Wagner describes the band as "pioneering theatrical metal" (J. Wagner 2010, 65), he seemingly focuses on some members of the band's interest in musicals:

"With Gutter Ballet in 1989, the band progressed further. Inspired by vocalist/keyboardist/main songwriter Jon Oliva's impressions of a Toronto performance of the musical The Phantom of the Opera, Savatage's music became more theatrical. Producer and de facto band member Paul O'Neill, who had toured as a guitarist with musicals Hair and Jesus Christ Superstar, encouraged Savatage toward the dramatic flourishes heard on 'When the Crowds are Gone' and 'Gutter Ballet'". (J. Wagner 2010, 65)

This perspective is echoed in some general criticism towards the band which is focused on commercialisation due to a Broadway influence e.g., "Listening to [*Dead Winter Dead*] as an entire album or as a 'story' is pretty hard work for all but the most hardened of theatre-goers" (MA-Savatage-#68, 2017). This suggests that, even if the Western art music components discussed in the last chapter are still at play, the mentioned perspectives frame Savatage's 'theatricality' as related to theatre contexts. Thus, to reiterate, I am presenting these perspectives as offering a potential for the classical to be a context towards the framing of 'theatricality' in the discourse, yet I am not suggesting that the relation is set in stone.

In summary, this overview has showcased several possibilities derived from academic and journalistic publications through which the ascription of 'theatricality' can be interpreted as offering some connection to classical-interpretative contexts. These arguments are not meant to represent an exhaustive overview of possibilities but, as mentioned at the onset of this discussion, frame contexts surrounding established bands as useful precedents. Through this approach I have also attempted to

point out the potential for these perspectives to have influenced audience discourse, thus arguing for their validity when discussing the album reviewers' utterances.

With that in mind, acknowledging the complexity of theatricality in terms of its role in popular music contexts as well as outside the typical 'classical' framings, this chapter will slightly adjust its operational understanding. Specifically, I will situate the ascription of 'theatricality' by reviewers in the context of traditional theatre and, in some cases, related performance techniques. However, the specific, and much narrower, understanding of 'classical theatre' will be considered in the latter visual-interpretative focused section. Doing so offers a balance between a sufficient classical-connotative potential as per Shuker's discussion of the broader theatre field being framed as 'high art', and simultaneously will avoid severely limiting the discussion if the aforementioned 'classical theatre' framing is to be adopted. I also hope that the concluding segment has sufficiently argued that, despite having some notable parallels to 'operatic' contexts, the framing of (classical-related) theatricality in progressive metal should not automatically be incorporated in said contexts due to contrasting perspectives observable in both communities' framing of theatricality.

9.2 Vocal theatricality performance techniques as relation to traditional theatrical contexts

The extensive variety of theatricality-related aspects discussed by academic literature in relation to heavy metal aesthetic presents a spectrum of possibilities as to what reviewers could mean when ascribing the term 'theatricality'. Given the largely unexplored relation between progressive metal and theatricality, it may be tempting to present a sprawling overview drawing from the complex (and at times contradictory) perspectives that emerge from the album reviews examined in this study. Rather, I have elected to discuss a specific category, namely, the ascription of 'theatricality' to vocals in recorded songs. This type of ascription is by no means the largest category available, however, on the one hand, this study and its discourse-analysis emphasis has consistently attempted balance the presentation of perspectives reflecting various scopes of discussion within the source data. On the other, in addition to its capacity to elucidate on the relation between ascriptions of 'theatricality' and the classical, I believe that the examination of this perspective can be of use by discussing a less-examined aspect pertaining to the genre.

As I mentioned in the opening of this chapter, there appears to be a lack of discussions regarding the 'theatricality' aspect of progressive metal. The discussion of 'vocal theatricality' cannot hope to address this oversight in its entirety, yet can offer some considerations whilst also parallel the general emphasis on instrumental/structural aspects in the broader framing of the genre, as I implicitly showcased in the literature overview of this study. In addition, the examination can both contribute to expanding on the less-often discussed framing of vocal aspects in relation to theatricality in metal contexts, as well as help to situate progressive metal in relation to characteristics within the broader meta-genre. To my last point, I will also briefly engage with academic research on earlier progressive rock-based theatrical practices as mentioned by Holm-Hudson.

The following discussion will thus be divided into two parts: first, to develop an understanding of what reviewers imply when ascribing 'vocal theatricality', I will outline a series of overlapping performance and structural characteristics derived from three progressive metal tracks in which audiences point out phenomenon's inclusion. Second, the observations will be situated in relation to

the culture-relevant framings, followed by an additional contextualisation which will argue that the reviewers' perspectives echo a historical understanding of theatre and thus parallel theatre's contemporary framing as a classical-relevant 'high' culture artform.

What do audiences mean by 'theatrical'?

> "[Star One's track] 'Cassandra Complex' has a dynamic metal riff over a rising synth line. […] I like how the female and male vocals trade off and answer each other in theatrical style". (PA-StarOne-#31, 2010)

> "[Shadow Gallery's track] 'New World Order' opens with the feeling that something evil is present. Nice affect. Theatrical vocals come in". (PA-ShadowGallery-#59, 2007)

> "[Crimson Glory's track] 'Lost Reflection' might be the best tune on the record. It opens with gentle guitar, synths and slow paced [sic] theatrical vocals. After 3 minutes the song explodes breifly [sic]. Nice contrast! It ends as it began". (PA-CrimsonGlory-#11, 2007)[290]

The three utterances quoted above showcase several instances in which album reviewers have directly pointed out the inclusion of 'vocal theatricality' in progressive metal tracks, namely, Shadow Gallery's "New World Order" from the album *Tyranny* (Shadow Gallery 1998c), Crimson Glory's "Lost Reflection" from their eponymous first album (Crimson Glory 1986), and Star One's "Cassandra Complex" from *Victims of the Modern Age* (Star One 2010). However, as the utterances are somewhat lacking in detail, this necessitated a closer examination to determine what precisely is being understood as constituting 'theatrical vocals'. Based on comparative interpretative close-readings I identified several overlapping characteristics that, in my opinion, illustrate the 'theatricality'-related aspects contained in the tracks: the adoption of a character in relation to a large-scale narrative; changes to the structure of the song as well as to the construction of individual components; the utilisation of dramatic and/or quasi-spoken vocal delivery, including the utilisation of rhythmic patterns in the vocal line.

Character and narrative co-relation

One of the immediately noticeable characteristics shared between the three examined songs is the co-relation between the adoption of an 'fictitious' character by the vocalist(s) and said character participating in a clearly 'constructed' (and often large-scale) narrative. The latter context can emerge from the album in which the songs are located or, in some cases, from the band's approach to self-framing. I base my understanding of a 'character' on Philip Auslander's concept of the performance persona in which a character represents a fictitious identity that a singer adopts within the confines of a song, and which can be separated (to some degree) from the singer's more consistent performance persona.[291] With that in mind, a singer may adopt a character in most songs which does

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[290] As both the utterances for Shadow Gallery and Crimson Glory were made by the same reviewer, I want to provide an alternative perspective that confirms that the track "Lost Reflection" is more widely associated as a site of vocal theatricality: "[Midnight's] fetish for theatrics was also something that wasn't being done much in metal at the time; "Lost Reflection" particularly stands out as a diamond in the rough, a style of ballad nobody else had the balls to attempt – probably because nobody else possessed the sheer emotional caliber [sic] of Midnight" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#6, 2013).

[291] For an in-depth overview of Auslander's concept, see section '11.2 Theoretical models: performance persona and female masculinity'.

not necessarily result in the ascription of theatricality. As such, I believe that reviewers refer to terms such as 'drama' or 'theatre' when the adopted character is perceived as emerging from a clearly constructed narrative, such as a concept album, and not as derived from the singer's performance persona or as intending to echo, strengthen or validate the experiences of the listeners.[292] This argument can be supported by the examined songs' positioning in large-scale narratives based on their corresponding albums: "Cassandra Complex" is part of an album whose broad concept revolves around each track alluding to a popular piece of literary/film/television science fiction, whereby the exchange between the multiple vocalists closely resembles narrative aspects from the film *Twelve Monkeys* (Gilliam, Terry 1996); and the sung-conversation between the two singers in "New World Order" is part of a concept album in which Mike Baker's protagonist is confronted by D.C. Cooper's antagonistic character.

The track "Lost Reflection" serves as the quasi-outlier in this instance as the corresponding album lacks a clearly definable concept, however a larger context informing the ascription of theatricality can still be extrapolated. Namely, the track can be considered as thematically matching several Gothic-inspired tracks in the band's output such as "Masque of the Red Death" from the band's following album *Transcendence* (see Crimson Glory 1988). Conversely, several reviewers have discussed "Lost Reflection" as a clearly definable 'story' or the singer as representing a 'role' (see below), which suggests that they perceive the character as clearly 'fictitious' or rather as tightly woven to the song's narrative:

> "'Lost Reflection' […] tells a story that will grip any listener, inspiring either sympathy or sadness as Midnight's vocal character wails in agony, mania and confusion". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#10, 2008)
>
> "[T]he eerie Lost Reflection, featuring Midnight at his maddening best, telling an acoustic tale of exile and insinity [sic] in the attic". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#13, 2003)
>
> "[T]he album closer 'Lost Reflection' puts [Midnight] in the tragic role of an insane person hiding in the attic talking and laughing to himself […] 'Lost Reflection' […] showcase[s] Midnight's emotional dexterity as a hopeless man locked in the attic going slowly insane". (MA-CrimsonGlory-#9, 2009)

This implies that the narrative does not necessarily have to be of a 'large-scale' variety, though it does confirm the need for said narrative to appear constructed, thus contributing to the 'artificiality' of the

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[292] An example where both latter perspectives are expressed is the hardship tale of the characters Tony and Gina in Bon Jovi's track "Livin' on a Prayer" (Bon Jovi, 1986). Despite the track's opening to clearly address the narrative of constructed characters ('Tommy used to work on the docks' // 'Gina works the diner all day' etc.), the song's chorus ('Woah, we're halfway there') seemingly shifts the perspective so that the included 'we' simultaneously positions the singer as quasi-involved in the narrative, but also – based on the notion that heavy metal addresses socio-cultural issues relevant to its fanbase – the 'we' becomes interpretable as creating a perception connecting the audience and the overcoming of either the 'hardship' discussed in the song's narrative or the metaphorical social challenge that said narrative presents.

character depicted by the singer, and to a point the observed quasi-separation from the latter's performance persona.[293]

Overall, it is possible to argue that the adoption of a character that appears as more artificial and separated from the singer's consistent performance persona due to the relation to an equally as constructed (often larger) narrative has contributed to the ascription of 'theatricality'. In addition, Crimson Glory's track enables to further specify that said 'larger narrative' does not necessarily have to stem from an album's coherent concept, and can instead emerge from a thematic similarity in the band's output, thus opening potential for the scope of the narrative to vary.

Alteration to the structural elements of a track
A further similarity shared between the examined tracks is the perception that the formal structure has been adapted in a manner that prioritises the incorporation of a complex narrative. The process is visible in both the construction of the song i.e., a prioritisation/higher number of 'verses'[294] as units allowing the presentation of narrative elements, and either reducing the number of choruses or adapting them to still perform a more involved narrative forwarding function. And in the adoption of a flexible approach to the construction of individual verses, varying them in terms of scope (i.e., number of lyric lines) and length (i.e., how many words per lyrical line) so as to present the narrative.

For example, the majority of the sixty-two lines of text constituting Shadow Gallery's "New World Order" can be summarised as a series of 'verses' that alternate between the perspectives of the two characters: lines one to eight and twelve to sixteen are 'verses' delivered by D.C. Cooper (see Figure 15, red outline)[295] with Mike Baker delivering lines nine to eleven and seventeen to twenty four[296] (see Figure 15, green outline). Whilst the track incorporates what can traditionally be understood as a 'chorus' – e.g. a double chorus appears between lines twenty-eight to thirty-seven (lyric starting at 'This is the new world order', see Figure 15, purple outline) with a one line transition on line thirty-two – later appearances either recombine the lyrics from the first appearance (e.g. lines fifty to fifty three or fifty-nine to sixty-two, see Figure 15, light blue outline) or transform the musical motif to a quasi-vamp that is then utilised to still further the narrative (lines fifty-four to fifty-eight, see Figure 15, brown outline). With regards to the approach in constructing the narrative-carrying sections, taking as an example the track's opening (i.e., the contribution of the guest vocalist D.C. Cooper), the scope of the singer's part in the first section spans lines one to eight, whereby his next entrance lasts lines twelve to sixteen. In addition, the length of the corresponding lines also varies rather significantly i.e., the words-per-line in the first section number 5, 5, 10, 4, 4, 10, 10, 6, and for the second the numbers change to 8, 4, 9, 9, 5, per each line. This showcases that the examined

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[293] What remains unclear is whether the clearly constructed performance personas of Crimson Glory's mask-centric aesthetic may have contributed to more easily establishing a disconnect between the singer's persona and the depicted characters. In simple terms, the perception that a singer 'morphs' into another character is probably easier if said singer is already perceived as quasi-artificial due to constantly wearing a silver face mask.
[294] I place the term 'verse' in quotes as for some tracks the CD booklet divides the lyrics into groups in ways that do not match the underlying musical accompaniment.
[295] For source of the image, see (Shadow Gallery 1998a).
[296] Whilst the text structure implies that the second 'verse' for Baker lasts up to lines twenty-seven, the last four lines (Figure 15, yellow outline) alternate between both singers.

sections are varied in both scope and length which supports the interpretation that their construction serves the needs of the narrative, and not the other way around. As the same flexible approach can be observed throughout the song as well as in relation to the other singer's contribution, this helps to frame the song's overall structure as following the narrative-first principle.

In contrast to tracks that attempt to compress a narrative into a series of (relatively) identically sized verses that alternate with (also relatively) lyric-repetitive choruses, the more flexible approach to the overall structure and the construction of the main building blocks of the examined progressive metal tracks leaves the impression that the incorporation and presentation of a complex narrative is being prioritised. Such prioritisation has likely led listeners to perceive the tracks as part-songs and (more importantly) as part-stories. In turn, this provides a foundation against which the singer(s) is/are perceived as not simply singing, but rather as participating in said narrative, especially when combined with a series of techniques contributing to a dramatic vocal delivery.

Dramatic vocal delivery

Figure 15: Shadow Gallery – "New World Order" (lyrics)

The existence of a co-relation between character and narrative and the song's alteration towards supporting said narrative provide important 'theatrical' framing. However, the aspect that I consider as arguably having most contributed to the ascription of 'theatricality' by reviewers is the dramatic delivery of the singers. Each of the examined tracks incorporates one or more vocal techniques that strengthened the perception that the singer(s) do not serve as narrators in relation to the events of the narrative, but rather actively participate in it through the detailed presentation of their characters.

Whilst in each instance the voice is involved in some capacity, the specific tools to facilitate the presentation of the character vary based on said character's suggested behaviour as well as the action they are engaging in. For example, Shadow Gallery's "New World Order" frames a conversation between two characters whereby the singer specifically pointed out as theatrical (guest vocalist D.C. Cooper) represents an antagonistic figure with sinister intentions. As such, in the initial stages of the track, aspects such as the melodic contour and the utilisation of underlying rhythmic patterns

are adjusted to approximate speech and more specifically the contours of a series of sentences (e.g., see [00:27 – 00:40]). In addition, multiple vocal effects are employed in a manner that seemingly reveals the character's disposition: e.g. quasi-aggressive subtexts emerge in relation to the use of subtle vocal distortion ('Good day' and 'citizen'); the tritone interval (D–A–G#) heard in the seemingly polite and courteous 'clean' singing portion of the delivery ('I don't mean' and 'We calculate') introduce stereotypically 'sinister' undertones; and narrow pronouncing of the letters 'u' and 'o' in the words "intr**u**de" from line two and "m**o**ves" from line five respectively, hint at a condescending subtext to the described actions.[297]

In contrast, Crimson Glory's "Lost Reflection" and its depiction of a distraught and emotionally unstable character lamenting their dire circumstances, is characterized by a constant change of emotional states: e.g. an initially subdued and quasi-whispering opening [00:23 – 00:32], through a more assertive second phrase [00:34 – 00:53] concluding with lamenting held tones [00:43 – 00:53], a return to the subdued delivery [00:57 – 01:06] which quickly shifts to a louder quasi-argumentative state [01:08 – 01:27] and a final section involving an aggressive outburst [03:16 – 03:49]. These are supported by a series of effects transmitting a heightened sense of emotionality: vocal break [00:39]; vibrato, both short [00:31], as well as sustained [00:43]; audible breathing-in [00:55]; panting [01:07]; declamatory-reminiscent spoken delivery [01:08] etc. The described effects are by no means exhaustive, even in the confines of the narrow sections of the examined song, though they should serve as suitable examples of the highly detailed combination between vocal effects, changes to melody and rhythm that may have contributed to the perception that the singers vocally 'theatricalize' the depiction of their character.

Finally, I want to briefly touch on Star One's "Cassandra Complex" as the approach to 'theatricality' strikes me as notably different than the two other songs. The track incorporates almost no vocal effects contributing to the depiction of the character, instead the vocalists predominantly 'simply' sing the vocal lines. It is notable that the previously quoted reviewer discusses the vocal theatricality of the track as the singers "trad[ing] off and answer[ing] each other in theatrical style" (PA-StarOne-#31, 2010), though based on my interpretation, I believe that the ascription may have pointed to more than the conversational organisation of the lyrics.

Examining the track enables to suggest that a conceptual relation between lyrics, rhythm and note duration based around the number three is being utilized. For example, the first line of the opening verse ('You are a beautiful woman in a beautiful world') contains both an anacrusis based on three eight notes, followed by two instances of three note groupings (two sixteenth notes and an eight note on the words 'beautiful'), whereby the second line ('but your world is gonna die') incorporates a lyrical grouping of three syllables ('but your world') followed by a quarter-note triplet over the words

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[297] The singer also utilises short bursts of narrow vibrato in the same section – e.g., line two 'intrude' (line two), 'down' (line three), 'monitored' (line four), 'moves' (line five) – which does not strike me as an effect contributing to the character's relation to the narrative. However, when the technique is related to the discussion of vocal virtuosity observed in relation to metal's conceptualisation of operatic vocals, an influence may be possible to infer. In other words, based on the semi-relation between 'operatic' and 'theatrical' perspectives, Cooper may have been ascribed 'vocal theatricality' due to employing virtuosic techniques enhancing the portrayal of the character.

'is gonna' and concluding with the word 'die' that lasts three beats. Table 4 below showcases a non-notational-based overview of the relation between rhythmic patterns and metric durations that underpin the melodic lines of the first four verses of the song.[298]

	Verse 1 (Russell)	Verse 3 (Russell)
1	**[You are a]** *beautiful* woman in a *beautiful* world	**You gotta** hear me out, though you wouldn't *understand*
2	but your world <u>is gonna</u> <mark>die</mark>	I came <u>back to the</u> <mark>past</mark>
3	I have seen the human race	I have come to save our world
4	drop dead in the <u>blink of an</u> <mark>eye</mark>	time's up, so we better move fast
	Verse 2 (Floor)	Verse 4 (Floor)
5	**You cre**ated this dream out of bits and pieces	**I want to** [help you deal] with the rage you feel
6	<u>filed a</u>-<u>way in your</u> <mark>mind</mark>	It's <u>still not too</u> <mark>late</mark>
7	you're caught inside a fantasy	you *created* your own world
8	but we'll find the truth <mark>inside</mark>	but it's starting to disintegrate!

Table 4: Star One – "Cassandra Complex" (lyrics), overview of the relation between rhythmic patterns and metric durations

The table showcases that together with the clear similarities (such as the three-beat ending of some phrases) even small differences can be interpreted as nevertheless retaining a 'three'-based thematic emphasis. This rhythmically organized approach to delivering the narrative allows to frame the exchange between the depicted characters as echoing aspects related to the realm of the classical. Namely, the track can be framed as a form of music 'dialogue' or "the setting of a text involving conversational exchanges between two or more characters" whereby this broad usage of the term is "most frequently encountered in connection with the dialogue of opera and other stage work" (Nutter and Whenham 2001, n.p.). Moreover, the clearly strophic underpinning of the examined section enables to draw some parallels to David Nutter and John Whenham's discussion of strophic dialogues (Nutter and Whenham 2001, n.p.). Finally, I would argue that based on the balance between melodic and lyric emphasis to lean towards the former, the overall vocal delivery can be described as between recitative and the arioso style, the latter defined as "songlike, as opposed to declamatory" (Budden et al. 2001, n.p.). This perspective allows to suggest that, despite lacking most detailed vocal delivery aspects found in Shadow Gallery or Crimson Glory's examples, the quasi-rhythmically organized approach to delivering the narrative retains a theatricality potential based on its relation to the realm of the classical.

Contextualising vocal theatricality

The interpretation that the presented observations may have led to the ascription of theatricality can be supported from the perspective of multiple theatricality-related contexts. On the most immediate

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[298] Table 4 is coded in the following manner: bolded segments indicate an **anacrusis**; highlighted words indicate a metric duration of <mark>three beats</mark>; underlined segments showcase the <u>use of a triplet</u>; words in blue font indicate a syncopation over three beats; italics indicate words with *three syllables*; square brackets showcase [words underpinned by three equal metric durations]. Please note, the separation of the word 'away' in line six is a purposeful division to showcase the two separate triplets.

level, the observed characteristics can be seen as paralleling some academic literature that engages with the term theatricality. For example, Cope's discussion of early (and highly canonised) heavy metal performers positions vocal theatricality as an influential element found as early as the genre's origins. The author suggests that, drawing from Robert Plant's early example of "dexterous but mild theatrics", singers such as Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson and Judas Priest's Rob Halford "engineer[ed] a new level of performer status where the singer becomes the central figure in the band" (Cope 2010, 68). When discussing the work of Halford, Cope argues that the singer's "range and eclectic style" including "deep vocal chants double-tracked with high-tessitura lines" and "banshee wails" were instrumental for "a blueprint for the theatrical vocal parts of bands as widely ranging as Cradle of Filth and Nightwish" (Cope 2010, 113). Later on, part of the author's conclusion positions "the legacy of aural theatricality" as one of several central factors contributing to the band's musical influence towards the genre (Cope 2010, 117). Cope presents a similar argumentation regarding Black Sabbath's influence, though suggests that the band's theatricality (e.g., in their track "Black Sabbath" from the eponymous first album) is related to a combination of paramusical elements and highly expressive vocalisations i.e. the "tolling bell and falling rain effect, followed later by a fearful, tortured cry for mercy from Osbourne" (Cope 2010, 105). Whilst I consider Cope to lean a bit too heavily on the idea of musical genealogy, his framing of vocal theatricality provides some useful parallels. The author's discussion of Halford's extreme range and the application of a variety of sonorities strikes me as comparable to the wide selection of possibilities through which a performer may choose to represent their character (e.g., Shadow Gallery's speech-reminiscent approach to vocal lines or Crimson Glory's multiple effects signalling emotionality). As for Osbourne's dramatic vocalisations, a direct parallel can be drawn here to Crimson Glory's equally as anguished scream towards the end of "Lost Reflection" (see timecodes [03:31 – 03:49]).

Another text I want to briefly mention is Florian Heesch's (2011a) examination of vocal work by death metal vocalist Angela Gossow (formerly of Arch Enemy). As part of the discussion, the author contextualises death metal's "representation of inhuman themes [as] always contain[ing] an aesthetic, or more specifically theatrical distancing" (Heesch 2011a, 173).[299] This is exemplified via a contrast between the (performer-derived) perspectives of growled/grunting vocals as a vocal representation of the aforementioned inhuman themes (e.g. Cannibal Corpse's lyrical "I" as representing a zombie character), and the quasi-ironic (self-)description of some extreme metal vocal deliveries as a 'Cookie Monster' style thus referring to the eponymous character in the children's show *Sesame Street* (Heesch 2011a, 173). The theatrical distancing that the author is pointing out in relation to the vocals (i.e., the zombie lyrical "I" in Cannibal Corpse's lyrics) strikes me as similar to the aforementioned relation between the depiction of fictious characters and constructed narratives observed in the examined progressive metal songs.[300] Cope's framing of Black Sabbath's theatricality

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[299] Ger. Orig. "Dieser ironische Blick auf das Monströse ist ein sprechendes Beispiel dafür, dass die Darstellung inhumaner Themen im Death Metal immer eine ästhetische bzw. theatralische Distanz innehat".

[300] A notable difference to Heesch's discussion of death metal vocalists is that the examined progressive metal tracks lack the tension caused by the presentation of violent lyrics. This recontextualises the theatrical distance between the performance persona and the depicted character to serve a narrative-strengthening purpose, rather than as quasi-shielding the singer from public outrage.

as partially emerging from Osbourne's dramatic vocalisation in the track "Black Sabbath" can also be viewed as contextualising the adoption of a constructed character. Whilst I was left with the impression that the author places emphasis primarily on Osbourne's prolonged cry as theatricality by way of the gesture's excess, I would argue that the dramaticism becomes apparent also as said cry emerges from the song's fictionalized character (and lyrical "I") during his encounter with the "figure in black" from the second line of the song's lyrics.

Reviewers' framing of vocal theatricality through the adoption of a constructed character can be even more broadly contextualised in relation to progressive metal representing a crossing point between its two meta-genre precursors' glam influences. From the perspective of heavy metal, Steve Waksman's (2009) study on the punk/metal continuum frames the complex stage behaviours as well as the challenges to gender- and naturalistic self-presentation as seen in the output of performers such as Alice Cooper and Iggy Pop as expression of glam sensibilities, and further argues that:

> "[T]he aspect of glam that had the broadest impact, and that most often spilled over into the genres of metal and punk, was the element of role-playing, or what was widely described as its 'theatrical' character". (Waksman 2009, 73)

As for progressive rock, Holm-Hudson's (2008) book *Genesis and The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* argues that the theatricality of the band's singer Peter Gabriel parallels glam rock aesthetic due to adopting a 'particularist' approach to theatrical presentation. This principle broadly refers to "such accoutrements as costumes, make-up, and body language (including stage movement)" (Holm-Hudson 2008, 32), though the author also considers Gabriel's adoption of different characters as part of the band's approach to narrativity to be relatable to similar persona/character undermining principles as found in glam rock performers such as David Bowie (Holm-Hudson 2008, 35–36). The significance of the glam context towards this study's classical-emphasis may initially seem low, though it does present a contrast to scholarly work such as by Hegarty and Halliwell. Specifically, the authors' limited discussion of progressive metal ignores theatrical components entirely, and moreover their attempt to distance 1970s progressive rock from glam contexts (see Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 123) creates the impression that, from a genealogical perspective, such theatricality has little to no bearing on the progressive metal.

The combination of the perspectives derived in relation to Holm-Hudson's, Heesch's and Cope's framings of theatricality allow to contextualise the characteristics extrapolated by this interpretation as paralleling vocal-related theatrical phenomena in relation to a variety of heavy metal and progressive rock contexts. In turn, this suggests that the presented observations can serve as relevant points of departure for further in-depth examinations of theatricality as a vocal phenomenon both in and beyond progressive metal contexts.

Taking a step back and considering the interpretation from an even broader perspective, I would argue that the outlined characteristics can be contextualised as echoing some dictionary definitions of theatricality, namely the quality of "relating to acting or the theatre" and of being "exaggerated or excessively dramatic" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 1828). This connection may seem rather obvious or simplistic, and I by no means imply that the reviewers are repeating generalised knowledge. Rather, doing so acknowledges that, even with their presentation of highly specialist

knowledge, the reviewers' understanding of 'theatricality' has likely reflected or drawn from the broad conceptualisation of the term. In addition, the ability to position the reviewers' understanding of 'theatricality' as relating to such broad context allows to collectively frame their statements as expressing what German theatre studies scholar Matthias Warstat refers to as a historical theatre model:

> "Definitions of theatricality that take account of the developments in avant-garde theatre and performance art are in productive contradiction to everyday language usage, because [theatricality] is largely associated with a historically limited theatre model from the 18th century: Presentation of a peep-box stage (room) on which actors represent the fictional characters of a drama in front of an audience separated by a ramp. As little as this model is consistent with contemporary theatre, it has persisted in large parts of the theatrical discourse, which sometimes leads to misunderstandings between theatre scholars and representatives of other disciplines. [...] Especially in the social sciences, [theatricality] is burdened with negative connotations of illusion, exaggeration or even deception, which are largely alien to the discourse of theatre studies". (Warstat 2014, 385)[301]

Whilst Warstat's discussion points to a difference of framing theatricality between theatre studies scholars and (predominantly) members of other academic disciplines, I believe that his argument is equally as valid for non-theatre-specialists from the general public. Specifically, the outlined characteristics in this interpretation make possible to suggest that reviewers' ascription of 'theatricality' relates to the same historical theatrical framing as discussed by the author: the singers are perceived as part-actors that through their highly detailed and involved performance present a fictional character, often in relation to an equally as fictitious dramatic narrative. By virtue of the listeners engaging with the performers through the medium of recorded audio, the musical track becomes both the 'stage' in which the narrative is presented but also a metaphorical 'ramp' that separates the musicians as actors from the non-participatory audience.[302] An important difference, however, is that for the discussed examples the reviewers' perspective does not carry the negative

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[301] Ger. Orig. "Theatralitätsdefinitionen, die die Entwicklungen von Avantgarde- Theater und Performance-Kunst berücksichtigen, stehen in produktivem Widerspruch zum alltäglichen Sprachgebrauch, denn der verbindet Th. weithin mit einem historisch begrenzten Theatermodell aus dem 18. Jh.: Es dominiert die Vorstellung einer Guckkastenbühne (Raum), auf der Schauspieler vor einem qua Rampe separierten Publikum die fiktionalen Figuren eines Dramas repräsentieren. So wenig dieses Modell dem Gegenwartstheater noch durchgängig entspricht, so hartnäckig hat es sich in großen Teilen des Theatralitätsdiskurses gehalten, was manchmal zu Missverständnissen zwischen Theaterwissenschaftler/innen und Vertreter/innen anderer Disziplinen führt. Vor allem in den Sozialwissenschaften ist Th. mit negativen Konnotationen von Illusion, Übertreibung oder gar Täuschung befrachtet, die dem theaterwissenschaftlichen Diskurs weitgehend fremd sind".

[302] It is important to mention that the interpretation of reviewers and performers as taking the roles of audience and actors respectively is only referring the actual engagement between the listeners and the record. It goes without saying that, from the perspective of the circuit of culture model, the act of creating a review posted on a public forum goes a step beyond simple reception and into the realm of regulation. Specifically, whilst the reviewers may have published their perspectives after some of the bands' disbanding, by publicly outlining their understanding of theatricality this will have influenced the discourse as to how the term is understood in progressive metal contexts.

connotations that Warstat suggest come into play. Rather, the aspects of 'illusion [and] exaggeration' are seemingly praised.

From this perspective, the outlined parallel conceptually narrows the gap between a popular culture-based audience and a mode of perception that can be framed as classical. On the one hand, referring back to Long's framing of the classic as "the invocation of death and the dead on the one hand, and reanimation on the other" (Long 2008, 26) it can be argued that reviewers' framing of 'theatricality' becomes associated with the classical due to (however unintentionally) 'reviving' a mode of theatre perception that, from contemporary theatre studies' perspective is conceptually outdated, if not 'dead'.[303] On the other hand, given that the reviewers' framing of 'theatricality' can be framed as quasi-reflecting the broad cultural understanding of theatricality, when combined with Shuker's discussion of theatre as a 'high culture'-connoted artistic field, it is possible that the ascription of 'theatricality' may implicitly echo similar connotations. It is important to stress, however, that similar to the caveat regarding Warstat's discussion of theatricality, the offered interpretations do not intend to frame the reviewers as employing the same "cultural hegemony" (Shuker 2005 [1998], 194) as discussed by Shuker. Rather, the reviewers' perspectives can be considered as seemingly reflecting the effects of cultural hegemony (i.e., theatre as classical) though by employing them in a popular culture setting, the implied policy-division which constructs "popular culture […] as commercial, inauthentic" (Shuker 2005 [1998], 194) continues to be eroded.

Section conclusion

As a brief summary, this section presented a comparative overview of characteristics that reviewers are likely to have referred to when ascribing 'theatricality' to three tracks by Shadow Gallery, Crimson Glory and Star One. The three identified categories – character and narrative correlation, alteration of a track's structural elements and dramatic vocal delivery – were contextualised as an expression of a broad understanding of 'theatricality' that, when considered through theatre studies-critical perspective, allowed to frame the reviewers' perspectives as in line with a fairly traditional underpinning of the term thus relating to them to this chapter's operationalised understanding of the classical.

Based on the observations in this interpretation, I argued that there is a potential for further framing of 'vocal theatricality', and in continuation of this principle I want to suggest several further

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[303] Another way to frame the idea that contemporary theatre approaches are rather removed from connotations of the classical is in reference to Fischer-Lichte's (2008) study *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetic*. The author's study conceptualises a new approach towards theatre aesthetic that takes into consideration the "performative turn" that theatre studies (as an echo of/parallel to similar developments in other disciplines) have experienced around the 1960s (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 22). One particular performative strategy that showcases the change's move away from classical-related contexts is the re-evaluation of concept of "embodiment" and the accompanying perception of the actor's corporeality. The fundamental principle can be summarised as an attempt to move away from the German literary theatre's text-centric mind-body dualism and its championing of the idea that "[f]or the body to be employed in the art of acting at all, it must first be stripped of its corporeality and undergo a process of disembodiment" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 78). Instead, the new approach to the body's role during performance is to purposefully utilise it, and thus introduce new layers of interpretative meaning that often blurs the line between the actor's corporeality and the depicted character. This perspective contrasts the previously outlined emphasis that reviewers perceive a progressive metal singer as theatrical primarily through the performer's clearly identifiable adoption of a constructed character.

steps can be taken up by future research. First, the presented argumentation can be cross-checked against other tracks by the same performers and later on against other performers understood as part of the same category of progressive metal. This will help to verify the observations' validity against other artists' theatricality, as well as expand and/or further specify the parameters constituting the relation to theatre based on how said other performers' audience engages (or does not) with the framing of theatricality. Second, it would be beneficial to also consider whether instances in which artists more explicitly engage with theatricality result in similar performance-related vocal approaches, thus contrasting the more inductively derived observations on the current selection of artists. Third and finally, this study established a contemporary theatre parallel through one academic conceptualisation, however this is by no means exhaustive in the examination of theatrical concepts. Considering theatre-scholars' concepts can be of benefit to developing a series of perspectives towards the examination of this permutation of progressive metal, as well as sister-genres such as the avant-garde (black) metal performers, to name a few. Conversely, if historical continuities are to be pursued, the framing of progressive rock through Peter Brook's theatrical models and progressive rock in Halliwell and Hegarty's study (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 119–35) can serve as a point of historical comparison, namely, in considering whether the relation between (earlier) progressive rock and progressive metal has resulted in the former's relation to theatricality taking stronger roots in the latter.

9.3 Classical theatricality in Shadow Gallery's eponymous first album

Within the corpus of performers this study investigates, the ascription of theatricality to Shadow Gallery was, by far, the most confounding. Considering the stage-related theatricality of the progressive metal's historical precursors, reviewers' praise of the band's theatricality struck me as odd given that Shadow Gallery spent the majority of their career without playing live nor touring (Halbscheffel 2013i). Moreover, the band's self-framing was fairly conventional and lacked a consistent presentation of costumes, masks etc., which further exacerbated the interpretative discontinuity. Whilst one way to resolve this conundrum is to point out the reviewers' praise of vocal phenomena, I would suggest that another possibility emerges in relation artwork of the band's eponymous first album which houses both the only costume-related self-framing of the performers in their released output, as well as a series of complex allusions to Greco-Roman contexts. The following section will present an interpretation of the artwork for the band's album *Shadow Gallery* (1992), whereby I will argue that it incorporates a series of parallels framing the band in relation to the concept of classical theatre. Moreover, I will suggest that the parallels are not an interpretative curiosity, but rather may have had an impact to the band's following, as relations can be observed between the reviewers' perception of Shadow Gallery as resonating with progressive music's semiotic and ideological genre codes and classical theatre's underlying community-developing and culture-critical principles.

As a brief overview of the section's structure, the initial step will establish the understanding of classical theatre by summarising an article by Erika Fischer-Lichte (2013), followed by an examination of relevant elements from the artwork of Shadow Gallery's album which mark it as a site of classical theatre. As a next step, I will showcase how some reviewers' praise of Shadow Gallery's

auditive output can be related to the classical theatre framing of the image, thus supporting the community-developing argument from the reception side. Finally, I will briefly consider how the presented argumentation relate to larger contexts such as similar classical connotative artwork in progressive metal contexts, and in relation to several metal genres' theatricality-framing approaches.

The classical theatre concept

Fischer-Lichte challenges the universalist and macro-history idea that "all European theatre begins with ancient Greek theatre, which is regarded as the first and thus original form of theatre in Europe from which later forms evolved" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 73) and argues that "[e]ach recourse to ancient Greek or Roman theatre in different European cultures since early modern times has been based on a particular set of assumptions and concerned a limited number of elements" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 81). An important aspect that becomes visible in several of the discussed examples is the modern allusions to Greco-Roman theatre as means of developing a specific community. For example, she frames the incorporation of both tragedy and comedy theatre plays in Greek festivals such as the Great Dionysia as a source of influence to the development of newer forms of theatre in the nineteenth century e.g., theoretical works by the German composer Richard Wagner that led to his *Gesamtkunstwerk* concept. Specifically, "the performances of Wagner's operas in the Festspielhaus on the Green Hill in Bayreuth were themselves meant to embody the idea of festival: theatre as festival was declared the theatre of the future" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 78), yet the composer's new theatre was not intended to simply recreate Greek theatre but rather was supposed to result in cultural changes:

> "Once a new, democratic society emerged, once theatre performances were no longer commodities available only to the rich but accessible to each and everyone, then will each person 'become in truth an artist'. Returning to the Greeks here meant proclaiming a utopian vision of the future. In this respect, Wagner's music drama is to be regarded as another 'rebirth' of ancient Greek tragic theatre". (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 78)

Fischer-Lichte's article also suggests that the community aspect mentioned above can be seen as a parallel to Friedrich Nietzsche's exploration of Greek tragedy beginnings as "originat[ing] in the Dionysiac principle, which is manifested in and enacted by a chorus of satyrs" and moreover that such "principle […] annuls individuation, transfers individuals into a state of ecstasy and transforms them into members of a dancing, singing community" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 78).

In his efforts to address the challenges in developing a community in larger cities due to the effects of industrialisation, Austrian theatre director Max Reinhardt drew from Nietzsche's 'chorus' in his creation of the "Theatre of Five Thousand, a new form of people's theatre as a choric theatre", which was intended "to unite actors and spectators into a community, even if this lasted only for the duration of the performance" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 79). Of note here are three aspects: first, Fischer-Lichte points to Reinhardt's reasoning to "perform […] ancient Greek tragedies (the most precious 'possession' of the educated middle classes) in a circus (the venue of entertainment for the common people) bridged the gap between elite and popular culture" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 79). Second, the author points out that the etymology of the Greek word 'theatron' (as well as multiple derivatives in Western-European languages) "designates a space in which something is presented to the gaze of the

people in order to be seen" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 80) which was likely influenced by the "lively interaction between actors and spectators [and such] audience reactions exerted a certain influence over the judges" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 80); third and finally, "besides incorporating a Greek-inspired spatial arrangement to foster community building, together with particular lighting and other staging devices, Reinhardt introduced choruses that consisted of hundreds of members" and indeed "reviews suggest that this new form of choric theatre did indeed create an aesthetic community out of actors and spectators" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 80).

Beyond the community-developing perspectives related to classical theatre, I want to briefly highlight Fischer-Lichte's argumentation against the supposed universalism of Greek tragedies and more specifically the culture-critical contexts emerging in the twentieth century. The author discusses the Western cultural situation in the 1960s as facing challenges "to the political, social and moral order established or re-established after the Second World War" and argues that "new cultural and artistic movements […p]erforming Greek tragedies, in large part radically rewritten […] referred to an established tradition in order to break it; and […] the tragedies were far removed from the demands of an illusionistic, realistic–psychological theatre" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 82). Furthermore, referring to the high number and widespread appeal of Greek tragedies in various cultural contexts around the world, Fischer-Lichte argues against universalism by pointing out multiple instances in which African writers (such as John Pepper Clark, Wole Soyinka, Efua Sutherland and Ola Rotimi) adapted and/or rewrote Greek tragedies as "act[s] of creative appropriation critically explor[ing] the relationship between African traditions and colonial cultures" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 83).

This brief summary of Erika Fischer-Lichte's critical exploration of the concept helps to outline the role of Greco-Roman contexts and the underlying aspects of community-development and cultural-criticism that are related to the conceptualisation of classical theatre. Based on this framing I believe that the concept of classical theatre provides several points of comparison that can be seen as paralleled in the artwork of Shadow Gallery's album: first, that Greek-theatre can be related with practices of community-development; and second, that the supposed universality of Greek tragedies present opportunities for said stories to be rewritten and adapted thus potentially introducing critical perspectives. These will serve as the framing against which Shadow Gallery's classical theatre engagement will be considered, however I want to make clear that the following argumentation will not attempt to align the performers with either Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* or Reinhardt's "Theatre of Five Thousand" directly i.e., as an attempt to establish a new approach to theatre. Rather, I will frame Shadow Gallery's artwork as incorporating recontextualization of Greco-Roman aesthetics in popular culture context as paralleling classical theatre's transformation of similar elements. Also, I will argue that based on similarities between reviewers' view on the band and the aforementioned efforts by Wagner and Reinhardt as well as the twentieth-century culture criticism, the band parallels classical theatre's community development aspects.

Interpreting Shadow Gallery's eponymous album artwork

As a first step of the interpretation, I want to clearly outline the ability to interpret the artwork in the context of classical theatre. To do so, I will explore the variety of Greco-Roman aesthetic elements

Figure 16: Shadow Gallery – *Shadow Gallery* (1992), front artwork

found in the front artwork, as well as frame the visibility of the performers on the back artwork as a form theatricality. The front artwork of Shadow Gallery's eponymous first album (see Figure 16)[304] presents a large hall-like space with marble-reminiscent flooring and several walls with intricate decorations. Multiple paintings are visible on said walls, statue of a naked woman and an equestrian statue can be identified in the far mid-left and right siders of the image respectively, as well as multiple columns whose upper portions connect to arches that support the implied ceiling. I refer to the ceiling as 'implied' as both it and some of the space above/around the painting is 'broken' or 'cut out' revealing a starred night sky-reminiscent background. The artwork is dominated by the image of a muscular figure whose back is turned away from the viewer, wearing a white fustanella-like garment (i.e., a skirt), as well as two large feathered wings attached to the hands and upper body through a series of straps. The figure also has a short straight sword on their left hip, and a head-strap around their forehead. Finally, several notable details can be discerned in the image: a small white mouse can be seen at the lower left side of the image, and a small glass/crystal apple can be seen at the bottom-right of the image as well.

Several elements from this description can be described as containing allusions to Greco-Roman antiquity in relation to: mythology e.g., the winged man as likely representing Icarus;[305] sculpture e.g., the naked woman closely resembling the Venus de Milo sculpture (see n.a. 1897), or the equestrian statue as paralleling time- and size-appropriate statues such as the Artemision Horse and Jockey (see Coe 2015); and finally architecture e.g., the columns appear to incorporate the capital from the Corinthian classical architectural order (Chitham 2005, 84–85, 88–89). The outlined elements can be discussed as within Fischer-Lichte's succinct framework that the recontextualization of Greco-Roman aesthetic, "[t]heatre concerns not only texts but also architecture" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 76),

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[304] The source of this image is a scan by the author taken from album corresponding to the following bibliographical entry (Shadow Gallery 1992).
[305] Both animals (quasi-)visible in the artwork – i.e., the white mouse and the horse statue – as well as the apple could also be discussed as representing references to mythology (e.g., the immortality symbolism in the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides) though due to the wide interpretative potential in a variety of other cultures/mythologies, it is difficult to suggest a more concrete relation to Greek mythology or symbolism.

but more importantly, I would argue that the artwork represents Greco-Roman elements as already adapted by/reinterpreted through more modern aesthetic movements.

In relation to sculpture, the interpretation of a more modern framing can be supported by pointing out that the Venus de Milo status has already lost its arms thus suggesting that the depiction reflects its contemporary existence rather that its presumed original form from its ca. 150-50 BC creation (Kousser 2005, 227); the real-world Venus de Milo is a full-size sculpture whilst the one depicted on *Shadow Gallery*'s album artwork is smaller and placed on a waist-high pedestal, thus suggesting a reproduction. Also, some authors have framed the statue as "the most celebrated statue in the world" (Arenas 2002, 35), which implicitly engages with notions of popularisation. With regards to the equestrian statues, these can be described as rather ubiquitous since the Renaissance e.g., Louis XIV's equestrian statue as discussed by S. A. Callisen (1941), whilst comparably modern (yet topic-appropriate) statues such as Alexander The Great monument by Evaggelos Moustakas in Thessaloniki, Greece from 1973 (see thessalonikitourism.gr n.d.) enable a modern interpretation of the subject.

From an architectural perspective, despite the construction of the columns to somewhat imply a Greek building such as a temple,[306] the pointed upper section strikes me as more akin to that of Gothic architecture, which is known for its drawing from Romanesque elements (see B. Klein 2004, 35, 67, 69, 72, 73; Kurmann 2004, 179; Pile and Gura 2013, 56–67) whereas the (presumably) marble flooring, heavy ornamentation at the base of the wall, as well as on the frames surrounding some of the paintings, suggests that the design of the implied space is paralleling Baroque aesthetic (Pile and Gura 2013, 147). And finally, with regards to the figure, the sword on the hip of 'Icarus' appears anachronistic as its design as a short straight-sword with an elliptical hilt-guard strikes me as near identical to what George Cameron Stone's glossary of armours and arms defines as a 'small sword' which were adapted at the end of the seventeenth century (Stone 1961, 568).

As such, the artwork constantly fluctuates between Greco-Roman depiction and newer recontextualizations, between suggesting a real space (e.g. a Renaissance palace such as the Palace of Versailles and its Greco-Roman symbolism-filled interior, or conversely a nineteenth century museum such as London's Victoria and Albert Museum) and fictitious one (e.g. via the starred sky-background), and between suggesting that an 'authentic' event is taking place (e.g. Icarus inside a Greek temple) and a theatrical one (e.g. a performer representing Icarus).

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[306] The visibility of the small white mouse in the lower-left side of the image enables a, however tentative, interpretation regarding the space's relation to Greco-Roman antiquity. Philip Kiernan's (2014) study of bronze mice statuettes found throughout the Mediterranean, discusses a common misconception in the association between Apollo and the animal, whereas the latter can be related to the former's "most celebrated temple [...] located at Chryse (or Hamixitos, now Turkish Gülpınar) on the west coast of Asia Minor, between Assos and Alexandria Troas, a temple in which [the Roman author] Aelian claims live mice were kept and fed" (Kiernan 2014, 604). The author points out that the mouse's association with the Greek god Apollo Smintheus is a modern invention, though this nevertheless enables an interpretation of the mouse as implying that the imagined space as alluding to Ancient Greece i.e., to the temple dedicated to Apollo.

Figure 17: Shadow Gallery – *Shadow Gallery* (1992), back artwork, selection

Whilst the front cover's saturation with Greco-Roman elements is not sufficient to suggest that the artwork represents a form of classical theatre, such a possibility emerges when considering the back cover and its depiction of the band members (see Figure 17).[307] Of note here is the use of costumes, and the stances by the performers which, whilst comparable to a general metal performer self-framing (e.g., stern expressions, direct stares at the camera etc.) strike me as both uncharacteristic to, as well as much more overtly theatrical than, the self-framing of the band in later albums (e.g., booklet of album *Tyranny*, or back artwork of album *Legacy*).[308] In addition, the theatricality can be extrapolated based on the band's engaging with elements found in the front cover of the artwork. From left to right, Chris Ingles is standing next to a pedestal on top of which a white mouse is trapped in a glass container that resembles the glass/crystal apple from the front artwork; Carl Cadden-James is holding a sword that is reminiscent to the one on the left hip of the 'Icarus' figure; Mike Baker is seen handling a (abnormally) shiny 'electric-red' apple that may be interpreted as also echoing the apple from the front cover, and is wearing a head-band similar to the 'Icarus' figure; and Brendt Allman is sat next to a Venus de Milo statue (again positioned on a white pedestal), and the performer is seemingly sitting on a chair with heavy Baroque ornamentation. Finally, all band members are positioned in undefinable contexts filled with colourful smoke, which can be interpreted as both having a reality-undermining effect similar to that the 'starred-sky' of the front cover, though also as potentially hinting at a stage as a location in which a combination between smoke and multi-coloured light may come into contact.

In addition to the elements connecting the band's self-framing to the context of the front artwork, I would argue that the costumes and poses chosen by the performers can be interpreted as incorporating an additional abstract level of theatricality. On the one hand, the image of the band's main composer Carl Cadden-James (second from the left) presents the performer dressed in a red-overcoat, which enables comparisons to typical portrait depictions of various Western art music composers (see Figure 18 to Figure 20), including the body posture, head position and choice of colour

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[307] The image was scanned by the author and taken from the album's booklet (*Shadow Gallery* 1992).

[308] Examples of the mentioned artworks can be found in webpages of the following bibliographical entries (Shadow Gallery 1998b) and (Shadow Gallery 2001).

of the clothing. The only notable difference here is Cadden-James' holding of a sword rather that holding/sitting next to an instrument as is the case of Vivaldi or Domenico Cimarosa's portraits.[309]

Figure 18: *Portrait of Antonio Vivaldi* (oil on canvas), ca. 18th century

Figure 19: *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* by Barbara Krafft (oil on canvas), 1819

Figure 20: *Domenico Cimarosa al cembalo* by Francesco Saverio Candido, 1785

Figure 21: *Portrait of Willem van Heythuysen* by Frans Hals (oil on wood), 1634-1635

Figure 22: *A Genoese Noblewoman and Her Son* by Anthony van Dyck (oil on canvas), ca. 1626

Figure 23: *Portrait of the Marquise Chaterine Grimaldi (?) and her dwarf* by Peter Paul Rubens (oil on wood), ca. 1620

On the other hand, the image of guitarist Brent Allman (fourth from the left) which depicts him slanting and relaxed in a heavy wooden frescoed chair next to the aforementioned Venus de Milo statue, enables comparisons to Baroque portraiture through the image's composition as well as his pose. A parallel can be drawn to a typical depiction of power as visible in lavish Greco-Roman elements

[309] For sources on the utilised images: Figure 18 (see Talbot and Lockey 2019, n.p.); Figure 19 (see Krafft 1819; for sources confirming the painter, see Schmid and Sanders 1956, n.p.; salzburgmuseum.at n.d.a; salzburgmuseum.at n.d.b); Figure 20 (see Candido, n.d.); Figure 21 (see Hals 1634-1635); Figure 22 (see Dyck ca. 1626); Figure 23 (see Rubens ca. 1620). A few notes about these sources. Regarding Vivaldi's portrait, whilst the image is anonymous and does not specify who is depicted, Michael Talbot's (2011) discussion of portraits by Vivaldi states that the image is broadly accepted to be a depiction of the composer (Talbot 2011, 148). With regards to Domenico Cimarosa's portrait, the source of the image suggests that it was painted by Francesco Saverio Candido (see Candido, n.d.) yet offers no concrete date and seemingly draws from somewhat unreliable sources. I was only able to find a source which confirms that an image by that name was painted by Candido in 1785, however no image was provided as evidence (see Rossi and Fauntleroy 1999, 7n1).

found portraits from the Baroque period such as Peter Paul Rubens or Anthony van Dyck, whilst the relaxed pose of the performer enables comparisons to portraits by Dutch painter Frans Hals. Through these parallels, the theatrical self-framing of some of the Crimson Glory performers becomes readable as alluding to (musical) classicism, and parallels Baroque portraits. From an abstract perspective this then becomes representative of a more modern setting which includes the re-contextualisation of Greco-Roman architecture. As such, these additional contexts further the argument that the band's theatricality becomes readable to the conceptualisation of classical theatre.

Whereas framing Shadow Gallery's album in the context of classical theatre presents an intriguing interpretative possibility, the reading becomes more tangible when the effects of the aforementioned contexts become identifiable in relation to the reviewers' appraisal of the band. I will argue that Shadow Gallery paralleled classical theatre's community-developing and culture-critical underpinnings and furthermore based on the positive reception, this aided in the development of their following by strengthening the perception that the band is adhering to progressive ideology. To pursue this argumentation, I will refer back to Fischer Lichte's discussion of Reinhardt's "Theatre of Five Thousand" and frame Shadow Gallery's work as paralleling some of the outlined principles i.e., presentation of a Greek tragedy in a culture-transgressive context which is delivered through a chorus theatre as contributing to the development of an aesthetic community.

Of these elements, the outlined chorus principle is most clearly visible in the discourse, as the structural choruses in Shadow Gallery's output (often sung by the 'chorus' of the band members) are amongst the most consistently praised elements by reviewers. Of particular note is some reviewers considering choruses as the defining element of the band, whilst others emphasise the extreme 'catchy' character that incites singing together with the track. Whilst praise for the choruses of the band's discussed album is somewhat limited, the fact that this phenomenon can be observed in later releases by the band suggests that the long-term effect can be seen as paralleling the intention of Reinhardt's chorus (by way of Nietzsche) namely to "transfers individuals into a state of ecstasy and transforms them into members of a dancing, singing community" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 78).

> "[Mike Baker] soars and carries the massively catchy chorus lines that Shadow Gallery are known for, often capably supported by the backing vocals provided by the rest of the band". (MA-ShadowGallery-#2, 2006)
>
> "What striked [sic] me the most is the lack of anthemic, superhuman choruses that SG delivered in [the album] Tyranny… As in the follow-up to this one, Room V, the choruses here are nowhere near the level of tracks like 'I believe', 'Roads of Thunder' or 'Mystery'….and believe me, one of the greatest assets of SG are their choruses, and honestly, I can't find a band that matches their ability". (PA-ShadowGallery-#77, 2006)
>
> "[The albums] Tyranny and Room V should be a part of anyone who dares to listen to prog metal, not only because of their cool stories, but also because of the choruses that drills [sic] right into your cortex and makes you want to sing out loud" (PA-ShadowGallery-#48, 2006)
>
> "We segue into [the track] 'Crystalline Dream' which sets the trend for future Shadow Gallery songs with a [sic] instrumental-driven melody with a catchy, sing-along type chorus". (PA-ShadowGallery-#35, 2011)

I would further argue that, whilst not reflected in the reception, Shadow Gallery's output also fulfils several other aspects of Reinhardt's approach. Referring back to the first interpretative section in this chapter, I argued that based on the shared characteristics of the three examined tracks, it is possible to consider the reviewers' understanding of theatricality as perceiving said tracks as abstract stages in which the performers represent their dramatic performances. Considering Shadow Gallery's artwork from this context, it is possible to suggest that, as a form of classical theatre, the theatrical self-framing of the band incorporates a similar effect thus paralleling the fundamental principle of the Greek word "theatron" as "designat[ing] a space in which something is presented to the gaze of the people in order to be seen" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 80). Through this conceptual framework, the artwork of *Shadow Gallery* becomes interpretable as the space through which the band – at this point seven years after its forming but lacking a dedicated following based on years of live performances – presented itself to new audiences, and potentially contributed to transforming the 'observers' to 'fans'[310] further down the line.

In addition, it is possible to frame the artwork as presenting a form of cultural transgression by interpreting the depicted space as an extension of the band's engagement with the work of writer Alan Moore. Halbscheffel's biographical article on Shadow Gallery points out that the band's name is derived from Alan Moore's graphic novels series *V for Vendetta* and more specifically from the hideout of the main protagonist 'V' titled "the shadow gallery" (Halbscheffel 2013i, 442). It is possible that the band's intention was to saturate the album with visual and textual allusions to the term given that, in addition to adopting the term as the name of both the band and their first album, the booklet also refers to the recording space for the album as 'The Shadow Gallery'. As such, the title of the album on the front artwork can be interpreted as not only simultaneously presenting the band and the album's title, but also as implicitly framing the depicted space as a/the 'shadow gallery'. This can be supported based on the similarities between the album artwork and the depicted contents of Moore's 'shadow gallery' as housing an extensive collection of (predominantly) 'high culture'-related artefacts such as artwork, literature and music: V's book shelves are shown to include books by Shakespeare, Walter Scott's 'Ivanhoe', 'Divine Comedy' by Dante Alighieri, Miguel de Cervantes' 'Don Quixote' etc. (see Figure 24); whilst a later depiction of the location (see Figure 25) showcases several paintings hanging from the ceiling, including Raphael's *The Three Graces* (Raphael 1504) visible in the middle-back of the image, and Pierro del Pollaiuolo's *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* (Del Pollaiuolo ca. 1475), visible in upper-left corner; and the 2005 film adaptation of Moore's work (McTeigue, James 2005) also presents the place as saturated with such 'high culture' artefacts (see Figure 26).[311]

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[310] As I mentioned in the opening of this book, I am tend to avoid referring to the discussed audiences as constituting of 'fans', however given that this argument is focusing on the development of a dedicated community, I believe this to be an acceptable omission.

[311] For sources of the used images, the author scanned the corresponding pages from the following bibliographical entries: Figure 24 (see Alan Moore and Lloyd 1988, 11), Figure 25 (see Alan Moore and Lloyd 1989, 6). The image used in Figure 26 is a promotional photo by David Appleby (see Appleby n.d.) that corresponds to a shot in the original film (timecode [00:27:25]), and was substituted due to better quality.

Figure 24: *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore, Vol I, p. 11, selection

Figure 25: *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore, Vol VII, p. 6, selection
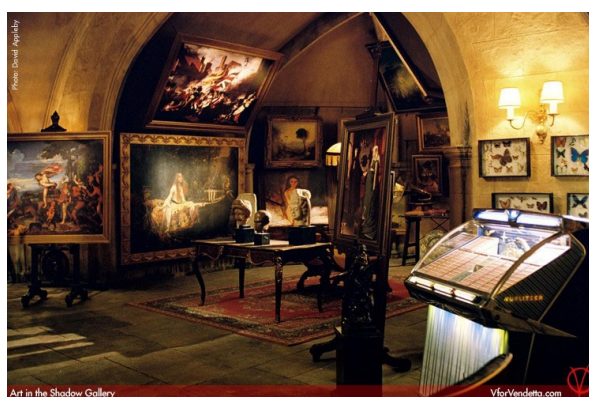
Figure 26: 'Art in the Shadow Gallery', promotional photo by David Appleby

Through this perspective the artwork extends the inherent cultural transgression that is the presentation of highly canonised sculptures (e.g., Venus de Milo), aesthetics (e.g., the Baroque ornamentation), material (e.g., the marble floor) and the incorporation of Greek mythology[312] as the cover of a popular music album by creating a further level of separation based on the implied parallel to the 'shadow gallery' in Moore's work. Moreover, it enables to view the artwork as paralleling Reinhardt's approach to overcoming the boundaries between social classes through the presentation of Greek tragedies in a circus space.

Returning back to the reviewers' positive reception of Shadow Gallery's choruses, I want to highlight an additional set of utterances through which it is possible to observe further parallels between some of the ideological underpinnings of progressive metal and a mixture of the culture-undermining rewriting of Greek tragedies in the twentieth century, together with Richard Wagner's "proclaiming an utopian vision of the future" and his desire to see every listener "becom[ing] in truth an artist" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 78).

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[312] The precluding section of this interpretation showcased the ability to interpret Shadow Gallery's album artwork as incorporating a character alluding to the mythological figure of Icarus, which in turn, can be seen as paralleling Reinhardt's approach to presenting a Greek tragedy. As this aspect remains exclusively on the visual level and is not engaged with by the band on an auditive and a narrative level, I will not address it as a separate category in this discussion.

"What sets Shadow Gallery apart from many other prog metal acts is their ability to write and play very complex, lengthy prog songs, that at the same time have a very commercially-viable, radio-hit-like quality to them. This is meant in a very positive way – there are many times where you can find yourself singing along, and where a chorus will stay in your head for hours – not something that can be said of much other prog metal material. Considering that Shadow Gallery have never performed a live show, these 'hits' are not written for commercial success, but for their own sake – and they really work". (MA-ShadowGallery-#2, 2006)

"[A]ll of the songs have very good riffs and sing-along verses and choruses, and that's what makes [*Tyranny*] so great, every single thing about the music you can tell they are [sic] not copied from other bands". (MA-ShadowGallery-#7, 2004)

"Not all of [the track] Cliffhanger is keyboard driven when the vocals take over to gradually move into a full-on backing choir that is lighthearted [sic] and lifting, all which [sic] makes SG worth listening to since their choruses make them stand out from other prog metal outfits like Dream Theater, Vanden Plas, and Fates Warning". (MA-ShadowGallery-#8, 2013)

It is clear that the utterances above frame Shadow Gallery's approach to choruses as the band's 'unique'[313] characteristic, as well as simultaneously positioning the band outside of the realm of the 'mainstream' despite the 'commercially-viable, radio-hit-like quality' to the observed songs.[314] Whereas these perspectives can be contextualised as reflecting progressive metal's drawing from the mainstream-critical ideological genre rules of both progressive music and heavy metal, the reviewers' focus on the choruses allows to consider the effect as related to the classical theatre contexts outlined in this interpretation.

As previously mentioned, the band's depiction of an 'Icarus'-like character on the front cover represents a popular culture-based recontextualization of a highly recognisable tragic Greek myth, thus can be framed as paralleling similar practices aimed at the performances of Greek tragedies in post-World War II contexts. Whilst this quasi-rewriting of the Greek tragedy lacks the critical reframing of "the relationship between African traditions and colonial cultures" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 83), there is a potential for audiences to have perceived the act as signalling the band's challenge to creative power-relations in the music industry, thus amplifying the 'uniqueness' of the band's choruses.

In addition, progressive music listeners' expectations of bands to push the boundaries are often balanced by the normative effects in relatability i.e., progression is to be partially achieved through iteration of established elements/approaches from within genre, and not a radical/avant-

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[313] I am surrounding the term 'unique' in quotes not to dismiss the validity of such perspectives, but as means of highlighting that some reviewers have related choruses to broader compatibility with/interests by progressive metal listeners – e.g. "[e]very prog-metal lover's dream, a big, back-of-the-arena epic chorus that leads into the best instrumental passages on the CD" (PA-ShadowGallery-#99, 2005) – thus suggesting that the band's success is not about pure innovation but also about iteration of elements that progressive music is receptive of.

[314] Whilst a less direct example than the ones quoted above, the following utterance can help in positioning the general accessible character of the band output as partly responsible for their community i.e., "[Shadow Gallery] have a small but devoted legion of followers who really dig their brand of catchy, relaxed prog metal, and [the album *Carved in Stone*] is my first taste of them" (MA-ShadowGallery-#4, 2011).

garde change of all aspects. As such the album artwork can be considered as not only a transgressive recontextualization of 'high cultural' elements (the aforementioned Greco-Roman architecture, sculpture and mythology) in popular music settings but also as a visual approach that echoes earlier examples of progressive music's artists transforming of Western art music elements (e.g., Emerson, Lake, and Palmer; Yes etc.), as well as instances in which progressive rock performers have engaged with Greek mythology as part of their output e.g., Macan briefly discusses Genesis' track "Firth of Fifth" as incorporating Greek mythological elements (see Edward Macan 1997, 108); or Sciabarra outlining that the band Point of Ares "has mined the Apollonian-Dionysian myth for thematic inspiration" in their second album *The Sorrow of Young Apollo* (Sciabarra 2002, 179n7).[315]

Taken together, Shadow Gallery's approach can be contextualised as a progressive music-appropriate sending out of a 'vision of a utopian future' towards potential listeners, that whilst not engaging with progressive music's handling of utopian themes (see e.g. Anderson 2020; Horwitz 2003; Hyltén-Cavallius and Kaijser 2017, 219–35; Edward Macan 1997, 80–83; Ed Macan 2003, 185, 186; Sheinbaum 2002, 38; Stec 2016, 406–19), semiotically anchors the band's own self-framing to progressive ideology i.e. a non-mainstream artist that generates visual parallels to the transgressive practices of highly canonised artists from the 'hallowed' early years of the progressive rock genre.[316] Furthermore, based on the implied symbiotic relation between the performers' non-commercial approach and their listeners' appreciation, as observed from the booklet from Shadow Gallery's following album *Carved in Stone* (see quoted excerpt from CD booklet below), the band's utopia incorporates the aspect of developing a specialist audience which, in turn, parallels Wagner's in transforming each listener as "in truth an artist" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 78). The collective result of these perspectives is a strengthened perception of the band's relation to progressive music ideology, and in turn, potentially the indirect fostering of a more dedicated community due to the increased perception of genre-authenticity.

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[315] However, it should also be acknowledged that the engagement with Greco-Roman period/mythology does not exclusively relate Shadow Gallery to progressive music contexts as work of several scholars have framed heavy metal's drawing from ancient Greece, figures from that period, or more broadly classical mythology, as a not-insignificant theme that engages with similar authenticity and/or community aspects (see e.g., Campbell 2009; Djurslev 2014; Umurhan 2013).

[316] It is worth pointing out that the choruses themselves can also be seen as auditive component contributing to the projection of a utopian future. Macan has pointed out that early progressive rock performers often included multiple singers whereby "passages sung by the lead singer alternate with choruses sung in three- or four-part harmony by all the group's vocalists" (Edward Macan 1997, 39–40). The author also points out that bands such as The Moody Blues, Yes, Caravan etc. had employed multi-vocal techniques with quasi-choral effects ranging from having hymnal qualities to "both homophonic arrangements in which the voices move in note-against-note motion with each other, and contrapuntal arrangements where two and even three separate vocal melodies are presented at the same time" (Edward Macan 1997, 40). Similarly, Holm-Hudson (2003) has pointed out that the progressive music-related genre of Zeuhl "is similar to jazz fusion […] with the addition of choral chanting and a greater degree of dissonance" (Holm-Hudson 2003, 485) and also discusses the track "Kohntarkosz" by the French progressive rock band Magma as including choral passages that, according to the band's drummer and founding member Christian Vander, were influenced by the "monolithic choral style" of Karl Orff (Holm-Hudson 2003, 491). As such, without claiming a direct 'influence' by earlier progressive rock bands, the chorus-singing of Shadow Gallery can be viewed as equally potent authenticating aspect. However, given that reviewers emphasise the 'sing-along' quality of the band's choruses, I consider them less directly relevant to the classical implications of progressive rock than the aspects the artwork seemingly engages with.

"Dear listener, this recording has been a labor of love. It is a combination of emotion meets execution and would not have been possible without your support. It is the cycle that perpetuates art in a commercially driven society. You continue to support–we continue to bleed. To you, our most heartfelt thanks. Let those who have ears listen–it's more than just music. God bless. Shadow Gallery" (Shadow Gallery 1995a, booklet, n.p.)

Framing classical theatricality in larger contexts

It is important to acknowledge that, given the specific set of components required to frame a performer as engaging with classical theatre, the presented interpretation does not offer a ready-made framework which can be easily transferred to the examination of other progressive metal performers. Nevertheless, I would argue that the fundamental principles underpinning the effects of said theatre – i.e., community-building through a perception of genre-appropriate authenticity and commitment/seriousness – can be positioned as valid when framed against several larger contexts.

First, relating to broader progressive metal contexts, I was able to locate multiple instances in which the album artwork incorporates a contrast between one or more classical-connotative collages that include architectural, sculptural or art-related elements and the corresponding bands' seeming lack of theatricality (see Figure 27 to Figure 32).[317] In both Dream Theater and Adagio's cases, the front artwork and the space/background in which the performers are depicted seemingly imply a connection which enables to suggest that a similar theatrical-related authenticity effects may be in play, even if the bands are not engaging with the same level of classical theatre as was the case in Shadow Gallery's example. Symphony X's artwork offers no direct connection between the performers' space and the front artwork, however, given the canonised status of the band, the visibility of Greco-Roman elements strengthens the framing of Shadow Gallery's artwork as presenting semiotic elements appropriate for progressive metal aesthetic expectations. It is difficult to say without proper investigation whether these examples can be viewed as similarly interpretable act of classical theatre, and indeed my discussion cannot address Rainer Zuch's critical argument regarding the lack of a broad aesthetic programme that for progressive metal and several other genres (Zuch 2012 [2011], 83). However, the current discussion can offer one approach in contextualising the co-relation between the self-framing performer and the presented classical-connotative aesthetic, instead of simply viewing them as a generalised 'allusion to high culture'.

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[317] Images derived from the following sources: Figure 27 (Dream Theater 1992b); Figure 28 (Dream Theater 1992a); Figure 29 (Adagio 2001b); Figure 30 (Adagio 2001a); Figure 31 (Symphony X 1998b); Figure 32 (Symphony X 1998a).

Figure 27: Dream Theater – *Images and Words* (1992), front artwork
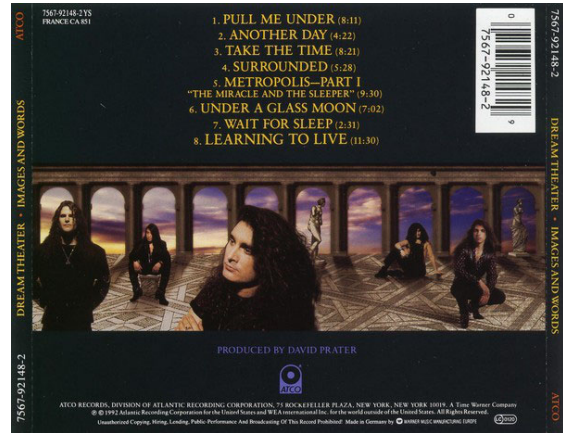
Figure 28: Dream Theater – *Images and Words* (1992), back artwork
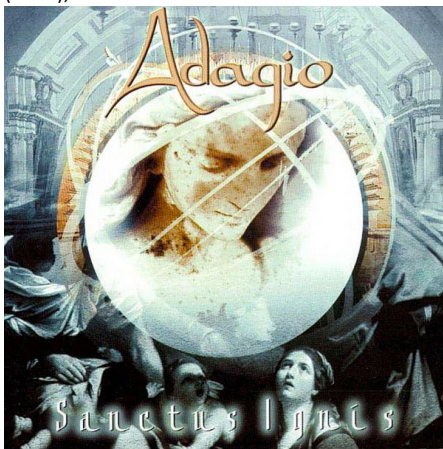
Figure 29: Adagio – *Sanctus Ignis* (2001), front artwork

Figure 30: Adagio – *Sanctus Ignis* (2001), booklet

Figure 31: Symphony X – *Twilight in Olympus* (1998), front artwork

Figure 32: Symphony X – *Twilight in Olympus* (1998), booklet

Second, the interpretation can be considered as exemplifying a phenomenon at a 'crossing point' between several theatricality-related approaches identified in genres such as black metal and Viking metal. The ability to interpret Shadow Gallery's theatrical self-framing as signalling seriousness and authenticity in tune with the genre's semiotic and ideological rules enables to draw comparisons to black metal's utilisation of 'corpse paint' facial make up. Specifically, Jan Grünwald's (2018) examination of masculinity-related self-framing practices in black metal addresses the theatricality of the genre with the author arguing that "it is important for the theatrical element of a [black metal] performance to be presented as an authentic lifestyle-form that, despite the use of make-up and facial grimacing, is to be perceived as transmitting seriousness" (Grünwald 2018, 57).[318]

Furthermore, by relating Shadow Gallery's theatricality with the development of a community, similarities can be identified to the blood-covered self-image of bands within the Viking metal genre. The research of Irina-Maria Manea (2016) discusses the reconstruction of Norse mythology in lyrics and visual elements of several Swedish Viking metal bands and argues that such aspects contribute to the development of a specific socio-cultural identity as well as constructing a form of leisure community based on such perspectives. Namely, "Viking metal is an open cross-culture in that anyone can assume and affirm this theatrical Nordic identity" (Manea 2016, 84) and further concludes that such "Nordic self-fashioning […] points out the identity struggles in a fragmented postmodernity that gives birth to all kinds of past revivalisms as building blocks for shaping togetherness" (Manea 2016, 90).

Both scholars' incorporation of identity-related arguments can also be seen as a notable parallel to the symbiotic relationship between Shadow Gallery (i.e., as an authentic professional lifestyle similar to black metal) and the broad progressive music culture (i.e., as a leisure community that defines itself through both its anti-commercial tendencies as well as engaging with a form of musical revivalism).[319] These extreme metal-based parallels are also of significance as, whilst Shadow Gallery is considered a band from the 'core' progressive metal genre, it is possible that bands from the (PA defined) 'tech/extreme prog metal' sub-genre may employ comparable theatricality-based authentication principles.

A final consideration I want to engage with, though more as a point for broader consideration, is my earlier relation between some reviewers' praising Shadow Gallery's 'sing-along' choruses and the notion of developing a 'singing community'. An additional aspect that appears in several of the previously quoted utterances is the contrast between "complex, lengthy prog songs" and their "very commercially-viable, radio-hit-like quality" framed, in part, via the "chorus [that] will stay in your head for hours" (MA-ShadowGallery-#2, 2006), and the praise of Shadow Gallery's "brand of catchy, relaxed prog metal" (MA-ShadowGallery-#4, 2011). When combined with a third utterance discussing the

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[318] Ger. Orig. "Gleichzeitig ist es wichtig, das theatralische Element der Performance als authentischen Lebensentwurf zu präsentieren, um, trotz Make-up und Grimasse, in der Inszenierung Ernsthaftigkeit zu vermitteln".

[319] As I am aware of the adoption of right-wing tendencies in some sub-categories of both black metal and Viking metal, I want to be clear that I am not suggesting a parallel between such aspects and Shadow Gallery, its audience, or the progressive music community as a whole. Rather, the emphasis remains on the co-relation between theatricality and community-development principles.

notion of 'accessibility' (see below), these carry some interesting implications to both Shadow Gallery, and other performers in this study's corpus.

> "The music on [Shadow Gallery's album] Tyranny is not only entertaining in every sense of the word, but it is soothing to the ears, entirely accessible, catchy and somehow remains relatively complex. I''s interesting, progressive music with the catchiness and accessibility of pop!" (PA-ShadowGallery-#56, 2007)

First, considering the perspective's contrasting between Shadow Gallery's music as complex, yet 'catchy' and 'accessible', this perspective can be taken as an additional way through which the band's relation to the classical can be expanded. Specifically, whilst I am certain that there are those still viewing Western art music as 'inherently' more complex and/or demanding to its listeners than popular music, there are pieces in the repertoire that can be described as balancing such 'hefty' undertones with a more 'accessible' character e.g., Beethoven's *Symphony No. 6* in F major, Op. 68 (or the Pastoral Symphony) – though this can also be applied to some of Mozart's Symphonies – Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's *The Hebrides* overture in b minor, Bedřich Smetana's *Má vlast* cycle of symphonic poems (especially the second piece in the cycle, *Vltava*), most of Johann Strauss' waltzes, or Ralph Vaughan Willaims' *The Lark Ascending*, to name a few. In other words, in a rather abstract sense, it is possible to view the combination of complex, yet accessible/catchy music of Shadow Gallery's output as paralleling various works from the history of Western art music with similar affective capacity. That said, the 'accessibility' ascription to other classical-connotative artists such as Savatage tentatively enables an extension of the argument towards their own output:

> "All the songs [in Savatage's *Dead Winter Dead* album] are very accessible which makes me wonder why Savatage never got the commercial success they so deserved". (MA-Savatage-#70, 2009)

On an even broader scale, the surprisingly high number of ascriptions and positive praise of 'accessibility' and 'catchiness' in virtually all bands within this study's corpus, enables to develop the argument that, whether in its classical-relatable capacity or not, the balance between said terms may be a useful tool in navigating the genre boundaries of progressive metal:

> "Any serious prog metal fan with a weak spot for accessible melody (and not just instrumental experimentalism) should definitely buy this record, which is already being rated by many specialized vehicles as one of the best releases of 2012". (PA-Threshold-#175, 2012)

> "Catchy choruses and superb vocal harmonies. Typical Technical progmetal". (PA-ShadowGallery-#55, 2007)

> "And we have all the typical prog metal elements [in the album *Room V*], like speedy but always catchy guitar & keyboard soloing". (PA-ShadowGallery-#108, 2005)

> "And that is one of Crimson Glory´s great strengths. No matter how melodic and catchy their material can be there´s always a good balance between that part of their sound and a harder edged and more aggressive beast just lurking beneath the surface". (PA-CrimsonGlory-#24, 2007)

> "When compared to earlier releases, [Threshold's *Subsurface* is] still prog metal, all the usual ingredients are present. Only the symphonic and atmospheric elements are emphasised more

into the sound. Especially the sound of the keyboards are [sic] more to the fore. This leaves a rather accessible sound though it may take some time for newcomers to get into the music. Being not familiar with progmetal it took me some spins for appreciating this album". (PA-Threshold-#140, 2006)

"The tunes [on Star One's album *Space Metal*] are actually a bit more straightforward than the Ayreon ones, and since the individual song emphasis is not on establishing part of a grander concept, this may be a bit more accessible to those that usually are not too keen on Lucassen's rock operas". (MA-StarOne-#1, 2008)

The quoted utterances help to suggest that, whilst progressive metal (and progressive music as a whole) is often discussed and praised for its complexity,[320] said aspect seemingly does not overturn the listeners' interest in the music's 'accessibility'. To a certain degree this is not a new argument as, despite the co-relation between progressive rock's emphasis on complexity to be the predominant argument in scholarship and journalistic writing (e.g. Spicer 2008, 313), there are some isolated instances in which progressive music and the concept of 'catchiness' appear in close proximity e.g., Melançon and Carpenter's description of the track "Roundabout" by Yes as "patently 'progressive' but also eminently listener friendly" (Melançon and Carpenter 2015, 136). Similarly, John Sheinbaum has argued that despite Yes to have transitioned away from the virtuoso performances and complex tracks in the 1980s, successful tracks such as "Owner of a Lonely Heart" – lauded by some as exemplifying the band's more commercial tendencies – still base the song on subtle, yet intricate structure, change of meter and a lack of a tonal centre thus indicating that the seemingly 'simple' and 'pop' tendencies of the track are much more detailed on closer inspection (Sheinbaum 2008, 36–39). And finally, these perspectives can also be identified in journalistic contexts, as exemplified in Wagner's outline of the band Rush which suggests that "*A Farewell to Kings* showcases the band's wide appeal better than any other Rush album, and proved their unique ability to write complex works of art for the egghead rocker while maintaining mainstream appeal" (J. Wagner 2010, 26).

To be clear, I am not interested in overturning the close association between progressive metal and its complexity, but rather to point out that, both through the audiences' perspectives as well as the academic and journalistic writings, notions such as the music's 'catchy' or 'accessible' capacity is by no means dialectical even to the most canonised performers in the progressive music. As such, I would argue that future examinations of progressive metal performers should attempt to balance between engaging with the music's various complexities, yet also consider and explore the audiences' interest in the music's more accessible properties.

Section conclusion

In conclusion, this section presented an interpretation to the ascriptions of 'theatricality' to Shadow Gallery by situating the band's eponymous first album as incorporating parallels to the concept of

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[320] This can be supported in relation to Ahlkvist's 2011 content analysis of PA-derived reviews, whereby the author observes that some reviewers of symphonic albums have praised "the complexity of […] 'challenging' and 'difficult' music [which] is usually seen as an asset that makes the music more 'progressive'. Indeed, the 'work' a listener must do to appreciate the best symphonic prog music is a source of pleasure for fans" (Ahlkvist 2011, 650).

'classical theatre' as per Fischer-Lichte's conceptualisation of the term. By examining the combination of the front artwork's collage of adapted Greco-Roman aesthetic elements and the back cover's costume-based theatricality of the band, I argued that the artwork can be interpreted as constituting a form of 'classical theatre', and moreover I outlined some of the implications for such a reading towards the band's reception. Namely, the consistent praise offered to aspects of the band's output such as their choruses reveals a series of parallels to the concepts underlying classical theatre i.e., historical community-developing principles and the transgressive and culture-critical element of more contemporary interpretations of classical dramas. In turn, said elements are perceived as echoing of progressive metal's semiotic and ideological rules thus contributing to the band's authentication and potentially to the development of their audience.

As an additional consideration, I offered several perspectives towards situating the broad observations in contexts beyond the band's output. I pointed out some parallels between Shadow Gallery's approach to authenticity and theatrical-focused authenticity practices of other (extreme) metal genres. I also suggested that, despite the fairly specific manner of outlining Shadow Gallery's classical theatre potential, the approach may carry some benefits in considering the overall co-relation between a progressive metal performer and their respective classical-saturated album artworks. Finally, I drew from an implicit aspect included in the audiences' perspectives in suggesting that the praise of a combination between 'complexity' and 'catchiness'/'accessibility' can be interpreted as both an abstract parallel between Shadow Gallery and Western art music composers' similarly balanced output. As well as that the broader implications of said combination of praiseworthy components offers the potential to pursue a more differentiated framing of progressive metal in which the genre's complexity examined together with the desired 'accessibility' of its audiences.

9.4 Chapter conclusion

In summary, the examinations included in this chapter framed the utilisation of the term 'theatrical' and presented arguments towards its capacity to signify a relation to the classical. After an overview of perspectives framing the term's classical-signification potential, the first major section of this investigation focused on examining the ascription of 'vocal-theatricality'. I presented a series of characteristics derived from the interpretative close-readings of several tracks and suggested that they can be framed as relevant components towards the ascription of 'theatricality' to the genre. The observations were then framed as representative of a somewhat traditional understanding of theatricality as expressed by the reviewers' perspectives, whereby by echoing historical framings of the term, a connection to the classical was established that nevertheless emphasises transgression rather than cultural hegemonic ascription.

The second section of the chapter returned to the discussion of visual artefacts and discussed the somewhat puzzling ascription of theatricality to the band Shadow Gallery, a performer with almost no public performances or touring practice. I offered a perspective that argued that the artwork of the band's first album can be interpreted as paralleling Fischer-Lichte's concept of classical theatre which may have contributed to the ascription of theatricality in lew of the aforementioned public events. Moreover, I suggested that the parallels between the band's artwork and self-framing and the aforementioned concept carries more than simply a surface level similarity. Rather, based on the

positive reception of the band, I argued that Shadow Gallery also parallels the same community-developing and culture-critical perspectives found in historical renditions of classical theatre. Thus, through a combination of visually signifying cultural transgression as well as adhering to progressive music's concepts of authenticity this implicitly contributed to the development of a dedicated community.

Beyond the summary of the contents of the preceding interpretative examinations, I want to also briefly provide some suggestions as to how perspectives that were not addressed in this chapter may benefit the further understanding of theatricality's role in progressive metal contexts. A notable aspect that remains difficult to explore given the written-review based data of this study is the contribution of liveness to the ascription of vocal theatricality. For example, I mentioned that Shadow Gallery's career consisted of close to no live performances, though some audience-made recordings of their few live shows may serve as useful sources in considering whether the ascription of theatricality has had a retroactive component based on such live performances. Additionally, the examination of vocal theatricality has purposefully omitted presenting comparisons to performers outside of the analytical corpus of artists, so as to avoid inadvertent furthering canonisation principles. However, some reviewers' comparisons between aspects of Threshold's album *Psychedelicatessen* and canonised progressive metal and progressive rock performers – e.g. the album as "not a million miles away from the drama of Queensryche [sic]" (PA-Threshold-#20, 2005), as well as describing the band's lead singer Glynn Morgan as "[t]oo bland, too lineaI..too BORING" including contrasting his work to theatrical singers such as Genesis' Peter Gabriel or Marillion's Fish (PA-Threshold-#21, 2006) – allow to consider the role of normative parameters relating to the framing of theatricality in progressive music culture.

Beyond the vocal-related perspectives discussed in this study, some reviewers have ascribed theatricality to instrumental or compositional aspects, for example, Crimson Glory's album *Transcendence* has been praised for the "towering, ominous, theatric [sic] melodies" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#24, 2012) as well as the "amazing solos that truly capture the sense of drama depicted within the songs themselves" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#26, 2006). Such utterances open the possibility that reviewers perceive a co-relation between the narrative-aspect vocal theatricality and the instrumental accompaniment or solo, though seemingly not in relation to the theatricality of the instrumental performance. Furthermore, the discussion of theatricality in relation to the band Threshold reveals a notable tension as, on the one hand, the band is framed as having created dramatic pieces (PA-Threshold-#89, 2009) or even albums (PA-Threshold-#20, 2005; PA-Threshold-#12, 2009), yet on the other hand, some reviewers have discussed the band's sound as "cold, it really feels like listening to a machine" and have emphasised the "the non-theatrical approach" (PA-Threshold-#32, 2005; also PA-Threshold-#189, 2013).

Finally, to situate my discussion into larger contexts, some of the perspectives discussed in this chapter can be seen as broadly contributing towards addressing the lack of theatrical discussions and/or the implicit perception that progressive metal is somehow an un-theatrical genre. The characteristics outlined as representative of 'vocal theatricality' were situated in relation to several academic publications engaging with the framing of theatricality, whereby the presented parallels

allowed to suggest not only the validity of the observations based on heavy metal and progressive rock historical precursors, but also potential for further relevancy and applicability to metal's less-often examined vocal theatricality. Also, I briefly suggested that progressive metal's theatricality may be further examined by applying different theatre-related concepts, whether in relation to historical continuities with the progressive rock and heavy metal meta-genres, or as means of addressing the practices of related genres such as avant-garde metal.

Furthermore, my discussion of Shadow Gallery's 'classical theatre'-relation was contextualised as potentially relevant to further examinations of progressive metal performers. On the one hand, I suggested that the observations can contribute to a more detailed framing of progressive metal's visual aesthetic and specifically instances in which performers are framed in close proximity to similar classical-connotative visual elements. On the other hand, I consider the band's approach as interpretable as a 'crossing point' between theatricality-related authenticity perspectives in (extreme) progressive metal performers, thus suggesting some potential for further applicability and expansion towards the examination of such categories.

PART 3: DIVERSITY

10. Perspectives on gender in progressive metal

10.1 General introduction: progressive music and female participation

When I began my research on the role of the classical in progressive metal, I expected my work to focus primarily on the ways by which aspects from Western Art Music, art studies, architecture and/or the general so-called 'high culture' are utilized in the genre. However, during my investigation and specifically the process of selecting my corpus of artists, I began noticing a certain worrying trend, namely that most bands mentioned in journalistic and/or audience contexts consisted predominantly of (mostly white) male performers. I was also surprised to find that written histories mostly overlooked the roles and contributions of women in progressive metal, or the broader progressive field (e.g., Lambe 2011; Sharpe-Young 2007; J. Wagner 2010),[321] and the more I kept looking, the more the reduced visibility of female performers or audiences kept gnawing at the back of my mind.

It goes without saying that the predominantly male demographic of (usually earlier) progressive music has been acknowledged on several occasions (e.g., Bowman 2002, 184; Johnes 2018, 119; Melançon and Carpenter 2015, 145n2; Sheinbaum 2002, 25; see also Dowd et al. 2021 [2019], 135n1). However, despite scholars such as Hegarty and Halliwell to suggest that "[f]emale vocalists form a distinct strand of progressive rock, largely one that sees folk mutate into more complex styles" and list about a dozen performers from notable progressive rock bands (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 203), sources, both academic and journalistic, incorporating/reflecting on the perspectives of female participants frame a much less inclusive/positive situation.[322] Jackie Parsons'

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[321] I am not accusing either of the listed publications of sexism or open exclusionism of women as all authors briefly mention some examples where female performers are involved as (usually additional) vocalists or instrumentalists. However, what is lacking is acknowledgement and/or reflection on the male-centric nature of the genre; moreover, a certain tension related to the role of women in/around progressive metal contexts can be outlined. Wagner describes the album *Tears Laid in Earth* (1994) by the goth rock/doom metal band The 3rd and the Mortal as "mak[ing] a mockery of various female-fronted 'goth metal' novelty bands that have come since" (J. Wagner 2010, 281). Together with the author's framing of Nightwish as "sometimes labelled a progressive act, but more rightly a grandiose power/gothic metal band" (J. Wagner 2010, 315), this both implicitly segregates certain symphonic or goth metal bands with female members, as well as parallels the ambivalent positioning of women in the other two mentioned texts. Lambe's discussion of progressive music contexts highlights male-consisting progressive metal performers, which is expanded via a brief mention of an additional/complementary "female-fronted symphonic metal" category (Lambe 2011, 146–47). Sharpe-Young discusses a cumulative category of 'progressive, gothic and symphonic metal' bands, which whilst situating the genres in close proximity, seemingly includes progressive metal bands with male members, with female performers appearing mostly in relation to symphonic- or gothic metal bands e.g., Epica's lead singer Simone Simons (Sharpe-Young 2007, 279). In all instances progressive metal is implicitly framed as including almost exclusively male performer-based bands, whilst the ambivalently related symphonic- and gothic- metal genres are framed as sites where female performers are situated. Leaving aside the already discussed challenges to navigating boundaries between progressive- and symphonic metal genres, these texts present somewhat limited perspectives on diversity by implicitly obscuring the visibility and scope of female musicians in progressive metal, as well as raise questions as to what 'type' of female participation is deemed 'acceptable' or 'appropriate'.

[322] In the interest of fairness to the authors' discussion, Hegarty and Halliwell are not blind to issues pertaining to female participation in progressive rock as they suggest that "[t]he real problem is that in exploring (and often problematizing) traditionally masculine traits, progressive rock largely excluded or limited the role of women. In order to claim a space within the band – and in rock in general – female singers often displayed their sexuality" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 204). Furthermore, the authors do point out that "a new wave of neo-prog centred around a female voice can be found in bands such as Karnataka, Mostly Autumn and Odin Dragonfly"

(2012) discussion of her experience as a progressive rock musician in the 1970s describes the genre (and surrounding music industry) as less than welcoming to women,[323] and whilst her discussions with newer generations of female performers (as well as women working in the music industry) reveals some improvement she does point out that "the same preconceptions and attitudes exist as before" (Parsons 2012, 105), with the author leaving us with the suggestion that:

> "For there to be a lasting and positive effect on the perception of women as serious rock musicians, there has to be a sustained increase in the numbers of those who can play with skill and confidence and their appearance on the public stage must be continuous". (Parsons 2012, 107)

I agree with Parsons' criticism and believe that her perspective is as relevant today as it was for the period it discusses, which can be exemplified by a 2019 panel discussion titled *#She Rocks. The Prog Panel*.[324] The event critically discussed the current situation in progressive music with multiple current and past female performers from various periods of the genre's history, as well as music PR staff and festival promoters. In the opening discussion, the moderator, *Prog* magazine's associate editor Jo Kendall, raised the question "Progressive music is traditionally viewed as a male-dominated genre, but is it still so?", which was met with more than one answer by panel members, that whilst the increased role of women is noticeable, the genre was at least 'male led' if not 'male dominated' in terms of performers, as well as audience,[325] thus confirming Parsons' perspective.

(Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 219) which, together with their analysis on Kate Bush, Tori Amos and Björk contribute to increasing the visibility of female performers in progressive music (see Burns, Lafrance, and Hawley 2008 for further research on Björk; see Burns 2008 for additional perspectives on Amos).

[323] The chapter "Gender Politics and Prog" in Will Romano's (2014) journalistic overview of the genre echoes this description, by highlighting perspectives from 1970s female performers such as Annie Haslam (Renaissance), Sonja Kristina (Curved Air), and Sidonie Jordan (Empire). Haslam describes prog as a "boys' club" (Haslam, quoted in Romano 2014, 317) as well as mentions the voyeuristic tendencies of some male light-technicians during a tour (Haslam, quoted in Romano 2014, 319), whilst Jordan describes experiencing isolation due to being the only woman in an otherwise male band (Jordan, quoted in Romano 2014, 319). Whilst summarising Kristina's role in Curved Air through some eyebrow raising statements – "[a]s some have pointed out, Kristina won the gig not because of her sexy figure, but her strong sexy voice – Romano outlines that as "[she] seemed to go out of her way to attract attention, relishing her sex-symbol status" and as having contributed "gender- and adult-oriented topics in her songs [such as] the rather lighthearted and risqué commentary on modern society, masturbation, and pornography" (Romano 2014, 317). Choice of words aside, these perspectives can be seen as examples of issues women face(d) in relation to the genre, yet based on the last example also of the potential introduction of quasi-sexual empowerment perspectives through the actions of the performer.

[324] The multiple videos that constitute the panel discussion can be found online (see Ewing 2019).

[325] A similar perspective can be extrapolated from a quote by Jerry Ewing, editor of *Prog* magazine, who is briefly quoted in suggesting that the increased popularity of progressive metal bands such as Opeth, Mastodon and Mars Volta "changed prog's traditionally male fanbase: 'Loads of girls like heavy metal'" (Ewing, quoted in Petridis 2010, n.p.; for discussions on the gender and intersectionality-focused investigations on Mastodon's depiction of female dancers in the music video of the track "The Motherload", see Santos Silva and Medeiros 2021; Sollee 2015). That said, other anecdotal evidence suggests that not every context contributes to the acceptance of female performers in progressive metal. For example, Wagner outlines that the pairing of progressive metal band Cynic with death metal bands Cannibal Corpse and Sinister in the mid-1990s was less than successful as "[f]or many Cannibal fans the sight of headless Steinberger guitars, a growling female vocalist playing keyboards, and deeply tranced-out musicians playing in shut-eyed serenity was just too much" (J. Wagner 2010, 175).

Whilst I initially planned to begin this investigation with a segment presenting empirical evidence on the lack of female involvement in the genre, I discovered that someone has already done so, namely the extensive study *Gender Inequality in Metal Music Production* by Pauwke Berkers and Julian Schaap (2018) published in parallel to this study's preparation. Berkers and Schaap present a large-scale examination of female involvement in a variety of metal music genres, deriving their data from an identical data pool as this study – the metal-archives.com website – and furthermore, their analyses cross into the genre of progressive metal. Alas, same as in Parsons' discussion, Berkers and Schaap's description is rather bleak as, from the first mention of the term 'progressive', the readers encounter the same masculine-dominated perspective. The authors describe "'progressive deathcore' being the least 'feminine' genre" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 9) as well as point to progressive metal as constituting 96.1% male and 3.9% female members (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 56), whereby the female participation in the genre is "highly skewed towards vocalists" most likely due to "the affiliation between masculinity and technological skill and control" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 75).[326] That said, Berkers and Schaap suggest that "although progressive metal are [sic] typically perceived as musically complex […] and hence expected to be male dominated" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 61) on multiple occasions the authors acknowledge the relative feminine connotations of the genre (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 22) or the clustering of female performers in progressive metal genres in countries such as Netherlands (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 23, 60, 61).

Based on the combination of my observations and these preliminary contexts, I elected to expand my study in relation to diversity in music by contributing to the ongoing efforts in strengthening the visibility of female performers in the progressive metal genre. It goes without saying that diversity includes multiple dimensions ranging from aspects such as age, race, disability, religious beliefs and ethnicity (to name a few) which could not be examined or considered as thoroughly as that of gender. However, the focus on the genre's gender potential in this study will hopefully provide a meaningful continuation and extension of existing academic examinations related to diversity. For example, Sam Grant's (2016) discussion of the Israeli progressive/folk metal band Orphaned Land discusses how the Israeli female singers Schlomit Levi and Miri Milman and the Palestinian-Israeli

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[326] Bruce Friesen and Warren Helfrich's (1998) analysis of lyrical contents in Canadian heavy metal music between 1985 and 1991 has suggested that the progressive genre has engaged with gender themes, and that in the aforementioned period they have increased (Friesen and Helfrich 1998, 272, 273). However, whilst the provided overview of what bands/albums were examined suggests a relation to progressive metal contexts as per a previous publication by one of the authors – e.g., Queensrÿche's eponymous album as well as their record *Empire* from 1990; and Extreme's *Pornograffiti* (Friesen and Helfrich 1998, 282, 283; for the aforementioned publication see Friesen and J. S. Epstein 1994, 10–11) – the large-scale content analysis-approach employed by the authors only provides a general overview of the engagement with gender aspects. Barring a brief comment regarding Extreme's track "He-Man Woman Hater" as "extol[ing] the masculine 'virtue' of emotional distancing from women [and] treating them with distrust and loathing" which the authors leave as an open question as to the lyric's "sincer[ity] in its suggestion, or a thinly veiled tongue-in-cheek criticism of such attitudes among males" (Friesen and Helfrich 1998, 267), it remains unclear as to what constitutes gender themes in the context of the progressive metal genre as well as in what way they are handled by the corresponding performers. To be clear, by this comment I am suggesting that the example by Extreme strikes me as insufficient evidence as, I am both generally opposed to drawing from, and further situating, a singular track's lyrics as representative of an entire genre, as well as that based on contemporary framings of progressive metal, the band's lack of situating in these genres by audiences raises questions as to whether the authors' observations would be seen as valid.

vocalist Mira Awad have contributed not only in terms of their vocal abilities but also by reflecting on and balancing the co-relation between female representation and national identity thus contributing to important aspects in the band's output such as the emphasis on co-existence, religious and gender transgressions.[327] Additionally, texts by Fellezs (2016a) include reflections on issues of gender in metal such as his discussion of the YouTube female virtuoso guitarist Li-sa-X, or his exploration of race in relation to guitar virtuosity in the work of African American guitarist/pianist Tony MacAlpine (Fellezs 2018), a neo-classical/'shred' (and progressive metal as per both PA and MA databases) performer emphasising Western art music borrowing/transformation comparable to both the broad subject of this study, as well as the example that I will discuss here.

As a central inquiry to my investigation, I will explore the work of an artist that, whilst not directly recognised as part of the genre, can be framed as inadvertently echoing many of the aspects that the first part of this study extracted from the album reviews of accepted progressive metal artists: Katherine Thomas known by her stage name The Great Kat, a violin and guitar virtuoso known for her 'cyberspeed' metal transformations of Western art music pieces. Having broadly introduced the gender problematic that contextualises the discussion in this part of the study, the remaining sections of this chapter will focus on presenting The Great Kat. I will first briefly introduce the performer, outlining relevant aspects of her biography as well as present an overview of the characteristics of her work and self-framing. This will be followed by sections that outline my justification for selecting the performer, and conclude with a brief discussion of current academic research on The Great Kat.

10.2 The great who? – An introduction to The Great Kat and her output

Due to The Great Kat's underground status, her work has not been commonly included in histories of the genre, and to my knowledge, there are no journalistic or academic texts that provide a sufficient (or up-to-date) outline of her biography, the characteristics of her output, or general tendencies in her self-framing. As such, in order to provide an introductory overview of the performer, the following section will, in part, address these omissions. I will attempt to balance between offering sufficient historical contexts, and highlighting relevant elements that will later contribute to framing The Great Kat's applicability as a progressive music artist, as well as showcase aspects that will become central towards the interpretation of the performer's Western art music and gender-combining output. That said, as this section intends to provide a general overview, aspects that will be subjected to in-depth examination later on in this investigation will only be mentioned in passing.

The biography of Katherine Thomas (henceforth referred to only by her stage name 'The Great Kat'), as included on her website (greatkat.com n.d.o), highlights her involvement with Western art music during her formative years by presenting an impressive, if somewhat predictable, development of her musical career, as well as her subsequent transition to a heavy metal performer. She began playing classical instruments at an early age (piano at 7, and violin at the age of 9), which led to a

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[327] Sam Grant's discussion (S. Grant 2016, 223) also includes a brief mention of two other bands from Israel featuring female members – Stormy Atmosphere which features the female singer Dina Shulman and Key of the Moment featuring the female vocal-contributions of Iris Sternberg – that are listed by the MA website under the genre-label "Progressive Rock/Metal" (see Metal-archives.com n.d.t; Metal-archives.com n.d.j), which further helps to strengthen the idea that female participation in progressive metal is not limited to a few isolated cases.

scholarship to Julliard School of Music in New York at the age of 15. She graduated from the institution six years later with honours, with her biography listing a fairly substantial list of awards (e.g., "Robert Hufstader Scholarship" in Composition and Theory; Gallery Concert Series Young Artists Award), positions within prestigious ensembles (Concertmaster of the Juilliard Pre-College Orchestra) and appraisals by governmental figures e.g. "New York Governor Mario Cuomo awarded The Great Kat (Katherine Thomas) the Certificate of Merit as 'Recipient of the Palma Julia de Burgos Award' in recognition of her outstanding musical achievements". After an unspecified period of 'touring the world', her biography then takes a 'metal' turn, described by the performer as the result of two connected events. One, The Great Kat declares that 'classical music is dead'[328] – though she is rather vague as to how or why she reached such a conclusion – and two, having seen a Judas Priest music video, she turns towards writing and performing metal music with the goal to update Western art music in a fast-paced and succinct a manner she dubs 'cyberspeed' music that is reflective of the (at the time) contemporary internet society.[329]

The highlights from this sequence of events (e.g., graduating from Julliard School of Music and later 'transforming' into a heavy metal performer) are often echoed in interviews with the performer I encountered, though some additional information regarding The Great Kat's transition into the world of heavy metal can be derived from a podcast by Steev Ricardo, an American PR agent who claims to have signed the performer to RoadRunner records in the 1980s (Ricardo 2019, [04:33]).[330] According to the discussion, The Great Kat had submitted a demo tape which was positively received by Ricardo, thus leading to an initial contact between the two parties (Ricardo 2019, [05:19]). The podcast then claims that there was no other official communication until The Great Kat simply appeared with her bandmates at Enigma Records' offices (Ricardo's employment at the time), thus leading to her being signed to RoadRunner when Ricardo transitioned to the latter company (Ricardo 2019, [05:39]).[331] Ricardo suggests that "[The Great Kat] may have alienated a many people along the way" (Ricardo 2019, [05:49]) most likely during the recording of the two records under RoadRunner[332] – *Worship Me or Die* (1987b) and *Beethoven on Speed* (1990d) – which, in turn, may have contributed to her

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[328] As a brief note touching on contextualising arguments to come, the anti-establishment principles aimed against Western art music that can be detected in this statement can be seen as a parallel to some progressive rock performers such as Daryl Way from Curved Air, or Robert Fripp from King Crimson, which respectively suggested that Western art music and the symphonic orchestra as an ensemble were either dead or obsolete, as noted by Keister and Smith (2008, 452n23).

[329] Some interviews present a more differentiated history, with The Great Kat mentioning one of her initial professional engagements with popular music to be her co-operation with the composer Timothy Leary (e.g., Forbes 2017) in ca. 1984 which resulted in the song "Right Brain Lover", though I was unable to locate the specific track for more direct examination. Furthermore, despite The Great Kat avoiding comparisons to similar metal performer (see Footnote 439), her 'origin story' strikes me as a mirrored version of Yngwie Malmsteen's own familiarity with Western art music i.e., hearing Paganini on a TV broadcast (see Walser 1993, 94).

[330] The booklet for the *Beethoven on Speed* does list (what can be viewed as) thanks to a number of people, including Steev Ricardo (see The Great Kat 1990b), thus somewhat supporting his claim to have been responsible for The Great Kat's signing to RoadRunner Records.

[331] Ricardo's podcast creates the impression that he was the one responsible for The Great Kat's entrance in the metal music realm, though he does not mention the existence of a three song EP titled *Satan Says* (Kat 1986) released in 1986 under the humbler name 'Kat', which may have indeed been The Great Kat's first release.

[332] The second CD by The Great Kat was released under RoadRacer Records, a sub-label of RoadRunner.

subsequent transition to releasing albums exclusively through her own label TPR Music,[333] barring the 1996 interactive CD-ROM *Digital Beethoven on Cyberspeed* (The Great Kat 1996c) released by the Bureau of Electronic Publishing.

The Great Kat released multiple CDs (and later on DVDs) through TPR Music, usually at a rate of roughly one release every two to three years,[334] whereby up to the year 2009, the majority of releases – be it EP CD singles, CD compilations or DVD compilations of videos – tend to be products that include multiple pieces. In contrast, from around 2012, releases shift to a one-track-per-release format, with separate DVD releases featuring a video for said track being simultaneously available. This change in format may have been influenced by the shift towards digital distribution platforms such as iTunes, Spotify or Amazon since ca. 2000, though given The Great Kat's underground status, focusing CD/DVD releases to only one track may have been a way to maximise revenue.[335]

The majority of the performer's releases can be considered as representing a fairly 'common' approach to creating an album together with accompanying music videos, though of particular note is the approach to contents of the album artwork and the music videos themselves. In short, The Great Kat's artworks can be summarised as culture-transgressive intertextual collages that incorporate two contrasting components: the visibility of The Great Kat usually wearing forms of lingerie and in what can be described as quasi-suggestive poses and/or facial expressions; and a historical portrait of the composer whose music is transformed within the record. With regards to music videos, a large number of The Great Kat's videography can be summarised as comprising of short, DIY-aesthetic focused videos that are constructed from fast-paced and image-saturated scenes. Furthermore, these videos incorporate a similar contrast between the performer's quasi-suggestive self-framing, as well as a fairly emphasised theatrical and narrative-centric focus that (at times subtly, at times less so) weaves aspects alluding to the original Western art music piece's original narrative and/or to the history of the corresponding composer. With that in mind, these are not universal rules as some of The Great Kat's artwork only partially matches this principle (i.e., some not including the composer's portrait), and some of her albums can be interpreted as having a quasi-conceptual underpinning (e.g., her album *Wagner's War*). Also, a somewhat recent development in relation to her video repertoire is her series of quasi-comedic cooking videos, which depict The Great Kat as preparing various dishes, framed in

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[333] TPR Music is listed as the distribution company for The Great Kat's releases from 1996 onwards, though most albums up to the early 2010s are listed as "Published by Blood and Guts Music" (e.g., see The Great Kat 2000a).

[334] Discography and music-distribution website Discogs.com lists several promotional VHS tapes released (most often) during the same year that the corresponding audio track was released (Discogs.com n.d.e). I am purposefully leaving out these promotional videos as, on the one hand, tracking down the specific examples may be an exercise in futility which effectively does not contribute to the discussion, and on the other hand, most if not all (official) music videos were later bundled in The Great Kat's video-compilations.

[335] A general comparison can be made to the creative approach of Brian Patrick Carroll, known under the stage name of Buckethead, a performer with some relation to progressive music whose enormous output ranging at the time of writing in the hundreds of released studio albums (e.g., see Progarchives.com n.d.e) can be interpreted as a form of 'overwhelming the listener' with releases. In comparison, The Great Kat's approach strikes me as resulting a similar form of 'media saturation', though achieved both through her re-packaging of various tracks for release on digital platforms.

the videos as 'favourites' of composers such as Beethoven, Paganini, and Rimsky-Korsakov e.g., mid-2017's "Chef Great Kat Cooks: Beethoven's Macaroni and Cheese" (2018c).[336]

An aspect worth briefly mentioning in relation to The Great Kat's historical contextualisation is her forward-looking perspectives in relation to technology. In a video interview from 1994 (Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d; see also Metalsucks.net 2011),[337] The Great Kat is shown demonstrating her, just released interactive CD-ROM, *Digital Beethoven on Cyberspeed* (Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994d, [04:50 – 04:54]). The interview highlights her opinion that technology (such as personal computers or the aspect of interactivity) has become an important part of engaging with music, and media more broadly, and suggests that internet will overall become more prevalent medium (Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994a, [08:00 – 08:12]). She also discusses planning to design her own website (Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994a, [08:13]), and suggests that the overall experience of her output intends to invoke excitement-through-education, via the auditive examples of classical instruments or a questionnaire about Western art music composers (Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994b, [04:10 – 05:18], [05:59 – 06:45] and [07–44 - 08:56]; also Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994c, [08:54 – 09:17]). Later on, The Great Kat implies that metal musicians have yet to explore such technological venues, and claims that even if they attempted to do so, their efforts will be limited to more 'trivial' aspects such as band photos or lyrics (Reality Check TV [channel name] 1994d, [02:43 – 03:14]).

The combination of fast-paced talking, bravado and occasional insults to the filming crew and other musicians, helps to showcase typical aspects of The Great Kat's self-framing, yet also highlights an attempt to position her Western art music knowledge and experience as a strategic effort in self-promotion as well as staying ahead of the technological curve. Specifically, whilst it is difficult to measure whether the educational underpinning was genuine or simply a part of the 'CyberSpeed' principle, nevertheless, it is possible to argue that the inclusion of the aforementioned interactive components, gimmicky as they may appear, may have actually served as differentiators had other

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[336] Despite the seemingly random and somewhat bizarre contents of these videos, there are nevertheless ways through which they can be interpreted as containing the same culturally transgressive potential as can be inferred from the album artwork/music videos, namely, through the parallel of cooking books featuring recipes by Western art music (e.g., Women's Association of the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra 1958) or heavy metal performers (see Phillipov 2014). It should also be mentioned that Phillipov's examination of several heavy metal cookbooks highlights said publications as "represent[ing] cooking as a pleasurable part of the everyday lives of metalheads and a (sometimes ironic) site for the performance of metal identity and community" (Phillipov 2014, 260). More importantly the author suggests that "[t]he cookbooks' culinary choices and instructions also reflect an equation of masculinity and power that is central to metal's musical and social values" (Phillipov 2014, 264) which is exemplified in the recipe's characteristics relatable to masculinity e.g. emphasis on meat, use hot spice or playful recontextualizations such as substituting cow's milk for goat's milk thus echoing the devil connotations associated with the latter animal (Phillipov 2014, 264–68). This allows to consider The Great Kat's approach to these videos as also incorporating a combination between Western art music 'borrowing' as well as a (potentially ironic) engagement with the masculinity concepts that can be identified in such cooking-based "negotiat[ions of] tensions between the scene's transgressive and mundane impulses" (Kahn-Harris, quoted in Phillipov 2014, 268).

[337] The interview was uploaded as four separate videos to the YouTube channel of the fanzine Reality Check TV, though based on the type of recording it is unclear as to whether the nearly forty minutes of combined footage was broadcasted in any capacity.

performers engaged with similar interactive practices at the time. Two aspects are of note in relation to this interview. On the one hand, the existence of the aforementioned interactive CD-ROM, as well as her website's since at least 1996 (Archive.org 1996), suggest that, she possessed the means/influence to act upon said technological venues[338] and showcases her emphasis on technology and innovation as aspects that have some bearing on progressive music contexts. And on the other, in light of the continued issues women face as both performers and as technical staff in the (broad) realm of rock music (e.g., see Parsons 2012, 95–98) The Great Kat's technical perspective may be interpreted as a behaviour that implicitly counteracts female gender stereotypes.

It should be pointed out, however, that this forward-looking technological focus did not carry on indefinitely. If the time of inclusion of iTunes icons on her website is any indication, her transitioning to digital distribution stores took place in mid-2010, nearly seven years after the launch of the iTunes Store (Archive.org ca. 2010). From my perspective there seemingly have not been other efforts in pushing the boundaries in terms of music experience as on the interactive CD-ROM, nor has her website's design (or functionality) changed from its mid-1990s aesthetic, thus leaving with a distinct 'behind-the-curve' feel, even when compared to the websites of other indie artists or labels.[339] With that in mind (as a brief 'spoiler' to some upcoming argumentation) the website's decidedly 'retro' and DIY look and feel may be interpreted as beneficial depending on the perspective e.g. as an expression of progressive culture's oxymoronic desire to move forward with a gaze (at times) firmly affixed to generations past. Or conversely, as a website-equivalent to the DIY low-cost printed underground punk magazines, a comparison enabled by the similarity of The Great Kat's work to other notable female punk performers.

As an underground performer, summarising The Great Kat's work in terms of awards, chart positions or sales is difficult to say the least. Thus, to avoid the trappings of describing her popular music career in terms of listing her albums, I will instead provide a brief outline of typical musical characteristics of The Great Kat's output, as well as present some general points in relation to her self-presentation.

To describe The Great Kat as 'only' a highly virtuosic player would probably be a disservice as her role in the ensemble can be summarised as quite as pervasive. In addition to being the lead guitarist/violinist of the band, she also assumes the lead vocalist role (where vocals are utilised),

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[338] In the comments of a 2011 Metalsucks.net article (see Metalsucks.net 2011) one user provides an interesting retort in suggesting that Megadeth may have launched a website around the same time as the interview in late 1994 (see Matt P [username] 2011). Whilst this may be possible, I was only able to verify that Megadeth's website was preserved via the WayBack machine in 1999 (see megadetharizona.com ca. 1999). If true, this would position Megadeth as technically having engaged with a website earlier than The Great Kat, though if the comment discussion is any indication, said band they may have been an early outliner. Thus, I would argue that this does less to detract from the latter's emphasis on innovation, but rather provides a context as to her practices during the mid-1990s.

[339] Whilst the original goal of my comment is to showcase that The Great Kat has not retained the forward momentum detectable in her discussion of the need for metal performers to engage with online-focused creativity or promotion, I do not mean to imply that she has abandoned being part of modern digital distribution platforms. Her work can be encountered on video-upload platforms such as YouTube, in which a good number of her videos (old and new) are uploaded, as well as Twitter in which she communicates with audiences and advertises her newer contributions.

whereby in some interviews The Great Kat mentions transcribing classical pieces, usually from a violin-to a guitar-part (e.g. see Metal-rules.com 1997; Zervos 2008). The booklets/inserts of her CDs contribute to this (self-)framing as heavily involved in the album's creation, by prominently stating that all music and lyrics have been written by The Great Kat as well as her having contributed with producing and mixing of the records (see The Great Kat 2000e, CD insert).

The performer's core ensemble most commonly features electric guitar and violin (acoustic or electric), both of which performed by The Great Kat, and backed by a dedicated bassist and a drummer, whereby several oft-utilised techniques (e.g., blast-beat drumming,[340] fast palm-muted strumming of singular tones) enable comparisons to the realm of extreme metal. In the period after beginning to self-publish her work (ca. 1996), the ensemble is extended beyond the typical instrumentation found within metal music to include an 'orchestra' – either a 'CyberChamber' or symphonic variety (e.g., see The Great Kat 1998b, booklet) – whose included instruments change seemingly depending on the requirements of the arrangement.[341] With regards to vocal work, this aspect is not particularly common, appearing more often in the earlier stages of her career rather than the last two decades, whereby the performer employs growled vocals, the delivery of which can be compared to either the (relatively) lower, and rounder, style of growling found in death metal (Phillipov 2012a, 74–75), or the higher-sounding (and what I would describe as 'narrower') equivalent found in black metal bands such as Emperor or Darkthrone (Kahn-Harris 2007, 4). Backing vocals are provided by the bass and drum players – referred to in the album's booklet as a choir, with thematically appropriate clarifications such as 'Choir of Death', 'Choir of Corpses' or 'Choir of Blood' (e.g. see The Great Kat 1996b) – though based on the pieces I examined, this aspect has a less-central musical relevancy, and is more likely included as an additional semiotic component showcasing the performer's engagement with Western art music and heavy metal contexts.

Two general categories of pieces can be identified within The Great Kat's output which are identifiable based on their broad themes: tracks that focus on violence, occasionally involving implied acts of male-targeted sexual violence such as castration, male rape in the lyrics; and tracks that focus on the 'cyberspeed' treatment of pieces of Western art music. Despite having their specificities, these categories are by no means completely separate as, auditively, both types of pieces tend to share the metal music aesthetic-derived focus on the virtuoso electric guitar-playing and extreme performance tempi, as well as the succinct duration (an average track's length is about 2-3 minutes), whilst a contrast can be drawn based on the ensemble i.e., classical-transformation pieces tend to be instrumental-based, whilst growled vocals appearing almost exclusively in pieces focused on the topic of violence. In terms of their topics, Western art music-transformative pieces do not attempt to overly incorporate the sexual violence thematic, yet as I will showcase such aspects are more subtly included

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[340] Blast beat drumming can be summarised as "a standard rock beat sped up to a frenetic tempo" (Hagen 2011, 186; see also, Elflein 2010, 281; Heesch 2011b, 66–67).

[341] For example, the booklet of her CD *Bloody Vivaldi* (1998b) lists a solo violin, a first and second violin and a viola – all of which recorded by The Great Kat – whilst the remaining cello, and double-bass are credited to a MIDI instrument, though such instruments are also being digitally constructed by the performer. At the bottom of the list of performers in *Bloody Vivaldi*'s liner notes also lists The Great Kat as having conducted the ensemble (*Bloody Vivaldi* 1998b, booklet).

or can be interpreted based on the co-relation between artwork and some music tracks. Also, in 2019 The Great Kat released several pieces for violin and piano which are most directly comparable to a typical Western art music chamber duo based on their omission of the electric-guitar/heavy metal music aesthetic, though retaining the increased performance speeds e.g., "Brindisi Waltz for Violin and Piano" or "Czardas for Violin and Piano" released in early and late 2019 respectively (The Great Kat 2019b, 2019c).

Finally, the self-representation of The Great Kat is arguably one of the most important components contributing to navigating her output. As I will discuss in the literature overview on the performer, scholarly work has briefly touched on the use of erotic-suggestive outfits and behaviour, though this is done very briefly and in reference to The Great Kat's earlier tendency to utilise BDSM-reminiscent clothing. Thus, such texts do not reflect the newer aesthetic directions such as her transition to a much more colourful choice of clothing (and in part video-sets) that can be observed towards the early 2000s. These combinations between self-framing and specific behaviours require more detailed examination that I aim to provide here, thus I will engage with them in the following chapter. However, what I would like to briefly discuss is an aspect pertaining to The Great Kat's framing that I consider to have a fairly fundamental role in understanding her output, namely her brash and aggressive behaviour, as well as her self-positioning in relation to feminism.

The Great Kat's demeanour can be summarised as a combination of speaking fairly fast, in a loud, near-shouting manner, often combined with energetic gesticulating, whereby her aggressiveness is not only means of (verbal or visual[342]) theatrical expression, but rather can be viewed as one of the core aspects characterising her self-framing both in, and beyond, her output. In addition to often referring to herself in the third person, since 1990's release of *Beethoven on Speed*, The Great Kat has continuously claimed to be the 'reincarnation of Beethoven',[343] and whilst such self-evaluation is rather difficult to top, she has also dubbed herself as the 'High-Priestess of Guitar Shred' and as 'God' in the booklet of the record *Guitar Goddess* (see The Great Kat 1996b).[344] Her view towards

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[342] An easy example to point out here is the fairly consistent representation of The Great Kat in the early-to-mid parts of her career with her mouth open, in what can be described as an animalistic 'roar' e.g., see front cover of *Beethoven on Speed* album (The Great Kat 1990c).

[343] I want to briefly contextualise this odd behaviour by The Great Kat by pointing to a rather tragic development that took place during this project's work, namely, the death of Eddie Van Halen due to throat cancer on October 6, 2020. Specifically, after Van Halen's passing, articles offered tributes to the performer, and the one by James McMahon stood out to me for its comparison between Van Halen and Mozart in terms of their talent and impact on the industry (McMahon 2020). From this context, the outlandishness of The Great Kat's statement becomes, perhaps, a highly theatricalised behaviour that weaponised some of the valuing ideas related to guitar virtuosos to her own purposes.

[344] The Great Kat's 'reincarnation' self-ascription may be contextualised as not only drawing from Beethoven's own highly regarded position in history, but also as potentially echoing what Maynard Solomon's article (1975) describes as the composer's own engagement with challenges of social class i.e., his nobility pretense (as Solomon titles his article), or the more recent perspective of John Clubbe (2006) who describes Beethoven's "imagin[ing] his life as a counterpoint to Napoleon's [and who also] came to imagine himself [as] Napoleon's successor" (Clubbe 2006, 543). If we push this perspective further, one may even suggest that the seemingly unrelated similarities between the names of 'The Great Kat' and that of the eighteenth-century Empress of the Russian Empire, Catherine II, also referred to as 'Catherine the Great' (see Raeff 1972) are not quite accidental, but rather (however tentatively) frame a new "nobility pretense" on behalf of The Great Kat.

other musicians was already briefly mentioned, though it is worth noting that her perspective towards audiences showcases a specific duality: on the one hand, those that do not understand, or do not wish to engage with her music, are referred to by abusive terms such as 'peons', 'morons', 'idiots' etc., and she has suggested that those who do not 'get' her music are either using drugs or alcohol (e.g., see Dalley n.d.). And on the other, those listeners that are accepting of her music are referred to (amongst other terms) as "Kat-Certified Genius" or "thrashdisciples [sic]" (e.g., see The Great Kat 1990a). She is known for direct statements drawn from her work, such as "Wake up!" which corresponds to info found in the booklet of her second record *Beethoven on Speed* (see below); or the creation of specific close-positioning between her ability and Western art music composers, such as the aforementioned claim that she is the reincarnation of Beethoven or that she is the only true composer/virtuoso etc.:

> "*WAKE UP! THE GREAT KAT IS GOD!* […] *YOU HAVE FALLEN INTO THE GREAT KAT'S MISSION TO HYPERSPEED YOU INTO THE 21ST CENTURY!!! SPEED. ANGER. VIOLENCE. BRILLIANCE. SPEED UP YOUR BRAIN NOW!*" (The Great Kat 1990d, booklet)

Whilst the majority of The Great Kat's interviews can be described as focusing rather heavily on the performer's reiteration of her performative skill, or as a 'barrage' of self-promotion claims, the interview quotes below help to highlight a rare, yet in my opinion critical, aspect with relevance towards interpreting her work, namely an expressed support of feminism:

> "Q: Do you consider yourself a feminist? Can you describe any challenges being a woman in the music business? What do you do to stay on top?
>
> A: The Great Kat is a FEMINIST KICKING MY MALE COMPETITORS IN THE BUTTS with PERFECT CLASSICAL VIOLIN AND GUITAR TECHNIQUE, SPEED and BRUTALITY — which they think only MEN can do!!!!
>
> JEALOUS MALE GUITARISTS'DON'T WANT a POWERFUL, TECHNICAL and AGGRESSIVE FEMALE to CHANGE their STATUS QUO of MALE GUITAR DOMINANCE!!! The Great Kat is TEARING DOWN their ENTIRE WALLS of STUPIDITY with the HELP of LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN!!!!
>
> The Great Kat is also an ENIGMA, who is a VICIOUS, BLOOD-DRIPPING GUITAR DOMINATRIX, as well as a CUTE, LOVABLE, ADORABLE GODDESS!!!!!!" (The Great Kat, quoted in Regan 2015)
>
> "12. Has The Great Kat ever considered a tell all tale book of your career?
>
> Answer:
>
> The Great Kat is THE ONLY POWERFUL FEMALE since JOAN OF ARC and should have a 'TELL ALL' book AND a MOVIE made about the LIFE OF THE REINCARNATION OF BEETHOVEN SENT HERE TO REVOLUTIONIZE CLASSICAL MUSIC for the MORON MASSES, while FIGHTING the SEVERE CHAUVINISM and IGNORANCE of the MALE-DOMINATED SOCIETY!!!!!!!!!!!!" (The Great Kat, quoted in Saulnier 2012)

Overall, whilst the emphasis on aggression and quasi-violence that can be observed in such 'real world' interactions may initially seem as simply representing the outlandish behaviour of a heavy metal performer, I will argue that both independently as well as together with the mentioning of feminism, these can be interpreted as a core underlying principle with high relevance towards framing The Great Kat's performance persona and much of her output.

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In summary, I hope that this brief overview has provided a sufficient introduction to The Great Kat's biography and her transition from Western art music to heavy metal contexts. As I previously touched on, several of the elements mentioned here will contribute to the performer's framing in relation to progressive music contexts (e.g., her interest in technological aspects), or will be examined more closely in the next chapter, such as framing her aggressive demeanour and feminism, as part of the examinations of her complex combining between transformation of Western art music pieces and gender-related perspectives.

10.3 Justification for artist selection

Having briefly outlined the aspect of 'who' this investigation will engage with, I believe that it is important to both outline 'why' the performer was selected, as well as to clarify my self-position with regards to the artist to be examined in this part of the study. Similar to my general framing as a "professionally interested" (Hitzler and Niederbacher 2010, 184) scholar and fairly 'external' observer to the field of progressive metal, my connection to the work of The Great Kat presents no conflict of interest from the perspective of prior knowledge of, or interest towards, her output. I encountered her work as part of the examination of the *Rock Hard* magazine during the preliminary stages of my work, whereby my initial interest was sparked based on her engagement with Western art music. Whilst I was initially unsure as to the suitability of her work to this investigation, given that neither MA nor PA community labelled her work as 'progressive metal', my opinion shifted as I began noticing parallels to characteristics identifiable in progressive music as a whole. Having outlined criticism on the lack of clarity as to how some scholarly work apply the label 'progressive metal' – as well as to continue acknowledging the importance of the perspectives by the genre's community – I want to frame the parameters by which I consider The Great Kat to be an appropriate example of the genre. To do so, I will briefly outline how The Great Kat's work matches perspectives expressed by scholarly and journalistic work on progressive metal, as well as the arguments (be they direct or indirect) expressed by fans as to what constitutes a progressive metal artist.

As outlined in the previous section, The Great Kat's work focuses on the transformations of Western art music pieces through her fast-paced 'cyberspeed' music approach, and which are then delivered in her highly virtuosic as well as gender-(bending) and quasi-feminist perspective-saturated manner. Both the incorporation of Western art music in a popular music setting, as well as the emphasis on virtuosity have been discussed as signifiers of progressive rock – e.g. Halbscheffel lists these as characteristics commonly observed in academic definitions of progressive rock (2014 [2012], 5–38) – as well as important for the musical language of the heavy metal meta-genre (e.g. for the role of Western art music see e.g., Lilja 2009, 152–94; for mentions of virtuosity as a central component to the genre see e.g. Fellezs 2018; Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 261; Weinstein 2000 [1991], 83; for both factors' interconnected importance see e.g., Waksman 2003, 124–28; Walser 1993, 58–107). Acknowledging that the two genres' musical characteristics share some similarities (yet are not without their differences!), a rudimentary argument can therefore be developed that a metal performer's emphasising virtuosity and that utilises classical (music) elements can be broadly considered as equally close to the progressive music field.

I will take a moment and engage further with Hegarty and Halliwell's text as their discussion of female participation in progressive rock can help to contextualise The Great Kat as a suitable example of a progressive metal performer by outlining a variety of factors that can be identified as paralleled in the latter's work. Furthermore, their general emphasis on progressive rock contexts will help to counterbalance the performer's situating in heavy metal contexts in the body of this investigation. To be clear, however, as per my critical perspective on genealogy, this discussion intends to highlight contextualising parallels between The Great Kat and the precedents of performers within the broader progressive music field, rather than instil a genealogical 'continuity' between the contexts.

Hegarty and Halliwell summarise female participation in progressive rock by arguing that "[t]he voice was largely the only access for women to progressive rock" and that "rarer exceptions of female singers […] were also musicians: Gilly Smyth, Miquette Giraudy, Mireille Bauer of Gong, or singer Dagmar Krause and multi-instrumentalist Lindsay Cooper of both Henry Cow and Slapp Happy", though notably they also mention that "[t]hese rare inclusions sometimes involved virtuosity" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 203). Furthermore, the authors argue that due to a combination of "gender expectations and the absence of many female role models in the early history of rock […] in order to claim a space within the [progressive rock] band – and in rock in general – female singers often displayed their sexuality", as well as suggest that "female lead singers more often offered compositional balance rather than driving an explicit gender politics" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 204).[345] This perspective attempts to contrast Sheila Whiteley's critical viewpoint regarding treatment of women in countercultural contexts, and whilst suggesting that their examination of female performers in the genre does not "always encounter gender politics that feminist critics would necessarily recognize" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 204), Hegarty and Halliwell somewhat contradictorily offer multiple perspectives as to how the work of performers such as Kate Bush, Tori Amos or PJ Harvey incorporate sexuality and gender(-bending) aspects in various facets of the work.

From this general context several parallels to the output and performance practices of The Great Kat can be established. Whilst The Great Kat's predominantly instrumental-output initially contrasts with the authors' perspective regarding the vocal-centric reality of female progressive rock performers, the former's employment of growled vocals can situate her work in relation to modern progressive metal bands featuring female growlers such as Entheos[346] (e.g., see McGinness, Orie 2017). More broadly, her primary role as a guitar/violin virtuoso and occasional singer enables to situate her output as paralleling the 'rare exceptions' of multi-instrumentalist and virtuoso players mentioned by the authors. Furthermore, Hegarty and Halliwell's argument that "[s]torytelling and narrative are significant for women performers working within the framework of progressive music, enabling them to express and legitimate a creative female perspective" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013

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[345] For a discussion on the overlooked contribution of one such role model, Sister Rosetta Tharpe as a vocalist and instrumentalist pioneering both techniques and gestures associated with virtuoso guitar playing see Fast (2009).
[346] As Entheos is not included in neither MA nor PA databases (at the time of writing), I am inclined to frame their output within the progressive metal field based on their similarity to bands such as Animals as Leaders, especially in relation to the employment of irregular metre/rhythms in their output.

[2011], 209) suggests another notable parallel to The Great Kat's output, namely the emphasis to narrativity in her videos. Though as I will argue, these are much more focused on presenting a feminist rather than only a female-originating perspective. Similarly, the suggestion that performers such as Amos or Bush "use technology not only to create complex recorded works but also to develop images for their narratives and for their narrating and performing persona" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 218) is something that can be observed for the work of The Great Kat as her self-framing as highly involved in most aspects of a record's creation.

The combination of overt sexuality/gender elements and the Western art music thematic of The Great Kat's work can be situated in relation to several other female performers in progressive music. For example, Hegarty and Halliwell briefly discuss bands such as Renaissance and Curved Air as examples in which engaging with Western art music sources was a notable aspect of their output. Renaissance is described as a band whose "primary mode [is] a fusion of rock and classical music" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 206). The authors frame the "interest in blues and classical composition" by founders Keith Relf and Jim McCarty as expressed via the use of classical piano in some of their compositions, the "[r]eworking themes from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic suite *Scheherazade* (1888) [in] 'Song of Scheherazade'", the band's large song suite from the album *Scheherazade and Other Stories* from 1975 (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 205–6), as well as discuss the "five-octave range and an operatic reach from [the] classical training" of the band's later singer Annie Haslam" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 204). Curved Air is described as a "similar fusion of rock, folk and classical elements" in relation to which the authors mention "revisiting of classical music (the violin pieces 'Vivaldi' and 'Vivaldi with Cannons', which rework Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*); and through Sonja Kristina's powerful vocals" the latter described as "a theatrical style that bordered on the operatic" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 206). These examples[347] contribute to framing The Great Kat's own vocal/instrumental transformation of Western art music pieces in relation to progressive rock contexts, though of further note is that her emphasis on sexuality can be also viewed as paralleling the authors' comment that "Grace Slick and Sonja Kristina projected sexualised images to enhance the theatricality of their contralto voices" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 204; see also Footnote 323).[348]

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[347] A few chapters later (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266–68), the authors develop a similar line of argumentation that is somewhat relevant for progressive metal bands, namely, describing the interest in orchestral arrangements by symphonic metal bands such as Epica, Sonata Arctica etc. as "recall[ing] the aspiration of progressive groups to incorporate classical music" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266). However, due to the lack of terminological clarity – i.e., having earlier referred to Nightwish as a "power-metal band" and Epica as "goth-rock" band (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 219) – this somewhat undermines the overall coherence and usefulness of said argument towards this study.

[348] From a slightly different perspective, Keister and Smith's critical perspective towards the limited association between progressive rock and 'high art' borrowings argue that the genre is "characterised by its musical ambition" and suggest that "the term fits well the flamboyant behaviour of Keith Emerson, Rick Wakeman and other young progressive rock stars who were enjoying sexual and exhibitionistic triumphs that made them the envy of their peers" (Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 434). Whilst the authors' comments are neither supported by evidence nor by additional discussion on what constitutes a "sexual and exhibitionistic triumph", at 'face value' this suggestion can serve as both individual performance personas, as well as progressive music as a whole, to

Circling briefly back to the significance of the vocals, and specifically aspects of gender-bending, Hegarty and Halliwell borrow from Jennifer Rycenga in outlining that the "alto tenor singing voices" of Rush's Geddy Lee and Yes' Jon Anderson "offered an open and encompassing sexuality and an almost queerly gendered position (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 203). Furthermore, the authors comment on the gender-bending perspective Kate Bush's "'sonic cross-dressing' of her voice, which can go low as well as high and can move from a whisper to a shriek" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 210), as well as suggest that "[t]he gender-bending performance that Deborah Withers sees in Bush's *Lionheart* could equally apply to Amos" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 217) which Hegarty and Halliwell relate to the use of costume and the theatrical self-framing of the performer on cover artwork. The Great Kat's vocal delivery does not engage with high pitched vocals, however, the aforementioned growling vocals should be mentioned as a (variety of) techniques with an equally as strong gender-bending potential when emerging from the female body (e.g., see Heesch 2019), and can serve as potentially more relevant argument to progressive metal contexts. Furthermore, with regards to the gender-bending potential in visual contexts, whilst The Great Kat's artwork and self-framing during music videos has a seemingly 'easily interpretable' sexualised self-presentation, I will argue that a rather complex gender-bending and transgressive potential can be uncovered when artwork and/or video-performances are closely examined.

With regards to the work of scholars that explicitly attempt to explore progressive metal artists, it is worth pointing out that The Great Kat's work does not conform to the metric or rhythmic complexity that is positioned as the "core progressive metal trait" (McCandless 2013, n.p.) or as the genre's focus (Pieslak 2007, 244), yet this study's examined tracks has shown that bands discussed by multiple communities of audiences as within the category of progressive metal can have a more limited engagement with metrical complexity in their work.[349] However, in his examination of the work on Dream Theater, McCandless also discusses the band's "strikingly intricate album cover art" (McCandless 2013, n.p.) which are interpreted as a progressive feature. As I will showcase, The Great Kat certainly embodies the notions of 'striking' – i.e., "attracting attention for being unusual, extreme or prominent" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 1751) – and also that, if examined thoroughly, the artwork's contents can contain a surprising depth of cultural connections.

From a different perspective, The Great Kat's self-positioning on feminism and the ability to interpret her output's implementation of feminist criticism and/or queer gender perspectives[350] can

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be engaging with the broader sexuality thematic. Similarly, whilst the broad perception of progressive hard rock/progressive metal bands Rush seemingly frames the band as not attracting female audiences, and that Rush would go "back to the hotel to read books" whilst other were "chasing groupies" in the 1970s (Sheffield 2013, n.p.), some, such as the "famed groupie" Connie Hamzy (Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 694), have suggested that Rush's members were not averse to such pursuits (Hamzy, quoted in Wiederhorn and Turman 2014, 162).

[349] Considering that The Great Kat adopts the role of lead guitarist and violinist, this can be interpreted as somewhat conforming to both scholars' observation on progressive metal bands exploring virtuosity in every instrument. However, I suspect that such reading may stretch their definition a bit too much, and should be taken as a suggestion offered 'with a wink'.

[350] Whilst I have not come across a great deal of research attempting to discuss progressive music in relation to queerness (e.g., Horst 2002; also, Rycenga 2002, 159), the article "Sisterhood: A Loving Lesbian Ear Listens to Progressive Heterosexual Women's Rock Music" by Jennifer Rycenga (1997) can be seen as coming in close

be described as including a political component that is comparable to that of other progressive metal bands already discussed in academic literature: e.g., Nelson Varas-Díaz' examination of Pain of Salvation's albums *The Perfect Element* and *Starsick* highlights their "challeng[e to] the listener to understand the role of individuals and social structure on human health, and other social endeavours" (Varas-Díaz 2011, 48); or Hegarty and Halliwell discussing Dream Theater's critical positioning on political issues such as the "ethics in stem-cell, medical experimentation and IVF" in the song "The Great Debate" or the band's criticism of "religious corruption in the quest for power" in tracks such as "Sacrificed Sons" and "In the Presence of Enemies" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 270–71).

Concerning journalistic efforts, whilst The Great Kat's fairly underground status seemingly precludes her inclusion in the book-length studies I previously referenced, there are nevertheless some perspectives that can be suggested implicitly support her positioning as acceptable example to progressive metal contexts. Jeff Wagner's book-length study on progressive metal deploys two criteria to which bands must conform so as to be included, namely "bands whose work is marked by constant change" and/or have a "unique" sound, as well as "approach metal using an innovative, ingenious and/or novel angle of attack" (J. Wagner 2010, xviii). Also, whilst not explicitly mentioned as a criterion, the author has commented on a variety of artists that engage with Western art music contexts, thus paralleling the general framing of progressive music as nearly-synonymous with engaging with such practices. Whilst both The Great Kat's emphasis on transforming Western art music pieces, as well as the general 'uniqueness' of her approach can be framed as matching Wagner's perspective, I am offering such an argument rather tentatively. On the one hand, the introduction of this study outlined some issues with Wagner's framing of progressive music as constantly 'developing'. On the other, I will avoid discussing The Great Kat's work as progressive due to its 'truly innovative' character, so as to prevent the potentially negative implications of this inquiry being misinterpreted as 'rediscovering' of female performers. Specifically, in Catherine Strong's critical discussion of female grunge performers being "written out of historical accounts of music" (Strong 2011, 398) the author draws from Davies who, in turn, states that due to their systematic exclusion in retrospective writing on rock, women are often framed as a "perpetual novelty" (Davies, quoted in Strong 2011, 402).

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proximity to such a perspective. I say 'close' not to discredit Rycenga's work but rather due to two aspects: first, the author's understanding of 'progressive' strikes me as in-line with the idea of political progressiveness rather than with the aesthetic of the progressive music genre. That said, she examines the work of Kate Bush and Tori Amos whose engagement with gender elements have been discussed in close proximity to progressive music (see Hegarty and Halliwell's discussion of Bush and Amos, [2013 [2011], 208–22]) as well as heavy metal (see Luc Bellemare's (2016) discussion of Amos' cover of a Slayer track), thus offering perspectives that can be of benefit when addressing performers moving between both genres. Second, Rycenga's text suggests that the ability to provide a queer reading is not so much about her identity framing the analysis or about identifying queer perspectives. Rather she employs the term "*lesbian* [as] more universal and more idiosyncratically personal than general usage. It does not exclude those whose experience (sexually and musically) is distinctively different, but it also is born from my specificity. The 'lesbian ear' is active, physical, interpretative, female, immersed in sound" (Rycenga 1997, 209, italics in original). She also adds that "[b]y presenting a lesbian analysis of songs that have no overt lesbian content, and no lesbian political agenda, I am stating that all of women's culture, all of world music, all of history, is part of lesbian culture as well: this is the world in which we (lesbians and nonlesbians) live" (Rycenga 1997, 209).

Contrasting Wagner's lengthy study and mostly positive viewpoint on progressive metal is the more reserved (both in terms of opinion and space dedicated in the study) work of Stump, who (in my view begrudgingly) includes progressive metal in the 2010 update to his progressive rock focused publication. The author's bemoaning of progressive metal's overreliance on virtuosity (Stump 2010 [1997], 331) can be utilised as a context framing The Great Kat's own (nearly monothematic) emphasis on multi-instrumental virtuosity both in interviews as well as represented through her output. Furthermore, the author's seemingly haphazard discussion of multiple progressive metal bands features several aspects that can support a claim for The Great Kat. First, Stump suggests that performers such as Yngwie Malmsteen are to be excluded from the so-called 'progressive pantheon' due to the performer's inability to "deconstruct his basic musical units – harmony, texture, development" (Stump 2010 [1997], 331). One may suggest that, given some similarities between Malmsteen and The Great Kat's approach in relation to weaving highly virtuosic guitar performance with Western art music contexts, the latter's efforts in incorporating not only musical components but also deeply embedded references to historical/cultural aspects surrounding various composers may show enough attention to (para-)musical elements so as address Stump's criticism. Also, Stump's brief inclusion of the band Electrocution 250[351] comments on their "shameless flinging of virtuosity in the public's face on a set of short numbers inspired by classic MGM and Warner Bros cartoons" (Stump 2010 [1997], 333). Despite the ambivalence of this inclusion, the performer's mentioning can serve as both an additional example of progressive metal's emphasis on virtuosity, but also as a context that positions The Great Kat's short (i.e., rarely exceeding 2-3 mins) yet fairly dense tracks and accompanying videos as representative of a rarer approach found within the genre, rather than as cause for excluding her work due to expectations of long suite-like pieces.

Finally, with regards to the perspective of progressive music audiences, it is notable that performers such as Yngwie Malmsteen or Tony MacAlpine, both highly virtuosic performers with more than a passing interest in Western art music, have been discussed as progressive artists, yet despite these similarities the progressive label is not granted to The Great Kat.[352] As it is difficult to state why

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[351] Whilst it is unclear as to whether Stump considers the band within the confines of progressive metal, it is included in both PA and MA databases, the former as part of the 'tech/extreme prog metal' category, and the latter as a "Progressive metal, Shred" performer, thus supporting their validity as a point of comparison (see Metal-archives.com n.d.f; Progarchives.com n.d.g)

[352] At the time of writing, Tony MacAlpine is listed in the MA database under the categories "Shred, Neoclassical, Progressive Rock/Metal" (Metal-archives.com n.d.w), and in the PA database under "Progressive Metal" (Progarchives.com n.d.x); Malmsteen is listed under "Neoclassical Power Metal/Shred" in the MA database (Metal-archives.com n.d.x), and as "Prog Related" in the PA database (Progarchives.com n.d.z). The Great Kat is not included in the PA database, though her MA entry shares the genre-label "Shred" (Metal-archives.com n.d.u) with the aforementioned performers. Whilst the association with 'shred' tendencies is not universally positively received in progressive metal contexts, Fellezs frames the term as somewhat related to progressive contexts as "[s]hred guitarists often cite fusion and progressive rock guitarists, such as Al Di Meola and Allan Holdsworth as influences" (Fellezs 2018, 117). Whilst this can serve as an argument towards The Great Kat's indirect paralleling of accepted performers, I will caution against pursuing the idea from the perspective of 'influence'. To illustrate my point, Fellezs's discussion of MacAlpine states that "Van Halen's technique borrowed not only from his hard rock forebears, such as Jimi Hendrix, or his avowed influence, Eric Clapton, but also from classical guitar performance practices and progressive rock guitarist Allan Holdsworth, known for his adaptation of violin

a band is not included in such user-driven databases, I would instead point to several aspects in The Great Kat's work that can be framed as implicitly echoing genre principles as expressed by those audience communities.

Referring to PA's definition of progressive rock, five characteristics are mentioned as additional to the purely musical ones (e.g., form, timbre or rhythm): technology, concept albums, lyrical themes, presentation and stage theatrics (see Progarchives.com n.d.a). Technology is framed as important to progressive rock's exploration of "new electronic musical instruments and technologies" (Progarchives.com n.d.a), and as such, one may argue that The Great Kat's excursion in the digital world with her interactive CD-ROM *Digital Beethoven on Cyberspeed*, as well as her use of synthesized symphonic instruments to supplement her arrangement, can be read as part of progressive metal/rock's tendency to seek development and pushing boundaries yet with gaze affixed towards the past.[353] As for concept albums, The Great Kat's album *Wagner's War* (The Great Kat 2002) is divided into multiple acts that share a thematic continuity in terms of balancing Western art music-based and violence-based tracks to suit the specific segment's focus.[354] Progressive rock's tendency to "avoid typical rock/pop subjects such as love, dancing, etc., rather inclining towards the kinds of themes found in classical literature, fantasy, folklore, social commentry [sic] or all of these" (Progarchives.com n.d.a), can also be derived from *Wagner's War* and its theme being not simply 'war' but rather a (personal) response to the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001 (see Skinny Devil Magazine 2012), and as I will argue further in the chapter, The Great Kat's feminist self-positioning enables to interpret multiple songs throughout her output as containing a subtle female-supportive undercurrents.

The PA-definition's comment regarding "some bands became […] well known for the art direction of their albums […] with the 'look' integrated into the band's overall musical identity" (Progarchives.com n.d.a) is also a characteristic that can be observed in The Great Kat's output as her album artwork is not only highly idiomatic to her performance personas visible as part of specific

techniques […] to the electric guitar", as well as that "[g]uitarists such as Yngwie Malmsteen explicitly modelled themselves after Franz Liszt or Nicolo Paganini as opposed to Jimi Hendrix in performance style" (Fellezs 2018, 117). Based on this description if progressive 'influence' was a priority, Van Halen, rather that Malmsteen would have been included in the PA website, yet at the time of writing, the opposite is true.

[353] Whilst the most pertinent comparison here is *Promised Land* (MediaX, Inc. 1996), a multimedia interactive game by the progressive metal band Queensrÿche that enables players to get access to some videos and behind-the-scenes footage related to the eponymous album, this interactive tendency can be found in multiple examples across heavy metal and progressive realms. The former represented by e.g., Iron Maiden's *Ed Hunter* (Synthetic Dimensions 1999) music compilation and video-game, and the latter by e.g., the interactive CD *Saga Softworks* (Saga 1995), a compilation CD of Canadian prog rock band Saga, or *XPLORA 1: Peter Gabriel's Secret World* (Peter Gabriel 1993) the first of several interactive/game CDs released by Peter Gabriel in the 1990s.

[354] Whilst The Great Kat's engagement with the topic of war may evoke some parallels between progressive rock deriving aspects from psychedelic rock, there appears to a large contrast in terms of the implicit underlying perspective. If progressive rock's drawing from psychedelia included a critical stance towards overt militarism (e.g., see Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 437–39, for a discussion of Emerson, Lake and Palmer's album *Tarkus*), The Great Kat's *Wagner's War* appears to reflect a more heavy metal-interpretable approach to the subject (see e.g., Puri 2010 for a discussion on the framing of war in heavy metal contexts) by framing what can be described as a response to, and a 'call-to-arms' against, the terrorist attacks on New York on September 2001. As I have only conducted a surface examination of the latter album, I cannot state with certainty whether there is a war-critical aspect, though I do not fully exclude such a possibility.

albums, but also can be traced to her other public appearances (e.g. her dominatrix persona in public concerts or her femme persona in her quasi-comedic cooking videos). Finally, stage theatrics and the use of elaborate costumes is a category that whilst discussed in relation to bands such as Genesis (Progarchives.com n.d.a), can as easily be considered as the domain of heavy metal. Nevertheless, my investigation of The Great Kat's video for "Paganini's Caprice #24" (The Great Kat 2018g) will include some comments as to how highly theatrical behaviour can be detected in music videos, as well as overlapping in some of the performer's earlier live-music performances.

Finally, I wish to refer back to some observations as to what types of arguments progressive metal audiences have made in their album reviews, and offer a complementary observation regarding my examination of the reviewers' interest in a balance between 'complexity' and 'accessibility'. As I briefly mentioned in said section, Ahlkvist's examination of the PA website has pointed out that one of the aspects associated with the genre is "the complexity of […] 'challenging' and 'difficult' music [which] is usually seen as an asset that makes the music more 'progressive'. Indeed, the 'work' a listener must do to appreciate the best symphonic prog music is a source of pleasure for fans" (Ahlkvist 2011, 650). A variation of this principle has been observed in relation to progressive metal performers' discourse whereby some have expressed their interest and critical reflection on progressive metal performers' complexity in relation to the notion of 'repeated listening':[355]

> "The songs [on Savatage's *Dead Winter Dead*] aren't very deep, once you listen to them two or three times, you pretty much have an idea of what to expect; there wasn't anything on [*Dead Winter Dead*] that I 'discovered' some time later". (MA-Savatage-#74, 2005)
>
> "After a few listens [Threshold's] flair began to diminish and [*Subsurface*] seemed more and more formulaic". (PA-Threshold-#142, 2007)
>
> "Each time i [sic] listen to [Shadow Gallery's] Room V, it brings something new to me, something that [sic] worth listening again and again and again". (PA-ShadowGallery-#111, 2005)
>
> "I have to say that after one listen I was ready to write [Kingcrow's *Phlegethon*] off which would have been a mistake on my part. Each listen since has made me like this recording more". (PA-Kingcrow-#10, 2015)

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[355] This appears to be a broader and/or long-running phenomenon associated with progressive metal (though possibly to progressive music as a whole) as Roccor points out that "[f]ans that place high demands on the variety of music and who want to discover new sound elements and subtleties even after repeated listening prefer progressive metal bands" (Roccor 1998, 118) [Ger. Orig. "Fans die hohe Ansprüche an der Abwechslungsreichtum von Musik stellen und auch nach mehrfachem Hören immer neue Soundelemente und Feinheiten entdecken wollen, bevorzugen Progressive Metal-Bands"]. Similarly, Bradley Smith (1997) has suggested that progressive rock (and its related terms, art rock or classical rock) can be positioned under the category of "active listening" which refers to "a private process – a carefully thought out, purposeful approach towards hearing that involves all of the listener's sensory, cognitive, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual faculties at their peak" (B. Smith 1997, 9) and offers the adjectives "challenging […] difficult […] varied" (B. Smith 1997, 9–10) as characterising the music. This latter argument is not without its issues as it strikes me as echoing Adorno's division of listeners of popular and 'high' forms of music (Atton 2012, 350), thus Atton's (2012) critical examination of discourses surrounding 'difficult albums' as an "intersection between the avant-garde and the popular" (Atton 2012, 352) can be seen as providing a more reflexive consideration of listening practices that is applicable to progressive music (see also Atton 2011).

"There is an apparent conceptual-basis behind [Arch/Matheos' *Sympathetic Resonance*] which is quite difficult to comprehend with the first few listens, but definitely eases up over a time. This is probably the only distraction which this album offers; discovering the story". (MA-Arch_Matheos-#2, 2012)

"As usual, I do not judge an album after only a few listens. If you do that, you might be missing some real gems! So I gave [Redemption's *Snowfall on Judgement Day*] quite a few spins because it immediately appeared to me that this album wasn't as likeable as quickly as Fullness Of Time". (PA-Redemption-#52, 2009)

At the same time, the core of my argument at the end of the 'theatrical/dramatic' chapter highlighted that, in addition to the emphasis on 'complexity', reviewers were also interested in elements that simultaneously engage with a track's 'accessibility' such as the 'catchiness' of a song. I would argue that The Great Kat's output can be considered as having the potential to engage with both aspects.

Whilst it is difficult to synthesise what listeners may find 'challenging', I can offer a tentative suggestion that draws from the previously outlined perspectives. It can be argued that The Great Kat's output present a series of challenges to progressive listeners on multiple levels e.g., from an 'abrasive' persona, through extremely fast-paced videos, the aesthetics' combining of violence and eroticism, to most tracks emphasising continuous instrumental virtuosity not that far from the negatively perceived extensive solos in progressive metal bands (e.g. see Footnote 50). Simultaneously, her approach to transforming pieces of Western art music most often focuses on highly recognisable compositions from the Western art music canon, which are presented through her 'cyberspeed' aesthetic, and that may initially leave the impression of 'classical noodling' without much deeper substance. However, by deploying the same practice of multiple listening sessions as well as their desire to go beyond the surface, listeners may find that various facets of the music, the performance persona, and aesthetic are saturated with allusions to the performed piece or the original composer, a tendency that also carries over from the auditive to the visual level in the album artwork or music video. Furthermore, as I will argue, The Great Kat's music videos have a tendency to offer a strong narrative interpretative-potential related to the original piece which parallels some reviewers' interest in 'discovering the story' though rather than from the lyrics or the artwork – the main emphasis is the music video. It can be argued that this description can serve as evidence for The Great Kat's work satisfying the notions of 'accessibility' and 'complexity' that is both praised and desired by progressive music audiences.[356]

I hope that through this overview of academic, journalistic and audience perspectives, The Great Kat can be considered as echoing a sufficient number of progressive music characteristic and perspectives,

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[356] This argument can be also extended by suggesting that readers may find a great deal of details by exploring the interplay between The Great Kat's guitar/violin work and that of the original piece she is transforming. However, my hesitation in offering such reading does not intend to suggest that listeners will not be capable of doing so, but rather questions whether they would be interested in pursuing such a challenge. As I mentioned in the motivation for this study's approach to musical interpretation, scholarly work has outlined that music audiences tend to focus on "the musical surface, visceral effects, and elements such as timbre and texture" as opposed to musicologists' more common emphasis on "large-scale patterns and meanings" (Hung, quoted in Ahlkvist 2011, 649). In other words, whilst I do not exclude the possibility for listeners to be interested in the minutia of The Great Kat's transformations of Western art music pieces, I wish not to impose my musicological perspective and 'overinterpret' this possibility by suggesting that such an action is highly likely.

thus framing her as a suitable example of female performers from within the genre. As previously mentioned, the main points raised in this section – relation to Western art music contexts, feminist and gender-interpretability, or the importance of the performer's self-framing towards her persona – will be examined in more detail later in the chapter. Furthermore, in addition to the discussion as to how The Great Kat pursues metal-related authenticity, I will attempt to further strengthen the parallels to progressive music contexts, by offering small interjections that highlight additional precedents drawn from progressive music field.

10.4 The Great Kat – state of research

Despite her career to span nearly thirty years, scholarly examinations of The Great Kat have been fairly few and her work has rarely received an in-depth examination. Most often, The Great Kat is mentioned in passing by scholars who briefly touch on her virtuosity (e.g., Berkers and Schaap 2018, 30; Hein 2004, 102; Roccor 1998, 118; Sackl-Sharif 2015a, 12; Sackl-Sharif 2015b, 209; Walser 1993, 101), with brief observations are made regarding her erotic-provocative costumes e.g., Weinstein comments on The Great Kat's claim to virtuosity whilst wearing a "décolleté leather and studs outfit" (Weinstein 2000 [1991], 69), or Daniel Guberman using the "Metal Messiah" video as an example (Guberman 2017, 194n2) commenting on the male gaze-focused tendencies of heavy metal in the 1980s (Guberman 2017, 184). Of the aforementioned, Fabien Hein and Weinstein's texts also mention the aspect of humour as playing a role in The Great Kat's work though such brief comments are not particularly useful as they neither provide enough information as to what motivates a potential critical commentary of the humour, nor offer much details as to how such an approach is pursued. Over time some scholars have pointed to The Great Kat's engagement with gender as more complex e.g., newer work by Weinstein comments on The Great Kat's work as having a gender subversion element (Weinstein 2013, 152); or another publication by Guberman (2020) which focuses on incorporating heavy metal and its continued issues with misogyny in an educational setting, where he briefly touches on The Great Kat's use of gendered variations of some terms e.g., god in "Metal Messiah" and goddess in "Kat Possessed", which "suggest[s] strategic deployment of her gender" (Guberman 2020, 185).[357]

Scholarly work examining The Great Kat in more detail are even fewer, and disappointingly their observations are quite often limited or carry significant caveats. To my knowledge, the only work that has focused on The Great Kat's musical output, and not primarily on her gender, is that of Sílvia Martínez Garcia (2006) who outlines the performer's transformation of Pablo Sarasate's *Concerto fantasies on Carmen*, op. 25. Garcia's conclusion that the transformation of the classical is essentially a process of "ramping up the tempo to bring it closer to speed metal standards, so as to keep the melodic line while conveying the aggressiveness and force characteristics of heavy music"[358] and that

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[357] The exemplary fashion in which The Great Kat is integrated in this source makes it difficult to determine as to whether the ability to "identify patriarchy, or even excription, in music and imagery" (Guberman 2020, 185) in female metal performers such as The Great Kat, is to be considered a process of strengthening or subverting said negative elements.

[358] Fr. Orig. "L'adaptation que Great Kat fait de la Fantasía consiste essentiellement en une accélération du tempo permettant de le rapprocher des standards du speed metal, de façon à conserver la ligne mélodique tout en transmettant l'agressivité et la force caractéristiques de la musique heavy".

the music is received as a "technical challenge and a provocation"[359] (Martínez Garcia 2006, 106, 107) is not inaccurate. Yet the author does not engage with aspects such as The Great Kat's version balancing preservation of Sarasate's composition with her own approach, or the interplay between the auditive and visual levels (e.g. the video roughly recreating Carmen's narrative, transformed through gender-bending perspectives).

That other scholars have focused on the gender aspects of The Great Kat is not entirely surprising, nor should be chastised for such choice, as her CD/DVD artwork, contents of some videos and some lyrics are quite saturated with quasi-suggestive elements. What bothered me in that regard, however, is that even in a discussion that attempts to frame and confront the masculine stereotype of metal music, such as Philip Kelly's (2009) investigation on the role of the guitar as contributing to the construction of metal's gender identity, the author places more emphasis on the descriptions of male performers (seemingly equating them as the 'original' source for masculinity), against which a limited overview of female performers is contrasted. In short, from my perspective, the analysis does not begin with an investigation of the female performer in an outwards direction attempting to contextualise the actions of the female performers, but rather chooses to centre the investigation on male examples, effectively outlining female performers' inability to 'out-masculine' male performers.

Michael Broyles (2011) provides the longest examination of The Great Kat (ca. five pages plus an illustration) and his analysis presents some contextual framing beneficial to readers unfamiliar with her work e.g., drawing connections between her metal-performance style and a historical review of her performance whilst still a Western art music player. Broyles also offers some accurate observations on the performer's over-the-top persona that go beyond a surface acknowledgement of her outward quasi-eroticism e.g., "[u]sing the same manner with which men portray machismo in metal, [The Great Kat's] goal is to empower women, although her approach is not exactly mainstream feminism" (Broyles 2011, 314). However, the author's at-times light-hearted writing style borders on dismissal towards metal performers and The Great Kat in particular. Whilst an introductory statement equating her engagement with Beethoven as "exploitation" (Broyles 2011, 313) may be accepted as accurate (if a bit overstated) given her continued reincarnation claim, describing her work as "Kat is World Wrestling Federation riding on the coattails of Beethoven" (Broyles 2011, 316) pushes the author's humorous descriptions into eyebrow raising territory. I was appalled that a contemporary academic discussion includes the following description of the performer:

> "[The Great] Kat exploits her sexuality and turns it on edge. She is a long-haired long-legged busty blonde who flaunts sexuality much as many male rockers and metalists [sic] do. She usually appears onstage in scanty leather fetish gear, and even sells underwear on her web site. She is not a Tina Turner or a Madonna, however. While being provocatively female in appearance, and having the animal attractiveness that would appeal to a testosterone-laden, heavily male audience, she makes clear that she is ready to shred more than the guitar if you do not accept her as the dominant goddess she claims to be". (Broyles 2011, 314)

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[359] Fr. Orig. "Ceci permet à l'auditeur de recevoir cette musique comme un défi technique et une provocation — provocation qui est d'ailleurs l'un des traits personnels de Great Kat".

To ensure that my critique is clearly articulated: leaving aside the stereotypical description of heavy metal fans as 'testosterone-laden, heavily male audience', it is not due to prudishness but rather fundamental respect towards the person being researched, that I consider descriptions such as 'long-legged busty blonde' to border on objectification, not to mention, completely unacceptable for an academic study – or any other serious discussion – released in 2011.[360] Moreover, Broyles somewhat unreflexively equates The Great Kat with 'pop' contexts – a regrettably perpetuating association between the supposed inauthenticity of genre and female performers (see Strong 2011, 401) – and employs a problematic 'good vs. bad pop' framing that manages to simultaneously devalue both Turner and Madonna (presumably as pop stars prioritising looks over 'substance') as well as The Great Kat (for being unable to pull off quasi-erotic provocations as effectively as Turner or Madonna).

Nevertheless, Broyles returns to a less-problematic manner of discussing The Great Kat towards the latter half of his analysis by framing her work as contributing to a disruption to heavy metal's homosocial tendencies, and in identifying the early depiction of women as dangerous seductresses as the "message of empowerment to women in this misogynist genre" (Broyles 2011, 318). The author ultimately praises The Great Kat for "adopt[ing] the power of thrash metal bands while inverting its sexual message" and "for drilling to the very macho core of metal and vividly personified the male fear of the female taken to its extreme" (Broyles 2011, 318–19).

Overall, I believe that this overview of the current research on The Great Kat's output has highlighted not only the limited academic attention paid to the performer, but also that many discussions are fairly short, and often provide incomplete and/or problematic analyses of The Great Kat's work. This not only confirms that the performer's output requires more in-depth discussion but also that it would be beneficial for a more thorough examination of her complex and extensive relation to the classical, in an inclusive musicology manner (see Solie 1993) that both considers the gender aspects of her work, as well as provides sufficiently in-depth musicological observations.

10.5 Chapter conclusion

As a brief summary, this chapter served as a broad introduction to the second major focus of this study, namely engaging with diversity aspects in progressive metal. The first section presented an overview of my motivation for examining gender in relation to the genre, and provided some relevant context framing the necessity for the pursuit of such themes. This was followed by a section broadly introducing The Great Kat through an overview of her biography, typical musical characteristics, as well as aspects pertaining to her performance persona. The penultimate section outlined my justification for selecting The Great Kat as research subject by providing a series of academic, journalistic and audience-based perspectives which offer a framework situating the performer in close proximity to progressive music contexts. Finally, I discussed the current state of research on The Great Kat and provided a critical perspective on the limited attention paid to the performer, as well as the focus on predominantly the performer's gender (and rarer music-related perspectives) as highlighting the need for an in-depth investigation that balances gender- and music-interpretative discussions.

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[360] The Great Kat is seemingly rather 'thick skinned' regarding such descriptions as a quote from Broyles' book is included on her website, as part of a text-collection praising her performance skills (greatkat.com n.d.a, n.d.n).

11. The Great Kat – a case study

11.1 Chapter introduction

The Great Kat's output spanning nearly thirty-year and the majority of her creative output consisting of pieces heavily saturated with connections to Western art music contexts enacted through to gender-interpretable perspectives. Thus, to say that selecting examples to address the complexities that (almost inevitably) emerge from such volume is difficult would be an understatement. What further complicates the matter is that, despite academic literature to have mentioned The Great Kat's suggestive costume choice, they have neither provided a great deal of context as to the significance of said costume and behaviour, nor has the more consistent adoption of a different set of self-framing, aesthetic and behaviour have been commented on. In order to more thoroughly examine the performer's work, yet avoid presenting a 'phone book'-list of characteristics, the following (still rather lengthy) chapter narrows the scope of the discussion to a series of investigations through which important principles observable in The Great Kat's work can be exemplified.

I will begin this examination by presenting a brief summary of the two major concepts that serve as broad framing relevant to the entirety of the discussion: the performance persona concept by Philip Auslander, as well as the female masculinity concept by Judith Halberstam. The following major interpretative sections will then introduce additional theoretical framings to support the exemplary close readings of artefacts derived from three aesthetic/performative practices. Considering that one of the immediately noticeable characteristics of The Great Kat's self-framing is her consistent claim to be the reincarnation of Beethoven, it would be remiss of this investigation if some of its aspects are not briefly discussed. As such, section 11.3 will situate an aspect of said behaviour as part of the performer's practice of visually contrasting her quasi-suggestive self-framing with historical portraits of various composers. The chapter will include an interpretative close-reading of the artwork and music of The Great Kat's "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" (The Great Kat 2020a), showcasing it as an example of the popularisation principle in her output as well as signifying a potential (gender) power-transfer from Beethoven to The Great Kat. In the following section 11.4, I will engage with The Great Kat's near monothematic emphasis on virtuosity by discussing the performer's self-framing in the video for "Paganini's Caprice #24" (The Great Kat 2018g). Specifically, how said piece can be interpreted as representative of the approach to authenticating her Western art music-centric virtuosity (in this instance) by alluding to Paganini's myth and the elements it shares with the aesthetic and perspectives related to the heavy metal genre. Finally, in order to more accurately discuss the multiple performance personas that can be identified in The Great Kat's output – which I refer to as the dominatrix and the femme – section 11.5 will situate their behaviours and associated aesthetics in relation to multiple theoretical concepts from gender studies. These will be followed by individual interpretative close readings of aspects from the album *Rossini's Rape* (2000) and the music video for "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro" (The Great Kat 2019e) through which I will respectively showcase how the dominatrix and the femme (including the latter's depicted characters) can be interpreted as introducing feminist- and or gender- perspectives to the artefacts, as well as contribute to the performer's framing in heavy metal contexts.

Overall, I believe that the examination of these practices will offer a somewhat encompassing discussion of The Great Kat's multifaceted approaches and will allow to more thoroughly examine the principles underpinning the interface between gender aspects and classical/popular transgressive in her output. As an additional framing context, I will also point out that the examination of these practices attempts to implicitly balance drawing from gender-studies' critical perspectives as well as to hopefully address some of the previously outlined challenges in academic investigation of The Great Kat. Generally speaking, the investigations attempt to balance engaging with gender as well as music-interpretative perspectives so as to avoid reiterating on the more single-perspective summaries of The Great Kat as outlined in the previous chapter. Furthermore, throughout these investigations I have provided a series of comparisons to multiple female performers both within and beyond metal contexts, as well as considered The Great Kat's work in relation to other practices in which the female body is framed in a suggestive manner. These serve not only as important contexts situating the performer's work, but also attempt to balance addressing several previously outlined perspectives. On the one hand, the increased focus on discussing female performers intends to continue general efforts in strengthening the examination of diverse persons in academic research, as well as reduce the further canonisation of male performers as per my own critical viewpoint on such perspectives. This can be seen as generally addressing my criticism of the text by Kelly regarding the author's over-emphasis on discussing male rather than female performers in his discussion on masculinity in metal. Simultaneously, I have strived to introduce brief comparisons to male performers and/or their output so as to balance the critical perspective of Davies that suggests that the exclusive comparisons between female performers leads to a process of women being perceived as 'perpetual novelty'.

11.2 Theoretical models: performance persona and female authenticity

As I hinted at in my summary of The Great Kat's biography, the performer's self-framing is a component with a significant importance towards framing the specificities of her output, whereby I specifically highlighted her aggressive behaviour both within her output, as well as during 'real world' engagements with interviewers. As this element persists throughout her career, I believe that this core significancy should be addressed somewhat independently, thus I consider two theoretical models as particularly suitable for contextualising the performer: Philip Auslander's concept of the performance persona, and Judith Halberstam's female masculinity concept.

Auslander's (2009)[361] concept of the musical performance persona builds on the work of Simon Frith and discusses performances as involving three distinct (yet interconnected) layers observable either independently or simultaneously, that aid in shaping the outward perception of a performer: "the real person (the performer as human being), the performance persona (the performer as social being) and the character" (Auslander 2009, 305). Auslander provides several important considerations regarding the aforementioned layers of performance: first, with regards to "the real person" he notes that he/she "is the dimension of performance to which the audience has the least access" (Auslander 2009, 306) as well as that the access to a performer in a live setting (e.g., album

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[361] For a different approach to examining of the construction of an artist's persona, including an overview of academic discussions on this challenge, see K. A. Hansen (2019); see also, Fairchild and Marshall (2019).

signing) should not be seen as a sure way in experiencing "the performer as human being" but rather the performance persona enacted in that specific context. Furthermore, in his application of this concept to the glam rock genre, Auslander points that "[the] three signified presences admittedly are often difficult to distinguish from one another" (Auslander 2006, 5), an important comment that informed my own approach to exploring The Great Kat's work. Namely, that whilst the summary of her biography in the previous chapter can be understood as a glimpse of details pertaining to 'the performer as a human being', the framing of these details on the performer's website should most likely be understood as a process of defining the origins of The Great Kat's performance persona.

Second, the performance persona – i.e., the performer as social being, or also referred to as "the performer's self-presentation" (Auslander 2006, 4) – is described as "the most important of the three roles musicians play" due to serving as "the point of identification between performers and their audiences" (Auslander 2009, 306). Whilst a performer may construct different personae depending on the contexts, "they do so in ways that are recognizable in relation to conventions external to themselves" (Auslander 2009, 306), whereby Auslander discusses (musical) genres, be they the one in which the performer is developing his/her persona or an external one, as sets of criteria from which performers draw so as to develop their persona(s) (Auslander 2009, 306–7). With that in mind, Auslander recognises that "the ability to perform the persona across a multitude of platforms has become particularly important now that the traditional profit centre of the music industry, the sound recording, is becoming increasingly less viable" (Auslander 2009, 308). Rather "performers are not the sole authors of the personae they perform" (Auslander 2009, 308) and as such the construction of one or more performance personae may be motivated by a variety of other people e.g., managers, collaborations with other performers, etc.

Third, the performance character is described as an "optional element that comes in primarily when the musician is a singer performing a song that defines a character textually" (Auslander 2009, 308) with Auslander also adding that in instances where "non-singing musicians who do not develop characters through voice and lyrics, but whose personae may play roles in other kinds of staged narratives" there exists the possibility that a performance is perceived as direct and by presented by a persona that is unmediated by a character (Auslander 2009, 308–9). The author also notes that, whereas a persona enacts a character for each song, or even can be considered as representing multiple characters within a specific song, "the performance persona remains a constant, at least within a specific performance context" (Auslander 2009, 314).

In addition, Auslander discusses "the means performers use to define and project personae" (Auslander 2009, 309), drawing from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) by Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman. Specifically, the performance persona is presented as a social front that comprises the "expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance" (Goffman, quoted in Auslander 2009, 309) whereby Goffman's original work then divides this further into "'setting' (the physical context of the performance) and 'personal front' in which are included the performer's 'appearance' and 'manner'" (Goffman, quoted in Auslander 2009, 310). As was the case with the broad levels of performance persona and the character, this taxonomy retains a fairly high degree of flexibility as, for example, Auslander notes that

a setting may be chosen by a performer as means to support presenting a specific image, whether that supports or undermines narratives within the genre (Auslander 2009, 310–11). Or, with regards to the "manner" of a performer, he notes that "[the] performer's manner is specific to a particular, situated performance of persona rather than an expression of an ongoing set of personality traits" (Auslander 2009, 312). An important note to add here, however, is that whilst Auslander outlines that "[t]he 'front' is a point at which performances intersect with larger social contexts and conventions, as all aspects of a front must be legible to a specific audience" (Auslander 2009, 310), my work will offer *interpretations* pertaining to The Great Kat's 'personal front' in relation to her self-framing as a virtuoso and a heavy metal performer. As such, the offered readings on the specific points of contact with the broader contexts of the personas will likely be more specific than what their broader connotations imply, thus not necessarily shared by all observers. In other words, The Great Kat is presented dressing in suggestive clothing and leaning over another male person with a quasi-aggressive expression may generate a broad semi-suggestive implication based on a combination between the persons and the situation. However, the ability to interpret such a situation as incorporating connotations pertaining to the strengthening of the performer's virtuoso or heavy metal framing, as well as often potentially subversive elements, requires both the specific contexts outlined here, as well as familiarity with the performer that not every observer may possess.[362]

The second theoretical framing that I consider critical for the examination of aspects pertaining to the gender component of The Great Kat performances and more specifically the over-the-top, often aggressive and borderline abusive manner in which she presents her performance persona is that of female masculinity. This theory was introduced by Judith Halberstam in her 1998 eponymous study, whereby the fundamental argument of the author is that "masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects" (Halberstam 1998, 1).[363] Whilst Halberstam's study does not provide a definitive answer as to what masculinity 'is' (which has been criticised in other scholarly work e.g., Paechter 2006, 257–61), she does offer a broader set of societally framed elements that contribute in understanding the 'where' and 'who' of masculinity:

> "Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and to uneven distributions of wealth. Masculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into the family; masculinity represents the power of inheritance, the consequences of the traffic in women, and the promise of social privilege. But, obviously, many other lines of identification traverse the terrain of masculinity, dividing its power into complicated differentials of class, race, sexuality, and gender". (Halberstam 1998, 2)

Halberstam argues that "[m]asculinity […] becomes legible as masculinity where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body" (Halberstam 1998, 2) and offers analyses of drag king

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[362] This does not intend to present a contrast between 'researcher' and 'fan' perspectives, but aims to show that the presented interpretations require a specific set of information that is derived via a fairly in-depth engagement with the performer, as well as academic texts, concepts and theories, and are thus not likely to be easily accessible to any observer that engages with the performer's output.

[363] For other discussions on female masculinity see e.g., Francis (2010); Gardiner (2012); Noble (2003).

performances, lesbian interactions and transgender discourses as locations and communities from which masculinity-related aspects can be observed. She further suggests that to equate masculinity with maleness is a fundamental error that ignores a long history of masculinity associated with and emerging from the female body as "far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing" (Halberstam 1998, 1).

On a final note in relation to this concept, I wish to point out that Halberstam focuses on the exploration of queer perspectives and considers female masculinity as quite tame in situations where it continues to signify "resolute heterosexuality" (Halberstam 1998, 28). Whilst this clarification is important in framing female masculinity as most impactful when it does not emerge from the 'white male middle-class body' and its close association with the 'heroic masculinity' and its heteronormativity implications, for my purposes Halberstam's comment also necessitates a specific clarification to be made. Namely, whilst I will offer several theoretically-framed contexts through which The Great Kat can be interpreted as paralleling a non-heteronormative and even queer perspectives, I do so without making claims regarding the sexuality or gender of the real person or the performance persona.

In summary, given The Great Kat's specific self-framing, I believe that the presented overviews have showcased said concepts as highly complementary and suitable to framing of this investigation: Auslander's model helps to differentiate and navigate the complexities of The Great Kat's performance persona(s), whilst the employment of Halberstam's concept allows to establish the underlying gender principle to The Great Kat's self-framing, from which the gender component of the acts, behaviours and statements made by said performance personas can be situated. In section 11.5 I will expand this discussion by both outlining the multiple performance personas that I consider interpretable in The Great Kat's output, as well as discuss the interoperability between their specificities and the underlying female masculinity concept.

I should also point out that Auslander's concept contributed to my approach in structuring this investigation as I attempted to implicitly parallel the author's levels of performance into the structure of the work: the examination of The Great Kat's biography served as a tentative look into 'the real person', though as mentioned I do not suggest that the narrative presented by the performer should be seen as only pertaining to said level. The following section's (11.3) examination of The Great Kat's engagement with a portrait of Beethoven hopes to illustrate a context from which the performer draws towards her performance persona. Similarly, my discussion of the emphasis on virtuosity/authenticity as outlined in section 11.4 helps to illustrate the adapting of the former context's elements towards the heavy metal genre she situates herself in. The discussion of the different performance personas in section 11.5 moves away from a singular relation between The Great Kat and her work and attempts to more accurately describe and navigate said personas and their respective 'manners'; and finally, section 11.5 also engages with some of the performance characters that can be found in The Great Kat's output, specifically in relation to the femme persona.

These presented models serve as fundamental framings that underpin the majority of the investigation, though each section will offer additional theoretical contexts for the purposes of situating the specific examination. I should also point out that, as mentioned in the broad methodological overview in sections 5.3 and 5.4, the methodological approach to discussing music- and visual-artefacts in the following sections remains mostly intact, in its basis on a temporal-focused prose form that emphasises outlining relevant aspects in a detailed, yet accessible manner. However, as per Halberstam's 'queer methodology' or a 'scavenger methodology'-approach, these are expanded by several additional principles. Namely, the musical interpretation introduces limited notational examples as means of exemplifying how The Great Kat transforms specific Western art music pieces, whilst the visual interpretation expands the art-studies perspectives through relevant gender studies concepts or framings as means of properly contextualising and addressing the gender-specific dimensions of the observations.

11.3 Popularisation in "Beethoven's Violin Concerto"

Within the myriad of practices that constitute The Great Kat's interfacing between popular/classical transgressive elements and gender perspectives, arguably one of the oldest (as well as most commonly utilised) practice is developing a visual contrast between the quasi-eroticised body of the performer and the use of historical portraits of Western art music composers in album artwork. In addition to being an approach to constructing the highly characteristic visual aesthetic of The Great Kat's performance personas, this practice can be viewed as highlighting an underlying principle of her work, namely that of popularisation. In order to explore the connection between the aforementioned practice and the principles of popularisation, this first interpretation will examine the album artwork (and some auditive perspectives) of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" whereby I will highlight how the image's components reveal multiple degrees of popularisation achieved through intertextual means.

As a first step I will briefly outline the two concepts that frame my discussion, namely, the principles of popularisation as outlined by Rainer Winter (2003), as well as the principles of intertextuality drawing from Serge Lacasse's (2000) discussion of intertextuality in music combined with some of Gerard Genette's (2001 [1997]) concept of the paratext. Second, I will begin my examination of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" by examining the piece's auditive levels and their intertextual and popularisation components. This will be followed by a series of perspectives in relation to the visual component's popularisation capacity in relation to the general aesthetic as well as the 'inherent' popularisation potential of the utilised historical portrait of the composer. Finally, I will focus my attention on the gender element by discussing how Beethoven's masculinist gender framing as contributing to The Great Kat's own gender construction, and situate the gender implications of the performer's partially-nude framing in relation to several contexts.

Framing popularisation and intertextuality

Rainer Winter outlines popularisation as multiple socio-cultural practices that challenge the traditional understanding of the existence of clear borders between 'high' and popular culture as well as the accompanying notions that the output of said two cultural categories are constructed differently i.e., the former claiming the naturalistic 'unity' between a composer/painter/artist and his/her work as

opposed to latter's serialised products designed as broadly disseminatable cultural goods. This differentiation is based not only on the principles of cultural artefact construction, but also on the associated social class-related evaluations whereby claiming 'high' culture as connotating the taste of the bourgeoisie/middle-class becomes an ideologically motivated argument for the separation from the tastes of the lower class and its inherently inferior popular-based texts (Rainer Winter 2003, 348). In addition to the inherent connection of popularisation practices to various cultural groups' adopting and transforming artefacts – either by the members (and for the purposes) of said groups or as re-popularised items to wider audiences by mass-market industry (Rainer Winter 2003, 348) – Winter cites Bourdieu in discussing the role of "cultural mediators" [Ger. Orig. "Kulturvermittler"] as actors straddling the line between creators and consumers that aid popularisation by creating new ways to interact with artefacts of 'high' culture (Rainer Winter 2003, 351).

The Great Kat may not fulfil the criteria of innovation from the perspective of metal culture's historical engagement with Western art music, yet her heavy metal aesthetic transformation of Western art music pieces enables her output to be framed as corresponding to the principle of re-contextualising 'high' culture artefacts in popular culture contexts. The theatricalised goal of updating Western art music for newer audiences (whether 'genuine' or not) as part of her performance persona can be compared to Winter's description of a cultural democratisation enabling audiences to access various works. Furthermore, the performer's repertoire regularly draws from well-known pieces from the Western art music canon thus navigating between modifying said "high" culture artefacts' status into "'sunken' cultural assets" [Ger. Orig. "'herabgesunkenem' Kulturgut"] whilst retaining some the "differentiated and representative"[364] capacity of the classical (Rainer Winter 2003, 351). In other words, whilst the transformation of Western art music pieces recontextualises them in new contexts, their relation to the classical is still presented albeit retained for the purposes of the performer's goals.

The Great Kat's work can also be discussed as embodying several of the related fundamental production aspects within popular culture. For example, the re-contextualisation of portraits by classical composers as building material for her album artwork as well as her focus on transforming a classical piece in a metal music aesthetic are comparable to De Certeau's notions of "misuse or re-purposing of things or activities" in popular culture (Rainer Winter 2003, 349).[365] Simultaneously her output can be seen as both paralleling Fiske's comment on popular culture as incorporating "polysemic" cultural artefacts,[366] as well as popular culture as a "culture of conflicts" (Rainer Winter

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[364] Ger. Orig. "Gleichzeitig verliert die Hochkultur zunehmend den Charakter einer klar abgrenzbaren, repräsentativen Kultur".

[365] Ger. Orig. "Das Populäre läßt sich durch eine Zweckentfremdung bzw. Umfunktionierung der Dinge und Aktivitäten, deren es sich bemächtigt, kennzeichnen".

[366] Whilst Fiske's broad argument is summarized by Winter as "in order for media texts (especially television texts), to be successful i.e., to be seen by many, they have to be open and polysemous so that the different groups and cultures can exchange meanings and energies that meet their respective identities", I believe that The Great Kat operationalizes this principle less as means of offering different identity-forming meanings. Rather, as I will argue in the discussion in section 11.4, the performer is drawing from the polysemic potential of some Western art music composers towards forming her own metal-interpretable identity. [Ger. Orig. "Seine Hauptthese ist, daß mediale Texte (insbesondere Fernsehtexte), um erfolgreich zu sein, d. h. von vielen gesehen zu werden, offen und polysem sein müssen, damit die verschiedenen Gruppen und Kulturen Bedeutungen und

2003, 350), for example in the series of clashes such as the eroticised body of the performer and Western art music's supposed non-sexual underpinning (McClary 1991, 54), or the clash between the femininity of her body and the masculine connotations of virtuoso guitar/violin playing in the music.

Whereas the concept of popularisation aids in exploring The Great Kat's transgression of musical traditions (classical and popular), I wish to supplement it with a concept that helps contextualise the aspect of the 'means' of said transgression, namely several perspectives from the broad field of intertextuality. The term "intertextuality" was initially developed in literary studies[367] and can be summarised as "fundamentally about borrowing, about transgressing the unity, the self-containedness, of the utterance, and about the opening of it to other utterances" (A. F. Moore 2016c, 271). The theory was initially applied to musical artefacts by non-musicological scholars though as Moore points out, the concept has long been incorporated in popular music studies and "recognised as a crucial theoretical construct" (A. F. Moore 2016c, 273) as popular music rarely focuses only on the musical material, but rather creates inter-medial products/artefacts in which music, lyrics, artwork, video, body-movement etc., play a role in generating the meaning of said artefacts.[368] I will draw from the work of Serge Lacasse who has adapted Genette's transtextuality theory (a term that Genette utilises to describe multiple categories of intertextual relations) to recorded popular music, though I will also briefly draw from Genette's paratext concept.[369]

Lacasse's theory focuses on several sub-categories from Genette's terminology, namely intertextuality – "the actual presence of a text within another" (Genette, quoted in Lacasse 2000, 36) – as well as hypertextuality – "any relationship uniting a text B [the 'hypertext'] to an earlier text A [the 'hypotext'], upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette, quoted in Lacasse 2000, 37), both of which are then discussed and adapted for the analysis of musical artefacts by taking into account aspects such as recording techniques, as well as the non-exclusively written manner by which music tends to exist. When adapting intertextual practices, such as the quotation, Lacasse introduces the terms 'allosonic' and 'autosonic' quotations so as to address music's specifics with regards to "the actual insertion of an excerpt from a given text within another" (Lacasse 2000, 38). An 'allosonic quotation' can be summarised as the insertion of the "abstract structure" (Lacasse 2000, 38) of a pre-existing material into a new piece, or in simpler terms, a musician performing a portion of a pre-existing piece within the confines of a new one filtered through their own idiolect. Whereas 'autosonic quotation' is described as "intimately linked with recording techniques" and points to the practice of sampling as a commonly found example, be it in its digital such as through a DAW or its analogue varieties e.g., tape splicing (Lacasse 2000, 38, 39).

Energien austauschen sowie gewinnen können die ihren jeweiligen Identitäten entgegenkommen. Diese Offenheit darf jedoch nicht mit einem 'anything goes', gleichgesetzt werden"].

[367] For an overview of intertextual theories in literary studies see Allen (2011 [2000]).

[368] See Cook (2004) for a methodological contribution to the multimedial analysis of musical artefacts.

[369] For other work on intertextuality in popular music see e.g., Lacasse and Burns' (2018) edited collection; Nicholson (2006); Tagg (2013); for intertextuality in specific musical genres see e.g., Bolay (2019); Burns, Woods, and Lafrance (2015); W. Everett (2010); Spicer (2009); J. A. Williams (2014). For intertextuality in Western art music see M. L. Klein (2005).

With regards to hypertextual category or "the production of a new text (hypertext) from a previous (hypotext)" (Lacasse 2000, 40), Lacasse discusses several practices that can contain allosonic or autosonic aspects: parody i.e. an (often) humoristic transformation whereby "the overall song sounds very close to the hypotext (similar style), but with new lyrics (different subject)" (Lacasse 2000, 41); travesty or the (again potentially humoristic) rewriting of a text which retains the content but with a new style, though with the important distinction that the transformation is intended to provoke through debasing or ennobling of the hypotext (Lacasse 2000, 42–43);[370] as well as the pastiche or the creation of a new text based on stylistic features rather than a specific earlier example i.e. "the hypertext has no precise hypotext" (Lacasse 2000, 44).

In addition, Lacasse's discussion presents several practices that are specific to the realm of music and seemingly have no equivalents in literature (Lacasse 2000, 44).[371] He points to the practice of copying or a "performance that aims at being the closest possible imitation of a pre-existent, usually recorded, performance" whereby "[t]he aesthetic value resides in the ability of a particular artist to reperform as faithfully as possible what has been already performed", a good example of which are either cover bands that try to be as "faithful as possible to the original recording of the song being covered" (Lacasse 2000, 45) or, borrowing from Middleton, "when bands focus their live performances on accurate reproduction of their own recording – or when audiences complain that they have not succeeded" (Middleton, quoted in Lacasse 2000, 45). Another practice is that of covering, or "a rendering of a previously recorded song that displays the usual stylistic configuration of the covering artist" (Lacasse 2000, 46) and its somewhat overlapping notion of an instrumental cover which constitutes "an instrumental (and allosonic) rendering of a previously recorded song where the main vocal line has been replaced by an instrumental melodic line" (Lacasse 2000, 47–48).[372]

Towards the end of his typology, Lacasse introduces the term 'transtylisation' or "the process of altering specifically the stylistic features of a given song in order to obtain a new version of it" as a way to consider the degree of the underlying transformational process that takes place under those practices presenting an effect that results from a transformation, rather than the process itself (Lacasse 2000, 54). Lacasse points to travesty as an example, describing it as "a transtylisation procedure that aimed to denature a given piece in some way" which he contrasts by pointing out that "a cover would presumably have no [denaturing] intention, though resulting equally from a process of transtylisation" (Lacasse 2000, 54). In addition, he seemingly borrows from Sausserian perspectives by expanding on the aforementioned transtylisation when commenting that "travesty (along with any transtylisation practice) transforms its hypotext paradigmatically, whilst parody (allosonic **and** autosonic) acts syntagmatically on its hypotext)" (Lacasse 2000, 54, emphasis in original).

The adoption of Lacasse's framework in my investigation presents the benefit of utilising a well-accepted terminology in popular music studies. Also, through being built on the foundation of

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[370] Lacasse rightfully points out that whether a hypertextual transformation is deemed a 'debasement' or an 'ennoblement' highly depends on the observer's perception, rather than being an aspect determined primarily by the author's intension as originally conceptualised by Genette (Lacasse 2000, 43).

[371] Lacasse outlines several additional types (Remix, Translation, Cento and Plunderphonics), however they will not be summarised as they are not relevant to this investigation.

[372] For the significance of cover songs in rock music tradition, see Solis (2010); Weinstein (1998).

Genette's understanding of intertextuality, it allows for the adoption of the latter's work on the paratext. My interest in the paratext concept – or the additional information surrounding a 'main text' that helps to inform, or adapt its perception (Genette 2001 [1997], 2)[373] – is in its more textual focus than Lacasse's recorded music emphasis, as Genette's framing of illustrations as paratexts translates quite well to the exploration of the album artwork in popular music artefacts such as CD or DVDs.[374]

To be clear, however, the co-relation I aim to explore through Genette is by no means a novel concept. Popular music scholarship has long discussed artwork as a key component for performers, serving multiple functions such as "a form of advertising, alerting consumers to the artist(s) responsible, and thereby sustaining and drawing on an auteur/star image; and [performers] make an artistic statement in relation to the style of music by association with particular iconography" (Shuker 2005 [1998], 7). So much so that, as Cynthia Fuchs points out, there have been some historical concerns about the image overtaking the music's supposed central importance (Fuchs 1999, 180). Indeed, Genette's concept of presenting the paratext as a "threshold of interpretation" or as having a prominent role in terms of informing the interpretation of the main text (Genette 2001 [1997], 1) is quite similar to Fuchs' description of the close relation between the artist's own image and their reception – she outlines how various images[375] inform the reception of artists such as Madonna, Prince and the Wu-Tang Clan. In addition, Genette's suggestion that the paratext represents "an influence on the public" (Genette 2001 [1997], 2) can also be considered similar to Fuchs' discussion of images in popular music as tools through which performers both reflect and shape the musical genres to which they belong (Fuchs 1999, 185), as well as "the ways that fans use music videos as background noise, convenient forms of advertising, new narrative models, or style inspirations" (Fuchs 1999, 181). Thus, my referral to Genette's paratext concept aims to introduce a related and appropriate context, rather than infer that popular music studies' instrumentarium requires expanding.

In summary, I consider the outlined popularisation and intertextuality concepts to be highly useful when employed to the interpretation of The Great Kat's output, as through such framing it will allow to present a perspective on how elements from the artwork and music of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" can be positioned in broader cultural contexts. As my interest lies in exploring the gender aspects of this artefact, the two concepts strike me as quite well suited for the discussion i.e., through popularisation's inherent connection to groups outside of the dominant culture, whilst the intertextual focus enables comparing and contrasting The Great Kat's own feminist context to gender aspects in other musical and cultural traditions. That said, additional theoretical contexts will be introduced throughout the study when discussing specific comparisons.

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[373] Genette divides such texts into peritexts i.e., texts located within the boundaries of the main text such as the title, editor preface etc., as well as the epitext or additional written/spoken texts that exist beyond the "borders" of the text such as interviews by the author.

[374] For other uses of the paratext concept to music/media phenomena see e.g., O'Dair (2019); Sutton (2015); Stanitzek (2005); Stawiarski (2010).

[375] To avoid misinterpretation, my comparison between Fuchs and Genette stems from the perspective that whilst Fuchs' article discusses image primarily from the perspective of the 'public image' of a performer, considering that such images are created also in relation to how a performer frames themselves on album artwork, I consider her arguments as also valid when discussing the latter medium.

Interpreting "Beethoven's Violin Concerto"

The investigation will center around the examination of The Great Kat's 2020 track "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", an example selected as it both allows to broadly examine popularisation in the performer's output on both a visual and auditive levels, as well as enables generating observations regarding the performer's oft repeated reincarnation claim. The discussion is divided into several sub-sections that address the auditive level, situate visual components and their popularisation, and finally the gender potential of the two figures visible on the artwork. The goal was not to 'segregate' the investigative levels, but rather to structure the interpretation so that the presented semi-autonomous observations on specific aspects can contribute to the piece's overall popularisation potential.

The auditive level
Of the several types of pieces commonly found in The Great Kat's output, "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" can be framed as relating to the main category of a heavy metal transformation of a Western art music piece. In order to gain a better understanding of how the selected example both represents this category, as well as the broader principle of popularisation, this examination will highlight several aspects pertaining to how the transformation is achieved on an auditive level. Also, a few concluding remarks will consider some of the implications of popularisation to the broader Output of the performer. However, to reiterate a point made in the overview of the performer's writing style, this reading's 'exemplary' capacity to outline some salient features found within The Great Kat's repertoire should not be seen as a complete 'blueprint' of the performer's approach.

"Beethoven's Violin Concerto" was released as an individual track in ca. 2020 and constitutes a fairly fast tempo piece with a length of one minute and thirty-one seconds[376] that is based on The Great Kat's typical ensemble of solo guitar and violin, bass, drums and synthesised instruments. Its title presents listeners with Lacasse's 'agreement' required for a hypotext to signal its connection to a hypertext (Lacasse 2000, 41), in this case engaging with Beethoven's eponymous Op. 61 concerto. Upon listening to the piece, it becomes clear that the 'agreement' is indeed acted upon as the track's hypertextual transformation of Beethoven's piece exemplifies an important aspect of The Great Kat's approach to classical transformations. Namely, retaining a notable amount of the original composition's arrangement, sonorities and continuity, which are adapted and presented through the performer's heavy metal aesthetic and performance practices. This allosonic transtylisation approach allows to suggest that the piece can be summarised as a form of travesty, yet as I will argue, the aspect of "rewriting of some 'noble' text […] in another style in order to 'debase' it" (Lacasse 2000, 42) is intended less to devalue the piece, but to reframe it as contributing to The Great Kat's own purposes.

As with many of these classical transformation pieces, given the short track duration, The Great Kat's rendition does not attempt to encompass Beethoven's entire concerto, but rather focuses only on the third "Rondo" movement, predominantly its post-cadenza segment. I say 'predominantly' as the opening of the piece presents a half-statement from Beethoven's main theme which is concluded by a combination of small-quotations that transition to the movement's post-cadenza

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[376] I base my observations on the Spotify version of the track released in 2020 (see Great Kat 2020a), and all references to specific timecodes below are accurate to this version.

section. Specifically, The Great Kat opens the track [00:00 – 00:02][377] by presenting an incomplete quotation from the movement's beginning[378] which is performed on in unison on the violin and electric guitar though commencing an octave lower (see Figure 33, red outline).[379] However, rather than presenting said theme in its entirety, she introduces a repeated motif of two rising major seconds (D–E–F#) followed by a jump down a major third (F#–D) [00:03 – 00:04] that seemingly draws from a section in bars 28–33 in the original score (see Figure 34, red outline). The following combination of a trill, followed by another trill an octave higher [00:04 – 00:06] can be compared to a similar section between bars 269–274 (see Figure 35, red outline). And finally, whilst the latter octave jump in the trills directly precedes the cadenza section, the appearance of the drums at [00:06 – 00:17] is based on the rhythmic pattern from the section after the movement's lengthy cadenza i.e. as found in the lower-strings in bars 281–288, and the upper strings between 289–292 (see Figure 36, green outline), thus serving as a 'bridge' that relates the opening motif and avoids the cadenza entirely.

With the transition to the post-cadenza section established, [00:12] introduces an accompaniment in the electric guitar and bass (and to some extent the drums) that roughly follows the eight-note patterns found in the string section in bars 293–296 (see Figure 36 and Figure 37, blue outline). From [00:17] onwards, despite seemingly utilising the original rhythmic patterns consisting of two eight notes followed by a quarter note in bars 297–302 (see Figure 37 and Figure 38, green outline), The Great Kat's arrangement compresses the accompaniment so that the audible effect remains similar whilst performing fewer notes. From [00:21] the number of notes is accurate to the original score, yet due to the metrically-inaccurate feeling of the accompaniment they eventually change their overall position in the bar – not an eight-note rest in the beginning but sounding as if the accompaniment begins on the first beat of the bar.

I will also briefly highlight several other aspects of the arrangement which showcase the mixing of classical and metal aesthetics e.g., at [00:41] the main theme returns in an upper register, first on the lead electric guitar, then repeated in the violin; or at [00:52], the drums combine their role in retaining original rhythmic patterns (i.e. performing both statements of the theme in unison with the main instrument followed by the adoption of the quarter note and an eight note phrase that normally appears in the accompanying strings) which then shifts to a more 'typical' role in a popular music ensemble (i.e. matching the sixteenth note played by the lead instruments with drum fills that conclude with a cymbal hit). Finally, at [01:06] The Great Kat utilises synthesised woodwind/brass instruments to provide some counter-melodic lines from the arrangement, which highlights her tendency to incorporate additional instruments so as to retain aspects of the original composition.

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[377] As in the first half of this study, I utilise square brackets to indicate a specific time code in the track.

[378] The main theme of the movement appears in the very first bars, however I chose to present the visual example from a few bars later due to the overall sonority in The Great Kat's version being much higher and is performed fairly loudly. It struck me as more appropriate to point to a later higher-pitched and fortissimo-dynamics scored section of the original that is, in part performed an octave lower, rather than visually use the opening and suggest that said bars are presented an octave higher and with louder dynamics.

[379] Notated examples and corresponding references to bar numbers are derived from a 2007 Eulenburg edition of Beethoven's concerto: Figure 33 (Beethoven 2007, 71); Figure 34 (Beethoven 2007, 73); Figure 35 (Beethoven 2007, 100); Figure 36 and Figure 37 (Beethoven 2007, 102); Figure 38 (Beethoven 2007, 103).

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Figure 33: Beethoven – Violin Concerto, Mov. III, bars 7-13

Figure 34: Beethoven – Violin Concerto, Mov. III, bars 28-33

Figure 35: Beethoven – Violin Concerto, Mov. III, bars 269-274

Figure 36: Beethoven – Violin Concerto, Mov. III, bars 280-293

Figure 37: Beethoven – Violin Concerto, Mov. III, bars 294-298

Figure 38: Beethoven – Violin Concerto, Mov. III, bars 299-302

Having briefly discussed some examples that illustrate the piece's interplay between the transtylisation practices and the effort in retaining the original composition's relative continuity as part of The Great Kat's musical transformation, I want to return to my referral of this piece as a 'travesty' by offering some interpretations as to what, or who, is being 'debased' or 'ennobled' as the category implies. Considering The Great Kat's claim to be the reincarnation of Beethoven, the piece's arrangement and performance can be interpreted as continuing the association, potentially in a manner that parallels the power-shift from a quasi-de-masculinised Beethoven to a more 'powerful' The Great Kat, an aspect that I will discuss further in relation to the artwork.

Taking as an example the way that The Great Kat performs one of the more complex passages [00:22 – 00:32] it is noticeable that the parallel lines of the violin and the electric guitar are so dominated by the latter instrument's string-slides-centric approach that it almost negates the audibility of the sixteenth notes passage that the violin is heard performing. I am tempted to suggest that The Great Kat is not attempting to perform the original piece's passage (see Figure 37 and Figure 38, red outline) accurately or with clear articulation. I say 'does not attempt' rather than 'is not able to', as the upwards scale-like passage at [00:33], as well as the other sixteenth-note passages at [00:48], are performed much clearer by both the electric guitar and violin. So much so that I am somewhat left with the impression that the 'muddy' articulation at [00:22 – 00:32] is delivered intentionally. In addition, the accompaniment provided by another electric guitar track and presumably the bass, create the impression that they are somewhat out of sync with the lead instrument – particularly the drums' odd cymbal part – creating an even stronger impression that the piece is somewhat metrically 'shaky'.

One way to interpret the co-existence of virtuosic yet 'sloppy' performance aspects is to frame them as a form of de-masculinised representation of Beethoven filtered through The Great Kat's own virtuoso principles. Specifically, the larger aforementioned passage [00:22 – 00:32] can be interpreted as echoing the historical context that whilst Beethoven studied violin, scholarly work such as by Lawrence Sommers (1934, 46) and Robin Stowell (1998, 3) acknowledge he was not a particularly skilled player (Stowell describes him as 'comparatively mediocre') and thus it was unlikely that the composer would have been able to perform his own violin concerto. The appearance of the latter virtuosic passages at [00:33] or at [00:48] can, in turn, be interpreted as The Great Kat's own performative skill 'taking over' and as such highlighting her own abilities rather than that of the composer.

In addition, several other transtylisation practices can be interpreted as seemingly emphasising The Great Kat's importance as the arranger and performer of the piece. For example, at [00:55] the accompanying electric guitar performs a tremolo that corresponds to the same articulation as performed by the cello, viola and second violin in the original. Whilst this initial appearance of the tremolo signals the re-arrangement of pre-existing material, from [01:14] up to the end of the track the same tremolo returns in the electric guitar despite it there being no corresponding parts in the original composition; and even more so, rather than following the 'perdendosi' (i.e., 'dying out') dynamic direction found in the original, the tremolo inverts this idea and subtly increases in volume instead. Whilst originally the orchestral decrescendo aids in leading to a final pianissimo statement of

the main theme by the violin that concludes in a tutti (i.e., the full ensemble) fortissimo, The Great Kat's arrangement removes the subtlety of the ending and performs said theme in forte dynamic on both solo electric guitar and violin, both of which are sustained beyond the accompanying ensemble is no longer audible. By ignoring Beethoven's intended dynamic conclusion of the piece and as well as performing the final statement of the theme on two instruments rather than solo, the performer disrupts the contrast between the soloist and accompanying ensemble, highlights the dualistic metal/classical aspect pertaining to The Great Kat's persona, not to mention that by sustaining the final notes beyond the ensemble's conclusion clearly showcases whose sonority is of importance. In other words, The Great Kat's ending is much more focused on her leading role which is presented in a rather 'in your face' manner that certainly matches the performer's brash performance persona, and to a point can be considered as means of establishing dominance over Beethoven.

Taking a step back to consider the implications of simply performing the piece, it is possible to connect the act of playing the *Violin Concerto* to the strengthening of The Great Kat's female masculinity, namely by paralleling the historical gender connotations associated with the violin instrument. Alan Tyson (1962) has pointed out that the Op. 61 concerto can be considered as having a dualistic context as, in addition for being written for the violin, Beethoven also re-arranged it as a piano concerto sometime later on (Tyson 1962, 104–6; see also Tyson 1967 for a discussion of the historical sources of the Op. 61). Taking into account that gender perspective on the violin around the creation of the piece framed the mastery of the instrument as a masculine connotative practice (see quote below) as well as the idea that female performers have historically been discouraged or even prohibited to study and perform on the violin (see Steblin 1995 for a discussion on gender stereotyping of musical instruments; and Maiko Kawabata 2004, for the violin in particular), it is possible to view her choice of the violin version of the concerto as going beyond an interest in highlighting her performance abilities. Rather, it can be read as re-asserting masculinity of her performance persona (or even transferring some of the inherent masculinity of Beethoven) by performing the version of the piece that, during the composer's lifetime, would have been perceived as more 'masculine' by virtue of the presentation on the mastery of the instrument:

> "Virtuoso codes of violin performance were gendered in several ways, ways so obvious to contemporaries as to have been transparent. From the new symbolism of the violin as a feminine form (now no longer the 'king of instruments') and the bow as a phallic symbol to the sexual connotations of male violinists in the act of performance, gender codes were ubiquitous. Perhaps the most familiar aspect of the violin as gendered lies in descriptions of its 'voice' as feminine. Certainly, the association of the violin's long, singing lines with sopranos has a venerable tradition. Heroic codes were, in contrast, gendered masculine because military heroism and the exercise of power were the province of males; furthermore, the sight of a violinist lashing around with the bow, attacking the string aggressively, and disciplining the resonance of that string with tight dotted rhythms seemed to enact sexual domination".
> (Maiko Kawabata 2004, 103)

That said, within the discussion of signalling 'power' or dominance, it is interesting that despite The Great Kat's emphasis on virtuosity, she is not interested in performing the piece's cadenza, nor to

write a soloistic section in substitution – both of which strike me as somewhat missed opportunities given that heavy metal can be considered as signalling power and masculinity through the virtuosity of the guitar instrument. One way to read this 'out-of-character' approach is to suggest that The Great Kat's core emphasis remains on establishing connections to Beethoven, which may have been undermined given the more indirect relation between the cadenza and Beethoven. Specifically, due to the composer not leaving an original cadenza[380] this led to the piece being "published in numerous editions with cadenzas by famous soloists" (Jarosy 1934, 330; see also Wulfhorst 2010).[381] As for why she did not write or improvise her own cadenza, one that draws from heavy metal's central importance of soloing, this aspect remains more ambivalent and can be contextualised primarily via the observation that her output is not particularly focused on displaying virtuosity through showcasing her 'creative mastery' of the instrument, but rather by emphasising the speed with which she can perform the classical-to-metal transformations.[382]

Overall, this brief summary of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" showcased several aspects pertaining to The Great Kat's approach to transforming Western art music pieces, such as shortening and compressing the original piece, yet retaining some aspects of the arrangement, or the combining between heavy metal and Western art music performance practices. Without wishing to claim universality, these will be encountered further in additional examinations of auditive components in the following sections. I also offered perspectives as to how some aspects related to the performance/arrangement of the piece can be interpreted as contributing to her self-framing in relation to Beethoven. The Great Kat's version of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" can be seen as an example of Lacasse framing of a 'travesty', however whilst a general Western art music-aficionado may view the track as a form of 'debasement' on the basis of its 'mischaracterisation' of Beethoven's entire work (i.e., presenting only the final minute of the piece), its at times 'sloppy' delivery of the music (i.e., something frowned upon in Western art music's focus on clear depiction of technical aptitude) or even by its interpretability as undermining Beethoven's status in the Western musical canon, I argued that said 'debasement' of the track was aimed at a strengthening of the performer's persona. Specifically, I argued that, when viewed through The Great Kat's claim to be the reincarnation

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[380] Whilst some have noted that there does exist a cadenza written by Beethoven for the piano transcription of the concerto (B. Schwarz 1958, 437), Alan Tyson describes the two versions of the concerto as "a concerto with two alternative solo parts" (Tyson 1962, 105) thus it may be assumed that Beethoven's own cadenza would have been ignored as it relates to a rather different piece than what The Great Kat was intending to perform.

[381] A certain tentative relation to virtuosity may be inferred, nevertheless, based on the previously mentioned passage highlighting the transition from a less-than-impressive to a more virtuosic depiction of skill. Specifically, Beethoven dedicated the piece to a notable virtuoso Franz Clement (see also Haas 1948), yet anecdotal narrative suggests that "the composition was not completed until the very day of the first performance, and Clement found himself in consequence obliged to play the last movement at sight without any previous acquaintance with it" (Sommers 1934, 47). From this perspective, one may suggest that The Great Kat's version as 'improving' during performance may parallel this historical context, whilst retaining a context in which a desirable framing of 'virtuoso' to herself is retained.

[382] Another perspective that I draw from my own experience as a classically trained musician (and with experience in performing soloistic pieces) is that, whist The Great Kat has shown the ability to write accompaniment parts that exhibit typical metal auditive elements, it is possible that she was not trained, or has independently explored, more involved improvisation techniques – an aspect of musical practice that may not have been emphasised (or even practiced) by Western art music-trainees at the Julliard School of Music.

of Beethoven, the track's performance can be read as an ambivalent 'representation' of the composer. This is achieved via its implicit parallel to Beethoven's historical inabilities as a performer, that eventually gives way to The Great Kat's own virtuoso skills and her prioritisation within the arrangement, as well as by reclaiming masculinity through recontextualizing the historical gender-framing of virtuosity on the violin. Again, similar perspectives will be encountered in further sections when discussing the co-relation between the performer and the developing of virtuosity in her self-framing, or in relation to potential 'demasculinisation' perspectives towards the composers her work is engaging with.

Before concluding this section, I want to briefly consider the broad implications of the popularisation and intertextuality aspects in relation to the auditive component of The Great Kat's output. Whilst "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" can be seen as having a fairly established role in the Western classical canon in the twentieth century – as exemplified by Mark Katz's (2003) in-depth discussion of the piece in over thirty recordings – one aspect that it does not quite manage to capture is the significance of pre-existing intertextual connection and/or popularisation potential to The Great Kat's choice of repertoire.

In relation to intertextuality, in addition to the outlined approaches, it can be argued that The Great Kat is seemingly aware of the intertextual and paratextual capacity of some pieces within her repertoire. For example, whilst orchestral pieces constitute by far the largest category of transformed pieces (e.g., "Beethoven's '5th Symphony' for Symphony Orchestra & Band" on the *Beethoven Shreds CD* from 2011) multiple examples can be identified whereby the piece contains connections to the operatic realm, e.g. The Great Kat's track "Sarasate's 'Carmen Fantasy' for Violin and Band" (The Great Kat 1998b) is based on Sarasate's own suite transformation of Bizet's opera *Carmen*. As we will see in a later examination, pieces such as these offer a variety of paratexts such as the libretto and its characters from (and to) which The Great Kat develops allusions. Conversely, the paratextual aspects surrounding the chosen piece may be interpreted as relevant contexts to The Great Kat's work is alluding. This was exemplified briefly in the aforementioned historical contexts surrounding Beethoven, yet in certain instances the relation is much more prominent and integrated in The Great Kat's own paratextual properties of the piece.

In terms of popularisation, the examination of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" highlighted that The Great Kat is not simply creating a brand-new piece that incorporates a brief quotation from the original, but rather balances between retaining aspects of the structure, and the original arrangement in her rendition. This certainly can be seen as embodying the notion of popularisation, specifically the ideas of transforming 'high culture' pieces into 'sunken cultural assets', though also in relation to the popularisation and democratisation of lesser-known pieces such as those (likely) known more by violin players/violin aficionado listeners, rather than wider audiences e.g., Bazzini's *The Dance of the Goblins*, Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, or Fritz Kreisler's *Tambourin Chinois*.

With that in mind, reflecting critically on the negative implications of associating between a female performer and the popularisation of a track, I will briefly point out an alternative perspective that avoids essentialising such a connection. It is noticeable that a number of pieces that are transformed in The Great Kat's repertoire can be described as presenting a 'pre-existing'

popularisation. On the one hand, The Great Kat has engaged with a number of pieces with a substantial and broad cultural reach e.g., Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* in C minor, Op. 67, or Chopin's *Funeral March* from his *Piano Sonata No. 2* in Bb minor, Op. 35, are arguably amongst the most widely recognised pieces, whilst the *Allegro* movement from J.S. Bach's third *Brandenburg Concerto* in G major, BWV 1048, the *Presto* movement from the *Concerto No. 2* in G minor, Op. 8 (*Summer*) as part of Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, or Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* orchestral interlude certainly come close. Moreover, these pieces are not simply 'popular' but have been subject to previous popularisation: taking as an example Vivaldi's *Summer* concerto, Duxbury's encyclopaedic books shows a plethora of examples where this piece appears (Duxbury 1985, 7; Duxbury 1991, 19, 20, 48-49; Duxbury 2000, 49, 93–94, 110, 149, 179, 185, 186, 217–218, 220, 223–224, 249, 356–357).

On the other, a number of pieces present an established connection to popular culture via their use as the musical soundtrack and/or as a broad cultural source for animated shorts by Warner-Brothers' *Looney Tunes*, Metro-Goldwin Meier's *Tom & Jerry* series, or some animated films: Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5* in Pink Panther's cartoon "Pink, Plunk, Plink" (Pratt, Hawley 1966); Richard Wagner's *Walkürenritt* in Bugs Bunny's "What's Opera, Doc?" (Jones, Chuck 1957); Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* in Bugs Bunny's "The Rabbit of Seville" (Jones, Charles M. 1950); and to a degree, Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy*, specifically the inclusion of the Habanera from Bizet's opera in Tom & Jerry's "Carmen Get It!" (Deitch, Gene 1962). Franz Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* is by far the most wide-spread example, appearing in Mickey Mouse's "The Opry House" (Disney, Walt, and Ub Iwerks 1929), Bugs Bunny's "Rhapsody Rabbit" (Freleng, Isadore 1946), Tom & Jerry's "The Cat Concerto" (Hanna, William, and Joseph Barbera 1947) and semi-animated feature film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (Zemeckis, Robert 1988), to name a few notable examples.[383]

The purpose of this perspective is to highlight that The Great Kat's engagement with these pieces is not limited to her 'causing' or 'ascribing' popularisation, but rather that her actions implicitly 'amplify' existing popularisation capacity. To be clear, by 'amplifying', I am suggesting that The Great Kat is presenting a parallel that continues the piece's popularisation, rather than focusing her efforts on drawing from the already-popularised perspectives. That said, the latter an aspect is not entirely out of the realm of possibility as, on the one hand, despite her video for Rossini's "William Tell Overture" (The Great Kat 2018h) to engage with the libretto of the corresponding opera, the performer's brief synopsis of said video is framed as partially echoing the TV Show "Lone Ranger" (see greatkat.com n.d.l). And on the other hand, The Great Kat's self-framing in the artwork for *Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries* sees the performer wearing a horned, rather than winged, helm that is comparable to the helm worn by Elmer Fudd's 'Siegfried' character in "What's Opera, Doc?" cartoon (see greatkat.com n.d.p). Similarly, both the investigation of this piece's artwork as well as the investigation to The Great Kat's video for "Paganini's Caprice #24" can be framed as implicitly

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[383] Holm-Hudson's discussion of progressive rock has argued that performers from the progressive rock genre may have been influenced by animated films such as Disney's *Fantasia* (Holm-Hudson 2005, 379–81), thus offering another potential parallel between the genre and The Great Kat. For further discussions on the interaction between Western art music and animated film, see Long's chapter "Concertos, Symphonies, Rhapsodies (and an Opera)" (Long 2008, 196–232, specifically 197–198, 204–205; see also Clague 2004).

'amplifying' the popularisation that can be extrapolated within certain included components, and with bearing on the performer's self-framing in heavy metal contexts. Nevertheless, viewing The Great Kat's output in relation to popularisation as an extension, what I hope to get across is not that the performer's work is somehow less 'original' or 'authentic', but rather that this abstraction can be seen as reducing a potentially negative framing of 'women as related to pop contexts' or that the underlying 'sinking' of cultural goods associated with popularisation is negatively misinterpreted as resulting from the act emerging from a female performer.

The visual level

Figure 39: The Great Kat – *Beethoven's Violin Concerto*, front artwork
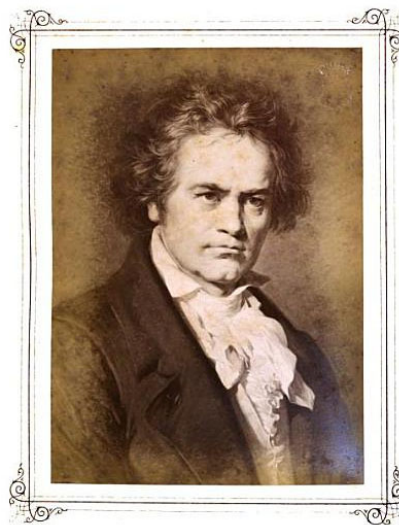
Figure 40: Portrait of Beethoven by Carl Jaeger (ca. 1870)

When discussing popularisation in The Great Kat's output, or even the output as a whole, one aspect that is a staple of the overall aesthetic of the performer, and observable since the beginning of her career, is the striking approach to constructing her album artwork. Specifically, the visibility of the quasi-exposed body of the performer contrasting with the incorporation of a Western art music composer's historical portrait.[384] Whilst it would be easy to point to the contrast by itself and consider the discussion of popularisation 'done and dusted', I want to offer a more detailed examination of the visual component of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", as exemplified in Figure 39.[385] This artwork was

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[384] At the time of writing, the portraits of six composers have been used as part of this collage aesthetic approach: J.S. Bach, Beethoven, W.A. Mozart, Paganini, Rimsky-Korsakov and R. Wagner. This approach is rather common in The Great Kat's visual aesthetic, yet it is not universally employed, as some releases follow the same naming convention and music-track selection though they lack a composer's portrait as part of the artwork e.g., *Bazzini's The Round of the Goblins* (see greatkat.com n.d.m).

[385] This image can also be framed as symptomatic of The Great Kat's practice of re-issuing of albums. Whilst I refer to this image as the front cover of the eponymous CD – based on the artwork presented on The Great Kat's own website/store – the single's (re-)release on digital distribution platforms such as Apple Music or Spotify features a front cover with near identical framing achieved via different photos by The Great Kat. Even more so, my initial gathering of material includes at least one other image that is constructed in a similar fashion and was recorded by me as a front cover. As such, the artwork discussed in this interpretation can be considered as one of several front covers which present near identical framings of the performer and her engagement of the composer. For image source of Figure 39 see (greatkat.com n.d.b).

chosen as not only highlighting the intersection between the classical and The Great Kat's contrasting gender-related collage aesthetic but also, as it's examination can contribute to understanding the processes of The Great Kat's development of her female masculinity in relation to Beethoven.

To provide a general outline of the image, I will first briefly summarise the artwork and its constitutive elements. The title of the single is positioned at the top of the artwork, under which The Great Kat's heart-based logo can also be found, whilst the main body of the image helps to establish a dual visibility of both The Great Kat and Beethoven. The portrait of Beethoven, a half-length portrait of Ludwig Van Beethoven by the German painter Carl Jaeger (Boetticher, Friedrich von 1891, 606; Hanslick ca. 1875, ix),[386] serves as the main portion (or background) of the image, surrounded by a red and white Passepartout-like border, and an additional physical (i.e., most likely printed) copy of Beethoven's background portrait is visible in the left corner. Two large superimposed images of The Great Kat are visible in the left and right sides on the image, both times the performer is dressed in two-part black lingerie, a black headband and heavy make-up. The left-side image of The Great Kat features her holding a black electric guitar, leaning against a surface that features the aforementioned printed portrait of Beethoven, whilst a wood-coloured violin is also visible behind her body. The right-side version of the performer showcases The Great Kat as holding a black-coloured violin in a performance-ready position, with her right hand holding the bow as pointed directly at the camera. The two images by The Great Kat are quite similar in terms of the downward angle of photography, however examining the differences in the chosen costume as well as the make-up, it becomes clear that despite such similarities the images are seemingly not derived from the same photographic session. With the image described, my investigation will first consider the popularisation related to the DIY aesthetic of The Great Kat's photoshopped album artwork, as well as briefly reflect on the dual visibility of both The Great Kat and Beethoven. And in a later step, I will focus on more directly discussing the image's gender connotations by presenting contextualisation towards both visible persons.

As previously mentioned, an immediately noticeable characteristic is the image's contrast between Beethoven's historical portrait and the quasi-nude female body of the performer, and by extension between the classical-connotative implications of the CD's title and composer's portrait, and the 'popular' sensibilities of the performer. With that in mind, considering how the 'interface' between these contrasting perspectives is achieved, the combination between a clearly 'manufactured' approach to artwork production combined with the use of bring colours struck me as comparable to some of the principles underpinning the pop art movement, and to an extend the work of Andy Warhol. To that effect, I will briefly outline relevant aspects pertaining to the 'pop art' movement, and will argue that The Great Kat's work can be seen as engaging in popularisation through paralleling said movement.

As Joseph Imorde's (2017) critical overview of the term's history illustrates, 'pop art' remains an aesthetic phenomenon whose heterogenous, yet fairly canonised characteristics, presents a challenge to a set definition, due to the lack of "theoretical work on the criteria for the comparability

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[386] For image source of Figure 40, see Hanslick (ca. 1875, 41–42; image situated between the two pages).

of the different positions" (Imorde 2017, 222)[387] that is to accompany contemporary processes of critical re-evaluation. Pointing to the US as one of the locales where the term first took root in the 1960s, Imorde summarises the movement as "[w]hat has now been described with the label *Pop Art* was the ennobling of the inconspicuous, the everyday, the popular in the respective artistic processing and handling" (Imorde 2017, 222, italics in original),[388] and the author suggests that the acceptance of this US-based version of pop art over European counterpart was due to "the advantageous production and better (media) distribution conditions in the USA" (Imorde 2017, 223).[389] Simultaneously, borrowing from Alice Marquis, Imorde contrasts that whilst for the US "behind the success of pop art was a network of people who were connected to one another by a capitalist striving for gain and a will to socialize, and who consciously distanced themselves from the art of old Europe" (Imorde 2017, 224),[390] the term's usage in countries outside of the US was neither associated with said country's popular culture but in addition to being "identified […] with a smooth surface and subversive entertainment, [it was also identified with] social engagement, political conviction or revolutionary activism" (Imorde 2017, 224) and in some cases including hostility to US's own "economic (and thus implicitly artistic) dominance" (Morgan, quoted in Imorde 2017, 224).[391]

Two aspects regarding pop art's processes highlighted by Imorde are worth mentioning here. First, he points to Umberto Eco's 1971 efforts in structurally framing pop art's processes and summarises their understanding as "'pop operations' consisted in picking out certain aspects from a contemporary culture of signs, objects and images and 'transposing' these aspects in different ways" (Imorde 2017, 223).[392] Furthermore, he emphasises Eco's categories of two-dimensional reproduction e.g. "*multiplication*, either simply or with variations (Warhol reproduces a photograph of Marilyn Monroe with colour changes); in inserting a real object into another, manipulated, environment (Rauschenberg brings Coca-Cola bottles into his paintings)" (Eco, quoted in Imorde 2017, 223, italics

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[387] Ger. Orig. "Die mittlerweile weitgehend akzeptierte Heterogenität dessen, was man gewohnt war, unter dem Sammelbegriff 'Pop-Art' zu fassen, wird dabei kaum von theoretischen Arbeiten zu Kriterien von Vergleichbarkeit der unterschiedlichen Positionen begleitet".

[388] Ger. Orig. "Was mit dem Label Pop Art nun beschrieben wurde, war die Nobilitierung des Unscheinbaren, Alltäglichen, Populären in der jeweiligen künstlerischen Ver- und Bearbeitung".

[389] Ger. Orig. "Dass sich die amerikanische Pop-Art vergleichsweise schnell gegenüber anderen Varianten in Europa und aller Welt durchzusetzen verstand und in viel stärkerem Maße Beachtung fand, war sowohl den vorteilhaften Produktions- als auch den besseren (medialen) Distributionsbedingungen in den USA geschuldet".

[390] Ger. Orig. "Hinter dem Erfolg der Pop-Art stand ein Netzwerk von Personen, das durch kapitalistisches Erwerbsstreben und sozialen Distinktionswillen miteinander verbunden war, und sich bewusst von der Kunst des alten Europa distanzierte".

[391] Ger. Orig. "In Staaten wie Brasilien, Japan oder Ungarn wurde Pop-Art nicht allein mit glatter Oberfläche und subversiver Unterhaltung identifiziert, sondern mit sozialem Engagement, politischer Überzeugung oder revolutionärem Aktionismus. In diesen Ländern verband man den Begriff 'Pop' auch nicht reflexartig mit der Populärkultur der Vereinigten Staaten, vielmehr waren die je eigenständigen Spielarten der Pop-Art 'häufig durchtränkt von einem Zwiespalt, wenn nicht einer offenen Feindseligkeit gegenüber der Vorstellung einer ökonomischen (und damit implizit künstlerischen) Dominanz Amerikas'".

[392] Ger. Orig. "Für [Eco] bestand die 'pop operation' darin, aus einer zeitgenössischen Kultur der Zeichen, Objekte und Bilder bestimmte Aspekte herauszugreifen und diese Aspekte in unterschiedlicher Weise zu 'transponieren'".

in original).[393] Second, Imorde also discusses the oft ironic positioning of pop art's output as one of the challenges to early questions regarding the 'content' of such art (Imorde 2017, 223–24) and argues that pop art "offered starting points for subversive currents and developments within Western consumer societies" through its combination of "habitus of interpretative denial as well as the open commitment to camp and queerness" (Imorde 2017, 224).[394]

It should also be mentioned that pop art is by no means devout of gender aspects as pointed out in Paul Rutherford's (2019 [2007]) investigation of eroticism in modern society. In said study, the author suggests that "the exploration of the new eroticism was a staple of pop art, inside and outside of the United States" (Rutherford 2019 [2007], 124) and echoes Richard Hamilton's identification of the qualities "'sexy' and 'glamorous,' […] as leading characteristics of the new art" (Rutherford 2019 [2007], 124). Rutherford points to US pop artists' "gendered vision" whose work "amounted to comments on what had happened to eroticism in the modern world of brands", and also discusses that "pop art diverged from the well-established European tradition of the nude because the purpose was not just to fashion yet another variety of erotica, a succession of beautiful and available young women designed to please the eye of the male voyeur" (Rutherford 2019 [2007], 124). Simultaneously, Rutherford is critical of pop art's inability, at times, to maintain an ironic message when engaging with erotic contexts or imagery. Focusing on the output of painter Mel Ramos, the former presents a scathing conclusion that "like all of the pop artists, you never could be sure whether Ramos's imagery was meant to be ironic or accepting" (Rutherford 2019 [2007], 126). Furthermore, he describes the artists as "consummate voyeurs who had produced works that embodied the practices and effects of the Eros project" (Rutherford 2019 [2007], 126), the latter being a term Rutherford employs (borrowing from Foucault's own discussion of the changing role of sexuality) to describe a series of processes that investigate the increased utilisation of sexualisation in modern culture and media. This overview of the pop art movement is by no means exhaustive,[395] however I strived to highlight elements that will aid in framing and interpreting The Great Kat's artwork for "Beethoven's Violin Concerto": sign identification and transposing into a new context; integration of 'real objects' into manufactured spaces; multiplication; ambivalent gender framing; campiness.

Arguably one of the most immediate parallels that can be suggested between The Great Kat's aesthetic and the sensibilities of pop art is the identifiable elements of camp, which I will briefly touch on by drawing from Susan Sontag's "Notes on 'Camp'" essay (2009). Artwork such as "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" presents The Great Kat's femme persona, which can be read as Camp's "glorification of 'character'" principle (Sontag 2009, 285; note 32)[396] yet also as a combination between the qualities

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[393] Ger. Orig. "[…] in *Multiplikation*, entweder einfach oder mit Variationen (Warhol reproduziert eine Fotografie Marilyn Monroes mit Farbänderungen)".

[394] Ger. Orig. "Mit dem ausgestellten Habitus der Deutungsverweigerung wie auch mit dem offenen Bekenntnis zu Camp und Queerness bot die Pop-Art ebenfalls Ausgangspunkte für subversive Strömungen und Entwicklungen innerhalb der westlichen Konsumgesellschaften".

[395] For a more in-depth discussion of pop art's history, its main actors, cultural antecedents and its role in a contemporary pop-theoretical framing, see Thomas Hecken's study (2009), especially chapters II and III (Hecken 2009, 51–92 and 93–168).

[396] My inclusion of 'notes' in this paragraph does not denote a 'footnote' in the original text, but rather the specific note number, as per the organization of Sontag's writing.

of exaggeration (Sontag 2009, 279; note 9), clear theatricality (Sontag 2009, 280; note 10) and as containing high degrees of artifice (Sontag 2009, 279; note 7). Whilst some may object to this idea as the violin concerto belongs to the broad category of concert music which Sontag argues that "is rarely Camp" (Sontag 2009, 278; note 5), once factors such as the sheer intensity (Sontag 2009, 286; note 33) and outlandishness (Sontag 2009, 283; note 24) that 'oozes' from The Great Kat's performance persona, the equal if not higher importance of the style (Sontag 2009, 288; note 40) with which she delivers her work, as well as the parallels between her work and that of "overstraining the medium and introducing more and more violent, and unresolvable, subject-matter" (Sontag 2009, 287; note 36) are considered, I believe that her work can be seen as Camp through and through. Indeed, as I will echo below, it is the quasi-androgyne gender qualities (Sontag 2009, 279; note 9) that emerge in relation to her work, as well as the unintentional (i.e. "dead serious" – Sontag 2009, 282; note 19) manner through which she claims to be the reincarnation of Beethoven – again, outlandishness! – or that she will improve on Western art music, strike me as The Great Kat presenting a challenge to the institution of Western art music thus echoing Camp's idea that "high culture has no monopoly upon refinement" (Sontag 2009, 291; note 54) as well as Camp's championing of "a victory of 'style' over 'content'" (Sontag 2009, 287; note 38) .[397]

In terms of the contrasting aspect that is Beethoven's image and the self-framing of The Great Kat, I believe it is not difficult to suggest that, even if not the most well-known portrait of the composer, one of the reasons for The Great Kat's inclusion of Beethoven is his recognition-potential, and thus by extension the cultural connotations as a 'classical' sign. This certainly helps to situate the act of inclusion as part of pop art's 'transposing' of a cultural sign into new clearly manufactured contexts i.e., the 'Photoshopped' image that constitutes her album artwork. With that in mind, the transposition into her aesthetic, specifically the double visibility of both Beethoven as well as The Great Kat, strikes me as comparable to Andy Warhol[398] and his pop art approach of "multiplication" (Eco, quoted in Imorde 2017, 223) e.g., in works such as *Marilyn Diptych* (Warhol 1962b).

In contrast to Warhol's adjustment of colour or adjustment of details in the different copies of Marilyn Monroe's portrait, The Great Kat's utilisation of Beethoven's portrait involves more fundamental changes. Namely, both the size as well as the medium of the image is changed, as the composer's inclusion in the lower left side of the image is physically printed on a piece of paper, seemingly hung on a wall, which can be interpreted as The Great Kat contributing to demystifying the composer by disrupting the naturalistic framing of the composer as a 'unique' creative individual. It is also worth pointing out that The Great Kat applies the multiplication principle on an additional level as Jaeger's Beethoven portrait can be described as by far the most widely utilised classical composer portrait in her visual aesthetic, appearing as a visual component in almost all releases including

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[397] I hope readers will excuse the somewhat excessive integration of references in this paragraph; this is an is intentional act on my behalf, serving as a writing-related 'nod' to the over-the-top and 'style over substance' principle within the aesthetics of Camp. After all, if there ever is a time and place for the academic language to slightly 'loosen' up, I believe that describing Camp provides one of the most appropriate opportunities.
[398] For in-depth discussions on Warhol, see e.g., Danto (2009); Deiss (2015); Michelson (2001); Zahner (2006).

intertextual references to the composer examined to date, and in some isolated instances in album artwork BDSM-focused releases e.g., *Torture Techniques* from 2018 (see The Great Kat 2018a).[399]

Another similarity shared between The Great Kat and Warhol is the devaluation effect towards Beethoven. Musicologist Mina Yang (2006) has commented that Warhol's artistic reframing of the composer contributed in undermining the former's ability to be perceived as "a symbol of *haute-bourgeois* culture" through the "subsumption into the capitalist marketplace" (Yang 2006, 2).[400] This interpretation can be transferred to The Great Kat's integration of the composer's image into the artwork for her commercially-targeted records. However considering the epitextual context of The Great Kat continuous claim to be the reincarnation of Beethoven, I would argue that she balances the composer's devaluation with reaffirmation of Beethoven's genius in a way that is beneficial to her re-purposing of the composer's cultural status.

With regards to The Great Kat's own double image, I consider this visibility to have several implications. Whilst her multiplied self-inclusion contributes to the image's manufactured capacity, as per pop art's contexts, it is possible to suggest that the desensitising effects towards 'high culture' are retained yet operationalised towards The Great Kat's purposes. On the one hand, as a performer associated to both popular and Western art music traditions, the continuous contrast between The Great Kat's quasi-exposed body and the transformed Western art music content represents the popularisation principle of cultural mediators aiding in reducing Western art music's perception as "differentiated and representative" culture (Rainer Winter 2003, 351). On the other hand, it can be argued that a desensitisation process may be taking place towards the male gaze (see Mulvey 1999), caused by the marketing-focused self-framing of her quasi-nudity. Specifically, the continuous, and often double, inclusion of very similar framings of her body that incorporate quasi-suggestive and ironic-interpretable facial expressions/excessive make-up, may result in an oversaturation of such imagery and thus potentially subverting and redirecting the male gaze towards the performer's own work.[401] In other words, even if a viewer may be initially attracted to the album due to its cover, they may eventually begin overlooking the self-framing and focus primarily on the auditive components.

The somewhat suggestive context of artworks such as "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" offers parallels between The Great Kat and pop art's quasi-supportive depiction of erotic imagery, as well as what can be described as the 'decorative' role of female subjects in pop art pieces by male artists e.g., Tom Wesselmann's *Study for Nude (Danielle)* (Wesselmann 1970); Roy Lichtenstein's *Little Aloha*

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[399] Due to a combination between The Great Kat releasing her music on her own label and the often-lacking barcode/ISBN number, as well as her tendency to re-release her work on digital distribution platforms leading to said tracks be listed with a newer 'release' date, it is difficult to precisely identify the year of some post-2011 releases. As such, I refer to the date as found on the digital distribution service Spotify.

[400] It should be reiterated that neither Warhol nor the pop art movement as a whole should be considered as the initiators of the idea to transform Western art music, or classical composers, into a marketable good – as the development of mass printed scores for in-home performance can clearly indicate. My contrast intends simply to highlight a similarity between The Great Kat and Warhol in relation to the popularisation of Beethoven through their work.

[401] It goes without saying that it is impossible to argue that such redirection will take place for every observer as there will most likely be those who still find the images (predominantly) erotically stimulating. However, the argument remains plausible, especially when considering that The Great Kat self-framing in music videos exhibits the same ironic subtexts as well.

(Lichtenstein 1962); or James Rosenquist's *I Love you with my Ford* (Rosenquist 1961). However, it should be emphasised that The Great Kat's involvement is also dualistic as both the artist creating the album artwork[402] and the woman visible in the image, thus enabling more direct comparisons to the output of female pop-artists such as Evelyne Axell,[403] a Belgian painter contemporary to Warhol known for her feminist-inspired "auto-erotic (self-)portraits which show a self-confident female identity" (Decan 2005, n.p.), e.g., as in her paintings *Ice Cream* (Axell 1964) or "Erotomobile" (Axell 1966), with the latter case also including the female figure multiple times.

As previously mentioned, I consider it a fairly unproblematic interpretation to suggest that Beethoven's portrait is, in part, most likely incorporated for its capacity to represent the classical. However, I left my discussion of the portrait as the last point in this examination so as to consider some of the more abstract implications related to not so much who the portrait represents, but rather the portrait itself as a visual artefact. To that effect, I will briefly consider how, through a theorisation of the process of selecting a historical portrait, The Great Kat may be interpreted as paralleling pop art, specifically in the movement's interest in engaging with *objet trouvé* [Eng. "found object"] or "manufactured objects raised to the dignity of works of art through the choice of the artist" (Breton, quoted in Iversen 2004, 45).[404] As an additional step, I will also discuss the pre-existing popularisation potential that emerges in relation to the use of Beethoven's portrait in popular culture.

The idea to consider *where* The Great Kat might have chosen the portraits emerged during my attempts to reconstruct criteria and/or implied connections as to *why* the performer chose the specific classical composer portraits for her artwork. Beyond determining that the portrait of Beethoven was created by the German painter Carl Jaeger,[405] there was no discernible connection between most other utilised portrait in terms of their original artist or painting method. Online inquiries on the portraits also produced conflicting results as Beethoven's portrait was easily discoverable in google searches (though rarely accurately identified), however portraits for Wagner, Rimsky-Korsakov and Paganini proved much more difficult to initially locate. I eventually discovered the connection I was searching for, in that every composer portrait used by The Great Kat as part of her output can be found in the first page of image-category search results within the Library of Congress' online database, specifically when the composer's last name is input as search query. Whilst I initially considered this a coincidence, I discovered multiple characteristics that support my claim. First, when used by The Great Kat, portraits are often included in monochromatic colours which struck me as colour-shifted versions

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[402] I have found no evidence suggesting that The Great Kat is the actual person responsible for the digital creation of the album artwork. However, based on her DIY recording/publishing principles, as well as the outwardly projected heavy involvement in many aspects of the creative process, it is reasonable to assume that she may be more directly involved in the creation of the artwork than bands whose albums are released via a major label.

[403] For an in-depth discussion of Axell as well as other female pop artists, see Minioudaki (2007).

[404] Margaret Iversen presents a critical argument on the differing aesthetic principles that outline the, at times interchangeably utilised, terms 'found objects' and 'ready-mades'.

[405] Two other portraits by Jaeger have been used by The Great Kat: the portrait of Mozart (Hanslick ca. 1875, 33–34; image situated between the two pages) appears in the artwork of releases based on the composer such as *Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture* from 2019 (greatkat.com n.d.j; see also The Great Kat 2019a); and the portrait of Franz Schubert (Hanslick ca. 1875, 49–50; image situated between the two pages) was also used only in The Great Kat's website, specifically for the webpage containing the biography of the composer (greatkat.com n.d.c).

of the black and white or yellowed-paper quality of many historical images found in the Library of Congress database (e.g., Jaeger n.d.). Second, my examination of the videos for "Sarasate's Carmen Fantasy" (The Great Kat 2018i) and "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" (The Great Kat 2020b) revealed that in every instance of a static historical image being flashed on the screen, said image can be easily located in the Library of Congress database. For example, the former video includes historical movie/theatre posters related to the opera Carmen which can be located under search terms "Carmen" such as the shot at [00:01] including theatrical posters from ca. 1896 (see Liebler & Maass Lith. and Abraham, Edw. J. [ca. 1896a], [ca. 1896b]); whilst the latter video includes a variety of portraits of Beethoven that appear when the composer's last name is given as search query e.g. the video's shot from [00:41] incorporates a portrait of Beethoven by N.C. Wyeth from 1918 (see Wyeth 1918). Third, Paganini's portrait used for the release *Chef Great Kat Cooks Paganini's Ravioli* (The Great Kat 2017b), is not only found in this database,[406] but also the specific entry for the image links to the library's "Performing Arts Blog" which includes articles that discuss the composer's ravioli recipe together with the image, with the articles dated about a year before the release of The Great Kat's aforementioned video (Miller 2016).[407] As such, I am fairly confident in suggesting that the Library of Congress is the source for, and a common denominator that connects, the composer's portraits (and other historical images) in The Great Kat's output.[408]

The implication that the classical composer portraits may have been sourced via the online portal of a public library relates to the changing co-relation between the portrait's 'framing' to that of its contents. Despite representing highly canonised composers, the selection process strips/alters many of the original portrait's physical characteristics due to being accessed as digital files (e.g., size, original colour etc.), and subverts the image's high culture signification capabilities. This renders them as 'found objects' in a similar manner to Warhol's aforementioned *Marilyn Diptych* being based on the 'found object' that is Monroe's publicity photo for the film *Niagara* (Danto 2009, 40).[409] The consequent effect can be summarised as presenting a similar contrast to that of pop art: representing Ludwig Van Beethoven through a reddish-sepia printed image pinned on a wall, includes a similar challenge to the established understanding of the composer as the "Übermensch of Western music" (Yang 2006, 2) as the challenge to what constitutes art expressed in Warhol's painting of a can of

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[406] Julius Kapp's 1922 biography of Paganini identifies the portrait as a lithograph by G. Nehrlick (Kapp 1922, 15; see also Footnote 465).

[407] To be clear, I am offering this co-relation as a broad context, rather than that the article directly inspired The Great Kat. Also, for those interested, the latter's video shares some basic similarity in method, yet does not make Paganini's ravioli following the original recipe as outlined in the article.

[408] I can further support my claim by pointing out that, having returned to examining The Great Kat's output after completing this section, I was confronted with new examples following the same principle. The artwork for her track "Chopin's Funeral March" (The Great Kat 2021a) features two portraits of the composer that can be identified easily in the top results of the Library of Congress' online database (see, n.a. ca. 1907; n.a. 1915-1925). Also, to consider The Library of Congress as the primary source of images used by The Great Kat might also help to partially explain why some releases do not include a historical portrait of a composer.

[409] A brief note to be made here is that, whilst the use of stock photos as means of generating a professional artistic product has in the past resulted in somewhat negative responses in fields such as video game development (e.g., see Rougeau 2012), my emphasis of The Great Kat's parallel of this approach does not intend to accuse the performer as 'lazy' or as 'unimaginative'.

Campbell's Soup (Warhol 1962a). It is important to acknowledge, however, that the resulting popularisation effect reframes, yet does not nullify the composer's classical signification, as such a component is still retained to be drawn from and redirected towards The Great Kat's own aesthetic and gender framing, as I will argue in the next section.

To conclude the discussion of the popularisation principles found in the image's aesthetic, I want to offer a final perspective by discussing the specific portrait by Beethoven and suggest that the image not only had an inherent popularisation potential, but also that its appearance in further popular culture contexts furthers said reading. The exploration of the history[410] of the specific Beethoven portrait used in "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" reveals multiple levels of popularisation in relation to both classical as well as popular contexts. Having determined that Beethoven's portrait was created by Carl Jaeger (Boetticher, Friedrich von 1891, 606; also, Rimbault 1874, vii; Hanslick ca. 1875), reviewing additional historical information allowed me to determine that the image was created as part of a series of portraits commissioned as illustrations for a publication from ca. 1874 titled *Gallery of German Composers: A Series of Photographic Portraits* (Rimbault 1874).[411] Based on the framing that the editor Edward Rimbault provided in the book's introduction, the publication was designed to be a series of succinct biographical portraits on classical composers intended for consumption by a broader audience:

> "The present volume of Portraits of the most eminent German Composers will be welcomed by all true lovers of music and of art […] and whose [composers'] works we so love and admire, would not prove an unacceptable offering to the public at large". (Rimbault 1874, v)

Whilst the original purpose of Beethoven's portrait as illustration of this book makes visible the image's popularisation[412] intention, it is also worthwhile to consider that the title of the book refers to the included images as 'photographic', an aspect that Rimbault expands on, describing the illustrations as "oil paintings […] photographed in a manner that may entitle them to be held valuable as works of art" (Rimbault 1874, vii). Whilst admittedly representing a somewhat inflated language, the statement introduces some interesting contrasts: on the one side, it highlights the utilization of photography in some capacity, a fairly novel medium in the late nineteenth century (see Kenaan 2020, 15–20),[413] and as such framing not only the portraits' intention as quasi-popularisation, but also the popularisation contexts of the technology that facilitated the images' inclusion. Specifically, photography[414] both reflected "mid 19th-century desire for attention to detail and verifiable accuracy"

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[410] Beyond the source discussed below, most literature that examines historical portraits of Beethoven (e.g., Bergquist 2012; Busch and Geck 2019; Comini 1987; Steblin 1992) I explored, neither discuss, nor mention, Jaeger's portrait.

[411] I am referring here to an English publication from ca. 1874 (see Rimbault 1874) that features an identical selection of composers and (visual) portraits as an earlier German publication from ca. 1871 (see n.a. 1871). I was only able to locate the second edition of said German publication, and indeed the portraits were included as well (see Hanslick ca. 1875). The difference between the English and German versions is that, whilst the portraits remained the same, the biographical data for each chapter is not translated from Edward Hanslick's German version, but seemingly written anew by Edward Rimbault.

[412] For a discussion on popularisation related to art history contexts, see Imorde (2009).

[413] For a broader history of photography, see Rosenblum (1997).

[414] For a contemporary examination of the popularisation processes that underpinned the increased use of photographic reproduction from the beginning of the twentieth century, see Imorde and Zeising (2019).
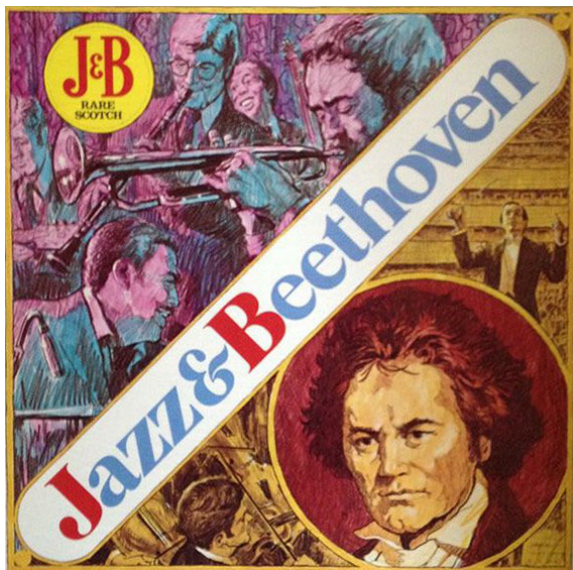
Figure 41: Various Artists – *Jazz & Beethoven* (1980), front artwork

(Hamber 1990, 135) as well as provided readers with access to (artistic) images that would otherwise be reserved to individual collections. On the other hand, the author suggests that the portraits become 'work[s] of art' by the virtue of being photographed, which may be interpreted as echoing the nineteenth century debates as to whether photography should be considered as 'art' (for overview of some early debates see Rosenblum 1997, 209–14). Overall, it becomes clear that based on the intended purpose of the composer's portraits, and their manner of integration in the original publication, the image can be described as accompanied by multiple levels of popularisation in addition to The Great Kat's own selection process.

I will expand on the portrait's popularisation potential by also highlighting several aspects related to the image's original purpose that have been unintentionally reiterated in album artwork for music releases in contemporary classical and popular music contexts. First, a direct comparison can be drawn between the original biographical usage of Jaeger's portrait and more contemporary utilisations such as on the front cover of the educational record *Ludwig Van Beethoven* (Michel Gatineau and Patrice Ahrweller n.d.), released as part of a series of records by the French label *La Ronde Des Enfants* [Eng. *The Round of Children*; this is a known children's nursery rhyme] designed to introduce a composer's work to younger audiences through an eleven page booklet combining historical information, evocative illustrations and short notated examples visually representing some of Beethoven's writing.

Figure 42: Various Artists – *A La Rencontre De Beethoven* (1989), front artwork

This positions *Ludwig Van Beethoven* as not only echoing but also expanding on the original publication's intention to provide larger audiences with information on classical composers by reframing the portrait in a quasi-educational context.

Second, the original publication's 'compilation'-like approach to presenting classical composers to wider audiences can be considered as contributing to the popularisation potential of Beethoven's image and as such becomes an interesting framework that allows to draw parallels to the use of the composer's portrait in musical compilations. For example, the album artwork for *Jazz & Beethoven* (Various

Artists 1980b; see Figure 41)[415] – a small 12" compilation release, associated with the English blended-scotch manufacturer J&B – appears to have been designed so as to represent an intertextual connection between the company's signature initials and the album's visual design and musical content. The initial tracks are performed by jazz players such as Art Hirt, Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington thus representing the 'J' of the company's logo, whilst the concluding two Beethoven overtures conducted by Bruno Walter, represent the company's second initial 'B'.[416] The implied dualism continues through stylised visual representations of typical performance situations for both settings: a jazz (club) performance and a concert hall classical performance, both 'sides' separated by a large type-font outlining the record's title. Yet, the physical 'barrier' that the type-font creates is somewhat ambivalent, as, the common colour-pencil based visual aesthetic that is utilised to represent both the jazz players and Beethoven's portrait, as well as the implied 'liveness' component of both performance scenarios in the image, suggest an attempt at equalising the differences between the two music traditions. Overall, it can be argued that *Jazz & Beethoven*'s contrast between popular culture (be it the jazz music, or the fact that the record was released by a popular alcohol company) and Western art music can be contextualised as within the boundaries of popularisation principles, even if such a direction is not causally related to the appearance of Beethoven's portrait.

Another noteworthy example in this category is the release *A La Rencontre De Beethoven* [Eng. Meet Beethoven] (Various Artists 1989b; see Figure 42)[417] as representing an entry into *Les Classiques D'Eve Ruggieri* [Eng. Eve Ruggieri's Classics] (see Discogs.com n.d.c), a series of Western art music compilation CDs created in association with the French TV and Radio producer/host Ève Ruggieri. Three things should be mentioned here with regards to Ruggieri's compilation: first, it is possible to consider the compilation as relating to both the *Gallery of German Composers* popularisation approach as well as the educational context discussed in the *Ludwig Van Beethoven* album, if the CD-series *Les Classiques D'Eve Ruggieri* are considered as an extension of Ruggieri's 1980s TV programme *Ève raconte* in which she explores information on various historical figures (see Dartois 2018). Second, given that the compilation principle does not entirely belong to the domain of popular culture, its employment in the realm of Western art music introduces an interesting balance between the principles of canonisation and popularisation,[418] a balance that Ruggieri's or other series based around classical compilations (e.g., the German series *Die Klassik-Diskothek*[419]) appear to be engaging with. And third, the contents of the Beethoven-related album in Ruggieri's series include an interesting

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[415] For source of the image see Various Artists (1980a).

[416] Anecdotally, the website for the company begins the history of the brand with "A master distiller from Italy, Giacamo Justerini (the 'J' in J&B), falls head over heels for an Opera singer, Margherita Bellini, and follows her to England" (jbscotch.com n.d., n.p.), thus introducing the world of Western art music in a parallel manner to how the record approaches the association.

[417] For image source, see Various Artists (1989a).

[418] It is important not to overlook that by engaging with Beethoven's image – both the historical portrait as well as the 'reincarnation' aspect – The Great Kat presents a similar interplay that, whilst involving popularisation practices, simultaneously draws from, and hinges on, the canonisation of the composer.

[419] This series was chosen not only as they utilised Jaeger's Beethoven portrait in one of the releases (see Various Artists 1974) but also to highlight the existence of similar processes in series of Western art music records released in a different country and an earlier historical period, namely ca. 1970 (see Discogs.com n.d.a) as opposed to Ruggieri's collection that began ca. 1990 (see Discogs.com n.d.c).

balance of well-known pieces by the composer such as the "Ode to Joy" chorus and a contrast through less known tunes such as the composer's "Bundeslied, Op. 122", which not only continues the somewhat less-canonising reading in relation to Ruggieri's series, but also brings forward the aspect of canonised classical pieces as relating to the principles of popularity (i.e., what can be described through the 'popular classics' idea).

The provided overview of the pre-existing popularisation capacity of Beethoven's image serves to showcase two things. On the one hand, this discussion highlights that even without a clear sense of intentionality beyond the suggested 'the image was found on a public library site', the concept of 'popularisation' can be framed as deeply embedded into The Great Kat's aesthetic approach, as exemplified by the contexts of the portrait's original popularisation and the image's genre-tradition transgressive contexts. On the other, it allows to present The Great Kat's work less as an 'one-off' performer whose quasi-eroticised usage of Beethoven's portrait 'drags the composer's image down', but rather provides a broad paratextual context that allows to situate The Great Kat's own aesthetic practice as part of a line of approaches in which this image has been popularised.

With that in mind, similar to my discussion of the existing popularisation potential of the pieces within The Great Kat's repertoire, I do not wish to imply that the examples mentioned in the last few pages somehow tap into a fundamental quality of the portrait that is then passed on forward. Or that The Great Kat is explicitly drawing from the aforementioned examples, thus presenting a form of popularisation genealogy. Rather I aimed to provide a perspective that serves as a diffusion that de-essentialises the process of popularisation as stemming exclusively from The Great Kat's own work.

In summary, this portion of the discussion engaged with the overall aesthetic of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" artwork, and outlined several parallels between The Great Kat's album artwork and the pop art movement as informing the interpretation of the performer's popularisation potential. I discussed similarities in terms of the image's collage-like construction, the Campiness of the presented persona, as well as to some of the techniques or principles of pop art painters such Andy Warhol, and the presentation of suggestive contents by painters such as Evelyne Axell. Finally, I suggested that not only does the theorised method of identifying the composer's portraits can be framed as a parallel to pop art's interest in 'found objects', but also that the investigation of the creation and historical utilisation of Beethoven's portrait can reveal a strong relation to principles of popularisation that, in turn, further emphasise the implicit role of the principle that can be identified in relation to The Great Kat's use of the image.

Gender characteristics, part 1: Beethoven as symbol of masculinity
When considering the artwork for "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", one may assume that the visibility of Beethoven and The Great Kat exemplify a series of dualisms: a male, Western art music composer and a female, popular music performer. In turn it may be easy to read the correlation between the two visible persons as equally as straight-forward i.e., the (shallow) underdressed female performer is seeking to 'validate' her art via the image of the (more revered) male Western art music composer. Such a reading is not entirely out of the realm of possibility, yet brings with it issues in assuming that either of the visible persons can be assigned only one side of the classical/popular spectrum, and moreover that the relation exists only on the level of validation through the association with a 'higher

value' tradition such as Western art music. In addition, once we introduce the notion of The Great Kat claiming to be the reincarnation of Beethoven, the dimensions of the relation between the two figures becomes implicitly more complex.

This concluding segment of my examination of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" will attempt to engage with some of the gender perspectives that emerge from two persons and the interactions between them. On the one hand, as per my framing of The Great Kat's performance persona within female masculinity, I believe that images such as the discussed artwork help to showcase the complex process through which the performer's gender-framing engages and draws from Beethoven's perception as strongly masculine for the purposes of her own further development. To that effect, I will briefly outline historical aspects relating to Beethoven's framing and will situate The Great Kat's own female masculinity in relation to said context. On the other, as the notion of popularisation has focused on Beethoven as the 'high' culture artefact against which The Great Kat is viewed as the 'popular' component, I want to offer a more differentiated and de-essentialised reading. Namely, that The Great Kat can be interpreted not as simply the 'quasi-naked female performer', but rather as equally contributing to the transgressive potential of the image, by situating her self-framing in a variety of cultural contexts.

When it comes to understanding the construction of Beethoven's gender,[420] musicologist Sanna Pederson suggests that the posthumous framing of Beethoven as "the most virile of musicians" and as representing masculinity that almost entirely purges him from feminine traits (Rolland, quoted in Pederson 2000, 313) has been influenced by historical understandings of gender during the composer's lifetime. The author further argues for the existence of a conflicting perception of the composer as "simultaneously [...] masculine and as ungendered, universal" (Pederson 2000, 314), and explores how the gendering of sonata form, and especially A. B. Marx's assigning of gender categories to the two main themes – i.e. a "masculine *Hauptsatz* and a feminine *Seitensatz*" (Pederson 2000, 317, italics in original) – can be viewed as an extension of the nineteenth century notion of "the complementary nature of the sexes" (Pederson 2000, 316). The contradiction in Marx's clear assigning of a dominant and secondary positions in the structure, which are simultaneously claimed to somehow be equal (Pederson 2000, 317), has been defended by contemporary music theorist Scott Burnham who, in turn, attempts to balance the argument by suggesting that the aforementioned contradiction was "once understood as analogous to the relationship between sexes" and thus represents the foundation of a union i.e. "if the masculine part is more important, the feminine part is indispensable because the two parts must come together to form a perfect whole" (Pederson 2000, 317). When applied to the sonata form, the unification principle that underpins these ideas serves as the foundation of Beethoven's universality, though as Pederson shows, such argumentation still maintains fairly strong masculine-dominating principles. On the one hand, the inherent subjugation of the 'feminine' second theme draws from nineteenth century philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt's musings on the concept of interpersonal love which Pederson critically describes as a "theory of sex

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[420] For critical perspectives on gender relating to Beethoven and/or his music see e.g., DeNora (2002); Fink (2004); Grier (2020); Head (2013, 190–232); Knapp (2003); McClary (1991); Wallace (1999). For a discussion regarding gender aspects in Beethoven's appropriation in disco settings, see McLeod (2006).

characteristics [that explains] why a loving uncoercive marriage of equals must always simultaneously be the subjugation of wife to husband" (Pederson 2000, 317–18). On the other hand, Pederson suggests that in relation to Humboldt's idea of "the male body [as] the rule from which the female deviates" Beethoven's 'ungendered' universality also becomes visible when considering how sonata form as a whole "becomes the rule from which other composers deviate" (Pederson 2000, 320).

Beyond the heteronormativity underpinning of the aforementioned universality of Beethoven, the 'absolute' masculinity of the composer is related to at least two major factors. The first deals with what Pederson refers to as "the masculine sphere of politics" as having contributed to Beethoven's increased and retained masculinity from the perspective of his music reflecting and expressing the universal principles of the French Revolution and as such having an application to a majority of political elements to this day (Pederson 2000, 321–23). The author's critical discussion points to the existing of a desynchronization between the major French Revolution principles (i.e., liberté, égalité, fraternité) and modern understandings of such terms. She argues that "our contemporary ideal of fraternity […] has been shaken by its exposure in recent times as the bond specifically between men" and furthers her critique by stating that "Beethoven's strong association with the concept of fraternity enforces our perception of his masculinity because fraternity means membership in an exclusively male society" (Pederson 2000, 321). Moreover, she points to the narrative of the composer subscribing to said ideals does not match with some of his own writings which reveal an understanding of power as a dividing element separating those such as himself that claim and wield it, and those without power (Pederson 2000, 322). The author furthers her argument by examining the broader implication of the role of music in society at the time by pointing out the combined context of "music, like, woman, helped define the political sphere in the nineteenth century by being specifically excluded from it" (Pederson 2000, 322). As well as the effect of late nineteenth-century realism developments that critiqued music as "merely an escapist irresponsible, and feminizing pastime of the upper classes" leading to Beethoven being pointed to as "proof that music could play an important role in the public sphere" (Pederson 2000, 323).

The second large component of Beethoven's 'absolute' masculinity is framed as the composer's heroic narrative and its relation to the "archetypal narrative of overcoming, of struggle and triumph" (Pederson 2000, 324). This can be identified in Beethoven's renunciation of the Immortal Beloved, a sexuality sacrificing act for the purpose of the music itself that can be contextualised once again through Humboldt's contribution to gender during Beethoven's lifetime. Pederson points that by arguing that "to be masculine is to be freer and more independent from the body in all its mortality", Humboldt expresses a "long-standing and widespread identification of males with culture and females with nature" (Pederson 2000, 320) whereby the latter reduces women to the function of reproduction and positions men as having/being focused on higher universal aims, especially when they renounce their sexuality. Expanding the lens once again, Pederson argues that the idea of the struggle is also closely associated with Beethoven as a reflection of the German tradition of *Bildung* (i.e., the forming and developing of the self and individual abilities through education). Whilst benefiting the historical understanding of the composer as working through and prevailing, it also incorporated a "tradition of viewing woman as an unchanging, eternal essence, as the polar opposite

of the dynamically striving and achieving man" (Pederson 2000, 326) thus reducing them to the idea of simply *being*, leading Pederson to conclude that:

> "The reason why Beethoven is assumed to be the most masculine of composers is that what he and his music stand for is precisely the same ideology that tries to attain universal society in theory while maintaining male domination in practice" (Pederson 2000, 326)

It should be pointed out that the ascription of masculinity to Beethoven's image can also be identified in relation to other composers as well. On the one hand, some have sought to gain from the composer, as exemplified by an argument by Raymond Knapp whose detailed analysis outlines how Richard Wagner developed (and further strengthened) his own compositional direction by "assert[ing] his own musical lineage from the master – all in order to re-inscribe and align a full array of binary oppositions: male-female, rational-sensuous, forthright-devious, […], authority-presumption […]" (Knapp 2003, 46). On the other hand, other composers have been viewed as inherently less masculine than Beethoven, a good example of which being the contrast created between the naturalistic/feminine music and characters of Schubert and the masculine output of Beethoven as discussed by historian Christopher Gibbs who comments that "[m]uch of Schubert's image was created in counterpoint to Beethoven's" (Gibbs 1997, 50), further citing Robert Schumann's own framing of Schubert as having a "feminine character" in comparison to Beethoven (Schumann, quoted in Gibbs 1997, 51).[421] On a final note, the idea of Beethoven's masculinity is extended by Katharine Ellis (1997), who highlights not only the challenges presented by gendered repertoire to female virtuosos in the nineteenth century, but also that in institutions such as the Paris Conservatoire, certain composers (Beethoven including) were continuously not assigned for study by female students (Ellis 1997, 363).
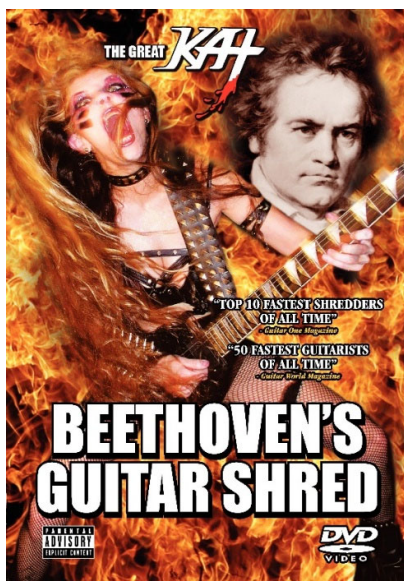
Figure 43: The Great Kat – *Beethoven's Guitar Shred* (2009), DVD artwork

From this historical framework of Beethoven's masculinity (and universality), the question emerges as to whether (and how) The Great Kat navigates the related gender concepts as part of the continuous reincarnation claims of her performance persona, and also in relation to her utilisation of the Jaeger's portrait of the composer. Generally, it is not difficult to suggest that Beethoven and the associated portrait have contributed to the strengthening of The Great Kat's female masculinity; this is no better exemplified than in the DVD album artwork for *Beethoven's Guitar Shred* (see Figure 43).[422] The persona's aggressive manner of expression, being surrounded by flames from which Beethoven's image emerges matches quite well with Susan McClary's own description of the composer's Ninth Symphony as being fuelled by "explosive rage", and containing "one of the most violent episodes in the history of music" (McClary 1991, 128), or Pederson's own

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[421] For other scholarly work that examines the work of Schubert in relation to gender perspectives as well as Beethoven, see e.g., McClary (2006); Webster (1993).

[422] The source of this image can be found in the following bibliographical entry (greatkat.com 2016).

summary of Beethoven's image as "personification of violence, with the source of his repressive and coercive power identified as his masculinity" (Pederson 2000, 314). At the same time however, the album artwork of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" presents a stronger contrast between the more feminine and quasi-erotic framing of The Great Kat and the masculinity of Beethoven' portrait. Given that the 'reincarnation' narrative has not been abandoned, this implies that the artwork can still be viewed as implicitly drawing from Beethoven's masculinity yet this is achieved via slightly different means.

Despite adopting her more outwardly femininity-expressive femme persona, The Great Kat's framing in "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" artwork can be interpreted as balancing between implicitly drawing from the composer's masculinity, yet through her own 'unnatural' and gender-constructed femininity, also refusing the accompanying 'negative' feminisation outlined in relation to the composer. It can be argued that, whilst not as aggression-situated as in *Beethoven's Guitar Shred*, the representation of Beethoven in the artwork of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" carries the same monolithic qualities ascribed to his character, from the large stature of the portrait itself, through the composer's stern and focused gaze 'into the distance', to his 'signature' wild hair styling,[423] which by extension can be viewed as echoing the associated masculinity potential.

With that in mind, the femininity emerging The Great Kat's body does not represent the 'complementary' femaleness/femininity as argued by Humboldt, as her double visibility in the forefront of the image strongly implies that she is by no means comparable to a 'secondary theme'. The Great Kat's depiction is defined by a stark lack of 'female naturalness' and in a manner that undermines generalised notions of 'beauty': she is included twice in the image thus destabilising the idea of the 'unique' and 'natural' woman, and is shown wearing make-up, an element that if applied more sparingly may have had the potential to serve as 'amplifying' natural beauty, however given its exaggerated proportions, creates an even more artificial look. Her hair is also died blonde, yet the roots show a substantial amount of the original brown colour which continues the artificiality of the image, as well as implies 'low-culture', not to mention a 'low class' stereotype of the 'white trash' person and the related excessive sexuality (see Newitz and Wray 1996, 59).[424] Moreover, her framing utilises a series of subtler masculine elements within the artwork: the performer poses with instruments associated with masculinity in heavy metal (electric guitar) as well as Western art music

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[423] I have not specifically examined literature as to whether this aspect is relevant for Beethoven's framing, however if less prudent depictions by the composer are anything to go by such as the artwork for Benninghoff's *Beethoven Bittersweet* (see Benninghoff 1971), or Budapest String Quartet's *The Complete String Quartets of Ludwig Von Beethoven. Quartet No. 15 In A Minor, Op. 132* (see Budapest String Quartet n.d.), then the composer's hair is surely something to be taken as part of his 'signature' look.

[424] The visibility of The Great Kat's two versions not only contributes to the 'manufactured' and 'unnatural' perception but can also be interpreted as contrasting with the idea of women simply 'being' rather than as capable of change. By being depicted as holding a guitar (left side) and a violin (right side), The Great Kat implicitly signals the change that has taken place in her career, namely the adoption of the former instrument in the move towards heavy metal aesthetics. It is also worth pointing out that she is depicting herself here as the femme persona and not the dominatrix that dominated (pun intended) her visual aesthetic for the majority of her career up to the late 2000s. And indeed when compared with the violence- and dominatrix-related elements of *Beethoven's Guitar Shred*, the changes in "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" are substantial: from a new persona, to a new manner of expression, to a new wardrobe etc.

(violin) contexts; she presents more forceful self-framings such as pointing the violin bow at the observer or firmly gripping the electric guitar's neck in what can be described as hinting at the instrument's heavy metal colloquial title as an 'axe'; and overall she shifts the power dynamic between herself and the observer – similar to the effects of Catherine Opie's photography of butch lesbians *Mike and Sky* from 1993 (see Halberstam 1998, 32–35, 38–40 for an analysis of Opie's photography) – by 'staring back' (Halberstam 1998, 35), rather than peering 'into the distance' as is the case of Beethoven. These elements can be described as expressing a combination of subtle masculinity as well as a 'manufactured', 'artificial' or 'unnatural' femininity that doubly disassociates the performer from naturalistic femininity depictions, and in turn enables the self-framing to draw from and be strengthened by Beethoven's masculinity.

Based on these examples, I believe that the relation between the two persons can be summarised as more than a 'cultural reference', but rather as representing one of several approaches through which The Great Kat's self-framing implicitly engages with 'the masculine code' of metal (Weinstein 2000 [1991], 105). By aligning her performance persona with not only one of the most canonised/recognisable composers in Western culture, but also one that is associated almost exclusively with masculinity, The Great Kat both claims support of her Western art music-focused approach to metal, as well as to her capacity to engage (and somewhat undermine) the culture's masculinity expectations. Regardless whether expressing the aggression as we saw in the artwork of *Beethoven's Guitar Shred*, or the more quasi-suggestive framing of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" artwork, the inclusion of Beethoven's image sends an implicit signal that the observable performer is not 'simply' a feminine woman, but rather one that is defined via her female masculinity. It goes without saying, however, that the performer's gender framing is not constructed only via Beethoven's masculinity, and that changes in manner of expression (aggressive as opposed to seductive) do not take place between different artworks, but rather are in constant interplay in her music videos. I will return to aspects as part of the examination of The Great Kat's major performance personas and their interaction with the underlying female masculinity concept.

Gender characteristics, part 2: Situating nudity

Reverting the attention to The Great Kat's visibility in particular, it would be easy to assume that within the context of the artwork for "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" – or most of her artworks, for that matter – the performer's quasi-nude female body is an 'expression' or 'reflection' of popular music aesthetic. Specifically, such a viewpoint would echo stereotypes about popular music's supposed preoccupation with physicality and sex, and/or the enduring idea that Western art music is somehow disassociated from sexual aspects, as pointed by feminist musicologist Susan McClary:

> "[W]hile popular music admittedly addresses issues such as sexuality, classical music (standard concert repertory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) is concerned exclusively with loftier matters. Indeed, it is precisely this difference that many devotees of classical music would point to as proof that their preferences are morally superior to those of the pop music fan: their music is not contaminated by the libidinal – or even the social". (McClary 1991, 54)

However, rather than implicitly supporting the questionable 'absoluteness' of this division by considering The Great Kat's quasi-suggestive self-framing represents nothing more than 'superficiality', in the next few pages I will argue that said framing can be interpreted as contributing to the performer's classical/popular transgressive (and by extension popularisation) potential. To that effect, I will briefly present three broader contexts in which the gender components of The Great Kat's aesthetic can be situated thus making the latter as simultaneously relatable to both classical and popular music contexts.

The first context in which The Great Kat's gender component can be situated relates to instances in which album releases employ a comparable suggestive and classical-combining aesthetic direction. During my investigation on the utilisation of the composer portraits integrated in The Great Kat's artwork, I examined a large selection of random releases related to the music of composers Beethoven, Mozart and Paganini on the site Discogs.com. Amongst these releases, I identified multiple examples in which the front artwork of albums by both classical as well as popular music performers, combines the erotic connotations of the quasi-exposed female body with intertextual references to the classical[425] (see Figure 44 to Figure 49).[426] The wide timeframe of these albums (1963 – 1993) together with being released across different music labels[427] in a variety of Western countries, allows to suggest that there exists a longstanding, albeit disparate, practice of utilising the quasi-nude female body in both popular and Western art music contexts in relation to which The Great Kat's own album artwork can be framed.[428]

When compared against the sample artwork provided below, it is easy to identify similarities to The Great Kat's own approach of signifying the classical in (and beyond) her own artwork: the inclusion of a classical composer's portrait parallels the release by Chris Daniels & The Kings; The Great Kat's artwork for *Digital Beethoven on Cyberspeed* has also utilised a broken bust of Beethoven thus presenting a similarity to the two white-marble-like busts used in the Daniel Barenboim record (see The Great Kat 1996a); finally the 'eighteenth-century' resembling costume worn by the woman on the front of *Best of Mozart* compilation, strikes me as quite similar to the costumes used in The Great Kat's video "Bach's Brandenburg Concerto #3" (The Great Kat 2018b)[429] as (most likely) visual signifiers of

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[425] Philip Tagg's extensive examination of Abba's track "Fernando" touches on a similar phenomenon in relation to the album artwork of Anni-Frid Lyngstad's 1975 *Frida Ensam* album, and specifically in its quasi-masturbatory framing of the performer, which the author then briefly contextualises through a comparison of similar poses in the artwork of Roxy Music's *Country Life* from 1974 (Tagg 1999, 108–9). For another brief discussion on nudity in album artwork see F. Fabbri (1982, 139–40).

[426] For sources of the used images: Figure 44 (see Various Artists 1971a); Figure 45 (see Eurythmics 1987); Figure 46 (see Daniel Barenboim 1970); Figure 47 (see Van Ludwig Orchestra [ca. 1978a]); Figure 48 (see Franck Pourcel 1992); Figure 49 (see Chris Daniels & The Kings 1991).

[427] The exception here are Figure 44 and Figure 46 which were released under the Westminster Gold label.

[428] As this is by no means an exhaustive examination of all records related to the aforementioned composers, it is possible that additional examples related to either Beethoven, Mozart, Paganini (or any other classical composer for that matter) may be identified, should the artwork be explored in a systematic fashion.

[429] The video was originally released in 2009 as part of The Great Kat's DVD, *Beethoven's Guitar Shred* (The Great Kat 2009), though I am referring to a digital re-release via the Amazon Prime Video streaming service.

Bach's music and related time period;[430] though to be clear, I am not implying that The Great Kat draws directly from the aforementioned sources. With that in mind, The Great Kat's contrast between quasi-eroticism and the classical in her visual aesthetic is much more consistently utilised, and can be described as simultaneously more explicit as well as presented with more strongly ironic subtexts.

The parallel between The Great Kat and this context can be extended to the examples' popular/classical genre-transgressive practices. On the one side, the popular music performers represented in the images below have engaged with various hypertextual auditive practices, from the disco renditions of Western art music of Van Ludwig Orchestra, through the inclusion of Chris Daniels & The Kings' cover of Chuck Berry's own rock challenge Western art music via "Roll Over Beethoven" (see Broyles 2011, 300–304) to Eurythmics' "Beethoven" that, whilst not referencing the composer's music directly, may be summarised as drawing from and transforming the notion of Beethoven's rebelliousness via the music-video narrative depicting a female character challenging societal female gender roles.[431] On the other hand, the visibility of the quasi-exposed female body in releases by Western art music artists such as Daniel Barenboim or the Various Artists release (as including several notable orchestras such as Vienna State Opera Orchestra, Vienna Radio Orchestra and the Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London), may be interpreted as transgressive if framed as an 'echo' of a similar tendency in (at the time) contemporary popular music releases e.g. the controversial first print of Jimi Hendrix Experience's *Electric Ladyland* (The Jimi Hendrix Experience 1968b)[432] in its depiction of multiple nude women; the full frontal nudity of both John Lennon & Yoko Ono in their *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins* (John Lennon and Yoko Ono 1968b); or the more 'artistic' framing of female nudity in Terry Callier's *What Color is Love* (Terry Callier 1972b).[433]

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[430] Whilst the contrast between a portrait of Bach and The Great Kat quasi-suggestive self-framing in the artwork for the corresponding CD release of "Bach's Brandenburg Concerto #3" (see greatkat.com n.d.e) is comparable to the discussion of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", I find that the aforementioned music video's use of similar costumes to serve as a useful way to extend situating the performer's suggestive self-framing.

[431] For discussions of Lennox's work in relation to gender contexts see e.g., Middleton (1995); Rodger (2004).

[432] Examples for the artwork for popular music albums I outline in this paragraph can be found in the following bibliographical entries: *Electric Ladyland* (see The Jimi Hendrix Experience 1968a); for *Unfinished Music No. 1* (see John Lennon and Yoko Ono 1968a); for *What Color is Love* (see Terry Callier 1972a).

[433] A recent phenomenon that helps to frame the act of including a quasi-nude female body not only as a general popular/classical phenomenon but also as relevant to progressive music aesthetic is the series of videos by the singer Toyah Wilcox, known for her work in the multiple renditions of the band Toyah, and the guitarist (and spouse) Robert Fripp, most-directly associated as the only consisting member of the highly canonised progressive rock band King Crimson. Specifically, beginning sometime during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Wilcox and Fripp gained a fair amount of popularity for releasing a series of short videos titled "Toyah & Robert's Sunday Lunch" in which they created brief covers of well-known popular music tracks. Of note here is that in some instances Wilcox engages (and is framed by media as engaging) with quasi-suggestive behaviours e.g., wearing a somewhat see-through top without a bra in the video covering Metallica's track "Enter Sandman" (see Lewry 2021); or during the cover of ZZ Top's "Sharp Dressed Man", Wilcox briefly 'flashes' Fripp (see Erel 2021). Whilst the articles certainly frame these covers as on the playful side, their significance for offering a widespread co-relation between a progressive rock performer (and one whose output has historically touched on the borders of heavy metal, e.g., see Martin 1998, 157, 252; see also Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 439) and more suggestive content should not be overlooked in terms of their capacity to normalise suggestive behaviour in close proximity to progressive music.

Figure 44: Various Artists – *Best of Mozart* (1971); front artwork

Figure 45: Eurythmics – *Beethoven* (1987); front artwork

Figure 46: Daniel Barenboim – *Piano Concerto No. 3 / Choral Fantasy* (1970); front artwork

Figure 47: Van Ludwig Orchestra – *Sock It To Me Tchaïkovski* (1978); front artwork
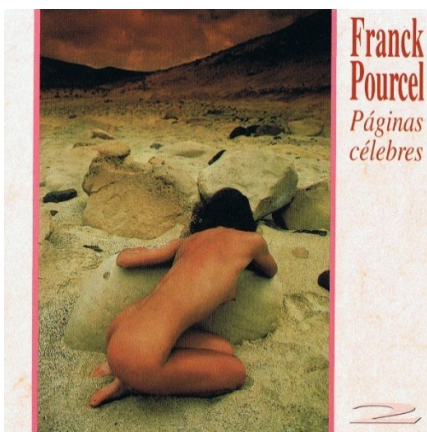
Figure 48: Franck Pourcel – *Páginas Célebres 2* (1992); front artwork

Figure 49: Chris Daniels & The Kings – *Roll Over Beethoven* (1991); front artwork

The second context I wish to refer to, is The Great Kat's utilisation of her near-naked body as comparable to the framing of the female nude in art studies discourse. In her study on the role of female nudity in visual art *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (1992), the art historian Lynda Nead discusses the depiction of the nude female body as connotating art (Nead 1992, 2) and further argues that "the representation of the female body within the forms and frames of high art is a metaphor for the value and significance of art generally" (Nead 1992, 3). This description is not intended as an uncritical glorification of the Western aestheticization tradition, but rather is accompanied by an examination of a series of frameworks – "mind/body, form/matter, art/obscenity […] the beautiful and the sublime" (Nead 1992, 22) derived from one of the earlier (and as Nead points out, rarely critically challenged) works on the female nude, that of Kenneth Clark. Nead argues that "one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body" (Nead 1992, 6) and is critical of Clark's distinction between "the naked [that] belongs to the inferior, female set of the body, whereas the nude is an extension of the elevated male attributes associated with the mind" (Nead 1992, 14). From this framework, The Great Kat may not have been depicted (or rather has not framed herself) as nude, but only partially clothed, however one can suggest that a comparison to art studies' framework is nevertheless possible as both her Western art music education and the popular culture argument that album artwork can constitute a 'work of art' (e.g. see Grasskamp 2004 for the application of such argument on the album artwork of Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album), can be considered as providing conceptual 'frames of high art' as outlined by Nead.

From the perspective of her Western art music education, rather than imply that The Great Kat's quasi-suggestive framing is derived from her transition towards popular culture – and thus inadvertently repeating the negative modernist gender association between mass (or popular) culture and women/femininity as critically outlined in the work of Andreas Huyssen (1986, 44–62) – it can instead be argued that The Great Kat's work (including visual facets) is more closely related to the ideas of postmodernism as her genre-transgressive output associates her with "one of the few widely agreed upon features of postmodernism [namely the] attempt to negotiate forms of high art with certain forms and genres of mass culture and the culture of everyday life" (Huyssen 1986, 59). Such argumentation can be supported by pointing to similarities between The Great Kat's self-framing and the work of postmodernist female performers that explored issues of gender and sexuality in active relation to that of their own naked bodies e.g., the performance art pieces of American artist Carolee Schneemann, or the work of Austrian artist Valie Export (see Juno 1991, 67–77, 186–193; Wentrack 2014). In addition, from the perspective that The Great Kat has been a primarily independently published performer since the mid-1990s, choosing to constantly include her near-nude body in album releases suggests a high degree of agency that contrasts the (most likely) randomly selected female models in the aforementioned practice of framing the female body in album artwork, thus subverting the idea that the framing of the eroticised female body becomes 'ennobled'.

However, it is important to also reflect on Nead's critical perspective that contrasts Kantian notions of "aesthetic of universal judgement" with the former also suggesting that "the female nude

[can] not only [be placed] at the centre of the definition of art but also on the edge of the category, pushing against the limit, brushing against obscenity" (Nead 1992, 25).[434] She continues:

> "The female body —natural, *un*structured —represents something that is outside the proper field of art and aesthetic judgement; but artistic style, pictorial form, contains and regulates the body and renders it an object of beauty, suitable for art and aesthetic judgement". (Nead 1992, 25, italics in original)

Referring back to The Great Kat's presenting a 'manufactured', and even more so a highly 'artificial' image (e.g., different hair colour, excessive make-up etc.), allows to view her self-framing as echoing Nead's perspective, yet somewhat adjusted to the popular music contexts. Namely, in the same way the unstructured female body pushes against the regulating purposes of aesthetic judgement, The Great Kat's 'manufactured' self-framing undermines a popular culture demands in structuring of the female body as normatively attractive. In other words, The Great Kat's self-framing can be viewed as contributing an art studies-comparable approach to quasi-nudity to the popular music-focused artwork of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", yet the 'manufactured' aspects of the framing undermine both the 'naturalistic' and thus 'suitable for art' perspectives as outlined by Nead, as well as the popular culture field's body-regulation expectations of normative attractiveness.

The ironic connotations of The Great Kat's self-presentation can also be seen as contributing to this latter perspective by echoing Nead's argument that "meaning is organized and regulated at the edges or boundaries of categories" and, borrowing from Mary Douglas, suggests that practices that push against boundaries of acceptability hint at "possibilities for a feminist critique of patriarchal representations of the female body and may suggest some directions for alternative ways of representing — through art practice and criticism — the female body" (Nead 1992, 33). Specifically, in contrast to the aestheticization of the nude female body that classical art champions, The Great Kat's self-framing fairly often contains a distinctly ironic underpinning due to the discontinuity between the implied quasi-erotic suggestiveness and The Great Kat's extreme make-up, exaggerated facial expressions or body-positions resulting in a perception of the performer as representing herself as anything but an attractive or as an affirmatively eroticised subject.

The implications of this discontinuity serve as the point of transition of this discussion into the third important context to which The Great Kat can be situated, namely popular music in which feminism informs aesthetic decisions by the female performers, a point of discussion that is relevant in line with the performer's self-ascription as relating to feminist concepts. Based on her approach to

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[434] Another context that merits a brief mention is that of a similar popularisation- and partial nudity-related phenomenon stemming from the realm of theatre, namely *pose plastique* or "the act of one or more performers appearing as 'living statues'" (Huxley 2013, 218). Specifically, David Huxley's discussion focuses on the work of the Australian female performer Pansy Montague, as professionally as 'La Milo', as a performer that incorporated the same *pose plastique* principle in her representation of statues drawing from Greco-Roman (and to a lesser degree Anglo-Saxon) mythology and history during her music hall performances at the turn of the twentieth century. Whilst music has no bearing on this context, the combination of quasi-nudity, popularisation principles, classical art contexts, and even aspects of multi-mediality – e.g. the transition between two or more *pose plastique* poses was supported by projections of comedic drawings from Montague's business partner, the cartoonist Alec Laing (Huxley 2013, 222) – can offer a historical parallel to aspects in The Great Kat's self-framing outlined in this discussion.

suggestive self-framing, The Great Kat's aesthetic strikes me as comparable to popular culture performers associated with third wave feminism, whereby in this context, the ironic (or aggressive) framing of the nude female body is often utilised as a tool for presenting feminist perspectives. As a brief outline of third wave feminism, Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan (2004) discuss the term as representing a social movement that comprises of multiple (and varied) definitions of feminism which altogether can be summarised as the feminism of a newer generation of women (the timeframe usually dated from the mid-to-late 1980s onwards) that both drew from the efforts of the second wave whilst acknowledging, and attempting to rectify, the latter's shortcomings:

> "These perceived limitations would include [the third wave's] sense that [second wave feminism] remained too exclusively white and middle class, that it became a prescriptive movement which alienated ordinary women by making them feel guilty about enjoying aspects of individual self-expression such as cosmetics and fashion, but also sexuality – especially heterosexuality and its trappings, such as pornography". (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, 169)

The authors also emphasise that changes brought forward by the third wave were aimed to reflect the changing social circumstances of women in contemporary periods, as well as the idea that popular culture is a powerful force that both shapes the experiences and realities of women, but also can and should be used as a tool for political activism (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, 170–71).

This broad and very succinct description of characteristics of third wave of feminism[435] aims to highlight elements of the movement that, in my opinion are quite applicable to contextualising the body-framing of The Great Kat. For starters, it is possible to view the quasi-nudity of the performer as in-between the body- and sexuality-affirmative aspects of third wave feminism, yet simultaneously the ironic underpinning of the performer's presentation suggests a coherence with female performers that are known for not conforming to standard femininity e.g., Courtney Love as highlighted by Pilcher and Whelehan (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004, 170).

Furthermore, the combination between the suggestive self-framing in the album artwork of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" (as well as most images within The Great Kat's visual aesthetic), self-empowerment, and the performer's underground artist status can be seen as paralleling the aesthetic of artists within the Riot Grrrl movement: Babes in Toyland's *Nemesisters* (Babes in Toyland 1995b) and its juxtaposition of a baroque wood framing and popular culture/violence hinting framing of the performers; Lunachicks' *Binge and Purge* (Lunachicks 1992b) and its framing of the artists in a traditional femininity-undermining context; or Liz Phair's eponymous album (Liz Phair 2003b) which bears similarity to that of The Great Kat's own *Beethoven on Speed* album artwork in its suggestion of depicting a naked woman that 'hides' behind the guitar.[436] Whilst The Great Kat's output does not consistently confront the listeners with the same politically charged message as is the case for Riot

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[435] For a collection of essays that examine in great detail the workings of third wave feminism, see Heywood and Drake (2003 [1997]).

[436] Examples of album artworks by the mentioned performers can be found in the following bibliographical entries: *Nemesisters* (see Babes in Toyland 1995a); *Binge and Purge* (see Lunachicks 1992a); *Liz Phair* (see Liz Phair 2003a).

Grrrl bands such as L7 or Bikini Kill – a comparable example will be discussed in relation to the investigation of her dominatrix persona – her work can be described as within the boundaries of female self-empowerment, as one of the main topics to which both Riot Grrrl, and third wave feminism in general, are associated with contributing.

Finally, the influence of punk sensibilities to Riot Grrrl bands such as Bikini Kill allows to also consider some parallels between The Great Kat and artists from the broader punk milieu. For example, The Great Kat's near-nude ironic self-framing, and especially in instances where the performer's female masculinity-related aggressive manner of expression 're-emerges', can be compared to the near-naked performances of the female frontman of the punk rock band Plasmatics, Wendy O. Williams – referred to colloquially as "The Queen of Shock Rock" (e.g., see B. Thomas 2017). The importance of such a comparison lies not only in the potential parallels to punk's deemphasizing or even criticising the display of traditional notions of 'natural beauty', but also that it enables to view The Great Kat's approach to nudity as comparable to the same sexuality-based provocation tactics that Riot Grrrl bands enact through their band names (e.g., Jack Off Jill, or Pussy Riot). This, once again, does not imbue The Great Kat with the same level of political activism, though it does allow to view the expressed sexuality of her work as within a feminist context which re-introduces the feminist perspective to her seemingly 'simply' suggestive album artwork.

Overall, this perspective has showcased the depth of interpretative possibilities towards the classical/popular transgressive potential The Great Kat's quasi-nude framing. My goal was to highlight that by positioning the performer's self-framing in a series of historical contexts this perspective can contribute to the de-essentialisation of the performer as the 'naked woman' that 'drags the composer's image' into popular contexts, but also that the quasi-nudity itself can be seen as an important factor contributing to the performer's popularisation capacity.

Section conclusion

In conclusion, my interpretation of The Great Kat's "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" has offered some exemplary arguments as to how the principles of popularisation as well as intertextuality (be it on an aural or visual levels) can be observed in the performer's output. My discussion of the auditive level explored the piece's hypertextual musical elements, as well as argued for the potential to interpret some of the performative and arrangement aspects of the piece as relating to gender aspects. The examination of the artwork highlighted the parallels between The Great Kat's aesthetic and method of selecting classical composers' portraits and the pop art movement, as well as showcased the pre-existing popularisation contexts that can be identified in relation to Beethoven's portrait in particular. Finally, I examined the gender aspects of the image by highlighting how Beethoven's historical association with masculinity can be seen as contributing to The Great Kat's own gender framing, as well as argued that her quasi-nude body can be interpreted as equally as important in terms of contributing to the popular/transgressive potential of the performer.

As the individual sections have hopefully exemplified, the quasi-suggestive self-framing of The Great Kat certainly confronts observers with aspects of gender in relation to the performer's output. Though as I hope to have showcased through these perspectives, the performer's self-framing can be

interpreted as not simply 'prominent' or 'noteworthy' but as complexly interweaved in the understanding of her output. As I outlined, my discussion on the relation between Beethoven's masculinity and The Great Kat's self-framing was not an attempt to position the latter as 'dragging down' the former's image. Rather I hope to have illustrated that, in relation to the reincarnation claim, The Great Kat's gender framing can be considered as strategically drawing from the composer's gender framing, which, in turn, has potential benefits to her perception in the masculine-focused heavy metal culture. This by no means explains her entire gender-related construction, and I am by no means claiming a sense of 'co-dependency' (i.e., The Great Kat's work cannot, or could not, have functioned without said gender-relation); though the discussion does allow to view the interaction as more than 'attention grabbing'- or 'bizarre'- behaviour, on behalf of The Great Kat.

Similarly, my arguments regarding the parallels between the performer and the pop art movement, the ability to situate her work as part of a broader tendency in culture transgressive albums featuring nudity, and the complex signification potential in relation to the suggestive framing in relation to art and feminist tendencies hopefully allowed for a more comprehensive overview of the general dimensions of her self-framing. The purpose of these overviews was to situate the self-framing practice and suggest its productive importance to her creative output, as well as to de-essentialise her quasi-suggestive body as either a representation of popular music's supposed overemphasis on sex, or as contributing nothing more than the suggestive counterpoint against which 'more important' facets are introduced. Nevertheless, I avoided more in-depth suggestions about aspects such as the role of feminism, as those will be addressed more thoroughly after outlining her performance personas later on.

Overall, I hope that the discussion has revealed the potential for examining pieces from The Great Kat's repertoire as incorporating a complex interaction between the popularisation of Western art music and gender aspects, that remains somewhat hidden behind a performance persona whose image may otherwise be dismissed as 'just another naked popular performer'.

11.4 Authenticating virtuosity in the video "Paganini's Caprice #24"

I would like to begin my discussion of authenticity processes in The Great Kat's output by recounting a brief anecdote relating to one of my first experiences with the performer. In early 2018, I was invited by my colleague Laura Fleischer to present a session in her gender-studies seminar "Masculinity in Popular Music", for which I decided to explore the topic of female masculinity. Amongst several other examples I chose for the session's discussion, having recently discovered some of The Great Kat's work, I included a brief video interview conducted sometime after the release of her second album *Beethoven on Speed* (see n.a. 2011). The interview in question was quite typical for The Great Kat's performance persona, presenting her loud, forward, and brash behaviour which took some of the students aback, whereby some referred to the aggressiveness of the performer's delivery as not only 'annoying', but also as 'untypical for women'. Whilst the Great Kat's offstage behaviour – as well as the reactions of the students – both help to exemplify the effects of the performance persona's female masculinity, the aforementioned self-framing behaviour can also be viewed as contributing to her establishing heavy metal authenticity. Her aggressive behaviour can be understood as in line with how rock/metal performers behaved during public appearances (e.g., Guns n' Roses' band members

destruction of a TV studio's set during an MTV interview see, Revolver Magazine 2014) and thus echoes Weinstein's early observations on 'the masculine code' of metal (Weinstein 2000 [1991], 105) and its requiring female fans (and by extensions performers) to behave and act masculine or risk expulsion. Whilst the fact that the interview was more-or-less conducted by The Great Kat (seemingly) with minimal input from the interviewer strikes me as similar to a different example of this type of behaviour as exhibited in 2006 by Sebastian Bach, known for his work as lead singer of the American heavy metal band Skid Row (see Цонев 2016, 23–24).[437]

Whilst The Great Kat's relation to Beethoven and her oft repeated reincarnation-claim can be framed as means for the performer to gain a similar type of notoriety as described above, from the perspective of 'authenticity' this relation seemingly emphasises the notions of 'monumentality' or 'significance' when supporting the performance persona. As a virtuoso female player, however, The Great Kat is confronted with a different, yet equally as substantial, challenge to framing her output. Specifically, within heavy metal culture's norms, notable and/or widely known virtuoso guitar players were, more often than not, mostly men. Moreover, as briefly mentioned in the previous interpretation, the historical framing of Beethoven as somewhat incapable player does not provide a sufficient foundation to the virtuoso challenge at hand. To that effect, I am interested in pursuing the perspective as to how The Great Kat may have tackled this challenge by examining one further continuously repeated claim, namely, that her work is only comparable to the output of Western art music composers such as Paganini (e.g., see The Great Kat n.d.).

The depiction of virtuosity on both guitar and violin is fairly central to The Great Kat's performance persona, yet in most interviews she avoids (or ignores) questions regarding comparisons or influences from popular music artists[438] with similar performance characteristics such as Yngwie

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[437] As the source is written in Bulgarian, and not that easy to come-by, I will provide a brief summary of the events. The book is the quasi-memoir of Цонко Цонев [Eng. Tsonko Tsonev], a former Bulgarian city-mayor and organiser of a highly prominent heavy metal festival in the town of Kavarna, Bulgaria whereby the book focuses on retelling his encounters with local and foreign hard rock and heavy metal performers. Regarding Sebastian Bach, Tsonev describes that the performer was invited to perform at the festival, and whilst friendly upon arrival in Bulgaria in 2006, when asked for an interview, the latter stated he will be asking, and answering, interview questions about his work and the upcoming concert (Цонев 2016, 23–24). Whilst from my perspective this is a rather arrogant behaviour by Bach – one that may not be as positively received in the US, as opposed to an Eastern-European country – Tsonev's account suggests that he was impressed by Bach's confidence. From this perspective, the argument can be made that such brash behaviours may still conjure respect from some observers more deeply engaged with heavy metal culture as a whole.

[438] Whilst I have taken a predominantly critical perspective against notions of 'influence', it is worth mentioning that The Great Kat has actively positioned herself outside of looser genealogies that may have contributed to the development of classical-derived legitimation. For example, Fellezs has outlined that some music critics have employed "all the rhetorical moves of a dated style of classical music and interpretation" towards developing a lineage between guitar virtuosos as means of authentication, through "a substantive historical context for positioning metal musicians as artists rather than as the embodiment of heavy metal's worst stereotypes – plodding incomprehensibility, naïve self-importance, and bellicose posturing" (Fellezs 2018, 120). As The Great Kat does not overtly engage with her virtuoso peers, it is difficult to determine her stance to such external approaches, though I would not be surprised if she is familiar with them and some of the aspects presented in the following examination represent a form of (implicit) parallel to said idea.

Malmsteen (e.g., Metal-rules.com 1997; Dalley n.d.; Metalian.com n.d.; truemetal.org n.d.).[439] As such, the claim that she is the only double virtuoso since Niccolò Paganini implies that her abilities are comparable to the composer (see e.g., D. Locke 2018; Rune 2010; Wisniewski 2017; Conexión Rock Honduras n.d.) which, in turn, suggests the establishment of a more involved connection to the composer.[440] From this perspective, I will argue that The Great Kat's video for "Paganini's Caprice #24" includes multiple allusions to the myth of Paganini as a 'demonic' performer[441] and that the implied connection can be interpreted as The Great Kat not only emphasising her Western art music education but also as representative of processes that authenticate the performer as a virtuoso within heavy metal (and by extension progressive metal) aesthetic.

The examination of authenticity is aimed less as means of supporting my claim of The Great Kat's relation to progressive metal, but rather to offer a theoretically founded perspective on how her predominantly cover-based output can be seen as both overcoming the challenges of a female virtuoso performer in heavy metal culture, as well as what Davies outlines as a negative co-relation between women and lack of credibility and authenticity:

> "Credibility is closely associated with the idea of authenticity, and this is automatically denied to women who are seen as being in any way manipulated or not in control of their own material (e.g., by singing other people's songs). If they are not performing their own material, then they cannot be expressing something 'real' about themselves. Credibility is also

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[439] That said, I was able to locate isolated instances in which an interview includes The Great Kat mentioning her respect towards the work of Jimi Hendrix, and Ozzy Osbourne (e.g., ram.org 1997; Rune 2010; vampster.com 2001a), with the latter example more specifically pointing to guitarist Randy Rhoads (Forbes 2017). The admiration towards Hendrix is notable as he is considered a pivotal figure in rock culture, as well as for his extensive electric-guitar techniques (e.g., see Christman 2010; Turner 2015), and his work has been discussed as containing a fair amount of progressive and psychedelic aspects (see Whiteley 1990; also Whiteley 1992, 15–27); whilst Rhoads' work together with Ozzy Osbourne is known for its usage of Western art music devices in a heavy metal context (see Walser 1993, 78–93). That said, to avoid essentialising this aspect as entirely pertaining to heavy metal contexts, Hegarty and Halliwell's examination of female performers in progressive rock have pointed out Tori Amos' reluctance to be framed as continuing the work of a similar performer in said genre (namely, Kate Bush) which in turn is contextualised as "reminiscent of the similar disavowal made by Marillion about the band's Genesis influence" (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 216). Similarly, Covach has argued that Hendrix's psychedelic output, and the broader phenomenon of the Summer of Love from 1967), were an important influence towards the progressive rock genre, though the author makes clear that despite performers such as Vanilla Fudge, Touch, Iron Butterfly or some isolated instances of The Doors (e.g. the intro to the track "Light My Fire") having included borrowings from Western art music (Covach 2000, 20–23), Hendrix specifically did not engage with the practice that extensively (Covach 2000, 21).

[440] As a quick aside to both of the discussed aspects, The Great Kat has at times argued that she is a performer transferring violin techniques to the electric guitar, and as such I was surprised to find little-to-no mention or comparisons between her work and that of Mark Wood – another Julliard School of Music graduate violinist and (to my knowledge) one of the few that positions his work in continuous active dialogue with heavy metal. For example, Gareth Heritage (2016) summarises Wood's album *Voodoo Violence* (1991) as "fus[ing] violin playing with heavy metal instrumentation to generate a sound that is indistinguishable from that of other late-'80s/early-'90s heavy metal instrumental albums" (Heritage 2016, 62). Furthermore, beyond the various electric-guitar shaped violins visible on his album artwork, his related business sells multiple lines of electric violins – 'Wood Violins' – that feature instrumental shapes borrowing from established imagery of guitars in metal culture, such as Gibson's Flying V, or Fender Stratocaster/PRS Guitars shapes (e.g., see Woodviolins.com n.d.).

[441] The relevancy of this interpretation can be further strengthened by interviews in which the performer has referred to Paganini as exemplifying "demonic virtuosity" (see Illinois Entertainer 2006, n.p.), which contributes to the previously mentioned close-framings of The Great Kat in relation to the performer.

associated with intelligence and seriousness, and when women display these (e.g., by commenting on politics or talking about depression) they are often derided, although male artists doing exactly the same thing are often lionized". (Davies, quoted in Strong 2011, 402)

The subsequent examination will be based on the following structure in its constitutive sub-sections. I will begin by presenting a brief overview of the concepts of authenticity and virtuosity, both in a larger scale from the respective perspectives of Allan Moore and Hans-Otto Hügel, as well as in reference to progressive metal contexts thus establishing a base context and some key conceptual perspectives that will appear later in the discussion. This will be followed by an interpretative close reading of "Paganini's Caprice #24", in turn, beginning with a broad overview of characteristics of both the music video, as well as the accompanying track. Next, I will outline several specific shots from the music video in which allusions to the myth of Paganini can be established as per Maiko Kawabata's examination of the phenomenon. Finally, I will showcase how the aforementioned shots can be interpreted as signifying a relation to the concept of virtuoso outlined by Hügel, though organised via Moore's typology of different approaches to authenticity-investing gestures. The sub-section "Third person authenticity" is where the majority of gender perspectives will be situated due to the specificity of the track's construction.

Framing authenticity and virtuosity

If there ever was a need for a contextual section outlining some of the implications of specific terminology, it would be the applications of the core-terms utilized in this section, namely 'authenticity' and 'virtuosity'. Both terms can be considered highly charged in the context of popular music research, and as such are loaded with a variety of implications that pertain to which genre is being referenced, the gender of the performer, the historical period etc., making them not only complex to summarise but also highly problematic due to the often-conflicting understandings that emerge in different discussions. To frame my discussion of these aspects in The Great Kat's video, I will focus on two articles that, in my opinion, are of tremendous help to the investigation at hand: Allan Moore's (2002a) investigation and re-framing of the concept of authenticity and Hans-Otto Hügel's (2003) historical overview of the virtuoso concept, which I will expand a bit further by touching on virtuosity's framing in progressive metal and its meta-genre precursors.

Moore points out that 'authenticity', or many of its derivatives, is arguably amongst the most charged terms used in musical discourse, whether utilised in fan discussions, journalistic writings or academic research (A. F. Moore 2002a, 209). Indeed, it can be argued that most genres or musical styles place certain emphasis on the ideas of what is, or is not, authentic which becomes observable in the dialogue that exists between the performer's transmission of a (musical, lyrical etc.) gesture that is to be perceived as authentic to that genre's conventions, and the listener's (be it fan or critic) own viewpoint on whether the aforementioned transmitted element is deemed as 'authentic'. This changing and evolving relation between the performer's and the listener's ideas of authenticity is

considered one of the main aspects of a genre's semiotic rules as per Fabbri's theory of musical genres (F. Fabbri 2004, 11–13).[442]

To counter the often difficult to manoeuvre value judgements that accompany the framing of a gesture within a performer's music as 'authentic', Moore's overview of the understandings of authenticity in popular, folk and Western art music traditions argues for the need of a different perspective which "rather than ask *what* (piece of music, or activity) is being authenticated" instead should focus on the "who" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 210). Moore's proposal aims to move away from the somewhat simplistic division between the authentic as a counterpart to terms such as 'entertainment' (A. F. Moore 2002a, 211) and attempts to re-define the concept of authenticity by presenting a typology consisting of three forms of authenticity underpinned by the idea that, due to being based on culturally contesting interpretations, authenticity "is ascribed, but not inscribed" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 210) to most artefacts.

Moore outlines the first category as 'authenticity of expression', or 'first-person authenticity', which emerges when an "originator (composer, performer) succeeds in conveying the impression that his/her utterance is one of integrity, that it represents an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 214). This form of authenticity does not simply emerge from the performer but rather is to be perceived by audiences as such, which becomes possible whenever an involved audience interprets acts or gestures by certain performers as "investing authenticity"; thus, it is not the acts themselves that the audience finds authentic but rather the performer himself/herself as originator of the aforementioned gesture.

The second category, titled 'authenticity of execution', or 'third person authenticity', is summarised as successfully "conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 218) which by "tracing back to an original […] validates the contemporary" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 215). Whilst the authenticity of execution presents a seemingly outward perspective i.e., "[b]y appropriating, by exhibiting trust in and making available to a broader audience" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 216) including the specific performance characteristics by specific groups of artists – e.g., Moore's example focuses on Eric Clapton's search for the roots of the blues tradition and his recording (and thus authentication) of the work of Robert Johnson and black blues artists in general – the importance of accuracy of representation is also linked to the aforementioned first person authenticity. Specifically, in addition to the increased effect of 'investing authenticity' that is likely to be perceived by audiences in relation to performers that provide an unmediated, yet historically rooted, performance, Moore argues that a core principle of third person authenticity relates to a performer balancing a duality that is being able to communicate common feelings, in a way understandable to his/her audience, yet to do so in ways that transcend the experience. Moore specifically points to the similarity between the ideas of an authentic rock singer's balance of such principles and the national music-ideas of composer Vaughan

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[442] It goes without saying that the concept of authenticity is not limited to that of whether certain musical gestures are accepted by a community, but also extends to broader aspects such as how listeners of the music construct their authenticity when they adopt the label of fan.

Williams who aimed to "unit[e] the social function of music […] with the transcendent claims of a functionless art music" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 217).

The third and final category is referred to as 'authenticity of experience' or 'second person authenticity', which Moore outlines as "a performance succeed[ing] in conveying the impression to a listener that that listener's experience of life is being validated, that the music is 'telling it like it is' for them" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 220). Moore's discussion of this type of authenticity frames it as affecting – or more accurately as affective towards – the listeners' positioning within the cultural constructs of "mainstream/margin, centre/periphery, or coopted/underground" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 218). Specifically, different cultural artefacts are deemed authentic or not based on whether listeners are able to identify said artefact as providing them a "place of belonging" as well as "a cultural identity in the face of accelerating social change" through a process of transfer "from a situation in which the 'naïve' individual, secure in her subjecthood, authenticates her actions and experience simply by undergoing them, to a situation whereby others are allotted the same vividness of experience such that their actions ground the first individual's security" ultimately concluding that "music we declare to be 'authentic' is the music we 'appropriate'" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 219).

I consider Moore's typology to be particularly useful to my discussion as it allows to examine The Great Kat's work from the lens of how certain actions presented in her videos contribute to one or more of the aforementioned types of authenticity. The concept's flexibility is also quite useful as, despite the relative autonomy of perceived effects that observers/listeners can interpret in relation to the three types of authenticity, all types may be identified in the output of a single performer. Moreover, utilising Moore's approach to authenticity and its observation-centric underpinning is quite conducive to the interpretation emphasis of my work, as well as allows to consider the interpreted videos less from the perspective of 'how well does this act/gesture fits into progressive metal's understanding of authenticity', but rather from a broader angle of 'how do the gestures within the videos contribute to authenticating The Great Kat as a metal guitar virtuoso'.

With regards to the concept of virtuosity, I will derive the contextual framing primarily from Hans-Otto Hügel's article on the virtuoso,[443] yet also expand some of his primarily historical-focused observations with considerations regarding the role of virtuosity in the contexts of metal and progressive genres. The term and fundamental concept of the virtuoso is derived from the Italian language, whereby since the sixteenth century it denotes a person whose skills, be it intellectual, physical, or otherwise, distinguish him/her from other people (Hügel 2003, 491). Since ca. 1740 the term is utilized in close proximity to the profession of the musician, with the differentiation based on the professionalism and focus on competition that underpins the virtuoso musician, as opposed to their craftsman-likened musical peers (Hügel 2003, 491). Skills or other powerful virtues are not the only characteristic that developed the understanding of the virtuoso. In relation to the nineteenth century's finance pressures, the framing of concerts as individual events necessitated for virtuosos to be of a high standard not only musically but also performatively (Hügel 2003, 491). The expressive

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[443] For an additional short overview of the violin virtuoso profession that expands the discussion into the twentieth century as well as outlines further historical developments in relation to countries such as Russia, USA, Israel or Japan (and neighbouring countries such as China or South Korea), see I. Wagner (2015, 10–23).

performances that relied not only on the work itself, but focused on the visual/gestural aspect of the performance were, on the one hand, supported by the connoisseur listener and his/her ability to appreciate the performance in both its aural and visual levels, and on the other hand, the externalized-emotions aspect of the performance was perceived as simultaneously expressing a musical role as well as the 'ego' of the performer (Hügel 2003, 491).

Hügel argues that the continuously negative critical perspectives towards virtuoso figures between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries are related to their popularity and increased concert activity, despite the comparatively smaller scales (i.e., number of concerts) and lack of clearly distinguishable popular culture as understood in the twentieth century. The resulting equation between the virtuoso's popularity with the art critics' ascribed notion of "the popular almost appears to be just a poor version of art" (Hügel 2003, 492)[444] suggests that most virtuosos were effectively perceived as a phenomenon related to popular rather than high culture. That said, the 'popularity' of the virtuoso is not a matter of novelty, but rather results from the compatibility between the depicted skill and effort, with the bourgeoisie praise of the "cult of highest performance" [Ger. "Kult der Höchstleistung"] and its accompanying "cult of work" [Ger. "Kult der Arbeit"], and more importantly, the depiction of skill is then overlaid with the virtuoso style and virtuosity of the performance.[445] Whilst this combination implies that the virtuoso "stands historically and systematically between the artist who has the status of a craftsman and the one who is a star" (Hügel 2003, 492),[446] Hügel suggests that it is nevertheless the projected image of the performer (with its related combination of role and self-presentation) that is of tantamount importance as the centre of the produced performance.

To counteract the art-critics' negative framings against their relation to the popular, virtuosos began to develop their personas through aspects such as public relations, and more specifically that of the music press, whereby of special note given the current investigation is Hügel's discussing Paganini as the first virtuoso to successfully achieve this. The relation between Paganini and the press can be summarized as the creation of a highly memorable experience in which the "representation of [the virtuoso's] image" is equally as important as the aural component of the performance (Hügel 2003, 492).[447] This not only "offers […] a projection surface that allows for different ideas, associations and sensations",[448] but also serves as the starting point of a media image that precedes, rather than follows, the performer. Though, as the author points out, said image is not entirely in the hands of the

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[444] Ger. Orig. "Das Populäre erscheint in der Kunstkritik nahezu notwendigerweise nur eine schlechte Ausgabe der Kunst zu sein".

[445] This specific framing is indicated by the author as drawn from the Hanns-Werner Heister's two-part monograph *Das Konzert. Theorie einer Kulturform* (1983, 214) who writes: "Professionelle Virtuosität fügt sich [...] bürgerlichen Prinzipien auch insofern durchaus ein, als der Kult der Höchstleistung - letztlich auch ein Kult der Arbeit - den Idealen aristokratischer Sozialgruppen auf der Basis arbeitsloser Einkommen widerspricht".

[446] Ger. Orig. "Der Virtuose steht daher historisch und systematisch zwischen dem Künstler, der den Status eines Handwerkers hat, und dem, der ein Star ist".

[447] Ger. Orig. "Paganini präsentiert im wörtlichen Sinn ein Image, indem er eine einprägsame, bildhafte Darstellung von sich erschafft. Er ist mindestens im gleichen Maß ein Bild- als auch ein Höreindruck".

[448] Ger. Orig. "Der Virtuose bietet - wie später im 20. Jh. die Stars - eine Projektionsfläche, die die verschiedenen Vorstellungen, Assoziationen und Empfindungen erlaubt".

performer as after a certain point it becomes "a pre-formed media image" that is being reproduced.[449] Thus, as Hügel suggests Paganini creates an "art figure" [Ger. "Kunst-Figur"] that refocuses the musical performance in the sense that "[t]o hear and see Paganini means to communicate with an image in which the work and the art figure can no longer be separated" (Hügel 2003, 493).[450]

Given that for Paganini it was the depiction of technical skill that served as the core of the experience and thus subsequently led to the formulation of the media image, Hügel points to reviewers' inability to (rationally) comprehend the complex virtuoso individuality that mixes the depiction of the performer, his/her skill, self- and role-representation, and as "neither is conveyed through the composition, but communicates itself directly in the performance" this led to the utilization of otherworldly characteristics so as to explain the performer's technical skill (Hügel 2003, 493).[451] Nevertheless, in relation to Schumann's own praise of Paganini's contribution to the virtuoso perception, Hügel concludes that Paganini's public relation "was hardly surpassed in the 19th century, at most it was varied" (Hügel 2003, 493),[452] signalling both a historical and continued perception of the composer as not only a virtuoso but also an innovator.

This overview serves as a guideline of some aspects that, in my opinion, can be detected in The Great Kat's "Paganini's Caprice #24" video and by extension as helping to characterize how the ideas of virtuosity are paralleled towards her performance persona. In addition, Hügel's article presents some additional and highly illuminating points regarding the virtuoso in avenues such as theatre, circus performers and actors, though I will incorporate these later on in the interpretation as smaller points serving to enhance the argument. Rather, at this point I would like to briefly consider the implications of virtuosity as relating to the genres of heavy metal and progressive music.

The concept of virtuosity, and most commonly (but not exclusively) understood as virtuosic instrumental performance, can be described as an aspect relevant to the aesthetic of the progressive metal genre, though determining its framing is somewhat challenging due to said aspect being shared by the genre's two main meta-genre precursors: progressive rock and heavy metal. Based on the historical relation to the aforementioned meta-genres, an easy conclusion would be to accept virtuosity as a constant in progressive metal. Academic discourse has determined virtuosity as highly important aspect to heavy metal (see e.g., Berger 1999b, 57; Walser 1993, 50–51, 57–107) as well as progressive rock (e.g., Ahlkvist 2011, 649; Edward Macan 1997, 191), though this does not suggest that it is the same approach to virtuosity at play in both instances. Whereas heavy metal bands tend to emphasise voice-, electric guitar-, or drum-virtuosity and usually those are presented individually, in contrast, progressive music scholars have argued that said genre focuses more on the depiction of virtuosity in relation to group composition/improvisation (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 65, 204)

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[449] Ger. Orig. "Sein Bild ist zwar ganz sein eigenes. Es gehört aber ihm nicht ganz, denn es ist ein schon vorgeformtes Medienbild, das er erneut hervorbringt".

[450] Ger. Orig. "Paganini hören und sehen heißt, mit einem Image kommunizieren, bei dem Werk und Kunst-Figur nicht mehr zu trennen sind".

[451] Ger. Orig. "Der Virtuose zeigt sich und seine Technik, betreibt Selbst- und Rollendarstellung. Beides ist nicht vermittelt über die Komposition, sondern teilt sich im Vortrag unmittelbar mit".

[452] Ger. Orig. "Er wird, was die Beherrschung virtuoser Darbietungsaufgaben wie seine Öffentlichkeitsarbeit angeht, im 19. Jh. kaum übertroffen, höchstens variiert".

or on "flashy displays of virtuosity for every instrumentalist in the ensemble" (McCandless 2013, n.p.; also, Bowman 2002, 214n2; Edward Macan 1997, 67).[453] Moreover, the meta-genre nature of the terms progressive rock and heavy metal allow for instances where virtuosity is either not required e.g. Hegarty and Halliwell argue that virtuosity is not an essential component as that would implicitly exclude bands fulfilling other criteria of progressive rock (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 10); or conversely, virtuosity is criticized or downright denied from within other sub-genres, as was the case for grunge exemplified (amongst other examples) by Blind Melon's dismissal of Dream Theater's progressive metal virtuosity (Friesen and J. S. Epstein 1994, 13), and in the nü metal genre, whereby some bands were not interested in employing virtuosic solos so as to differentiate their approach from that of other sub-genres (Custodis 2016a, 57). In addition, both meta-genres have been discussed as deriving some of their virtuosity from their interest/incorporation of elements of Western art music, though equally as important are heavy metal's blues (e.g., see Weinstein 2000 [1991], 16) and progressive rock's jazz elements (see Covach 2008) that further help to contextualise virtuosity as having a shared as well as separately-reached aspects. This shared-yet-separate aspect of virtuosity has also led to some ideas such as Wagner's argument that without the oft criticised 'self-indulgence' of progressive bands such as Rush and King Crimson "metal bands that aspire virtuosity and grand imagination might never have evolved from their primal core" (J. Wagner 2010, 31); though such framings ignore the argument by Walser made in the early 1990s which position the same instrumental dedication as related to the increased interest in more professional education that players such as Randy Rhoads or Eddie Van Halen were associated with (Walser 1993, 67–92). Conversely, whilst it is easy to point to metal performers such as Yngwie Malmsteen as representative of virtuosity that is perceived as 'self-indulgent', this does not imply that such characterization stems from the similar de-authenticating critiques aimed against progressive rock in the 1970s.

Focusing on progressive metal specifically, determining the role of virtuosity in the genre is somewhat challenging. That virtuosity plays a major role in progressive metal can be supported by academic writing (e.g., see Custodis 2017; McCandless 2013) and is also visible in journalistic writing on progressive metal (e.g., see J. Wagner 2010). With that in mind, however, a historical and cyclical condemnation of virtuosity as a depiction of skill without substance – e.g. J. N. Burk's (1918) condemnation of virtuosity as a fetish, strikes me as comparable to the (high-art) criticism against Antonio Lolli's imitation of animal voices on the violin in the eighteenth century as described by Hügel (2003, 492) and Dana Gooley (2006) discusses critical perspectives against virtuosity in the nineteenth century – continues through the twentieth century as well, visible both in the progressive rock and heavy metal-related virtuosity criticisms but also in contemporary criticism against what is perceived as 'empty virtuosity' or 'instrumental masturbation' in progressive metal. The use of such terminology against some progressive metal bands can be identified within album reviews I have examined in the first half of this study (see Footnote 50), but also such notions have been commented on in academic writing. For example, as part of Jeremy Wallach and Esther Clinton's re-evaluation of Walser's

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[453] With that in mind, this performance principle is not exclusive to progressive rock, as Lilja has pointed out that in relation to parallels between jazz and heavy metal "the practice of collective improvisation, which is common in all post-bebop jazz, was significant in blues rock and early 1970s heavy metal (Lilja 2009, 33).

"dialectic of freedom and constraint", the authors outline progressive metal's "stress[ing] of maximum expressive freedom for every instrument" which is contrasted to black metal's "austere musical conventions promot[ing] an aesthetics of confinement", whereby the resulting conclusion states that "Black Metal is the *only* Metal subgenre where one-man bands are an acceptable norm – one-man Black Metal is art; one-man Progressive metal is onanism" (Wallach and Clinton 2017, 107, italics in original).

In summary, based on the presented perspectives, virtuosity can be summarised as of importance to the progressive metal aesthetic, so long as it is not perceived by observers as 'empty'. I believe that my discussion will address such a potential in relation to the various polysemic and interpretative aspects found within The Great Kat's music video and related track.

Interpreting "Paganini's Caprice #24"

Moving on to the examination of The Great Kat's video, as previously mentioned, my interpretation will first introduce the piece by briefly situating it in The Great Kat's output, as well as offer a succinct overview of the video's aesthetic, types of shots and pacing, including some observations on the auditive elements of the corresponding musical track. The second larger section of the interpretation will engage with a close-reading of specific shots, situating them in relation to the ideas of authenticating virtuosity. I will present a summary of seven shots in which allusions to the myth of Paganini can be identified, and will group situating their authenticity potential in relation to Moore's third person and first person authentication typology, as well as offer a brief reflection on the element of irony in relation to the video. The consideration as to how the allusions to Paganini can be related to gender aspects in The Great Kat's performance persona is included as part of the aforementioned third person authenticity, as the most relevant context from which such observations emerge.

Summary of notable video- and auditive-characteristics

The video for "Paganini's Caprice #24" was released as part of The Great Kat's 2009 DVD compilation *Beethoven's Guitar Shred*[454] and serves as the visual companion piece to the corresponding track from the CD compilation *Beethoven Shreds* (The Great Kat 2011).[455] The video's duration is representative of The Great Kat's common practice of creating music videos that precisely match the length of their corresponding music tracks, and as such it contains no sections that prioritise the video over the original track's progression (e.g., a non-musical intro). In addition, "Paganini's Caprice #24" is quite typical in terms of The Great Kat's approach to video-structure as it presents a series of brief, visually saturated and rapidly-changing shots, that are implied to share some continuity though it is difficult to suggest that they depict a cohesive overall narrative. Said difficulty is further exacerbated by the shots' often challenging to interpret contents, whether independently or in relation to one another. The aesthetic of "Paganini's Caprice #24" can be described as based around predominantly dark-coloured (e.g., black or red) settings that are presented through The Great Kat's distinctive DIY and

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[454] My examination and referenced timecodes are based on the version of the video available on the digital distribution platform Amazon Prime Video (The Great Kat 2018g), supplemented by a higher-quality audio track from the corresponding *Beethoven Shreds* album.

[455] The track should not be confused with "Paganini's 24th Caprice" (subtitled 'Violin Caprice in A Minor arranged for guitar') that appears on the performer's *Beethoven on Speed* album from 1991.

low budget style, whereby a perceptible occult theme can be deduced through the visibility of religious crosses in various shots, amongst other things. From a production perspective, the video features several real-world low-budget sets that either consist of simpler backgrounds to the depicted events (e.g., black or gold-curtains behind the performers), or some shots employ a more elaborate set design e.g., a quasi-fence made out of what appears to be crossed bars, adorned with skulls and chains. Additionally, green-screen generated effects such as flames, smoke or a 'white noise' are also used as background in certain shots e.g. [00:02 – 00:06], [00:42 – 00:50], [01:24 – 01:26] respectively. In terms of filming technique, two types of shots predominate in the video: The Great Kat is depicted performing as part of the overall set and visual framing, or conversely her image is (most likely) superimposed through the aforementioned green-screen filming technique with this latter technique allowing for multiple instances of The Great Kat to be visible on the screen.

With regards to figures/characters identifiable in the video, three 'groups' can be broadly defined: first, The Great Kat as wearing multiple costumes – a black leather and studs lingerie-based costume with inverted crosses on the front of the performer's thighs that can be described as overall synchronous to her general dominatrix look; and a red-lace lingerie-based costume with a large metal cross worn around The Great Kat's neck, at times supplemented with a long red cape and a purple top-hat, which when connected to the appearance of these costumes in specific shots implies some variability in terms of the persona or character she represents. Second, several groups of hooded 'monk' figures wearing black, cream, or red-coloured hooded robes and sizable chained crosses around their necks can be observed whereby they also fulfil multiple duties i.e., they are depicted as either engaging in non-music activities (e.g., 'worship'-reminiscent activities) or as the backing band seen in certain shots. Third, miscellaneous characters such as a devil-masked figure can also be identified whereby said figure's costume implies a somewhat separate role in the video than the previous group. The focal point of most shots is The Great Kat performing on the violin or the electric guitar, most often by herself, though a backing band consisting of the hooded figures is also seen on several occasions. It should be mentioned that no other character (be it singular or a group), can be described as having a role equating to The Great Kat's centrality in the, however vague, sequence of events depicted in the video, yet they are of importance as, through their non-musical interactions with the persona, multiple allusions to the myth of Paganini become identifiable.

The combination between the extreme pacing of the video's shots and their dense and seemingly disjointed content suggests the first parallel to the concept of the virtuoso, namely that "the skill of the virtuoso demands an expert who can perceive and appreciate it, classify and compare it" (Hügel 2003, 491).[456] Specifically, one way to interpret this video-editing approach is as presenting a 'challenge' to the observer whereby (similar to most videos by The Great Kat) it almost necessitates an observer to view the material multiple times before being able to identify what each shot contains. This becomes elevated to a need to examine videos almost frame-by-frame so as to first properly see many elements, and second to attempt an interpretation. As my interpretative close-reading will

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[456] Ger. Orig. "Das Können des Virtuosen verlangt den Kenner, der es wahrnehmen und schätzen, einordnen und vergleichen kann".

show, whilst many elements initially appear as insignificant, upon closer inspection they suggest complex parallels to both the named classical composer as well as heavy metal aesthetic and culture.

This 'challenge' can be considered as contributing to a process of (however excessively and performatively) cultivating a specialist audience in co-relation to the audience-separation practice of the performance persona. Multiple interviews present The Great Kat as dividing audiences into those that have not been 'woken up' by the performer's output or do not have the 'IQ' for it (e.g. Adrenaline Zine 2001; Dalley n.d.; Mercati 2000; Skinny Devil Magazine 2012; R. van Poorten n.d.), which can be contrasted with the 'Kat Slave Club' (i.e. those that 'get her work'), with the latter's abilities measured, for example, by a 'KAT I.Q. Test' included in the booklet of her early album *Beethoven on Speed* (see The Great Kat 1990a). Whilst the overall approach can be dismissed as a marketing ploy aimed to develop *any* audience by erecting walls between fans and non-fans, the combination between The Great Kat's description of her music as 'Genius', her moto to 'Wake up!' as an invitation, and the aforementioned challenge to perceiving and subsequently interpreting the video of "Paganini's Caprice #24" enables the possibility for some fans to be sufficiently 'agitated' by the performance persona so as to closely examine her output and potentially identify the contained classical allusions.

To be clear, whilst the difficulty in 'taking-in', and by extension interpreting, videos such as "Paganini's Caprice #24" is quite real, I doubt that The Great Kat's aim is to develop a highly specialised audience that is capable of identifying the variety of allusions to the classical. Rather, I suspect that what is of importance here is the perception of such an audience existing around The Great Kat as it can serve as a (performer-manufactured) context that complements the adoption of the virtuoso figure. In other words, even if observers do not engage with the classical contents at a deeper level, from the perspective of the co-dependence between the virtuoso and his/her audience, the implication of a specialist audience existing around The Great Kat benefits her claim to the virtuoso mantle by subtly emphasising her instrumental prowess. Moreover, bearing in mind the contemporary criticisms against virtuosity as simply empty showmanship, the complexity of the artefact provides a tangible (and historically-informed) foundation that can be brought forward – whether by fans or by The Great Kat – as a form of defence against such accusations. Finally, as mentioned at the beginning of this investigation, from the perspective of progressive ideology, the complexity and challenge within the video of "Paganini's Caprice #24" can serve as one of the arguments regarding The Great Kat's consideration as a progressive metal artist, as both the necessity to engage with the music video multiple times in order to explore them fully, as well as the idea that such engagement is born out of the inherent challenge that the cultural artefact provides, echo the argument as to what contributes to the progressive music experience as expressed by reviewers of progressive metal bands.

The auditive level of The Great Kat's "Paganini's Caprice #24" transformation can be described as one of the more impressive pieces in her repertoire both in terms of her ability to perform nearly all of Paganini's original composition in one and a half minutes, as well as from the perspective of this track having one of the most professionally-sounding productions.[457] As is the case for many of The

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[457] My comment is not intended to criticise The Great Kat's other work, but rather to emphasise that even in her predominantly DIY aesthetic there are tracks that stand out for their more polished production.

Great Kat's pieces, the title establishes the intertextual 'contract' so as to signal its relation to Paganini's work, and also references the act of re-arranging from its solo violin original to be performed by a 'guitar, violin & band' as shown in its 'subtitle' on *Beethoven Shreds* track listing.[458] With regards to the ensemble, the violin and the electric guitar are utilised with a soloistic function, whilst the band (consisting of drums, bass guitar, as well as an additionally-mixed electric guitar), provide a heavy metal-styled accompaniment. The Great Kat's version can be summarised as an intertextual 'cover' in Lacasse's terms, as it presents nearly all of Paganini's original theme, variations and finale in her own specific style, barring both Variations IX and X, and repetitions outside of the opening theme and the first half of Variation III (see Figure 50, red outline). The tempi are much faster than most classical recordings/performances of the piece I explored, and The Great Kat's approach seemingly prioritises the consistency of the tempo rather than introducing tempo alterations as found, for example, Variation IV and its use of the violin's high registers. Furthermore, the dynamics are flattened i.e., removing the dynamic contrasts that can be found in some variations (e.g., between Variations VI and VII), instead remain consistently between forte/fortissimo.

In terms of the approach to transforming the piece, it is noticeable that The Great Kat seemingly alternates between performing one of the variations somewhat accurately to the original text, whereby the performance of the next variation is somewhat more abstract. As an example of this approach, the performance of Variation I [00:10] can be described as relatively accurate in its following of the melodic contour, with the only notable change being the inversion of the final octave jump from moving downwards to moving upwards (see Figure 50, green outline).[459] In contrast, when performing Variation II [00:17], The Great Kat seemingly rewrites the melody to consist only of the first half-step alternating notes and omitting the scalic movement upwards or downwards that comprises the latter half of most bars (see Figure 51, red outlines).

This alternating approach to the material's (fairly) accurate retention or alteration continues throughout the track, though it is not completely predictable. For example, the performance of Variations IV [00:34] focuses on the audibility of the glissando-based octave jumps that conclude with a trill or whammy-bar tremolo (rather than the original's a chromatic passage) in the high register of the violin, whilst the following Variation V [00:41] also does not stay close to the original. The characteristic features of this variation – accented lower notes followed by an upwards jump that presents a half- or full-tone step down with each tone followed by an octave lower jump – are adapted so that the accompanying ensemble perform a 'flattened' version of the melody that (i.e., avoiding the octave jumps) in the lower register. This is complemented by an additional 'flattened' line on the violin and solo electric guitar which uses the aforementioned glissando in the upper register and substitutes the octave jumps for trills. The performance of Variation XI [01:11] and the Finale [01:18] can be described as having received the most adjustments, as the former is the most difficult to

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[458] For an additional in-depth investigation on the relation between Paganini's Caprices and electric guitar virtuosity, see Andrew Davenport's (2008) PhD thesis which offers both a transcription of all of Paganini's Op. 1, as well as an overview of performative techniques for the accomplishment of such performance.

[459] Notated examples are derived from a Schott edition score of Paganini's Caprice 24 edited and arranged by Fritz Kreisler, specifically the solo violin part (Paganini 2001, 1).

immediately recognise; whilst the rendition of the piece's Finale places an extreme emphasis on the glissando-jumps technique and the double-stop passages within the section are completely removed.

Throughout the piece the violin and lead guitar share the soloistic role and often perform the main melodic line in unison [00:00 – 00:24] though some sections prioritise the sonority of one instrument over the other: e.g., the violin has a somewhat elevated role in Variation III [00:24 – 00:34] whilst being omitted/substantially reduced in Variations V [00:41 – 00:48], VII [00:56 – 01:04] and VIII [01:04 – 01:10] which, in turn, are performed primarily on the lead electric guitar. Although performing together in Variation IV[460] [00:34] the instruments' volume levels are sequentially adjusted roughly every two bars until [00:39] thus creating the effect of the instruments alternating performing parts of the melodic line and omitting the final descending notes (see Figure 52).[461] Also, despite this oft observed unison performance-approach, the instruments at times employ different articulation, e.g., in Variation I the violin performs in staccato/marcato whilst the electric guitar plays in legato; or the most contrasting example is Variation XI where the violin performs a series of ricochets (alternated with spicatto passages) whilst the electric guitar prioritises a tremolo effect.

The accompaniment by the drums, bass guitar and the 'second' electric guitar is also intriguing as, through their own set of techniques, it seemingly echoes the accurate/abstracted approach of the solo instruments. For example, the drums appear to alternate between utilising the alto and toms to match the broad rhythmic pattern of the main melodic line (e.g., in the performance of the main theme and Variation III) with a punk-reminiscent accompaniment i.e., bass and snare drums alternating with the hi-hat struck on all beats (e.g., Variations I, IV); the drums' support of Variation VI extends to the use of a quasi-blast-beat technique of sixteenth notes performed on both bass drums. The bass can be described as alternating between providing a quarter-note accompaniment that is based on the lowest and/or emphasised notes of a bar (e.g. opening theme or Variations I and IV) or performing in unison with the second electric guitar (e.g. Variations II, III) thus providing a fairly typical deeper foundation to the sound as found in metal-aesthetic bass-performances; a notable exception here is Variation VIII which seemingly prioritises the bass and its arpeggiated accompaniment.

This summary of the video's aesthetic, approach to pacing, included figures and their actions, as well as the overview of notable aspects of The Great Kat transforming of Paganini's original, should serve as sufficient introduction to the piece and its general characteristics. The next section will continue the interpretation of the artefact by examining seven shots through which the allusions to Paganini can be interpreted, as well as how said shots can be framed as contributing to The Great Kat's virtuoso-based authenticity.

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[460] Please note that the caption of Figure 52 refers to the contents as "Var. 4" in contrast to the image designating the excerpt as "Var. 3". This is due to the edition representing an arrangement of the piece by Fritz Kreisler who implemented a number of changes, including the removal of several variations. That said, the contents were cross-checked with a Peters edition (see Paganini ca. 1910) containing all variations, and the depicted image accurately presents the contents of Paganini's Variation 4.

[461] The sections in which the guitar is heard more predominantly are indicated in red outline, their violin-emphasising counterpart in green, the equal-sounding section in blue, and the omitted final passage in orange.

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Figure 50: Paganini - Caprice XXIV, Theme

Figure 51: Paganini - Caprice XXIV, Var. 2

Figure 52: Paganini - Caprice XXIV, Var. 4

Figure 53: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:09]
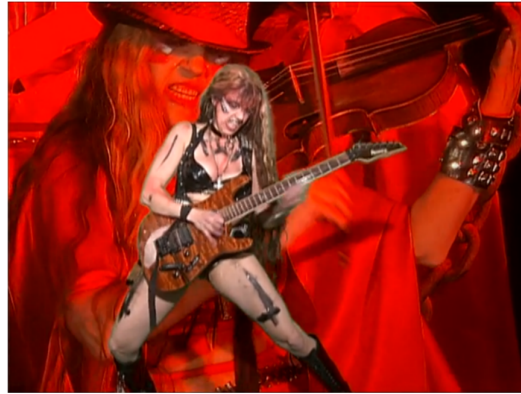
Figure 54: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:12]

Figure 55: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:25]

Figure 56: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:54]

Figure 57: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:38]

Figure 58: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:57]

Figure 59: "Paganini's Caprice #24", timecode [00:01]

Allusions to Paganini's myth in seven key shots

Having broadly outlined the notable characteristics of the music video and the corresponding track, my interpretation will focus on examining seven shots (see Figure 53 through Figure 59)[462] taken from various parts of the video. Whilst at first glance these may be considered as simply echoing the (stereotypical) association between fantasy/occult themes and heavy metal, I would argue that the shots incorporate allusions to the popular occult-related mythology surrounding Paganini and can be interpreted as authenticity-investing gestures utilised by The Great Kat. In this subsection, I will briefly summarise each of the shots and will contextualise the contained allusions by drawing from the work of musicologist Maiko Kawabata (2007).[463] The author provides an exhaustive contemporary overview of how the myth of Paganini was created in relation to a variety of factors ranging from the composer's biography, the broad framing of the violin as a gendered instrument and the violinist as a controversial cultural figure, as well as Gothic sensibilities that captivated contemporary audiences during Paganini's lifetime.

The first set[464] of shots depicts several hooded figures standing behind an improvised fence whereby The Great Kat grabs a sheet of paper from one of the hooded figures and proceeds to sign it using a wooden cross as a pen (see Figure 53); a few seconds later, she is depicted in the background layer of the video performing on the violin (see Figure 54). Kawabata's research argues that one of the most common characterisations within Paganini's myth was the ascription of the occult, and more specifically critics describing him as a "*malificus* – a person who makes a pact with Satan"

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[462] The used images are derived as screenshots taken from The Great Kat's video for "Paganini's Caprice #24" (see The Great Kat 2018g).

[463] For an even further in-depth discussion of Paganini as a whole, and additional aspects relating to his myth, see Kawabata's (2013) book length study on the subject.

[464] y 'set' I am describing a pairing of two shots organized from top to bottom and left to right. In other words, the first 'set' describes the two topmost images (Figure 53 and Figure 54), the second 'set' the next pair etc. Also, as timecodes are added to the captions of the images, I will not be repeating them in the main body of the text.

(Maiko Kawabata 2007, 88, italics in original) as a result of the composer's performance abilities. This helps to contextualise the aforementioned set of images, whereby the combination of a broadly speaking occult setting as implied by the hooded figures and decorative human skulls, as well as the symbolism of using a cross so as to sign something, creates a strong suggestion that the depicted act signifies a 'deal made with the devil'. In addition, the improvised fence can be interpreted as prison bars and as such related to a different aspect of the myth, as encountered by Louis Spohr in 1816, namely "the […] rumor that Paganini had spent four years in prison for murder and developed his virtuosity there" (Gooley 2005, 376). The second of the two shots therefore can be interpreted as the result of the 'contract', with the performance character presenting her impressive performative skills on the violin. The connection to Paganini's myth can also be established by the somewhat uncharacteristic sparkling top-hat worn by The Great Kat only in these shots of the video, as the accessory's cultural association with the figure of the magician enables a connection to the variety of names under which Paganini was ambiguously referred to e.g., "sorcerer", "wizard" and "magician" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 87).

The second set of images showcases two instances whereby black-hooded figures are surrounding The Great Kat either standing around the performer (see Figure 56) or are shown reaching towards her, both in a somewhat uncharacteristically golden-coloured set (see Figure 55). These images can be interpreted in relation to the idea that, for many of Paganini's contemporaries, there existed little-to-no difference "between demonic collusion and demonic personification" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 90) when ascribing the occult to the composer, thus leading to Paganini being dualistically referred to as someone that made a pact with the occult, as well as someone that embodies it i.e., as a manifested demon. Kawabata's analysis explores a caricature of Paganini by the German painter Johann Peter Lyser (see Figure 60; see Kapp 1922, 9)[465] from ca. 1828, which captures the demonic connotations surrounding the composer, with the author pointing out the inclusion of folkloristic occult behaviours such as "a possessed nun with hands outstretched in the act of devil-worship" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 88) depicted just outside of a circle of occult symbols that surround a 'demonic' Paganini dancing mid-violin-performance. Whilst I am hesitant to suggest that The Great Kat has incorporated a direct reference to Lyser's painting, an allusion to Paganini's demonic personification aspect may be deduced within The Great Kat's video through her depiction being surrounded by what is to imply 'monks' (based on the crosses on the necks suggesting their connection to the Christian religion) whose outstretched hands may signify a quasi-worshiping act.

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[465] A brief note on the bibliographical data for this image. Kapp's publication presents all images, including the discussed caricature, at a new section at the end of the book whereby the page numbers of said section begins anew. The secondary table of contents that outlines all images can be found on page 165 of the publication (Kapp 1922, 165).

Figure 60: *Karikatur auf die Wiener Konzerte* by Johann Peter Lyser (ca. 1828)

The third set of images showcases how a similar group of 'monks' are performing as a backing band to The Great Kat (see Figure 57), and include the visibility of a figure wearing a devil-resembling costume and face mask (see Figure 58). These two shots strengthen the idea that the video presents a sustained ambivalence regarding The Great Kat's character as implying both demonic collusion as well as demonic personification. In Figure 57 this is primarily accomplished through the internal references that the 'monk' characters create. Their visibility as The Great Kat-character's backing band relates them not only to the former's aforementioned demonic personification, but also as the same figures from which The Great Kat's character seemingly signed a contract to receive her musical ability. More importantly, they can be related to the myth of Paganini involving comparisons to the Gothic sensibilities of the main character in Mathew Gregory Lewis' Gothic novel *The Monk,* whereby Paganini is being characterised as a "brooding villain [who] consorted with depraved monks and nuns" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 97).

On Figure 58, the idea of demonic collusion is more prevalent, extended through visibility of the red-cloak masked figure visible to the left of The Great Kat. The red cape and sharper features of the mask struck me as similar to the depiction of Mephistopheles in the advertisement posters of the 1926 Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau film *Faust* (Figure 61; see also Murnau, Friedrich Wilhelm 1926).[466] Whilst the similarity to the poster may be incidental, the figure's appearance can be read as an allusion to the myth of Paganini as, influenced by the popularity of Goethe's novel during the composer's lifetime (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 90), contemporaries referred to Paganini quasi-derogatively as both Mephistopheles by virtue of his performative skills but also as 'Dr. Faustus'.

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[466] For image source, see imdb.com (n.d.).

Figure 61: Promotional material for *Faust: Eine deutsche Volkssage* (n.d.)

The final image (see Figure 59) depicts a 'blood' covered The Great Kat who, mouth agape, stares maniacally at the camera, whereby the shot's connection to the myth of Paganini is both fairly obscured as well as revolves heavily around the aspect of gender. Kawabata discusses a particular change in the historical image of Paganini during his lifetime, as the general understanding of the violinist as a charming rogue[467] developed into comparisons to acts of violence and murder. This change was facilitated by a combination of the gendering of musical instruments around this period and the associated feminine connotations of the violin which were amplified by the "Romantic fantasies that centered on the violin as an object of erotic desire" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 94). When combined with the violence-ascribing descriptions of Paganini's expressive performance e.g., the visually striking effects of the damaged hair of his bow during performance and the "rumors of Paganini's violent, criminal past", the resulting effect was the "creat[ion of] the image of a remorseless sadist who piled abuse onto women and violins" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 95). From this perspective, the shot in The Great Kat's video takes on a potential double meaning, as on the one side, it can be interpreted as quasi-representing the historical violence-ascribed connotations derived from Paganini's supposed history. On the other hand, bearing in mind the occult-implications later on in the video, said context simultaneously allows to interpret the shot as a rudimentary representation of 'hell' and as such the blood-covered The Great Kat can be read as one of Paganini's supposed female 'victims' as described in parts of his mythology.

Having explored how specific allusions to the myth of Paganini can be interpreted from the aforementioned shots, in the following sub-sections of the interpretation I will focus on offering perspectives as to how said allusions are utilised as authenticity-investing gestures. Whilst thus far I have referred to the allusions as pertaining to the depicted character in "Paganini's Caprice #24", I will argue that said allusions can be interpreted as a subtle adjustment of the historical framing of the virtuoso figure experience as "communicat[ing] with an image in which the work and the art figure can no longer be separated" (Hügel 2003, 492). Specifically, in this instance the emphasis lies less in the notion that it is the uniqueness of the performer that informs the performance, but rather the framing is extended so as to develop parallels between Paganini's occult-related contexts and The Great Kat's virtuosity-focused performance persona. In other words, through a combination of the allusions' polysemic potential as signifying both classical as well as popular elements, as well as the central underlying Gothic concept shared between Paganini's myth and heavy metal aesthetic, it can be argued that the allusions not only carry relations to the broad concept of virtuosity, but also become interpretable as authenticity-investing gestures strengthening The Great Kat's first person

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[467] Oxford Dictionary of English defines "rogue" as either "a dishonest or unprincipled man" or more pertinently "a person whose behavior one disapproves of but who is nonetheless likeable or attractive" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 1526).

and third person authenticity modes in relation to heavy metal's semiotic and technical rules (see F. Fabbri 2004, 10–13).

Third person authenticity

Several aspects from the aforementioned shots can be discussed as aiding in the development of Moore's third person authenticity or "the acquisition of an authentic mode of expression" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 218) in relation to their polysemic and genre-tradition transgressive potential. Taking as an example the shot depicting the occult-related practice of signing a contract with the devil in exchange for musical skill, in addition to its allusion to the myth of Paganini, it can be interpreted as echoing similar narratives identifiable in the histories of multiple popular music guitarists: e.g. blues guitarist Robert Johnson (see H. Everett and Narváez 2001 who discuss Johnson and Paganini's demonic myths), and Helen Farley's discussion of similar rumours surrounding Led Zeppelin (see Farley 2009) is also of note here. Given that heavy metal's early musical language drew from both classical as well as blues traditions (see Lilja 2009, 152–94), the polysemy of the occult-related narrative allows for a high degree of thematic compatibility with multiple sources closely associated with the origins of the genre.[468] Such gestures can then be read as signalling knowledge of the genre's history, an important aspect in determining 'real' devotion to the genre's tradition (see e.g., Dumittan 2014; Nilsson 2016),[469] thus contributing to a third person virtuosity-related authentication for The Great Kat's performance persona.

In addition, considering The Great Kat's education, by including such shots in a video transforming a classical composition through a metal aesthetic, it is possible to interpret said act as not only amplifying the track's echoing of the long history of heavy metal incorporating musical material from Western art music (e.g. Ritchie Blackmore and Jon Lord's classical contribution in Deep Purple tracks),[470] but also as a permutation of the studied learning as means of improving one's performance skill, which Walser highlights as becoming a prevalent and valued aspect in relation to Randy Rhoads' work ethos in the 1980s (see Walser 1993, 78–93). In other words, by presenting a high degree of knowledge about Western art music and signalling it to observers in ways that coincide with

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[468] The parallel to Western art music composers can also be extended as Custodis observes that "[m]ost cliches and connotations of the guitar virtuoso contain elements of historic role models of the nineteenth-century icons Paganini and Liszt and combine them with the aura of energetic distortion sounds and the habitus of playing an electrified guitar" (Custodis 2016a, 55; for further discussions on Liszt and virtuosity see Kramer 2001, 68–99; Larkin 2015; Noeske 2017). Indeed echoes of such perspectives can be found in discussions of virtuosity of heavy metal (e.g. Walser 1993, 76) as well as progressive rock (e.g. Bowman 2002, 185). From this perspective, whilst my argumentation focuses primarily on heavy metal contexts, discussions of virtuosity can be seen as also mostly valid for progressive rock contexts.

[469] Elflein's (2010) musical analysis-focused study on heavy metal argues for the existence of a "stream of tradition" [Ger. "traditionsstrom"] in heavy metal i.e., a similar principle of re-incorporating and thus historicising (musical or aesthetic) elements in a performer's output which serves as both strengthening the cultural memory related to the broad genre, but can also be utilised as means of signalling a band's familiarity with the genre's musical lineage (see Elflein 2010, 15–39).

[470] The notion of heavy metal's relation to the classical has been developed further than the classical training of guitarists such as Blackmore by performers emerging in later years e.g. Custodis' examination of the US power metal band Manowar highlights the close weaving between the band's philosophy and Richard Wagner, most notably the former's central concept of 'true metal' as derived from the engagement of the band's bass player and main songwriter, Joey DeMaio, with the history and writing of the composer (Custodis 2009, 23–60).

established narratives of skill, The Great Kat's gesture invests a virtuoso-related authenticity by transforming Rhoads' 'this is how you become a better player' to 'this is why I am a better player'.[471]

However, from Walser's perspective of heavy metal performers incorporating Western art music techniques in their own output (Walser 1993, 63, also 63–102), the question emerges how can an intertextual cover in Lacasse's terms (i.e. an interpretation retaining the content which is then presented through her own style) achieve the same effect? In other words, how can a heavy metal piece signal the 'incorporation' of Western art music aspects, if the performer is effectively transforming (almost) an entire Western art music piece into heavy metal aesthetic? I would argue that an interpretative possibility emerges when considering the track as more subtly engaging with characteristics of the caprice as a piece from Western art music contexts, as well as aspects pertaining to Paganini's history and own style.

It is possible to suggest that several aspects pertaining to the historical context of the caprice (or capriccio) as a type of piece are represented within The Great Kat's genre-transgressive version. The performer's track strikes me as paralleling Erich Schwandt's summary of the capriccio's connotation in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century as "a general disposition towards the exceptional, the whimsical, the fantastic and the apparently arbitrary" (Schwandt 2001, n.p.), a description that can be quite aptly applied to the initial impressions that The Great Kat's piece and its video leave. Simultaneously, it can be argued that The Great Kat's fast-paced, heavy metal/classical rendition encapsulates the notion of the capriccio as representing both the boundary/rule breaking aspects associated with the term throughout the seventeenth century, in addition to fulfilling the virtuosic expectations of the capriccio's eighteenth-century context (Schwandt 2001, n.p.).

Reflecting on the implications of selecting Paganini's Caprices, it is likely that The Great Kat's choice of this piece in particular not only recognises its contemporary positioning as amongst the most important compositions by the composer, but also it is possible that by constructing the piece as an intertextual cover her relatively close adherence to the original composition echoes the caprice's historical framing in relation to educational contexts (e.g., see Neill 2001; Schwandt 2001).[472] In other

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[471] The self-conscious behaviour of The Great Kat towards virtuosity can be related not only to heavy metal but also to progressive rock contexts. Specifically, John Sheinbaum has showcased that criticism against early progressive rock performers was based on the idea that they did not "engage their music intuitively [but rather] these musicians highlight surface virtuosity simply because they can", and also that the music of said performers "is always mediated by technical display, which stands between artist and audience, and distances listeners from the music" (Sheinbaum 2002, 22). The parallel to The Great Kat's focus on instrumental virtuosity is, in my opinion, clearly observable, and despite the temporal distance between The Great Kat and the aforementioned criticism, claims of changing tastes of expert audiences must be balanced by the perspective that some contemporary progressive metal performers are subject to similar (potentially de-authenticating) claims of focusing on 'noodling' or 'instrumental masturbation', which helps to further situate the currently examined performer in proximity to the progressive aesthetic in more contemporary settings.

[472] To briefly elaborate, Schwandt suggests that "A. Locatelli applied the term to the virtuoso passages for solo violin that conclude the outer movements of each of the 12 concertos of his *L'arte del violino* op.3 (1733); these capriccios, often as long as the rest of the movement, are really technical or virtuoso studies. [...] Paganini's 24 capriccios op.1 (c1810) continue in Locatelli's tradition. These études for solo violin (in particular no. 24 in A minor) provided later composers with material for countless variations, rhapsodies and transcriptions, as well as the inspiration for technical studies for other instruments" (Schwandt 2001, n.p.). This is also echoed in

words, if the inclusion of Western art music aspects into a heavy metal performer's output signals studied learning, The Great Kat's transforming of a caprice, and by Paganini no less, represents not just 'any' classical piece, but rather a historically situated type of piece associated with the development of virtuosity by 'the' violin virtuoso.[473]

With that in mind, whilst Paganini's output has, at times, been dismissed as simply constituting a vessel for the composer's virtuosity, other scholarly work has argued that from the perspective of the caprices' dedication 'to the artists' (at times translated as 'to the professionals')[474] together with Paganini never having performed them in public, the "pieces were meant as serious essays in composition" (Perry 2004, 208). From this perspective, by selecting Paganini's caprices for her metal transformations, The Great Kat's piece can be interpreted as both an authenticity-investing gesture via the caprice's strong association with virtuosity within the Western canon, yet also as means to imply that neither the piece, nor the virtuoso performer, are simply about 'empty showmanship', which in turn, may hint to observers to pay closer attention to what she is doing on various levels whilst showcasing her virtuosity.

Expanding further on the co-relation to Paganini's stylistic traits, it is possible to interpret some aspects of The Great Kat's re-arranging techniques as echoing characteristics that helped define Paganini's style. Musicologist Dana Gooley has argued that the performance and compositional styles of Paganini can be understood as containing a comedic dimension that draws from the traditions of *commedia dell'arte*, as well as the composer's own interest in theatre, rather than the more commonly associated contexts/characteristics of Romanticism. In her exploration of how said comedic mode functions, she describes Paganini as employing a bravura style that combines mimicry and dialogue, and more specifically approaches such as "vocal imitation, characterization, polyphony, and dialogue" as well as techniques such as "rapid shifts in violinistic technique—pizzicatos, bow strokes of various kinds, harmonics, and tremolos—executed across the registers of the instrument, producing an effect of quasi-orchestral polyphony" (Gooley 2005, 382) which she collectively describes as the *melange*. It should be pointed out that the author considers the melange's use in the caprices to be somewhat rare, though if one presents the argument that The Great Kat signals studied learning of the composer, then the ability to interpret some of the melange's characteristics in her own version does not introduce an interpretative conflict.

Edward Neill's text who states that "[Paganini's] Caprices were dedicated to 'alli Artisti' (professional musicians) and were immediately judged unplayable. They have since become the 'Bible' of all violinists and are often used as compulsory pieces in competitions and at music schools" (Neill 2001, n.p.).

[473] To be clear, Walser's study on the incorporation of Western art music in heavy metal contexts does indicate that heavy metal performers were rather selective in what devices/quotations they chose to adapt, thus my comment does not intend to undermine said importance. Rather, I simply argue that, as a violinist and guitarist, The Great Kat's choosing of a Paganini piece can be read as of particular importance to the process of virtuosity-authenticating elements.

[474] Another perspective that can be derived from the caprices' dedication ('to all professionals') is relating Paganini's understanding of the existence of "a division between connoisseurs and public" (Gooley 2005, 381), and the aforementioned interpretation of The Great Kat as generating a specialist audience. It is possible to interpret The Great Kat's choice of this piece as an attempt to re-contextualise the division, with 'connoisseurs' being those that appreciate her music, and the 'public' being those that do not recognise her achievements.

Referring back to characteristics of the arrangement within The Great Kat's version, on the one hand, in addition to the dialogue-reminiscent quick alteration between the electric guitar and violin in Variation IV [00:34 – 00:39], approaches such as the soloistic instruments' shift between retaining and altering Paganini's original, as well as the backing ensemble's shift from matching the original's rhythmic patterns to providing a punk-like support, can be read as contrasting stylistic shifts paralleling Gooley's description that "Paganini's melange can […] generate an impression of comic dialogue by shuttling abruptly between tragic and comic tone, or pathos and mockery" (Gooley 2005, 386).[475] In addition, Gooley's outline of 'rapid shifts of techniques' can be extended to the track's utilization of a variety of techniques in the electric guitar in a relatively short period of time e.g., trill [00:17 – 00:24]; chordal movement [00:24 – 00:34]; and slides/glissandi [00:41 – 00:43; 01:18 – 01:22]. On the other hand, with regards to musical mimicry, Gooley outlines that "violinistic gestures that we instantly identify as Paganinian—huge melodic intervals abruptly cut off, glissandi up or down the fingerboard, rapid ricochets of the bow—all bear some mimetic resemblance to the sighs, swoops, and mocking chatter of the comic stage" (Gooley 2005, 382). To that effect, The Great Kat's glissando- and high-pitches focused passage related to Variation VI in [00:49] can be described as paralleling both the technique as well as being mimetically 'scream'-reminiscent.[476]

An additional mimicry-related perspective can be suggested in relation to Philippe Borer's analysis of Paganini's caprices. Specifically, the author briefly mentions an interaction between the Viennese pianist Sigismond Thalberg and Paganini, whereas the former "was particularly impressed by the way Paganini created the illusion of several instruments" (Borer 1995, 15). From this, the unison playing throughout the track can be interpreted as including a reversed quasi-illusion parallel to what Borer describes as, rather than having multiple instruments as 'emerging' from Paganini's violin, The Great Kat's track uses two instruments to deliver the same line thus leading to an overlap effect that somewhat merges the sonorities of both instruments. Also, if 'mimicry' is interpreted more broadly, elements such as The Great Kat's lack of tempo variation may be considered as mimicking "Paganini's rigorous time-keeping" which is described in reports contemporary to the composer as "never stray[ing], and do[ing] nothing outside the value of the meter" (Borer 1995, 131).

Finally, in relation to gender perspectives, it is also possible to suggest that some elements of her arrangement reflect The Great Kat's female-masculinity.[477] For example, Jeffrey Perry's analysis of Paganini's violin caprices describes the composer's "two essential modes of expression: the lyrical and the questive" (Perry 2004, 209) whereby the former element is characterised by symmetrically constructed, singable lines set mostly in the range of the treble human voice" and the latter as "characterized [by] the easy and frequent transition from low to high" (Perry 2004, 210). It can be argued that The Great Kat's omission of the by far most melodical Variation X, as well as her avoidance

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[475] To be clear, this argument emphasises the similarity between Paganini and The Great Kat's emphasis on contrast, and I am somewhat disinclined to suggest that – even with her claim that 'classical music is dead' – this delivery intends to frame Paganini as a form of mockery.

[476] A somewhat less-serious suggestion in this vein would be to frame the piece's fairly fast tempo and high volumes as mimetic to The Great Kat's performance persona and her own 'in-your-face' style of conversation.

[477] For a recent performative-focused attempt to recontextualise Paganini's Caprice #24 as a queer performance see Clark (2018).

of dynamics lower than forte suggest that she is effectively stripping the piece from its lyrical mode of expression, as well as those more 'delicate' expressive elements that may be stereotypically associated with a feminine expression. Instead, the performer's emphasis of the remaining variations, their much more mobile melodic lines, as well as her use of guitar glisses to the instrument's higher register, can be interpreted as emphasising the questive mode and its frequent register-transitions. When presented, these latter techniques in both the violin as a Paganini-contemporary masculinity-connotated instrument, together with the electric guitar as an instrument connotating masculinity in The Great Kat's time and target genre, allow for an interpretation that the performer is projecting a decisively masculine interpretation of the piece.

First person authenticity
Transitioning to perspectives contributing to the development of Moore's first person authenticity i.e., "an originator […] conveying that his/her utterance is one of integrity" and "an attempt to communicate in an unmediated form with an audience" (A. F. Moore 2002a, 214), in my opinion The Great Kat's approach can be described as applying a framing of the term 'unmediated' that considers the theatricality and thematic aspects associated with heavy metal performance personas. Specifically, she engages with the deeply rooted Gothic connection shared between Paganini's myth and heavy metal aesthetic, which in turn enables the allusions to become an effective tool in strengthening her perception as a heavy metal-authentic performer.

Scholarly work on the connection between heavy metal and Gothic sensibilities have noted the genre's engaging with "themes of dark foreboding, supernatural menace, and unjust authority" (Wallach and Clinton 2017, 110) as well as its complex relation to the depiction of "unflinching portrayal of victimizers, from serial killers to totalitarian governments to necromancers" (Wallach and Clinton 2017, 103). When combining these aspects with the observation that historically Paganini's public figure was often associated with the "Gothic sense of being corrupt and perverted" (Maiko Kawabata 2007, 85), and the Gothic sensibilities' ascription causing "[t]he predominant hermeneutic of Paganini's bravura as 'demonic' or 'diabolical'" and his "comic mode [as] intensely demonic" (Gooley 2005, 416), the performative theatricality that can be observed in The Great Kat's video presents a parallel to heavy metal thematic. Specifically, the ability to interpret the video's character as offering complex parallels that balance demonic personification (e.g., surrounded by 'corrupted' monks) and demonic collusion (e.g., signing a contract with the devil) in close association with Paganini's myth can be compared to similar instances of thematic connection between a heavy metal performance persona and the occult. For example, the performance persona of Ozzy Osbourne and the self-adopted nickname of "Prince of Darkness" (e.g., Sharpe-Young 2007, 12, 51, 59) served to enhance the Gothic/occult focus of both Black Sabbath, as well as his later eponymous band.[478]

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[478] It should be pointed out however, that such an argument is contingent on those sub-genres of heavy metal such as power metal or 'traditional' heavy metal whose performers will not be considered as inauthentic if their behaviour and/or general aesthetic of the band draws from aspects such as occult, fantasy: e.g. Manowar's early self-framing as muscular men in loin cloths is closely comparable to the typical depiction of heroic masculinity in characters such as Conan the Barbarian (for discussions on Manowar/heroic masculinity in metal, see e.g. Heesch (2010); Kartheus (2015); Spracklen 2020, 75–88; for a discussion of Manowar in relation to fantasy

However, as The Great Kat is the focal point of the band, the performative association to a Western art music historical figure known for both his instrumental virtuosity, the aforementioned 'corrupt and perverted' qualities, as well as his own love of theatre and theatrical performative tendencies, benefits her performance persona the most (see Gooley 2005). A somewhat indirect, yet by no means unimportant, parallel that emphasises the polysemy of this approach, is that between The Great Kat and Esther 'Jinx' Dawson described as "the founder and singer of Coven. She was trained in classical music and 'born into the occult'" (Tweedle, quoted in Berkers and Schaap 2018, 28). The quotation above speaks for itself as to how it is paralleled by The Great Kat, and it can be argued that it matches both third person and first person authenticity principles, as the performer's approach can be seen as signalling knowledge regarding metal's predecessors, whilst the actions depicted in the video become a different approach to the 'born into the occult' principle ascribed to Dawson's own persona.

In addition to the argument that this video can be interpreted as implicitly validating The Great Kat's claim of virtuoso skills as matching that of Paganini, the strong parallels to the composer's myth can also help in contextualising her continuous evasion of questions regarding influence by (or interest in) other performers in the realm of popular music. Namely, such behaviour can be seen as paralleling Paganini's late-career "downplay[ing] the importance of his studies with both violin and composition teachers" (Perry 2004, 208). Though, in the case of The Great Kat her approach appears to be aimed at discouraging her association with other popular music performers, as well as to potentially divert the similarities between her work and those of other metal guitar virtuosos that have expressed admiration towards Paganini such as Yngwie Malmsteen.

Having said that, some polysemic aspects of the video, such as The Great Kat's use of a top-hat in Figure 53 and Figure 54, can be interpreted as implicitly connecting to metal aesthetic, whether intended by The Great Kat or not. As part of heavy metal performers' outfits, top hats are by no means widespread yet simultaneously hardly uncharacteristic, thus enabling to establish a connection to the genre based on three different perspectives. First, when considering the implications of the occult as

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imagery see also Custodis 2009, 26–34). With that in mind, a parallel to progressive music can also be established if the portrayal's emphasis is placed more on the representation/perception of more socially challenging political or philosophical ideas. For example, Bowman's discussion of Rush as representing a combination between progressive music and hard rock or heavy metal aesthetic elements, analyses the track "2112", a twenty-minute piece with a complex sci-fi narrative written by the band's late drummer Neil Peart (†2020). The narrative includes some parallels to the Objectivist philosophy of Russian-American writer Ayn Rand, that can be (extremely superficially summarised!) as the struggles of the individualistic Protagonist that attempts, and dies in his efforts, to oppose a galactic authoritarian regime of a group named the Priests of the Temples of Synrix. Bowman's analysis mentions that the band "uses heavy metal […] and Lee's shrieking vocal style to portray the undesirable collective of authoritarian priests" (Bowman 2002, 194) which offers a surface parallel to Wallach and Clinton's view on heavy metal's engagement with such thematic. However, more importantly, Bowman's discussion includes a reflection on the critical reception to Rush's piece as some critics read the band's framing of such topics as supporting fascism (Bowman 2002, 192, 200) and that some surveys of the band's fans, such as by Deena Weinstein, suggested that "more than 70 percent [were] under the impression that Rush was siding with the priests" (Bowman 2002, 200). This latter principle can be seen as a context in which the externally (!) perceived notion of Rush as a progressive rock band that engages with the same problematic topics as observed in heavy metal contexts allows to suggest a broad parallel relating The Great Kat's own approach to that of progressive music contexts; also, given Rush's position as an early progressive hard rock or progressive heavy metal performer, the parallel can be extended to the progressive metal genre.

part of a band's musical aesthetic, heavy metal bands with similar thematic focus such as Alice Cooper, Mercyful Fate and King Diamond have long been associated with their lead singers' (occult-related) costumes including a top-hat.[479] Second, continuing my argument regarding the parallel to Paganini as informing the virtuosity of The Great Kat's performance persona, given that she balances the virtuosity of both violin and guitar, it is possible to interpret her use of a top hat as also echoing its use by established instrumentalists, and more importantly guitarists, in the realm of metal e.g. the lead guitarists of the bands Motley Crüe (Mick Mars), Guns 'n' Roses (Slash [stage name of Saul Hudson]) and Alice Cooper (Orianthi [Panagiris]).[480] And third, when considering The Great Kat's own feminist self-positioning, her use of a top-hat as part of a quasi-provocative outfit enables some comparison to the item's utilisation by female performers with a similar thematic and female-experience centric output such as Maria Brink, the lead singer of In This Moment (see Figure 65). These factors contribute to suggesting the perception of an increased authenticity through a more general metal-associative manner; though a looser connection in terms of Moore's 'utterance of integrity' may also be suggested here from the perspective of The Great Kat presenting a self-image that keeps close to visual cues associated with heavy metal aesthetic.

Both Kawabata and Wallach and Clinton's studies refer to an additional Gothic-related aspect that is shared between Paganini's myth and heavy metal, namely the significant role of gender components. As an example, Wallach and Clinton point out that both heavy metal and Gothic literature's genres have been perceived as deeply gendered genres, once thought to have been predominantly aimed (or even consumed) by men and women respectively (Wallach and Clinton 2017, 112; see also Botting 2005 [1996] for broader examination of the gothic). Indeed, from a broad perspective it is important to acknowledge that Gothic (literature)'s relation to gender issues is deeply ingrained not only from the perspective of its female readership. Rather, it also incorporates the contributions of female authors and the problematisation of Ellen Moers' feminist-scholarship derived term 'female gothic', summarised by Anne Williams as "the affinity between the gender and the genre expresses the terror and rage that women experience within patriarchal social arrangements, especially marriage" (A. Williams 1995, 136; see also Hoeveler 1998a, 1998b; Ledoux 2017; Meyers 2001). Furthermore, other scholars have examined the female subject e.g., in literature (see e.g., Tóth 2010 for a discussion of the gothic heroine in the seventeenth century, or Morisi 2005 for the role of women in in Edgar Allen Poe's Poetry), in cinema (e.g., Hanson 2007) and in the contemporary Goth scene (see Brill 2008).

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[479] It should also be pointed out that, taking into account Mercyful Fate/King Diamond's occasional framing as within the progressive aesthetic (e.g., K. Jones 2011, 18; Petersen 2013, 167; J. Wagner 2010, 38–39) as well as other instances of progressive rock (e.g., Granholm 2011, 537n45) or progressive metal bands (e.g., J. Wagner 2010, 167) engaging with occultism, the shared topical interest between such bands and The Great Kat can be framed as further contributing to her applicability as a progressive metal performer.

[480] To avoid potential confusion regarding my referring of these musicians as *the* lead guitarists of their respective ensembles, of the listed performers, only Mick Mars has retained his role as the consistent lead guitarist of the band. With regards to Slash, whilst being the solo guitarist for Guns N' Roses' early years, after a quasi-dissolution in the mid-1990s, Guns N' Roses' reforming in late 2000s did not include Slash as the lead guitarist, with the guitarist returning only in the late 2010s. As for Orianthi Panagiris, she was the lead guitarist in Alice Cooper's (ever rotating) ensemble between 2011 and 2014.

However, most relevant to this discussion, and the aspect that I will expand upon in the following pages, is the fascination with the often entwined topics of death and sex (see e.g., Farnell 2014; Hogle 2011 [2002], 15; see Anolik's 2007 edited collection for essays discussing the many types of sexual 'other' found in the Gothic; see Praz 1954 [1933] for an in-depth discussion of the erotic dimensions of Romanticism; see Gamer 2000; Hume 1969 for the connection between Gothic and Romanticism; see Thompson's 1974 edited collection examination of dark romanticism as the larger aesthetic domain to which Gothic fiction can be framed). This portion of the examination allows to showcase the aspects pertaining to gender-aspects within the video, whereby I will focus specifically on the image of the performer covered in blood, as well as the images of her being surrounded by 'monk' figures. That said, as the virtuosity component of these images has not been addressed, I will briefly do so before discussing the specific gender aspects that can be observed.

Beginning with The Great Kat's blood-covered image from Figure 59, when examined from the perspective of the virtuoso concept, some noteworthy perspectives can be extrapolated. Hügel discusses a twentieth century expansion of the virtuoso figure towards the realms of physical entertainment such as that of circus performers, and points out said context as involving performers' development of their own virtuosity via the invention of signature moves and stunts as "the dangerousness of the circus number doesn't just make it more sensational. It is only without a safety rope that it becomes more than high-performance gymnastics, it becomes clear evidence of the virtuosity of the artists"[481] (Hügel 2003, 495). Furthermore, the author outlines a rather tragic aspect of such efforts, namely the historical instances where the desire to push the boundaries of a virtuosity has led to the death of some circus artists. He also includes a comment by Arthur Rubinstein that presents a much less tragic variation of the idea that virtuosity requires sacrifices from the performer, namely, that if a performer "didn't lose a few drops of blood and a few pounds, the concert was not good" (Hügel 2003, 495).[482] Viewing The Great Kat's blood-covered face and crazed look in the opening shot through Rubinstein's observation of 'losing a few drops of blood' for the sake of virtuosity, one might suggest that the former pushes the latter's expression to new levels of metaphorical intensity. On the one hand, through this shot The Great Kat may be interpreted as representing how much blood she has 'lost for her own art', whereby the mad look in her expression represents the extremes in her pursuit of virtuosity. On the other hand, the crazed look of the character may represent the quest for obtaining Paganini's virtuosity, whereby the occult underpinning of the video raises the question as to whether the blood stems from the character, or perhaps represents a demonic collusion-based occult 'sacrifice' intended to replace the idea of 'blood loss' in exchange for virtuosity.

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[481] Ger. Orig. "Die Gefährlichkeit der Nummer macht sie nicht einfach sensationeller. Erst ohne Sicherheitsseil wird sie mehr als eine turnerische Hochleistung, wird sie zum anschaulichen Beweis für die Virtuosität der Artisten".

[482] Hügel draws this perspective from Joachim Kaiser's 1977 study *Große Pianisten in unserer Zeit*, which I further verified in the 1997 edition of the book (see Kaiser and Bennert 1997). However, Kaiser's book presents the information as "Rubinstein stated that […]" (Kaiser and Bennert 1997, 38) and without any reference to follow (see full quote below). As such – even though the quote serves only as a point of departure for (generally) unrelated aspects in The Great Kat's work – readers should treat its validity with a 'pinch of salt'. [Ger. Orig. "Rubinstein hat gesagt wenn der Pianist im Konzert nicht ein paar Tropfen Blut und ein paar Pfund verlor, dann war das Konzert nicht gut"].

Furthermore, it can be suggested that the image's polysemic potential allows to interpret the blood-covered The Great Kat as simultaneously paralleling Western art music and heavy metal contexts. With regards to Western art music, the shot's interplay between blood, implied 'madness' and the general virtuosity implications can be compared to the nineteenth-century Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti and his opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*. More specifically, the opera's act III includes the 'Mad Scene' which depicts the insanity of Lucia Asthon (the main female protagonist) who murdered her groom-to-be Arturo Bucklaw (see Ashbrook 2002 [1992], for a summary of the opera's narrative). William Ashbrook discusses the piece as highly demanding and "allowing a soprano to demonstrate her technical prowess" (Ashbrook 2002 [1992], n.p.) which offers a fairly relevant parallel to virtuosity contexts. As for heavy metal aesthetic, examples of performers surrounded by flames in music videos include e.g., Rhapsody of Fire's "Rain of a Thousand Flames", timecode [00:05 – 00:19] (see Rhapsody of Fire 2001); whilst references to blood are not uncommon in the genre's aesthetic e.g., Slayer's *Reign in Blood* (Slayer 1986), Arch Enemy's *Covered in Blood* (Arch Enemy 2019), or Metallica's *Kill 'Em All* (Metallica 1983b).[483] More importantly towards the first person authentication argument, a variety of performers have depicted themselves as covered in 'blood' in performance situations such as the members of the Finnish pagan metal band Moonsorrow (see Moonsorrow.com n.d.); or within the context of a music video such as Slayer's track "Bloodline" which constantly alternates between images of the band is depicted performing covered in blood e.g., [00:53] (see Slayer 2002). When focusing on female band members, the Dutch Satanism-focused band The Devil's Blood comes to mind and their lead singer Farida Lemouchi who often performed whilst covered in 'blood' (see Metal-archives.com n.d.g),[484] whilst a recent notable genre-transgressive example, the US singer-songwriter Poppy (stage name of Moriah Rose Pereira) released the song "X" in 2018 which presents an interplay between pop and metal aesthetics, the latter framed (amongst other things) through the singer's depiction covered in blood e.g. [00:35] (see Poppy 2018).

Turning my attention on the gender aspects of the image, whilst I previously hinted at the ability to interpret The Great Kat's 'blood' covered maniacal stare as representing both the supposed victims of Paganini, as well as an embodies form of the violence ascribed to the composer, an additional gender-related interpretation becomes possible in relation to the Gothic death and sex thematic interest mentioned above. In addition to the historical sexual-violence connotations that the allusion to Paganini's context implies, the 'blood' and fire aspects of the shot are quite comparable to The Great Kat's depiction of quasi-violence as part of her general dominatrix aesthetic (e.g. see the front artwork of her *Bloody Vivaldi* CD),[485] as well as her dominatrix videos in which the persona is

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[483] Each of these examples presents a complex network of incorporating blood as an intertextual element e.g., Slayer's album includes a track titled "Raining Blood" which not only discusses a (metaphorical) hell-landscape, but also includes the album title's eponymous line 'reign in blood'; Arch Enemy's album title presents the main focus of the record, namely the band performing music covers; whilst Metallica's *Kill 'Em All* presents a blood-focused album artwork (see Metallica 1983a).

[484] Similar to the comparison with Mercyful Fate in Footnote 479, The Devil's Blood quasi-association with progressive music (e.g., Hayes 2012) can be seen as strengthening the potential for considering The Great Kat as within progressive metal aesthetic on a broader associative level.

[485] Example image can be found in the webpage of the following bibliographical entry: The Great Kat (1998a).

known to be less about the sexual gratification of the other party, but rather about inflicting sexual violence towards other men (e.g. see lyrics/video for the track "Castration", Figure 71 on page 382 of this study). In that sense, the shot's allusion to Paganini's myth benefits The Great Kat's (dominatrix) performance persona as it becomes a Western art music-related historical precursor that informs and enhances the latter's performative quasi-depiction of sexual violence.

With that in mind there is also the possibility to view the shot as not only including an allusion, but also as transforming said representation through The Great Kat's performance persona. From a general perspective, a certain critical component may be discerned when considering that Paganini's sexual violence may be alluded to by a female performer known for enacting near-retaliatory sexual violence on men, and which at times is seemingly extended to the historical images of classical composers (see 'The dominatrix and male-targeted sexual violence in the album *Rossini's Rape*' in section 11.5 for more details). More narrowly, the blood-covered The Great Kat may be interpreted as representing one of Paganini's victims through the lens of the former's dominatrix persona, which again serves as a form of first person authenticity. Namely, whilst I have characterised the facial expression of the shot as 'maniacal', it would not be inaccurate to describe it as containing a fair amount of anger, thus allowing to suggest that the depiction of a female victim here does not constitute that of a 'helpless' woman but rather implies a blood-covered vengeful spirit. This perspective allows to connect The Great Kat's depiction to a larger pool of cultural references which involve wrongfully killed women that return as spirits e.g., Japanese culture's onryō spirit, reappearing (most often) as a long-haired woman dressed in white, popularised by its modern setting adaptation in the films such as *The Ring* (Verbinski, Gore 2002) or *The Grudge* (Shimizu, Takashi 2004), (see Scherer's study on traditional spirits in Japanese cinema, specifically, Scherer 2014 [2011], 29–56). This notion then becomes an aspect of first person authenticity when considering metal-contextualised parallels to these Japanese spirits, such as the video for the track "Chapter IV – Human Confrontation" (from their 2018 album *Incision of Gem*) by the Italian death metal band Amthrya which features a similar shot [01:07] in which the lead singer (Kasumi Onryo) is presented wearing a costume resembling the spirit's description, and surrounded by the image of a burning house, albeit whilst lacking the copious amounts of blood (see Amthrya 2018).

With regards to Figure 55 and Figure 56's depiction of The Great Kat as surrounded by 'monks', the interactions presented in these images can be interpreted as contributing to the idea of the video conforming to aspects of the virtuosity concept. Hügel describes a development of the virtuoso/audience link in the late nineteenth century in relation to the virtuoso figure in the realm of theatre. Specifically, to justify their higher hiring costs virtuoso theatre actors were cast in roles that matched their body-voice-type which led to their overall image to present significantly thinner boundaries between the virtuoso him/herself, and those aspects derived from the depicted role. Together with the idea that there exists a specific audience that recognises and praises the abilities of the figure, this led to an increase of interest towards the personal/romantic life of the virtuoso, with Hügel pointing to audience behaviours that can be characterised as a form of star-fandom e.g., women following/accompanying actors to the latter's hotels or people throwing bouquets to actresses (Hügel

2003, 494).[486] This historical context helps to reframe the implications of the 'monk'-figures reaching towards The Great Kat from an allusion towards the myth of Paganini to a parallel to historical interactions between fans and the virtuoso by subtly replicating the former's behaviour as expression of adoration; furthermore, this 'adoration' gesture may be related to the presentation of the performer's virtuoso skill. As such, the overall interaction may be considered as representing a polysemic and relevant to modern performers perspective, based on parallels to popular music contexts and the fan-'hysteria' surrounding highly popular bands e.g. 'Beatlemania' phenomenon and Beatles' arrival in the US (see e.g., Cura 2009; Ehrenreich, Hess, and Jacobs 1992; Inglis 2000; Muncie 2000; Rohr 2017).

Furthermore, it is possible to argue that the thin boundary between the depicted role and the virtuoso figure is also a relevant aspect in relation to these shots due to similarities between the character depicted by The Great Kat in "Paganini's Caprice #24" and her broader dominatrix persona. Specifically, comparisons can be drawn between the monk figures surrounding and reaching towards The Great Kat's character in the video, and the on-stage interaction between the performance persona and fans during concerts. Some events are presented as a mixture of quasi-BDSM acts and continuous chants by hooded band members inciting concert attendees to 'bow' to The Great Kat (see video "The Great Kat – Live Show in Chicago" from her *Extreme Guitar Shred* DVD, The Great Kat 2018f).[487] Whilst the overlap between the monk figures' behaviour and that of the audience is not complete, it is the expression of adoration that is comparable between an archetypal performance carried out by The Great Kat in real-world spaces and a (much more) theatricalised in-video activity. Similar to my previous reading on the potential for the video to contribute to a somewhat forceful development of a specialist audience, The Great Kat's enactment of a dominatrix persona allows to generate an audience that (whether through their musical or potentially fetishist interests) is invested, and willing to participate, in the public performance and the associated depiction of implied 'occult' worship behaviour.[488] Furthermore, the quasi-ritualistic behaviour can be framed as a form of first person authenticity when considering heavy metal on-stage theatricality[489] as the ritualistic/occult ambience

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[486] Whilst I am rewording Hügel's text here, I am adding the original as it is difficult to determine whether the implication is that women's romanticization of the performer (i.e., from Ger. "schwärmen") implies that they 'stalk' the performers or that, due to their infatuations, they accompany the performer the latter's hotel. [Ger. Orig. "Zum Virtuosen werden quasi-persönliche Beziehungen aufgebaut. Junge Damen laufen schwärmend den großen Schauspielern zum Hotel nach (so bei Ludwig Barnay) bzw. man wirft den Schauspielerinnen Buketts zu (überliefert seit den 1860ern)"].

[487] The quoted reference points to the video's digital re-release via Amazon Prime Video.

[488] For a brief discussion on the potential for live performances to contribute to the development of community between performer and audiences, see Auslander (2008 [1999], 65–69); also, Custodis (2017, 49).

[489] The over-the-top theatricality should, again, not be essentialised as an exclusively heavy metal characteristic as, beyond the general role of theatricality to some canonised progressive rock performers such as Genesis, some of their contemporaries have been discussed during the 1970s as engaging with comparable 'unsavoury' on-stage antics. For example, Keister and Smith quote from a 1974 essay by music critic Lester Bangs regarding a performance by Emerson, Lake and Palmer, in which despite describing the performers as 'war criminals', Bangs seemingly praises the late Keith Emerson's behaviour during the concert i.e., "vault[ing] off the stage waving what looked like a theremin around, nearly decapitating several coeds […] Reclambering onstage, he capped even his own show by wiping his ass with it" (Bangs, quoted in Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 436). Leaving

of the aforementioned event or its on-stage behaviours are by no means untypical for a heavy metal concert, and apt comparisons can be drawn to the elaborate theatricalised and stage activities of bands such as Alice Cooper.[490]

In contrast to the balance between historical (sexual-)violence elements that emerged from the allusion's context and similar thematic handled by The Great Kat's performance persona in the previous 'blood'-covered example, I would argue that for the images representing The Great Kat as surrounded by 'monks' it is her female body that enables to ascribe a specific gender component to the shots. There exists a substantial difference in terms of the activities that the monk figures enact in Figure 55 and Figure 56 – the former depicting them in extremely close proximity to The Great Kat and reaching towards her, whilst the latter depicts the monks standing motionless and with some distance between them and The Great Kat – which can be interpreted as having additional gender implications towards the demonic personification of The Great Kat. Specifically, attempting to situate The Great Kat's emphasis on quasi-suggestive self-framings in relation to the idea of demonic personification enables to suggest parallels to female-demons in various mythologies e.g., the occult figure of the succubus, a female demon known for sexually seducing men in their sleep and subsequently draining them of their life during the sexual act (J. R. Lewis 2001, 122–124, 136).[491] From

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aside the overblown language used by Bangs, Keister and Smith argue that Emerson's behaviour as "outlandishly aggressive stage persona" is an extension of his earlier work with the band The Nice where "Emerson violently whip-lashed his band mates, repeatedly stabbed an American flag and burnt it on stage all the while performing an oddly duple-metred version of Lenard Bernstein's 'America', resulting in a lifetime ban from the venue" (Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 437). Given the performer's virtuosic skills, this example serves as a context that positions The Great Kat less as an oddity in progressive metal contexts, but as equally as related to both heavy metal and progressive music's acceptance of combining quasi-violent theatricality and musical virtuosity.

[490] From a different perspective, Georgina Gregory's investigation into hard rock and heavy metal "transgender tribute bands" – i.e., "female tributes which replicate a repertoire originally performed by male artists, and vice versa" (Gregory 2013, 21) – has argued that, the act of a female performer playing a male performer's output represents a form of challenge to stereotypes of women as incapable players and as subverting the masculine coding of the genre. More importantly, however, one of her correspondents – Gretchen Menn from the tribute band Zepparella – communicated that "some male fans are unable to contain their excitement, resulting in inappropriate actions" such as attempting to kiss the performers on stage (Gregory 2013, 34). As a discussion in the recently held (online) academic workshop "Feminism and Metal" (2021) reiterated, female performers are regrettably still subjected to the same issue; and that its permutations can be observed in various contexts, such as a concert venue or the camp surrounding a metal festival. From this context, it is possible to view The Great Kat's emphasis on creating a quasi-ritualistic situation in live events as including both the same gender-stereotype subverting principle, as well as a process of power-redistribution i.e., from a passive subject of the male-gaze to an active behaviour that benefit her persona, even if still subjected to said gaze.

[491] An additional point to be raised here is that through the interpretation of The Great Kat as drawing from the succubus figure, the aforementioned shot presenting her covered in blood can be related to a common depiction of the demoness Lilith in popular culture. The US vampire-focused tv series *True Blood* (see Ball n.d.) includes an eponymous character in multiple episodes of the show's fifth and sixth seasons and draws from the Jewish folklore framing of Lilith as a 'beautiful vampire' (J. R. Lewis 2001, 151) whereby the character is often depicted nude and whilst covered entirely in blood: for example, in the episodes "In the Beginning" (Ruscio 2012), or "Everybody Wants to Rule the World" (Attias 2012). That said, the image of a blood-covered vampire is not only related to quasi-erotic implication but can be seen as polysemic in it of itself, and has been framed as a signifier of power e.g., the vampire film *Blade II* (Del Toro 2002) presents a scene (ca. [01:34:45]) in which the titular (half-vampire) character emerges from a large container full of blood whereby the implication is that, having consumed some, his strength is rejuvenated thus fuelling the final confrontations concluding the narrative. As such, The Great Kat's 'blood' covered framing should be seen as potentially interpretable as a mixture of 'suggestive' yet also implying the notion of 'power'.

this perspective, two possibilities emerge with regards to whether the actions of the monk figures emphasise the element of 'desire' or the occult practice itself. With regards to the former, the monks' depiction in extreme proximity and attempting to reach The Great Kat, the image implies an element of desire based on the action implying the sexual allure ascribed to the succubus. If, however, only the occult element is to have been emphasised, both illustrations may be interpreted as more focused on the attempts to restrain the succubus i.e., Figure 55 showcases the monks attempting to physically 'apprehend' the demon, whilst Figure 56 may suggest a 'vigil', rather than demonic praise. Based on this perspective, interpreting The Great Kat's demonic personification through the figure of the succubus strengthens the video's incorporation of Gothic themes of combining death and sex as well as the first person authenticity-ascription through the performer engaging with a metal-appropriate 'unflinching depiction' of morally questionable figures and/or creatures.[492] In addition, parallels can be drawn to the work of female metal performers whose personas engage with similar occult creature quasi-erotic undertones e.g., the Italian gothic metal band Theatres des Vampires for which the vampire-thematic permeates the lyrics and as well as informs the (comparatively suggestive self-framing) performance persona of their lead singer Sonya Scarlet (see Scarlet Records n.d.).

Additional comments on self-framing and irony

Whilst the discussion thus far has argued that the allusions to Paganini's myth seemingly imply parallels between The Great Kat's performance persona and said myth one unaddressed factor remains the dual-visibility of The Great Kat in several sections of the video, including some of the shots examined thus far (e.g. Figure 53 and Figure 55). In addition to the complexity of the demonic personification and demonic collusion within different shots of the video, it can be argued that the double visibility of The Great Kat – created via a superimposition of a second image of The Great Kat (most likely) via a green-screen filming technique – implies the possibility of differentiating a video-specific performance character, which is hinted at by subtle changes in the costume design: Figure 54 and Figure 56 make visible changes in the otherwise similar dominatrix-related costume, whereby Figure 54 showcases a costume incorporating inverted crosses on the front of the performer's thighs which is contrasted by their omission and replacement with transparent black stockings in Figure 56. Additionally, Figure 57 highlights the red-lingerie costume-wearing version of The Great Kat as positioned in the background where allusions to Paganini's myth takes place. Both types of costume specifics may imply that the superimposed black-leather costume version of The Great Kat is included either as a way to emphasise the dualisms in the allusions themselves, or to suggest a separation

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[492] Both examples connecting The Great Kat with the depiction of a vengeful spirit or a succubus strike me as implicitly supporting an observation made by a MA reviewer regarding the "mystical dangerous woman" (MA-CrimsonGlory-#9) as a topic explored in several tracks by Crimson Glory (e.g., "Queen of the Masquerade" or "Lady of Winter" etc.), though also more broadly observed in tracks by other progressive metal bands such as Fates Warning and Queensrÿche. The Great Kat's persona broadly fits into this description, thus making it yet another facet of the argument that her work echoes aspects within progressive metal. However, I also acknowledge that the basic idea of women being framed as dangerous seductresses can be applied to heavy metal as a whole and matches Walser's description of the othering of women as "threats to male control and even male survival" (Walser 1993, 119) as exemplified by his examination of the video for Dokken's "Heaven Sent".

between the background character enacting the allusions and the foregrounded performance persona superimposed on a different layer of the corresponding shot.

If one accepts that the foregrounded and backgrounded versions of The Great Kat are two separate figures, one way to interpret said difference is as implying a 'temporal' component to the quasi-narrative by suggesting that scenes in the background serve as (potentially earlier) acts informing the current depiction of virtuosic playing presented by the foregrounded performer. The foregrounded version of The Great Kat is the first to be shown performing in the video and said version of the performer appears the longest time on the screen thus implying a representation of the performance persona within the video. From this, as the opening shots of the video present The Great Kat performing the guitar on a fire background [00:02 – 00:05], followed shortly by her image slightly shrinking and moving to the lower side of the frame thus allowing more visibility to the occult-themed theatrical acts in the background [00:06], it can be argued that the video offers a current temporal moment that 'retroactively' expands the first person authenticity via the introduction of allusions to Paganini's myth in the background.

Additionally, by considering the foregrounded figure as the performance persona of the dominatrix, and the backgrounded one as the video-character she specifically depicts, i.e. one engaging with a Faustian-deal between a musician and the devil, the video may be read as a quasi-ironic commentary on the history of moral panics surrounding heavy metal as music genre and culture related to occult practices (e.g. see the edited collection by Hjelm, Kahn-Harris, and M. LeVine from 2013 which discusses controversies related to heavy metal). The perspective that a critical viewpoint may be included stems from an interview given as part of the US television programme *Morton Downey Jr. Show* in 1989, whereby The Great Kat (in her own unique way) defended heavy metal against the, at the time, critical public discourse aimed at the genre (see n.a. ca. 1989). Beyond this potential 'motivation', the interpretation can be furthered via the satirical potential of the overly theatricalised depiction of occult practices. Whilst the occult-related activities taking place in the background may be a component that critical observers of the genre would expect to see, through the lack of a costume-continuity, not to mention the almost anachronistically low-budget and over-the-top theatrically, these activities become quasi-separated from the foregrounded performance persona version of The Great Kat thus allowing for a subtle critical commentary to be detected. Namely, by incorporating a variety of elements hinting at the myth of Paganini, the video may have aimed to showcase parallels between the historical negative framing of both Western art music composers and heavy metal artists, substituting the moral panics and occult-accusations targeting the topics of early heavy metal performers with the depiction of Paganini's occult 'understanding' associated with his performance skills at the time. This interpretation may also be strengthened in relation to a historical discontinuity between Paganini's myth and the composition of the caprices, as Perry points out that "the diabolical stage persona of [Paganini's] transalpine concert tours of 1828-34" appeared after the composition (1801-1809) or even publication (1820) of the caprices (Perry 2004, 208).

As a concluding remark, I would like to touch on an aspect that permeates the video for "Paganini's Caprice #24", yet is also representative of larger processes connecting the concept of the

virtuoso to that of The Great Kat's output. One of the more challenging aspects when attempting to interpret The Great Kat's output, and even more so in this part of the interpretation, is that of irony, and more specifically the authenticity-undermining effect that the low-budget DIY approach, as well as the over-the-top behaviour of the performance persona may elicit from observers. Put in simpler terms, in comparison to many of the equally as theatricalised contemporaries of The Great Kat, her work pushes many aspects of heavy metal personas into the realm of the ironical or even satirical. The difficulty that such irony introduces to offering interpretations is that there is neither a key statement separating the 'real person' The Great Kat from her performance persona, nor have I been able to locate an instance where The Great Kat constructively critiques heavy metal culture, beyond some feminist perspectives against the association between virtuosity and male performers mentioned as part of her biographical overview. From the perspective of a contemporary theory of irony such as that by Linda Hutcheon (1994), The Great Kat's work lacks a "cutting edge" (Hutcheon 1994, 35) or the knowledge shared by a certain community (in this instance her fandom) that would help to differentiate one statement or gesture not as affirmative of heavy metal culture, but rather as its opposite – whether it be complicating the statement's relation to the culture or simply critiquing said culture. With that in mind, to completely disregard the existence of irony in relation to her work would be tantamount to ignoring an entire level of interpretation, namely that many statements, gestures etc. found in The Great Kat's cultural artefacts are either meant ironically or conversely may be recognised (and thus ascribed as ironic) by some observers.

During the preliminary steps of the examination, I attempted to acknowledge the possibilities for irony, yet avoid essentialising a female performer's output as 'ironic' simply because it is not entirely conforming to the production- or expressive standards of heavy metal aesthetic. From this perspective I would argue that despite its DIY/over-the-top context, several aspects within "Paganini's Caprice #24" that can be interpreted as ironic. For example, the aforementioned shot of the blood-covered The Great Kat can be read as an occult-inspired equivalent to the B-rated action/gore movie aesthetic seen in Slayer's recent videos for the tracks "Repentless" (McDonnell, B. J. 2015) and "Pride in Prejudice" (McDonnell, B. J. 2016) with their copious amounts of blood spurts.[493] More specifically some of the final shots in each video depict the shared protagonist – Wyatt, a wrongfully convicted man who escapes prison in "Repentless" and then enacts revenge on the racially motivated killing of his black girlfriend – is depicted with his upper body covered in blood (e.g., [03:13] and [03:48] in "Repentless" and [05:41] in "Pride in Prejudice"). In a similar way through which Slayer's videos incorporate the representation of highly charged contemporary social subjects such as national-socialist tendencies, or even endemic racism, through heavy metal culture-acceptable B-rated gore aesthetics, it is possible to consider The Great Kat's blood-covered face in the aforementioned shot as engaging with a similarly ambivalent overlapping perspectives i.e. as aiming to 'capitalize' on heavy

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[493] An example of the aforementioned the gore film aesthetics can be seen in the latter half of Robert Rodriguez's film *From Dusk Till Dawn* (Rodriguez 1996).

metal aesthetics' acceptance of such depictions, or conversely the 'maniacal' expression wishes to satirize them.[494]

That said, whilst the lack of a 'cutting edge' makes it difficult to determine an ironic undercurrent aimed at heavy metal, one way to contextualise the existence of an ironic potential in The Great Kat's output as a whole is the contemporary association between "the technical surplus of the virtuoso" and those "genres that tell their stories with a wink" (Hügel 2003, 495). Hügel's argument points to "The Swashbuckler, the light-footed adventurer of mantle and épée[495] films"[496] as well as certain cowboy and modern martial arts films such as those featuring actor Jackie Chan, as examples of cinema depiction of virtuosity paired with a certain playfulness (Hügel 2003, 495). The word 'playfulness' – which I substitute for Hügel's version of "stories with a wink" – is a deliberate choice on my behalf as it enables to connect the concept of virtuosity with some of the lower, and thus having less-affective charge, levels of Hutcheon's model of irony, namely the "ludic" level which the author characterises through the terms "humorous, playful, teasing" (Hutcheon 1994, 47). If we consider The Great Kat's work as containing irony, then from this perspective its goal is potentially not aimed at the heavy metal culture, but rather at the idea of how virtuosity is presented, whereby it is only through an understanding of the playfulness of cinema virtuosity that the 'cutting edge' of the cultural artefact become possible. In other words, to those observers not aware of modern cinema contexts of the virtuoso figure, The Great Kat's overzealous depictions of a heavy metal performance persona in her videos may be perceived as somewhat bizarre or even appearing as satirizing some of heavy metal aesthetic principles i.e., pushing the theatricality to the point where it appears as if she is not taking the role seriously. Yet to those that are familiar with the idea of the cinema virtuoso it can be argued that she may be perceived as taking the idea of claiming a virtuoso title quite seriously.

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[494] An additional ironic interpretation I want to briefly mention is the potential to view the combination between The Great Kat's emphasis on speed with the gender-bending connotations of the video as engaging with what Simon Jones frames as "the thrash sound and attitude [as] synonymous with masculinity and particularly masculinity as a symbolic weapon against homosexuality" and that "thrash metal is upheld by some as being a defense against the gender blurring associated with lighter heavy metal styles" (S. Jones 2018, 475). In addition to the broad ironic potential of contrasting thrash metal-related characteristics with that of gender-bending, the interpretation can be pushed a step further in reference to Slayer as one of the genre's canonized performers. Namely, Clifford-Napoleone outlines that Kerry King – Slayer's lead guitarist – has become rather synonymous with the notion of "*the* homophobic heavy metal performer (according to queer fans)" due to having "used gay slurs in interviews and on stage" (Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 57). More interestingly, however, Clifford-Napoleone describes that "King is also the performer most surrounded by a 'he must be gay' whisper campaign" and that (drawing from Foucault's idea of "scopophilia") suggests that "queer fans obsessively look at Kerry King so he becomes not just a subject of derision but an object of desire" (Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 58). Returning to The Great Kat, whilst it is difficult to argue that the parallels to some of Slayer's videos are intentional, it is possible that the gender-bending can be interpreted as paralleling the queerscape potential as described by Clifford-Napoleone towards King's queer fans i.e., "both attracted and threatened but still watching" (Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 58). There exists the possibility for the gender-bending to also be read as a 'jab' towards King's homophobia, as per The Great Kat's feminist-underpinned criticism against male metal guitar virtuosos, though I offer such a perspective as a broad possibility.

[495] The term 'épée' designates "a sharp-pointed duelling sword, used, with the end blunted, in fencing" (Soanes and Stevenson 2005, 582).

[496] Ger. Orig. "Der technische Surplus des Virtuosen findet sich im Film vor allem in den Genres, die ihre Geschichten augenzwinkernd erzählen. Der 'Swashbuckler', der leichtfüßige Abenteurer der Mantel und Degen filme ist ohne Virtuosität nicht zu denken".

Section conclusion

In summary, the aspects discussed in this section help to generate an interpretation as to how The Great Kat's output can aid addressing some of the 'innate challenges' within heavy metal the performer faces as not only a female virtuoso in metal, but also as a performer whose repertoire consists almost-exclusively from the less 'authentic' covers-type rather than writing her own songs. My examination has showcased how multiple scenes within the music video of "Paganini's Caprice #24" can be interpreted as containing a complex network of allusions to the myth of Paganini. In turn, I suggested that the polysemic potential of these allusions offered contexts through which various gestures can be seen as authenticating The Great Kat's claim to instrumental virtuosity by enabling parallels to the historical framings of the virtuoso figure, the shared Gothic-sensibilities between the myth and heavy metal culture, as well as by presenting aspects that parallel theatrical and/or self-framing practices of other heavy metal performers.

Arguably, whilst the allusions to the composer's myth may not often be recognised as such, the combination between a track transforming a piece of Western art music towards a heavy metal aesthetic, as well as references to occultism allow it to be perceived as echoing the general thematic of heavy metal, and overall may be interpreted as signalling attention to detail derived from laborious study of heavy metal's cultural and musical history. In addition, I argued that, from certain perspectives, the video can be interpreted as engaging with a quasi-critical commentary towards the negative perceptions of heavy metal musicians whose music also taps into socially taboo topics, thus presenting a further notable parallel through familiarity with the culture's history of social push-back.

With regards to gender perspectives, this investigation has highlighted that whilst clearly important to the performer's output, gender perspectives are hardly the 'core' of the classical-to-metal transformation the performer is associated with. I argued that from the perspective of the shared death and sex Gothic-thematic underpinning heavy metal aesthetic as well as Paganini's myth, gender-related perspectives become observable and relevant towards the virtuosity-authentication process. Some of the examined shots offered possibilities to infer The Great Kat's framing in the video as becoming more heavy metal-potent when the implications of her biological sex are taken into consideration together with the occult thematic. Other instances allowed to infer some parallels that potentially contribute to The Great Kat's own dominatrix-aesthetic albeit without a focus on male-targeted sexual violence. It goes without saying that the comparison to Paganini introduces a fairly strong gender component i.e., by claiming to be as skilled as one of the most well-known male violin virtuosos, The Great Kat is implicitly strengthening her own framing as a female virtuoso. In addition, whilst not as prevalent as the reincarnation narrative, the outward comparison to Paganini, together with aspects observed in this video, offer a hint of a similar notion. Namely, The Great Kat pushes the comparison into the realm of quasi-'embodiment' allowing it to be interpreted as contributing to her female masculinity underpinning; though I offer such a perspective with a degree of reservation so as to avoid instilling a male-'originator' to female-'recipient' co-dependency.

Overall, the extent to which this investigation can be seen as 'exemplary' in relation to The Great Kat's engagement with authenticating virtuosity varies depending on the perspective. On the one hand, "Paganini's Caprice #24" can be framed as amongst the most allusion-saturated examples

through which a sense of virtuosity-authentication can be interpreted. However, whilst the virtuosity-affirming aspects are present in other transformations of a Paganini piece, the allusions to the composer's myth are seemingly less visible and/or The Great Kat is simply not pursuing this specific approach in every composer-focused video e.g. her video for "Paganini's Moto Perpetuo for Guitar and Violin" (see The Great Kat 2021b). On the other hand, it is worth briefly mentioning that the video's relatively low incorporation of gender aspects is not as prevalent as in other virtuosity-focused videos such as "Vivaldi's The Four Seasons", in which parallels are made to the historical figure of a female violin virtuoso Anna Maria della Pietà (represented by The Great Kat), has served as inspiration to Vivaldi's work (see The Great Kat 2018j). Whilst I will address a variation of such 'influence' theatrically enacted within one of the performer's videos later on, my mentioning of the Vivaldi-focused track aims to showcase that, even in those cases where The Great Kat is seemingly 'embodying' a female virtuoso, establishing a relation between the male composer still takes prevalence over the historical female performer. This may be caused by the higher 'recognisability' factor of Vivaldi's name, though it can also be seen as implicitly emphasising the performer's female masculinity through associations with male composers.

11.5 The Great Kat's performance personas and their role in the performer's output

As I outlined in the summary of The Great Kat's academic examinations, although discussions have mentioned that the performer engages with gender aspects as part of her output, the descriptions are often limited to summaries of the use of lingerie/BDSM items of clothing, and broadly/briefly outlining some form of pushback against the masculinity of heavy metal culture. Whilst these descriptions are by no means incorrect, they strike me as limited in a number of ways that ultimately leave a great deal of not-unimportant details about the performer unexplored. First, as the discussions are now somewhat temporally distanced from the performer's current aesthetic direction and types of behaviours, they overall present a limited overview of the 'tools' with which her output operates. Second, there has been no sufficient contextualisation of the multiple self-framings of the performer, and neither how the performer's self-framings (e.g., her choice of a BDSM-derived costume) engage with broad contexts nor has the potential interplay between said broad contexts and the self-framing in relation to heavy metal culture has been considered. Third, it remains unclear as to how the self-framings of the performer potentially change the various produced transformation of Western art context-based artefacts. This is not limited to the performance personas, but also to more broadly relevant aspects such as The Great Kat's ascription of a feminist role as well as the implications of her female masculinity. Finally, given that predominant lack of co-relation between the common discussion of the performer's general engagement with gender, and the limited framings of the auditive level of her work, to my knowledge there is no consideration as to whether the auditive level of an artefact reflect the self-framing aspects observed on the visual level?

I would argue that the differences that became visible in the previous sections of the interpretations – the colourful and erotic-suggestive aspects found in the artwork "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" and the much darker, occult and aggressive-connotative elements found in the video of "Paganini's Caprice #24" – are neither a case of a simple 'change of wardrobe', nor are they limited to those two artefacts. Rather, they signify that The Great Kat's aesthetic and behaviour is not only varied

but also fairly complex, thus necessitating further discussion of the specifics of the performer's self-framing.

This final segment of my examination of The Great Kat's output will begin addressing some of the aforementioned challenges by offering a more up-to-date, and situated examination of the two performance personas that have been predominantly featured throughout the performer's career – this study will refer to them as the 'dominatrix', and the 'femme'. I will argue that their adoption by the performer is an important aspect for understanding how gender aspects function in The Great Kat's output, and that the interpretation of the metal transformation of Western art pieces changes in relation to the adoption of a specific persona.

The discussion will once again be divided into several sections, with the goal being to offer both theoretical foundations for each persona's 'personal fronts' as a combination of setting, appearance and manner (Goffman, quoted in Auslander 2009, 310),[497] as well as exemplary close readings discussing the interactions to Western art music contexts. First, I will present separate theoretical framings for the two performance personas, including how the aspects of their 'appearance' can be situated thus offering the broad contexts informing the respective permutation of the 'personal front'. Additionally, relevant gender implications of such contexts towards The Great Kat's general framing will be discussed, as well as how the personas' overall aesthetic and presentation can be situated in relation to heavy metal contexts and female performer within them. Second, I will offer a brief extension that considers how 'manners' of expression of both performance personas both interact and overlap, as well as how they can be situated in relation to the underlying female masculinity concept of The Great Kat. Third and finally, I will present two interpretative close readings in which the performance personas are utilised in relation to a Western art music-related artefact (including their interactions with specific composers), and suggest that such inclusions can be interpreted as incorporating feminist and/or queer potential to the artefact's reading. For the dominatrix, I will focus on the album artwork and lyrics of the album *Rossini's Rape*, whilst to examine the femme I will examine the music video for "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture".

Before I commence, I wish to reiterate that from the perspective of the interpretative underpinning of my study, I am making no claims regarding The Great Kat's own gender and/or sexuality. More importantly reflecting on the potential conflict as to why a white, heterosexual male is to be able to offer queer readings, I will borrow from, and slightly adjust, Amber Clifford-Napoleone's approach in her 2015 study *Queerness in Heavy Metal Music*. Clifford-Napoleone gathered queer-metal fans' perspectives and, combining them with historical and theoretical framing that interprets aspects of heavy metal's aesthetic as derived from gay culture, presented an empirically founded argument for heavy metal music and culture's ability to be read as containing queer gestures and expression. In order to frame The Great Kat's adoption of both personas as

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[497] As the aspect of 'setting' in relation to the persona's persona front deals with "the physical context of the performance" (Goffman, quoted in Auslander 2009, 310), and the majority of discussions do not involve actual 'real world' engagements/places but rather 'imagined' ones in relation to artwork, lyrics or music video, this aspect is not explicitly engaged with. With that in mind, I have offered brief comments acknowledging the aesthetic of the sets in the examined music videos as the closest aspect to the notion of 'setting', and where necessary, discussed how they affect the perception of the performer.

interpretable in a non-heteronormative manner, my approach will echo the historical and theoretical aspect of Clifford-Napoleone's study and will outline the performative and queer-proximity contexts of the dominatrix and the femme thus framing them as persona-specific form of gender performativity (see Butler 1990) and as such as not representative of The Great Kat's own sexuality or gender. Furthermore, the individual interpretative close readings will argue that the personas' interactions obstruct a purely heteronormative reading, thus incorporating a queering effect on the classical subject matter.

Framing the dominatrix persona

Figure 62: The Great Kat – *Worship Me or Die* (1987), back artwork

I will begin my framing of the two performance personas by exploring the dominatrix, which can be summarised as the primary persona adopted by The Great Kat from the early portions of her career. Defined by a dark aesthetic, quasi-fetishistic costumes and a predominantly aggressive presentation, the dominatrix can be described as the persona more closely related to heavy metal contexts in which The Great Kat's output is broadly situated. The following section will outline how through the cultural framing of the associated BDSM role, the adoption[498] of a dominatrix-interpretable persona by The Great Kat enables the performer to both effectively navigate heavy metal culture, yet also, based on the performer's self-ascribed feminist position, for the persona's adoption to be interpretable as potentially reframing the genre's gender power-relations as well as to engaging with culture-relevant critical perspectives.

Despite the dominatrix to initially leave the impression of a simple case of presenting a fetishistic role to a wider audience, I would argue that through the adoption The Great Kat can be interpreted as both drawing from a framing of the female body that is both theatrical in its presentation of suggestive content, yet is also underpinned by the signification of 'power' wielded by the dominatrix figure.

Beginning with a fairly basic question of 'what is a dominatrix?', professional dominatrices are described in the sociological research of Danielle Lindemann as "women who receive money to

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[498] In line with my previous comment drawing from Davies on the need to avoid presenting female performers as a 'novelty', it is worthwhile pointing out that there have been earlier instances in which female heavy metal performers have adopted a dominatrix-like persona. For example, the front cover and inlet artwork of first album by the US heavy metal band Bitch, *Be My Slave* (Bitch 1983a), features their lead singer Betsy Bitch (stage name for Betsy Weiss) in a BDSM-reminiscent outfit similar to the one seen in Figure 62, as well as surrounded by and handling BDSM-related accessories (see Bitch 1983). Similarly, some of the tracks (e.g., "Be My Slave" or "Leatherbound") feature a similar emphasis on discussing BDSM related practices, though without any of the explicit violence as found in some of The Great Kat's track dealing with this thematic.

physically and verbally dominate male clients (whom they call 'submissives,' 'subs,' or 'slaves') through spanking, flogging, verbal humiliation, bondage, cross-dressing, and other tactics" (D. Lindemann 2010, 588). The author further clarifies that "although the interaction is erotic in nature, pro-dommes are *not* prostitutes – intercourse, oral sex, or manual gratification are rarely components of the exchange" (D. Lindemann 2010, 588), and also highlights a certain predictability in that the respondents of her study quite often referred "[to] their work as 'artistic'" (D. Lindemann 2010, 593). An additional larger investigation by the same author in 2012 has also showcased that in many cases the widespread popularity of the dominatrix image in popular culture is associated with a combination of high visibility and gender subversion e.g., she points to the recurring comedic effect of characters of the animated TV-show *Family Guy* dressing up in S/M gear (D. J. Lindemann 2012, 7). Further general perspectives regarding the framing of the dominatrix emerge in relation to a recent study by Abbey Ratcliff-Elder, Cory Pedersen and Arleigh Reichl (2019) in which the authors discuss the early mainstream-normalisation of the dominatrix image via the association to American model Bettie Page in the 1940s: "This popular reference might conjure up images of a sexy leather-clad dominatrix wielding a riding crop and handcuffs standing over her cowering male submissive" (Ratcliff-Elder, Pedersen, and Reichl 2019, 5), a stereotypical understanding clearly identifiable in some artwork featuring The Great Kat (see Figure 62).[499]

Whilst this brief summary cannot present a full picture of the complex socio-cultural components associated with the dominatrix role, it does highlight several aspects that may be of benefit as part of the adoption of a performance persona interpretable as dominatrix by The Great Kat. First, through this adoption The Great Kat's self-framing in heavy metal appears in close proximity to a fairly established suggestive figure in popular culture, and moreover one whose pre-existing context of combining high visibility and taboo topics parallels heavy metal's own taboo-handling practices. This may be tentatively expanded by suggesting that, to those familiar with the dominatrix' mixing of high visibility and modern 'taboo' aspects, the adoption of a corresponding character may be interpreted as implicitly hinting at the notion of 'transgression', thus offering a parallel to The Great Kat's own transgressive musical practices in the transformation of highly recognisable Western art music pieces through heavy metal aesthetic. Second, beyond the 'power'-evoking aspect of the figure's role as 'dominating' individuals[500] that can be framed as fairly recognisable in heavy metal

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[499] At the same time however, the image strikes me as comparable to the CD cover of Angie Reed's album *Angie Reed Presents the Best of Barbara Brockhaus* (2003) which presents the titular character Barbara Brockhaus in an inverted power position, in which it is her male bosses who are incited to 'suck my finger' (see Leibetseder 2012, 31–33 for an analysis of the piece). For image source, see The Great Kat (1987a).

[500] I'd like to briefly 'peel back the curtain' in relation to the writing process and offer a quick anecdote. Having completed my work on The Great Kat's output, I was engaging with a video-game from the Yakuza series of games (Ryu Ga Gotoku Studio 2018) in which the cultural framing of the dominatrix came into focus. The Yakuza series can be characterized as employing an intriguing contrast between the handling of crime-drama and (masculine-)connotated notions such as standing up for one's beliefs, honour, kindness etc. as part of the main narrative, and bizarre comedic/absurd interactions as part of the smaller semi-related narratives referred to as 'side-stories'. The side-story in question sees one of the game's main protagonists (Kazuma Kiryu) helping out a young woman that is employed as a dominatrix, yet due to her rather timid and apologetic demeanour, fails in her professional duties. Whilst some may roll their eyes at yet another instance of a man having to step in and

contexts, the aforementioned 'artistic' perception of the dominatrix role underscores an inherent theatrical potential that, when adopted by The Great Kat, allows the performer to engage with the genre's consistent theatricality (for research engages with theatricality in heavy metal see e.g., Bayer 2017; Breen 1991; Gerk 2016; Phillipov 2012b). Third, the dominatrix' use of S/M gear and its gender-subversion connotations can be seen not only as beneficial in terms of matching heavy metal's emphasis on leather in some permutations of the culture's uniform, but can also be related to the queer history and continuous dialogue and influence between "queer leather style and heavy metal style" as discussed by Clifford-Napoleone (Clifford-Napoleone 2015, 25–48).

The outlined perspectives help to provide a general set of characteristics that may be framed as advantageous to the adoption of a dominatrix performance persona by The Great Kat. However, I would like to focus specifically on the idea of the dominatrix as connotating 'power'[501] as I believe this aspect has interesting implications towards the development of The Great Kat's self-framing in relation to heavy metal contexts.

In addition to its contemporary power-connotating framing, studies such as those by Jeremy Baron (2006) have highlighted the historical representation of dominatrix-like women in the literary canon, known for their (sexual) power over men – including references to acts such as male whipping etc. – from as early as the Middle Ages (Baron 2006, 76–78; see also Schaffner 2012 for a related discussion of 'sadistic women' in literature). Baron's historical discussion also mentions the literary characterisation of "the strong woman" in fiction which were referred to as "resolute and disdainful" in the seventeenth century, and cites historical examples such as Elizabeth of England as having received "the doubtful compliment of manliness" (Baron 2006, 79). Whilst the 'compliment of manliness' is of note in terms of presenting a broad parallel to the underlying female masculinity of The Great Kat's persona, and by extension the dominatrix performance persona, the existence of a historical precursor to the modern framing of the dominatrix is of equal, if not greater, importance as The Great Kat's website contains a (seemingly haphazard) collection of mini-biographies of "Geniuses" (greatkat.com n.d.d). Specifically, within this collection, of relevance is the inclusion of female historical figures such as the aforementioned Elizabeth of England or 'infamous' figures such as Lizzie Borden, the latter outlined as "the infamous New England woman accused of chopping up and killing her father and stepmother with an axe" (greatkat.com n.d.g, n.p.). The combination between the

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help a woman out in this form of interaction, there are some rather curious elements that contribute to the idea that the dominatrix figure is associated with female empowerment. Specifically, the dominatrix attests to having accepted this job as means of developing her own character and assertiveness, and moreover the process of Kazuma Kiryu helping the dominatrix out involves him sharing details through which the dominatrix may be able to fulfil the expected 'dominating' role-playing behaviours. Whilst this description is clearly an example of stereotyping on many levels (e.g., what constitutes a dominatrix roleplay, a form of 'mansplaining' that can be derived from the encounter, or a woman assuming a sex-related job/role as means of self-fulfilment), the framing of the dominatrix role as means of empowerment, as well as the female character required someone willing to be 'abused' as primary form of guidance, shows the complexities of the dominatrix's depiction in popular culture – and their potential for representing female empowerment, rather than objectification.

[501] For brief discussions on the importance of 'power' in heavy metal contexts see Kosic (2012 [2011], 116–20); Walser (1993, 1, 2, 9).

TORTURE CHAMBER
All Lyrics & Music by The Great Kat
©1998 The Great Kat

WELCOME TO MY TORTURE CHAMBER!

Now get your ass over here
so I can STICK you in a vice and squeeze you
until you scream **IN PAIN! IN PAIN! IN PAIN!**
And your veins POP OUT and your stomach explodes
and all your disgusting insides
SPLURT OUT ALL OVER THE FLOOR!!!

Now step into the hot vat of boiling water.
See, I'm gonna boil your flabby skin
and watch it shrivel up and smell your ugly stench!!!
FAG!!

SHUT UP! SHUT UP!
STICK out your flaccid ass,
so I can kick the CRAP out of you
OVER and OVER and OVER and OVER!
until red, bloody welts form on your little ass!
HOT WAX! On your little BALLS!!!!
THEN I'm gonna chop them up!!

Had enough TORTURE YET???!!!!
Do you like your punishment?
YOU WANT MORE????
WHAT????!!! MORE?
OKAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Figure 63: The Great Kat – "Torture Chamber" (lyrics)

additional historical context of the dominatrix and some of the violent connotations emerging from The Great Kat's website, indirectly suggest a certain 'bloodthirsty' aspect to the performer through which some of the BDSM-related tracks in her output seemingly offer a more violent, rather than merely erotic, connotation.

To exemplify this potential, the BDSM-interpretable lyrics of tracks such as "Torture Chamber" from the album *Bloody Vivaldi* (see Figure 63),[502] showcase how the lyrical 'I', supposedly a dominatrix character performed by The Great Kat, engages in what can be described as a SM encounter and embodies the sadism aspect and its association with "the pleasure from giving physical or psychological 'pain'" (Guidroz 2008, 1768). The unnamed 'other' implied in the lyrics, a (presumably male targeted) submissive recipient sexual aggression, is denigrated and de-masculinised through terms such as 'moron' and 'fag', thus framing the overall engagement as the re-enactment of a role-playing SM event:

"Role playing involving the torture or interrogation of a witness or prisoner has also been replicated in SM scenes [.] This example of SM has been referred to as 'consenting to nonconsensuality' and would fall under the category depersonalization […] or 'edge play' because it can involve using potentially harmful objects as well as pushing emotional limits". (Guidroz 2008, 1769)[503]

Although the opening and closing lines of the lyrics ("Welcome to my torture chamber" / "You want more", respectively) can be interpreted as signs of consent by the aforementioned submissive 'other' as per modern SM practices – e.g., Margot Weiss states that "contemporary SM follows the motto 'safe, sane and consensual'" (M. Weiss 2009, 182); see also Jozifkova (2013) – other lyrics suggest a more violent underpinning. Specifically, perspectives emerging from the lyrical 'I' such as 'your veins POP OUT and your stomach explodes' or 'HOT WAX! On your little BALLS!!!! // THEN I'm gonna chop them up!!', imply that The Great Kat's version of the dominatrix ignores the understanding of an SM encounter as "not as painful, but as strongly stimulating" (Jozifkova 2013, 1), as well as goes beyond the contemporary framing that "power – and not the exchange of pain – is the primary basis of SM" (Cross and Matheson, quoted in Ratcliff-Elder, Pedersen, and Reichl 2019, 2). Instead, the lyrics leave the impression that the lyrical 'I' aims to perform physically (and by virtue of their threatening nature, also psychologically) violent acts focused on male sexual organs to the submissive 'other', thus

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[502] Image source derived from scan of the booklet from the album *Bloody Vivaldi* (see The Great Kat 1998b).

[503] As a quick clarification, the quote by Kathleen Guidroz represents a broad summary of role playing that, in turn, draws from multiple academic texts. These were omitted from the quotation for the purposes of readability.

magnifying the encounter to the level of implied sexual-violence towards men.[504] In other words, violence, and by extension the exchange of pain, is strongly associated with the exchange of power, and therefore the 'pleasurable' component of the submissive 'other' is effectively nullified.

Broadly speaking, regardless as to how accurate The Great Kat's actions may be in relation contemporary BDSM understanding, the aestheticized acts of male-targeted sexual violence can be contextualised as highly applicable to heavy metal's "unflinching portrayal of victimizers" (Wallach and Clinton 2017, 103). However, an additional interpretation emerging from the aforementioned historical contexts of the dominatrix suggest that the selection of the dominatrix persona by The Great Kat may be interpreted as providing a female-centric equivalent to what Rosemary Lucy Hill (2016) describes as myth formation within heavy metal narratives, and more specifically one that subverts the related gender and power disbalance. Hill's analysis argues that heavy metal narratives pertaining to the culture's imagined community are constructed via media-discourse, and furthermore points to the existence, and sustaining, of multiple myths that are applied to fans and performers alike and through which gender parameters within metal culture are defined and controlled. Amongst the four myth-related narratives identified in the author's examination of *Kerrang!* magazine, Hill discusses the masculine-framing "myth of the warrior" which, in addition to its general framing of "signify[ing] war in order to naturalise the expulsion of the feminine", employs elements as part of the magazine's letter pages that "prominently signify danger, death, war, gore, youth, power, and high volume" (R. L. Hill 2016, 64). Furthermore, specifically for the framing of male performers, the author notes that "photographs use postures, costumes and facial expressions that signify anger, aggression or intimidation in some form" (R. L. Hill 2016, 64–65), through a combination of "indicators of physical prowess, bravery, and power are visible", as well as suggests parallels to Anglo-Saxon and Viking framing e.g. "[g]estures and expressions evoke horror films and villains and seem designed to shock and to strike fear into the viewer" (R. L. Hill 2016, 65). In contrast, Hill outlines that the representation of women as either fans or players showcases that "[w]hilst female fans are represented as desiring, loving and protecting male musicians, and whilst men musicians are photographed in ways that signify the fearsome warrior, photographs of women musicians tend to emphasise heterosexual attractiveness" (R. L. Hill 2016, 71).

The contrast between female fans/performers as desiring and/or heterosexually attractive and masculine framing of power, aggression, death etc., serves as context in relation to which The Great Kat's adoption of a dominatrix performance persona can be interpreted as disruptive to the division. Specifically, the broad cultural framing of the dominatrix as a 'sexy figure' engaging with quasi-erotic encounters can be interpreted as retaining some of the heterosexual attractiveness aspect noted by Hill. However, in the case of The Great Kat, despite images such as Figure 62 to imply a heteronormative perspective through the performer's female masculinity and/or 'bloodthirsty' traits ascribed to the aforementioned historical female figures, these aspects allow for the emergence

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[504] The aspect of violence as emerging from the dominatrix is not a new concept developed by The Great Kat, though it appears to be related more to the realm of historical discussions as Anna Katharina Schaffner's examination of Marquis de Sade's *Juliette* points to the character of Countess Clairwill as "constitut[ing] an early version of the dominatrix-as-castrating-feminist stereotype" (Schaffner 2012, 187).

of a similar 'power' and 'shock and fear' components usually related to masculine framings. As such, The Great Kat not only undermines the sexual-normativity potential of her self-framing, but also substitutes the masculine 'Viking warrior' for the violent and 'bloodthirsty' dominatrix as a source of symbolic power in heavy metal contexts, thus destabilising the expected passivity of women performers/fans. This effectively allows The Great Kat to deploy a self-framing through which she can participate in the same myth-making narratives native to heavy metal culture, yet in a way that redistributes cultural power from primarily granted to male performers to a female(-masculinity) one.[505]

In addition, once the sexual violence related to the dominatrix persona is filtered through The Great Kat's self-ascribed feminist position, multiple additional gender-related parallels to heavy metal contexts can be interpreted. First, the utilisation of male-targeted violence in tracks such as "Torture Chamber" can be compared to similar practices in feminist-active metal performers such as the track "Menocide" (Otep 2002) by the band Otep, whose lead-singer and founding member is the outspoken feminist and openly queer Otep Shamaya. The lyrics of "Menocide" reference not only a call to arms against male oppression ("kill your masters / MENOCIDE"), but also incorporate critical perspectives on the ascription of gendered roles in society ("girls in the playroom / house-wives / servants in the workplace / slaves to lies") and gendered behaviours taught to women ("no one's listening / save your cries / everything they taught / was a lie") (azlyrics.com n.d.).[506]

Second, the gruesomely depicted overlap between sexual themes and male-focused violence may be read as an inversion of the aesthetics found in the heavy metal subgenre of porngrind (sometimes spelled as 'pornogrind'). Porngrind is described by Lee Barron as "fus[ing] the gore/death lyrical content of [grindcore and death metal] with a sustained focus on sexual explicitness, sexual violence and misogyny" (Barron 2013, 66), whereby the scholar's examination of the genre showcases how it's aesthetic heavily relies on the perpetuation of male (physical) domination over women, misogyny and sexual violence towards women. From this context tracks such as "Torture Chamber" can be interpreted as a critical inversion of pornogrind genre-aesthetics, whereby The Great Kat's dominatrix persona claiming power from, and redistributing violence towards, men in a manner that mostly matches porngrind's approaches. Furthermore, it is possible to read The Great Kat's sexual violence as also incorporating the topic of transgression – as shared and valued by both her performance persona and heavy metal culture – which is utilised to strengthen a female-supportive political message. Similar to marginalization of National Socialist Black Metal from the broader black

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[505] Simon Jones' examination of how heavy metal masculinities were framed in *Kerrang!* magazine between early 1980s and mid-1990s offers a complementary perspective that points out that "typically masculine gender codes such as machismo, hyper-masculinity and aggression can be both reproduced *and* resisted" (S. Jones 2018, 477, italics in original), and highlights performers such as Ozzy Osbourne whose masculinity "emphasis[es] playfulness, rebelliousness and theatricality" as well as Jon Bon Jovi as "embod[ying] the heavy metal values of power and freedom (associated with masculinity) *and* a romantic vulnerability" (S. Jones 2018, 474). This perspective is helpful not only in framing masculinity in metal as more differentiated and less firmly connected to only one type of masculinity (see also, N. Scott 2016b), but also in viewing The Great Kat's female masculinity, and its feminist-critical tendencies, as reflecting said gender 'abnormality' in heavy metal contexts.
[506] Although quoting from the corresponding lyrics-focused website for the purposes of clarity, I separately engaged with the track and verified the accuracy of the lyrics to the original song.

metal culture (Olson 2013, 149; see also Niall-Scott's 2013 discussion on metal's supposed apolitical self-framing in the same collection), porngrind is subject to a quasi-expulsion from heavy metal visibility, most likely due to disrupting what Hill identifies as the "[n]otions of equality and authenticity [as] fundamental to the representation of the [metal] community's core values" (R. L. Hill 2016, 52).[507] However, a lack of visibility is not the same as open condemnation and/or rejection by the broader heavy metal culture. Whilst I make no claims of deep familiarity with the entire 'porngrind' discourse, given that Barron does not mention porngrind scenes being subject to a process of expulsion in 2013, nor does a recent discussion of porngrind as a heavy metal subgenre (e.g., Weingarten 2019) imply such a development to have taken place as of writing of this text, it is possible to frame metal culture as failing to address a genre within its boundaries that houses a high saturation of misogyny. From this perspective, by adopting male-focused violence topics in some lyrics, The Great Kat may be interpreted as creating a potential response, recontextualising heavy metal's interest in transgression by pushing the boundaries of acceptability within the culture and, in a roundabout way, invites comparisons to genres such as 'porngrind', an act which can contribute to discussions about the historical normalisation of misogyny in the heavy metal as a whole.

Third, and finally, whilst the discussion thus far has presented the dominatrix persona as potentially drawing from the broad cultural context related to the eponymous BDSM role, it should be acknowledged that such engagements are also enacted in queer spaces (e.g., see Robin Bauer's extensive discussion on the subject Bauer 2008, 2014, 2016, 2018; see also Cahana 2012; Simula 2013). Thus, as a final context informing the dominatrix persona's relation to heavy metal contexts (though also relevant to some of the salient features native to The Great Kat's aesthetic) is the parallel to the queercore genre. Queercore is summarised by the musicologist Stan Hawkins as "a subcultural movement that is predominantly white, originating in North America in the mid-1980s" (Hawkins 2016, 198), whereby the ideological foundation of which is framed by Jodie Taylor as "reject[ing] the notion of cultural unity or cohesion among sexual minorities, and irreverently attacks the established figureheads, symbols, and codification of mainstream gay culture" (Taylor, quoted in Hawkins 2016, 198). Hawkins' examination of the genre showcases a surprising amount of similarities to The Great Kat's aesthetic, ranging from broad aesthetic principles such as queercore's "identify[cation] with the marginalization of LGBT communities by turning to what might be described as DIY style" (Hawkins 2016, 198), through the punk sensibilities of bands such as The Apostles and their "aggressive handling of themes [as] a way of confronting prejudice, gender, inequality, and the violation of individual rights" (Hawkins 2016, 199), to the political critique against sexual discrimination of bands such as tribe 8 ("a term denoting a female homosexual", Hawkins 2016, 201) expressed in songs such as "Frat Pig" which confronts "the rituals of frat boys raping girls" (Hawkins 2016, 202) with lyrics responding to such acts with sexual castration. Hawkins' discussion of tribe 8's lead singer Lynn Breedlove are also a noteworthy parallel here as The Great Kat's themes of male-targeted sexual violence, female masculinity and high degree of self-eroticisation can be identified in Hawkins' description. Namely,

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[507] Another way of expressing this denial of visibility is to point out that metal-archives.com, a website claiming to be the most exhaustive resource on metal music, does not include (nor recognise) the genre-descriptor "porngrind" or attests any bands belonging to it, among its over one-hundred and thirty thousand band entries.

Breedlove is described as presenting "displays of female masculinity" (Hawkins 2016, 202) in relation to "appear[ing] topless, donning a strap-on dildo, egging on her fans to engage with her [during performances]" (Hawkins 2016, 201) as well as Breedlove's own description of engaging with castration-related theatrics involving "chop[ing] off the testicles of big rubber dick or chop[ing] off a rubber dick and wav[ing] it around and toss[ing] it into the crowd" (Breedlove, quoted in Hawkins 2016, 201, 202).

In summary, this section outlined relevant contexts from the broad cultural framing of the BDSM-related role of the dominatrix, and argued that their intrinsic relation to power and theatricality may be seen as contributing to situating The Great Kat's own dominatrix performance persona in similar accepted and/or praised aspects within heavy metal culture. Furthermore, I suggested that based on connections between the historical figures viewed as dominatrices and the performer's seeming praise of quasi-violent historical figures, these allow to situate some of The Great Kat's BDSM-interpretable lyrics as more than 'role-playing' aggressions, but as potentially expressing male-targeted violence. Through this co-relation, The Great Kat's adoption of the dominatrix becomes a female-role substitute that offers a comparable violence, shock, or fear aspects usually reserved to masculinity framings in heavy metal, and thus both engages with myth-making narratives within heavy metal culture, as well as subverts expectations of female passivity or heteronormative attractiveness. In addition, when viewing the aforementioned male-targeted violence through the lens of The Great Kat's self-ascription to feminism, I presented several notable parallels affirming the persona's relation to metal contexts: parallels to female performers engaging with feminist-underpinned anti-gender normativity positions through similar lyrics as a way to transgressively invert aesthetic acts by misogynistic sub-genres within heavy metal such as porngrind; as well as parallels to queer contexts such as performers in the broad queercore subculture.

Defining the femme persona

The femme persona is the second consistently visible self-framing by The Great Kat and one that becomes more prevalent from the early 2000s, to the point of becoming the 'new standard' to appear in most of the performer's output. In contrast to the darker aesthetic and more overtly aggressive manner of the dominatrix, the femme is characterised by the utilisation of a bright and highly saturated visual palette, heavily feminine-connoted coloured lingerie and make-up, and places a higher emphasis on the depiction of quasi-suggestive body poses and facial expressions. Whilst it may be easy to suggest that this emphasis simply constructs a 'feminine persona', as I mentioned in relation to "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", this self-framing is often associated with normative-undermining components such as excessive make-up, potentially ironic underpinning, and as disrupting heteronormative-attractiveness aspects thus necessitating the deployment of a different term that can encapsulate such characteristics. As it will become clear in the following theoretical framing, the term femme was chosen as suitable in presenting the balance between the depiction of femininity with the heteronormativity-undercutting component. Recognising that applying the term femme to this second consistent persona by The Great Kat might lead to some assumptions regarding its historical association with the lesbian community, the theoretical framing will first contextualise the term in relation to its complex relation to the queer community, followed by an overview of the

femme theory from which my own ascription draws. Finally, I will present a discussion through which the femme's combination of suggestive, yet non-normative, depiction of femininity and performance practices can be situated in relation to similar approaches by modern female heavy metal performers.

Scholarly work discusses the term femme as emerging in the US from around the 1940s and 1950s as part of two related gender identities within the lesbian community – femme and butch. The femme signified a lesbian identity that retained, utilised and adopted broadly feminine aesthetic or behaviours thus complementing the butch lesbian identity and the latter's utilisation of masculine traits (Levitt, Gerrish, and Hiestand 2003, 99–100). Academic investigations also point out that the femme and its relation to femininity has been subject to some criticism from feminist groups as early as the late 1960s, with the latter arguing that by reproducing feminine aesthetic through the adoption of the femme identity, this also "encourag[es] the patriarchal objectification of women" (Levitt, Gerrish, and Hiestand 2003, 100). Or when viewed in a larger context of feminist critical positions, together with SM sexual practices, butch/femme roles were "judged [as] anti-feminist, as unthinking replications of violent heterosexual relations" (LeBihan 2001, 109). This negative connotation around the utilisation of femininity in feminist/gender discourse was challenged by earlier scholarly work by arguing that the femme/butch identities, were (and still are) not simply complementary but rather enable the subversion of heteronormative gendering through their close connection (see Case 1988). Specifically, scholars emphasised how the adoption of femininity, as an important component within the femme identity, enabled femme-related characteristics to be "considered not inferior but were granted respect and admiration" (Laporte, in Levitt, Gerrish, and Hiestand 2003, 100), as well as for femme identified persons to present challenges to female sexuality in the resignification of femininity through "orienting their sexuality toward a butch woman instead of a man" (Levitt, Gerrish, and Hiestand 2003, 99).

Although this argument aids in viewing the adoption of femininity as a source of empowerment rather than as secondary and/or subsidiary to masculine-related identities, one difficulty that remained was that it still entangled the femme identity to that of the butch identity, a connection referred to in some instances as "Butch-Femme othering" (Blair and Hoskin 2016, 103). Newer research efforts have focused on investigating contemporary understanding of the term femme by conducting empirical studies on both lesbian communities (e.g., Levitt, Gerrish, and Hiestand 2003) as well as larger queer communities (e.g., Blair and Hoskin 2016), with studies focusing on exploring the motivations for the adoption of the femme identity. Also, how people that chose to adopt said identity deal with, and reflect on, challenges both internal (e.g., questioning for whom does the person choose to wear make-up) or external (e.g., tackling external doubt as to whether the person is 'truly' lesbian). These studies and their results have helped to make visible that femme should not be understood as an identity that is associated exclusively with lesbian culture (see Blair and Hoskin 2016, 112) and even when seen within the narrower lens of lesbian culture, it should not be framed as: expressing exclusively femininity; reproducing related heteronormative connotations that may emerge (e.g. femininity as connotating passiveness); or that those that choose the femme identity are exclusively attracted to (or themselves attract) persons that have chosen the butch identity as a more masculine related gender identity. Rather, these observations make clear that the

femme exists as part of a spectrum of understandings whereby it allows both the expression of varying degrees of femininity and/or masculinity, as well as connects those that chose femme identity to be attracted to a variety of other queer identities.

This brief, and by no means exhaustive, overview of historical and contemporary contexts regarding the femme identity allows to grasp some of the challenges with regards to using this term, namely the association with the lesbian community and its historical relation to the butch identity. In order to have a specific framework regarding my understanding of the term femme, and to address these challenges, I base my working definition of the femme in close proximity to the work of Rhea Ashley Hoskin (2017) and the development of femme theory. As previously mentioned, whilst multiple aspects commonly presented by the discussed The Great Kat persona can be summarised as simply constructing 'a feminine persona' in relation to broad Western society's stereotypes of femininity I believe that in many cases there exists a clearly observable distortion aspect which can be framed through Hoskin's work on femme theory.

In her investigation of femmephobia – described as "prejudice(s) towards femme-identified persons" (Hoskin 2017, 100) – Hoskin discusses femme as a "a form of divergent femininity that strays from the monolithic and patriarchally sanctioned femininity" (Hoskin 2017, 99), and focuses on its utilisation in many bodies that do not conform to acceptability notions of patriarchal femininity, the latter described as "white, heterosexually available, DFAB, able-bodied, passive, self-sacrificing, thin, young, lacking self-actualization, and simultaneously negotiating Madonna/Whore constructs" (Hoskin 2017, 99). This more open theoretical framing of the term femme allows it to be decoupled from both its roots in the lesbian community and from the consistent connection to the butch identity, however it does not entirely remove its association with the broader queer community.[508] As such the use of the term to describe the discussed persona by The Great Kat allows for greater flexibility in terms of gender potential, in a similar fashion to the adoption of the female masculinity as underlying concept relevant to all of the performer's personas.

Other factors that contribute to the adoption of femme as a highly applicable term to describing The Great Kat's persona, include Hoskin's observation that "femme enactments are in constant dialogue with the negative assumptions projected onto femininity, challenging and disentangling the naturalized associations of patriarchal femininity" (Hoskin 2017, 100), which suggests that adopting femme identity is a political act with a critical underpinning. As my interpretative close reading will illustrate, The Great Kat's femme persona allows to generate interpretations of pieces where the persona's incorporation seemingly introduces a similar political underpinning to the transformation, whilst some additional contexts I will outline in a later section highlight that the persona can be interpreted as potentially challenging the assumed masculinity of

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[508] To be clear, the intention of this comment is not to strip the femme term from its connection entirely, nor to suggest that there is something inherently negative about said connection. Rather, I am pointing out that the adoption of the term femme to describe the actions of a person do not necessitate for that person to self-identify as queer, which is of importance, above all, as means to avoid a mischaracterisation of The Great Kat's gender and/or sexuality

metal and the associated negative assumptions regarding femininity by sharing aesthetic elements with contemporary female metal performers utilising a more sexualised form of femininity.

Hoskin also echoes previous academic work on the femme by pointing out that "[f]emme is femininity reworked, (re)claimed as one's own and made in one's own image (Hoskin 2017, 99), as well as pointing to how through the adoption of the femme moniker "femininity becomes a source of power and strength, rather than subordination" (Hoskin 2017, 100).[509] Both of these quotes strike me as very appropriate for The Great Kat's persona as my observations will highlight how her adoption of a femme persona balances the femininity aesthetic with elements that draw from her own female masculinity (e.g., over-the-top self-assertion and quasi-aggressive elements). Also, that the femininity is operationalised within the performer's focus on Western art music transformations, and accompanied with a shift from mostly aural experiences to more consistently visual dimensions of said transformations (e.g., the presentation of more feminine/suggestive components as part of video's narratives). Thus overall, by adopting the femme persona The Great Kat seems to be fulfilling both the utilisation of femininity as a source of power (or the adoption signifies no reduction of power when compared to the dominatrix), and the feminine aspect is adapted to her own image for her own goals.

However, the application of Hoskin's definition to the output of The Great Kat presents an interesting challenge with regards to the types of femmephobia described in the former's work, specifically with aspects relating to the femme mystification principle. Femme mystification is described as a process of "gender policing that operates by separating femininity from humanness—by eroticizing, exoticizing, and objectifying" (Hoskin 2017, 102–103). Hoskin also notes that through this process the feminine subject is rendered as a "cultural dupe" achieved via the "upholding [of] its ascribed artificiality" (Hoskin 2017, 103). Seeing as The Great Kat's femme persona increases the suggestive connotations of her output, this may be interpreted as the performer inadvertently eroticizing and objectifying herself thus upholding aspects that underpin the femme mystification. Moreover, in relation to Doris Leibetseder's discussion on the use of masks and masquerade by queer performers (Leibetseder 2012, 81–104), and specifically her outline of Mary Ann Doane's femininity as a mask (Leibetseder 2012, 89), it is possible to view the adoption of the femme persona by The Great Kat as precisely that, a 'mask of femininity' over the core female masculinity found throughout her performance personas, thus implying the adoption of a contrasting 'artificial' persona. These critical points can be deflected by pointing out aspects of irony that can be detected in The Great Kat's output which support the idea that the focus on exaggerated behaviour and suggestive poses, use of lingerie etc., is utilised as means of undermining principles of sexism and objectification, not to mention the context of such actions as empowering in the masculine-centric heavy metal culture. In addition, as I will showcase later on, the adoption of the femme persona retains a non-trivial amount of the masculine-connotative behaviours relating to The Great Kat's persona which helps alleviate the interpretation of the femme persona being read as 'artificial'.

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[509] Similar to Footnote 503, both quotations in this sentence are derived from Hoskin's own summary that are supported by general references to multiple texts. However, as no specific text was quoted by Hoskin, I have omitted including the additional authors for the purposes of readability.

On a final note for this terminological section, it is also possible to frame the adoption of the femme persona as complementary to the dominatrix, in the sense that both personas seemingly represent practices/identities that feminism has been critical of: the dominatrix' male-targeted violence comes in close proximity to the negative connotations of BDSM practices reinforcing a relation between violence and sexual activities (e.g., see Porter 2017, 301–2 for a brief discussion), whilst the more overtly suggestive aspects related to the femme persona seemingly touches on both the criticism against self-objectification in pornography as well as the criticism aimed towards femme lesbians as supposedly reiterating femininity without sufficient critical reflection thus hurting the overall direction of (second-wave) feminism. Given The Great Kat's self-ascription to feminist agenda, the parallel observable in both may be an interesting subtext as it would imply that, somewhat separate from the argument of femininity-normalising parallel to metal culture I will present below, The Great Kat's personas subtly imply a critical positioning towards negative historical contexts of feminism.

I hope that through brief overview of the term 'femme' has illustrated the clashes and discontinuities that my adoption of the term 'femme' towards The Great Kat's second prominent performance persona intends to bring forward. As a historical term with a strong, yet non-exclusive relation to queer contexts, and also as encompassing the notion of presenting a highly-specialised and non-normative version of femininity, the term femme allows to frame The Great Kat's complex and often conflicting engagement with suggestive self-framing. Furthermore, the term's implication of engaging with femininity as a source of 'power and strength, rather than subordination' strikes me as highly appropriate for the performer as, in addition to capturing some of the intricacies of The Great Kat's use of such framing in some of her videos, it also allows to showcase that even when appearing in suggestive and revealing costumes, there is a distinct ironic and or oppositional quality to the performer that is not reflected by simply referring to the persona as 'feminine'.

Framing the femme persona in relation to suggestive female representation in metal culture
In contrast to the dominatrix persona, the femme is a somewhat 'head-scratching' choice by The Great Kat as its much more colourful, outwardly feminine (and not immediately 'aggressive'-interpretable) aesthetic stands out against the typically darker and masculine connotations of heavy metal. So much so that initial encounters with the femme persona, and specifically with static images, may raise some questions as to whether the performer is situated within heavy metal at all. Furthermore, considering that the dominatrix can be interpreted as including an element of empowerment that reframes the cultural power in heavy metal, not to mention the femme's broad cultural framing and its implications of presenting divergent femininity, the question emerges as to whether the femme incorporates a similar potential. To address these perspectives, in the following pages I will suggest that The Great Kat's femme persona, and the associated quasi-suggestive connotations, can be framed not as representing a 'move away' from metal's aesthetic, but rather a 'change of approach' when contextualised in relation to similar approaches to self-framing by established female performers in the realm of metal culture.

Although the extensive connection to Western art music contexts might suggest that a comparison between the femme persona and female performers from genres saturated with similar

contexts should be pursued e.g., symphonic metal bands such as Nightwish or Within Temptation, the utilisation of more traditional signifiers of femininity by those bands' female lead singers (e.g., long effeminate dresses) contrasts the femme persona's presentation of a performative identity that does not entirely conform to notions of traditional or normative femininity. Rather, The Great Kat's femme persona and its feminine and suggestive contexts can be interpreted as contributing to the normalisation of transgressive femininity in metal culture which can be supported by parallels to several female-led metal bands that, since coming to prominence from around the mid-2000s,[510] utilise self-sexualisation principles in their performance whilst retaining the metal-culture focus on the aggressive or distorted: the American heavy/thrash metal band Butcher Babies and their lead singers Carla Harvey and Heidi Shepherd (see Figure 64), as well as the American industrial metal/metalcore band In This Moment and their lead singer Maria Brink (see Figure 65).[511]

Figure 64: Heidi Shepherd (left) and Carla Harvey (right). Butcher Babies, promotional image

Figure 65: Maria Brink. In This Moment, promotional image

Figure 66: The Great Kat, promotional image

It can be argued that from the onset of academia's critical yet constructive analysis of heavy metal culture in the early to mid-1990s, discussions have reflected the 'unproblematic' scene-internal framing of heavy metal as a predominantly masculine culture (e.g., see Weinstein 2000 [1991], 17; also S. Jones 2018, 460–66). With the widening of the academic studies on heavy metal culture, and the inclusion of studies with a reflexive approach towards gender and/or sexuality, a variety of positions have been brought forward that contribute to a much more nuanced understanding

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[510] Whilst this specific time-window aims to simply acknowledge the emergence of the discussed bands, I should point out that there exists a long-standing genre-agnostic history of female metal performers engaging with a spectrum of suggestive-interpretable practices as exemplified in the artist images in the following articles/pages: the late Maria Kolokouri (†2014), stage name Tristessa, from the black metal band Astarte (see occultblackmetalzine.blogspot.com 2010); Lita Ford from the eponymous heavy metal band (see Doğan 2020); Sonya Scarlet from the gothic metal band Theatres des Vampires (see Scarlet Records n.d.); Madeleine 'Eleine' Liljestam from the symphonic metal band Eleine (see rebellionrepublic.com n.d.); or Kathie Jarra from the power metal bands Stygmata and Jarra (see T. van Poorten 2007). Whilst this offers a broader context to The Great Kat's self-framing, I have not examined the aforementioned bands so as to determine the extent to which their respective quasi-suggestive practices can be situated in the same male gaze-deflecting or empowerment-related arguments presented in this section's discussion.

[511] For sources of the used images see following bibliographical entries: Figure 64 (see townsquare.media n.d.a); Figure 65 (see townsquare.media n.d.b); Figure 66 (see greatkat.com n.d.h).

regarding women of all races as fans and performers in heavy metal culture, amongst other gender-, race-, and globalisation-related perspectives: from book length studies (e.g., Berkers and Schaap 2018; Clifford-Napoleone 2015; Dawes 2012; Fast 2001; R. L. Hill 2016; Sackl-Sharif 2015a); through edited collections (Heesch and N. Scott 2016; Wallach, Berger, and Greene 2011); to individual chapters or articles (e.g., Donze 2010; Gregory 2013; H. Griffin 2014; R. L. Hill 2015; Hutcherson and Haenfler 2010; Krenske and McKay 2000).

Whilst academic framings of heavy metal's supposedly exclusive male audience have been updated to reflect (and be reflexive of) the role of women as fans, the understanding that heavy metal remains a masculine connotative culture is a reality that women must overcome should they wish to participate in said culture. Exploring the experiences of female metal fans, scholars such as Susanna Nordström and Marcus Herz (2013) have pointed out that heavy metal's normatively masculine framing positions women's ability to partake in heavy metal culture under significant pressure, as expressing femininity presents a challenge in navigating between 'acting male' and 'looking female'. Some female interviewees have discussed this duality as balancing being associated with the archetypes of the 'goddess' i.e., a knowledgeable female fan that is as passionate about the music as her male counterpart; or the 'whore' i.e., a female non-fan whose relation to a band/scene is connotated as representing someone's sexual trophy (Nordström and Herz 2013, 465), with similar dualities explored by Sonia Vasan in her examinations on gender and female fans in the death metal scene (Vasan 2010, 2011, 2016). Although the existence of a multitude of heavy metal sub-genres may imply equally as differentiated possibilities for women to participate, even in instances where female participation coupled with the depiction of femininity is more consistently visible (e.g. symphonic metal in the early 2000s), these have been accompanied by negative developments such as the 'female-fronted metal' term, which by positioning gender aspects in the genre labels, effectively echo aspects of patriarchal exclusion i.e., it is more important to point that there are women in the genre, rather than what type of music they create (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 30–31). Similarly, the previously discussed analysis by Hill on gender representation in the media discusses the processes of exclusion of both female fans and performers through the multiple gendered myths constituting the imaginary community (as per Benedict Anderson's theory) of metal, and which define listening experiences for performers.

Viewing The Great Kat's self-framing from such context, it can be argued that either persona engages with a balance between 'looking female' and 'acting male'. However, in contrast to the dominatrix' drawing from a quasi-violent theatrical framing that adheres to myth-making in heavy metal, I would argue that the femme navigates the same balance by prioritising an overtly feminine expression that still presents female masculinity and other desirable characteristics within the metal culture (i.e., conforming to certain aspects of the positive 'goddess' female framing through her musical skills), yet does so in a manner that undermines the association of sexualisation with passiveness and the negative 'whore' framing. To exemplify the potential of this capacity, I will briefly

outline a number of parallels and similarities between The Great Kat's femme persona and the personas[512] of Harvey/Shepherd and Brink.

Whilst each performer may be seen as conforming to many aspects of Hoskin's definition of patriarchal femininity (i.e., white, able-bodied, young etc.) it can be argued that all performance personas balance the outward presentation of sexualised femininity with characteristics that apply a distorting effect allowing them to still adhere to heavy metal's aesthetic. The figures above (Figure 64, Figure 65, and Figure 66) can serve as representative[513] costumes often utilised by the respective performers: items of clothing that are more likely to be considered as connoting femininity such as lingerie, fishnet stockings, close-fitted and/or cut-out tops that emphasise the breasts of the performers etc. However, these elements are complimented by aspects that can be seen as echoing metal culture's own aesthetic: from the visibility of Brink's tattoos; through the implied horror elements such as blood-covered bodies and the 'demonic' doll in Harvey and Shepherd's image (see Mills 2018 for a discussion of the horror connotations of dolls); to The Great Kat's self-description as a 'metal demon' and her holding an electric guitar – an instrument that retains its masculine connotations due to being more commonly performed by male than female musicians in heavy metal (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 23; Waksman 2003, 128). One might even argue that despite the costumes being somewhat revealing, each performer has applied a different effect that somewhat disrupts the male gaze: the suggestive possibilities provided by Brink's low-cut top are obscured by her hair; Harvey/Shepherd's use of tape over their breasts (itself a reference to another female performer previously mentioned as context to The Great Kat, namely Wendy O. Williams); or The Great Kat's use of a push-up bra that can be framed as transforming the self-framing to ironic levels. The use of make-up here is also dualistic as, on the one hand, it partially maintains its feminine connotations (more with regards to the professional look of the images), specifically each performer's utilising of pink or bright red lipstick as well as the visible use of cheek-colour. On the other, the use of extensive and often distorted eye-shadow strikes me as comparable more to the heavy metal's the historical engagement with make-up by male performers: from the eponymous lead singer of Alice Cooper, to Ville Vallo from the Finnish gothic rock/metal band H.I.M.[514] This masculine-relatable use of the make-up thus undermines and complicates the depiction of femininity rather than directly supporting it.

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[512] From Auslander's concept of the performance persona, I presume that the performers I mention as comparisons to The Great Kat employ their own performance personas. However, I refer here to more rudimentary observations, rather than a pre-existing analysis that fully examined the intricacies of said personas.

[513] Similar to how The Great Kat's dominatrix persona is a stark contrast to the femme's broad aesthetic, a quick Google search reveals that Maria Brink, Carla Harvey and Heidi Shepherd's costumes vary depending on a number of factors, from the aesthetic of a video/photoshoot to the salient features that define their image in relation to specific albums. As such, by representative I consider the images as capturing the overall effect of their aesthetic, rather than a specific design.

[514] It is worth noting that for both performers the use of makeup is not to be understood as connoting some form of alternative masculinity, but rather can be seen as representing a 'full circle' that returns to the ideas of connoting femininity. Whilst the use of make-up underlines the theatricality of Alice Cooper's eponymous lead singer, the band's first albums have been contextualized as in direct conversation with the aesthetic of glam rock (see Auslander 2006, 29–38) a perspective which the androgynous look of their *Easy Action* (see Alice Cooper 1970), or *Love It To Death* (see Alice Cooper 1971) album covers showcases quite well (see also Gerk 2016 for

Other similarities specifically between Butcher Babies and The Great Kat worth noting here is the utilisation of self-sexualisation as part of the band's marketing practices. The online stores of both bands include products such as posters and/or postcards which feature the female band-leaders in somewhat risqué framings[515] (see Figure 67 and Figure 68).[516] More interestingly however, both bands also include listings for items of clothing, and specifically items of clothing suggested to have been worn by the performers during the creation of a music video (see Butcherbabies.com n.d.b; greatkat.com n.d.f).[517] Depending on one's inclination, a critical reading of this marketing approach may be seen as both a positive engagement with forms of feminism i.e., a third-wave feminism body-reaffirming/sex-positive practice that challenges the normative masculinity of metal culture and pushes the boundary of what is 'acceptable' in terms of depiction of femininity; yet at the same time as problematic i.e., placing too much emphasis on the 'sex sells' principle, which, by not having a clearly visible critical underpinning, may result contributing to the issue of devaluing women as sex objects, observable in practices such as *Revolver* magazine's *Hottest Chicks in Metal* annual issue (see A. R. Brown 2016a; see also Whiteley 2015 for an additional discussion on sexualisation in pop music,), and as instilling heteronormative aspects regarding body image etc.[518]

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further discussion of changes in gender in the band Alice Cooper; also Golovin 2018 for a recent critical appraisal of the eponymous performer). Vallo's utilization of make-up reflects goth culture's own theatrical and gender bending aspects (see Brill 2008), whereby a direct example of the use of make-up by Ville Vallo as connotation of androgyny can be identified in the video "When Love and Death Embrace" e.g. [2:38] (see Pitkänen 2004).

[515] Without wishing to over-interpret the significance of these photographs, I want to briefly comment on the historical concept of *pose plastique* and the work of 'La Milo' from Footnote 434, and point out another notable parallel. Namely, even during the early twentieth century, the performer La Milo was selling postcards showcasing her performance as the legend of the nude ride of Lady Godiva (though also in other classical statue variants). Whilst the co-relation between such postcards and pornography was frowned upon, Huxley points out that "the whole point of Lamilo's postcards […] was that they could be defended as not being pornographic in the slightest" (Huxley 2013, 227). Again, The Great Kat's approach is somewhat more direct in its engagement with suggestive connotations, though one may argue that through the regular inclusion of composer's portraits, the chosen instruments, and the reiteration of her abilities or stature the combination offers not only a (however tentative) continuation of the ability to frame The Great Kat's actions as both popular- and classical-connotative, but also a similar defensibility against their singular interpretation as merely 'smutty images' as was the case for La Milo's postcards from a century prior.

[516] The sources of these images can be found in the following bibliographical entries: Figure 67 (see Butcherbabies.com n.d.a); Figure 68 (see greatkat.com 2020).

[517] This practice is not limited to only these performers as I also encountered instances where Floor Jansen, lead singer of the symphonic metal band Nightwish, is also offering its fans the ability to 'win' dresses implied to have been worn by the singer, through buying the band's merchandise (see Nightwish 2020).

[518] It is important to reiterate that the validity of sexualised self-framing strategies remains a debated subject by both the broader metal culture as well as female metal performers. For example, Susanna Sackl-Sharif outlines that the participation of Cristina Scabbia, the lead singer of the gothic metal band Lacuna Coil, in the aforementioned *Hottest Chicks in Metal* in 2014 issue was criticised by some writers from the *Metal Hammer*-magazine; Sackl-Sharif also quotes Angela Gossow, former lead singer and current manager of the melodic death metal band Arch Enemy, who also criticised the *Hottest Chicks* issues (Sackl-Sharif 2015b, 212). That said, around the same period, Gossow's replacement in Arch Enemy, Alissa White-Gluz, offered a more equalised position in which she defends women's right to appear in an attractive manner as empowering, though acknowledges the challenges of such an approach, such as pressure for (male or female) performers to do things they are not comfortable with. White-Gluz also mentioned that whilst she participated in the *Hottest Chicks* issues, she submitted photos a friend of hers took, and concluded by stating that "I would never use sexuality or looks as a selling point" (White-Gluz, quoted in Salmeron 2014, n.p.). Similarly, in a 2015 interview, Maria Brink discussed

Figure 67: "Butchers in the Kitchen", Butcher Babies (poster)

Figure 68: "Hot & Shredding Chamber Goddess", The Great Kat (colour photo)

The complicating effects of the depiction of femininity can also be identified in the performers' output, both in terms of the type of performance and behaviour during music videos. Despite the variety of genres to which these bands can be positioned in, a common factor emerges with regards to the undermining of gender stereotypes in metal music through vocal work i.e., the performance of distorted/growled vocals by all performers, as well as The Great Kat's instrumental work as a guitarist/violinist. For example, Heesch (2019) has discussed growled vocals as a performance practice drawing from historical genre-precursors to heavy metal aesthetic (e.g., growling in blues) which were further developed and differentiated in a variety of metal sub-genres (e.g., death metal, thrash metal, hardcore etc.). Growling is further described as problematically gendered both in terms of the sound's aggressive and thus masculine connotation, as well as some early framings of growling as a vocal technique associated with male performers due to reduced visibility of female performers in genres such as death metal. As the author points out, whilst performers such as Angela Gossow had been long considered as an "outstanding female exception" (Heesch 2019, n.p.) to growling's framing as a masculine style, bands such as Butcher Babies, In This Moment and The Great Kat (specifically her dominatrix persona) may be seen as exemplifying the wider association between the performance practice of growling and female performers. Furthermore, Butcher Babies and In This Moment utilise a combination of growled and clean vocals the latter of which clearly recognisable as emerging from the female body, an approach which can be interpreted as moving a step further beyond gender

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her being identified as one of the *Hottest Chicks*, and stated that the representation of "sexiness" is not intended as means of pleasing the audience but as a dress-approach she feels comfortable with, and emphasises that "[it is] 'my' sexiness. It belongs to me and can't be touched" (Brink, quoted in Leichtlein 2015, n.p.) thus signalling a critical reflexivity towards the act of self-sexualisation. [Ger. Orig. "Es geht mir nicht darum, ein Sexysymbol zu sein, oder mich sexy zu geben, um jeden zufriedenzustellen. Ich präsentiere mich so, weil ich mich dabei wohlfühle. Aber das ist 'meine' Sexyness. Sie gehört mir und ist nicht zum Anfassen"].

complication through vocal work, and positions the singers as identifiably female and simultaneously as 'transgressive' through their use of growled vocals.[519]

As growled vocals are a more pertinent (and less-often utilised) aspect of The Great Kat's dominatrix persona, I will adapt the comparison to the femme persona based on the performer's role as an instrumentalist. Berkers and Schaap's large-scale research on the role of women in metal music production showcases that a fairly small percentage of female performers (less than eight percent) play the guitar, in contrast to male guitar players' twenty-eight percent thus constituting said role as the most common type of male performer (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 71). Furthermore, the authors comment that "the absence of role models stresses the fact that a numerical lack of [...] female guitarists, can easily make people draw the conclusion that they are 'just' not good at it" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 68). From this view, The Great Kat's continuous work as not only a female guitar player, but a highly virtuosic performer, song-writer/arranger and a band leader, represents a challenge to perspectives such as women being denied access to playing guitar and engaging with "less prestigious support roles" (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 66)); or that even when playing, women's abilities are evaluated differently in the culture (see Nordström and Herz 2013, 463–64) and the associated negative implication that female performance abilities are 'outmatched' by those of their male counterparts. When considered in relation to the femme persona's self-suggestive framing, The Great Kat's emphasis on instrumental virtuosity further decouples the idea that for female players to be considered equal to male players, the former must visually resemble the latter. Simultaneously the continuous re-emergence of female masculinity through the femme persona counters potential accusations of inauthentic 'whore' behaviour, by re-introducing aggressive elements that are more coherent with heavy metal's overall aesthetic.

Additional perspectives worth briefly discussing pertain to videos created by In This Moment and Butcher Babies that can be contextualised as paralleling the extremely colourful aesthetic of The Great Kat's performance persona. Specifically, as including contradictions related to gender depictions in a similar fashion to the femme's combination between quasi-suggestive behaviour and expressions of aggression. On the one hand, Butcher Babies' video "Headspin" (see Butcher Babies 2017) focuses its visual narrative on depicting a quasi-realistic sexual encounter between a man in the physical world and woman in virtual reality. In contrast to The Great Kat's femme persona and the overlap with female characters represented in videos (as I will showcase in my examination of "Mozart's Marriage of Figaro Overture"), "Headspin" separates the lead singers from becoming the video narrative's subjects of desire by utilising an actress to perform the role of the virtual-reality woman, which in turn

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[519] I'd like to also briefly refer to Lucy Green's discussion on gender aspects related to the female voice in which she discusses the femininity affirming component of female singing, and points to the use of instruments as representing a technology that disrupts the 'natural' femininity in women (Green 1997, 54). From this context, it is not surprising that The Great Kat's female masculinity is supported by the growled and never 'clean' vocals, and – regardless of which persona is examined – she is utilizing multiple technologies (i.e., violin and guitar, the latter always electric, the former only at times so) which can be seen as disrupting the aforementioned female 'naturalness'.

becomes the 'focal point' of the male gaze.[520] Despite this separation, some comparison can be drawn between the alternation of suggestive and aggressive manners of expression in The Great Kat's videos and the actions of the Harvey and Shepherd, as the latter singers can be seen throughout the video, dressed in close-fitted semi-transparent costumes, employing comparable quasi-suggestive facial expressions and/or body positions e.g., [01:36] or [1:47],[521] which alternate with aggressive facial expressions and body-positions during the performance of growled vocals e.g., [01:28] or [03:07].

In This Moment's video for "Sex Metal Barbie" (see In This Moment 2015), on the other hand, showcases Maria Brink in several costumes that can be described as paralleling the aesthetic utilised by The Great Kat's femme: pink leather jackets, glitter-laced top-hat and coat, jewellery such as diamond-like earrings and tiaras, and the use of heavy brightly coloured make-up such as lipstick and eye-shadow.[522] In addition, the extensive effects that distort many of the scenes in "Sex Metal Barbie" through stretching the shot sideways, blurring large portions of the shot's outer segments, the often-seen flashes of colourful filters etc., remind me of the confusing effect resulting from The Great Kat's own frantic video-edits and the overlay of many simultaneous shots. The visual-distorting effects that can be framed as altering the depiction of femininity are also paralleled in the song's lyrics, in which Brink's overlap with the titular 'sex metal barbie' intends to serve as a critical response to sexist and derogatory comments that were made against her and the music (see Ebeling 2015). For example, the lyrics "I heard I grew up filthy, a trailer park queen // Drop out pregnant statistical teen", addresses misconceptions about Brink's own early pregnancy, and related negative stereotypes; or referring to the performer "Sex, Metal, Barbie, Whore, attention fiend" seemingly culminating in lines suggesting expulsion e.g. "You know I heard I don't belong in this scene". Despite this, the song's character, and by extension Brink, consistently pushes back against the negativity and transforming it as a form of self-empowerment[523] e.g., "You know I heard I don't belong in this game // Still you hold your hands in the air screaming my name" (darklyrics.com n.d.).[524]

I hope that these brief comparisons between The Great Kat's femme persona and the performance personas of Maria Brink from In This Moment and Carla Harvey and Heidi Shepherd from Butcher Babies, have illustrated similarities between the artists in terms of normalising the

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[520] To be clear, whilst this approach deflects some of the male gaze away from the performers, I am not suggesting that this solution is particularly useful as, regardless whether an actress or the singers, there is still a female person being objectified as part of the video.

[521] To avoid imposing a one-sided understanding of what constitutes 'suggestive' in the performance of Harvey and Shepherd, I wish to acknowledge that in some instances, what can be described as quasi-suggestive body position may simply stem from the fact that the singers are dancing (e.g. [01:19 – 01:20] or [01:22 – 01:25]).

[522] An additional parallel can be established based on the darker set that is shared between the video for In This Moment, as well as in some videos by The Great Kat's (e.g., "Sarasate's Carmen Fantasy", see [The Great Kat 2018i]). However, given that heavy metal's general aesthetic presupposes the use of darker colours, I mention this as a parallel only in its capacity as a common background against which the colourful aesthetic of the presented performance personas or performance characters are observed.

[523] As a brief note, whilst the general perspective of Brink addressing negativity towards her music, as well as the track representing a form of empowerment, is represented in the mentioned source (Ebeling 2015), the interpretations as to what lyrics appear to address are my own and based on Brink's own discussion of perspectives such as her early pregnancy (e.g., Shaffer 2013).

[524] Similar to my comment in Footnote 506, whilst I quote the lyrics from the designated site, they were cross-verified against the original track.

representation of sexualised femininity in heavy metal, whilst simultaneously retaining the aggressive/distorted elements valued within the culture. Despite the difference in their chosen genres, the performers share a number of self-framing practices that, whilst presenting quasi-suggestive perspectives, can be situated in contexts such as third-wave feminism. Similarly, the performers' framings in music videos can be seen as either attempting to deflect the effects of the male gaze, or critically engage with abusive perspectives due to the self-suggestive actions and transform them into sources of empowerment. It goes without saying that The Great Kat's own DIY distribution and extreme focus on Western art music will have a smaller impact than both bands' and their much wider success, yet through such a comparison, the identification of feminist and/or heteronormativity-undermining components in her femme-related output can be framed as not only in line with the femme's broad-cultural context, but also as situated in a metal culture-relevant context of presenting a somewhat divergent femininity that entails a critical component and serves as a source of empowerment.

Performance personas' manners of expression and their relation to female masculinity

Before moving on to the interpretative close readings in this section, I want to return to the two underlying concepts to this entire investigation, namely Auslander's performance persona and Halberstam's female masculinity concept. Specifically, in the following pages I want to briefly address some of the complexities that the co-relation between "appearance" and "manner" as constituting Goffman's "personal front" (Goffman, quoted in Auslander 2009, 310)[525] of both the dominatrix and the femme personas interact with the female masculinity that I theorise as the underlying concept to The Great Kat's gender framing.

Whilst the appearance aspect of the femme and the dominatrix personas makes them easily distinguishable due to the contrasting aesthetic – the former emphasises a much wider and varied colour palette, whilst the latter seemingly emphasises on predominantly darker tones – from the perspective of how these self-framings are presented in album artwork, promotional material, or music videos, the output of The Great Kat utilises two distinct performative manners: an aggressive manner of expression and a suggestive manner of expression. As a summary, the aggressive manner of expression spans the depiction/implication of any visual or textual act of aggression and/or violence, as well as the adoption of body language or facial expressions that can be interpreted as aggressive e.g. The Great Kat mimicking hitting her band members with a facial expression that includes burrowed brows, open moth showing her teeth or the utilisation of lyrics discussion physical/mental violence. In contrast, the suggestive manner of expression focuses on the depiction of more directly suggestive (and non-violence-based) poses and facial expressions e.g. The Great Kat is shown performing activities such as suggestively licking objects, or the shots are framed in a way so as to emphasise her quasi-exposed breasts with a facial expression that includes a suggestive look towards the camera, her mouth open with her tongue pressed against her lips. It is worth noting, however, that whilst the examples provided for each manner include elements from visual, textual or body-expression levels, it is not necessary for all elements (e.g., a facial expression *and* an erotic-

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[525] For the lack of discussion on the aspect of 'setting', see Footnote 497.

connotative act) to be simultaneously enacted, as these elements do not appear in close proximity as part of the album artwork or in can be identified in different shots of a video.

An important clarification to be added here is that neither manner is exclusive to a specific persona, and should, instead, be differentiated based how consistently they are utilised in relation to the persona i.e., as a primary or as a secondary manner of expression. Whilst it is expected that, based on their appearances, the persona's primary manners of expression will be suggestive for the femme and aggressive for the dominatrix, it can be argued that, whether directly or indirectly, both personas exhibit traits associated with the opposite manner of expression, thus rendering it as secondary. For example, music videos featuring the femme persona include brief shots of her utilising aggressive facial expression or mimicking hitting her other characters or band-mates thus implying an overlap in which the femme draws from the aesthetic-expressions native to the dominatrix; in addition, infrequent appearances of what can be described as a dominatrix persona in some videos may be viewed as either the appearance of both personas in the same clip or as a continuation of the aesthetic drawing from the femme to the dominatrix. As for the dominatrix the application of a more flexible understanding as to how the two manners of expression function, allows to retroactively put into context some quasi-suggestive yet not violence-focused images that appear in the booklet of some CDs e.g., last page of insert of *Rossini's Rape* (see The Great Kat 2000c).

Rather than viewing this overlap as instances of 'crossing wires' in relation to how the two personas present their manners of expression, considering that The Great Kat's female masculinity-focused performance persona is associated with notions of aggression and depiction of virtuosity, the appearance of these characteristics in the corresponding performance personas can be interpreted as the female masculinity as a shared underlying concept between personas. Namely, whilst the dominatrix persona can be more consistently related to female masculinity through the aggressive and assertive aspects stemming from broad masculinity stereotypes, the femme persona's more infrequent expressions of aggression are supplanted with depictions of instrumental virtuosity drawing from masculine-connotated ideas common in metal culture.[526] The two manners and their relations to the personas and female masculinity are outlined in the diagram below (see Figure 69).

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[526] It is possible to suggest that the presented mixing of manners of expression as well as the general gender-transgressive potential of The Great Kat can be seen as paralleling some observations made by Macan on progressive rock as combining various components falling broadly into a 'masculine' and 'feminine' categorisation e.g. the combining of "the 'masculine' R&B and 'feminine' folk styles" (Edward Macan 1997, 30) timbres and instrumentation such as "harsh, closed, 'masculine' timbres (produced on electric guitar, distorted Hammond, and synthesizer) with more open, relaxed, 'feminine' timbres that lack strong attacks and piercing upper frequencies (produced on the Mellotron and various acoustic instruments)" (Edward Macan 1997, 31); and the alteration of electronic and acoustic sections "[a]coustic passages suggest the meditative, pastoral, traditional, and 'feminine,' electronic passages the dynamic, technological, futuristic, and 'masculine'" (Edward Macan 1997, 43; see also Holm-Hudson 2005, 388–90). Although the author states that such divisions are employed as "metaphors and archetypes, commonly used by musicologist [and] not attempt[ing] to judge whether the characteristics associated with these terms are biologically grounded or socially constructed" (Edward Macan 1997, 31–32), I remain rather sceptical at offering elements as firmly into one or the other category. With that in mind, if Macan's idea is pushed beyond a "juxtaposition of 'masculine' and 'feminine' sections [as] symboliz[ing] many of the conflicts that were of great importance to the hippies" (Edward Macan 1997, 31) but rather as the genre offering a context in which the lines between representations of femininity or

This observation is not only one of the main reasons as to why I elected to adapt Auslander's closer relation between an individual manner to a specific persona. But also, as it showcases that by considering the two manners as non-exclusive to a specific persona, as well as being utilised in a primary/secondary manner, the interpretation of The Great Kat's output can take into consideration actions/behaviours that would otherwise be deemed as 'out-of-character' (e.g., the femme persona's sudden aggressiveness, or the dominatrix' presentation in suggestive yet not violent contexts), instead of ignoring them or deeming as irrelevant due to not matching the general aesthetic/behavioural framework for each respective persona.
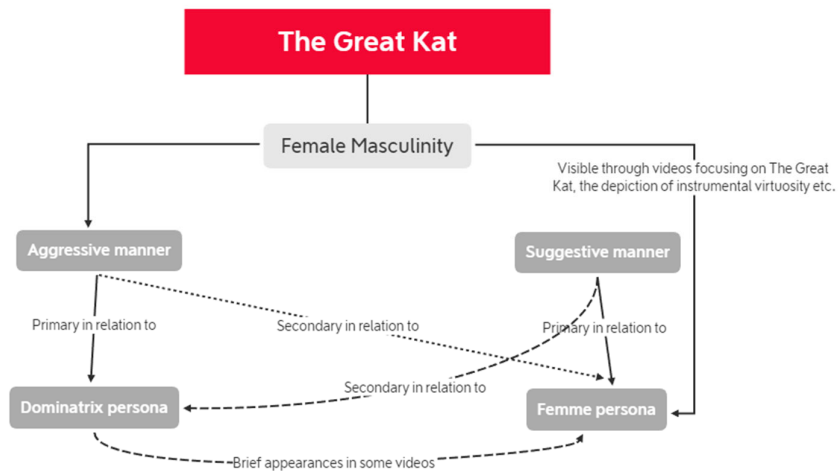
Figure 69: Manners of expression and their relation to The Great Kat's performance personas

In summary, this brief discussion has attempted to outline the common manners of expression of both performance personas presented by the performer, as well as present their overlapping principles, which situates them as less directly connected to Goffman's aspect of 'appearance' in their corresponding personal fronts. By theorising that the performance personas not only present their primary aggressive/seductive manners of expression, the aforementioned extension allows for some of the 'inconsistencies' in the personas' presentation to also be taken into consideration. In addition, I argued that through some of the overlapping characteristics, The Great Kat's underlying female masculinity gender concept can be interpreted as emerging, thus allowing for the two performance personas to also be situated in relation to the broader gender-framing of the performer.

The dominatrix and male-targeted sexual violence in the album *Rossini's Rape*

Having provided some terminological clarity as to how the dominatrix and the femme personas are defined for this study, as well as the broader context against which the corresponding performance personas can be situated, for the following two sub-sections I will engage with interpretative close-

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masculinity, either in relation to instrumental association or more broadly, can be actively blurred, transgressed, or subverted by a performer, I believe that The Great Kat offers an potential for expanding such readings in relation to more contemporary framing of gender.

Figure 70: The Great Kat – *Rossini's Rape* (2000), front artwork

readings on individual pieces. The goal is to not only exemplify how some of the aspects presented in the preceding sections can be identified in The Great Kat's output, but also to focus on their implications in instances where the personas interact with Western art music pieces, including aspects such as engaging with the corresponding composers. The current sub-section will focus on the dominatrix and the implications of male-targeted sexual violence and its appearance in close proximity to the context of the composer Gioachimo Rossini as part of the artwork, lyrics and music of CD *Rossini's Rape* (The Great Kat 2000e), whilst the next sub-section will focus on the femme persona and the presentation of heteronormative-underpinning elements in relation to the music video for "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", as well as discuss some interplay with the presented characters as part of the video's re-enactment of the corresponding opera's libretto. The interpretative close readings attempt to retain the same combination of discussions on both visual components, presenting relevant observations on the auditive level, as well as to offer some parallels to relevant performers as means of additional contextualisation, though the examinations will be more concise in their scope when compared to the discussions from the previous two sections. In addition, as I mentioned, my framing of the femme in relation to broad metal culture contexts will take place in a separate discussion at the end of this examination.

Within The Great Kat's catalogue of pieces/albums with titles implying extreme and/or violent co-relations to Western art music composers (e.g., *Beethoven on Speed*, *Bloody Vivaldi*), the four-song CD single *Rossini's Rape* can be described as by far the most direct example in which sexual-violence elements are positioned in close proximity to that of the album's namesake composer. Whilst this may be seen as simply a 'provocative' approach to signalling the performer's drawing from Rossini's output, I would argue that the inclusion of the dominatrix persona is more than an aesthetic choice, and that the sexual violence associated with said persona becomes an important aspect in understanding how the album constructs the engagement with Western art music contexts.

Exploring the album as a whole allows to observe that the broad framing of violence and aggression seemingly permeate the record in a number of ways, from the title, through the artwork's aesthetic, to the naming of certain tracks. Beginning with the title, the specific selection of words – likely chosen for their alliterative effect – implies a transgressive aspect by contrasting the composer's name with a sexual violence term. The choice of fonts continue this transgressive potential as the cursive font utilised to represent the name 'Rossini' is strongly reminiscent to how Western art music is connotated in popular music media (see my previous discussion in section 8.6), whilst the jagged 'lightning'-resembling font used for the term 'rape' presents complex connotations that range from

"CASTRATION"
All Music & Lyrics
By The Great Kat
©2000 The Great Kat
Slice off his penis
Cut his disgusting
testicles!
Crush his balls!
SMASH EM! SMASH EM!
Flog that moron!

CASTRATION

Sever off his PENIS
Chop off his balls
Squeeze his DICK OFF
SLIT HIS HAIRY ASS!

CASTRATION

GET DOWN FUCKER!
GET DOWN!
LET ME HAVE YOUR
LITTLE DICK! HA! HA!
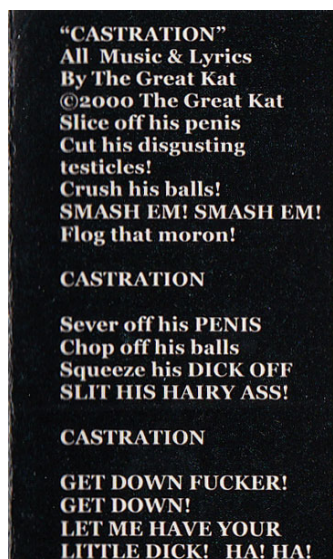
Figure 71: The Great Kat –
"Castration" (lyrics)

semiotic implications of power/danger (e.g., jagged lightning used as a sign of electric boxes), which can also be associated with heavy metal aesthetics focus on such semiotics (e.g., Metallica's album front artwork for *Ride the Lightning*),[527] to a potentially implied connection to the use of shock-devices as part of some BDSM-related practices. The tracklist showcases a combination between the genre-transgressive practices in relation to tracks transforming Western art music (i.e., "Rossini's 'William Tell Overture' For Symphony Orchestra & Band", and "Bazzini's 'The Round of the Goblins' for Violin, Piano & Band") as well as highlights the inclusion of sexual violence-based tracks (i.e., the tracks "Castration", and "Sodomize").[528] And finally, the album artwork (see Figure 70)[529] presents The Great Kat's dominatrix persona clearly and showcases her aggressive manner of expression, as she is depicted with her mouth open in a quasi-violent grin, holding a studded paddle and leaning over a gimp-masked half-naked man on his hands and knees on the floor, which when viewed together with the inclusion of the term 'rape' in the title, suggests a lessened erotic subtext and rather increased sexual-violence connotations.

With that in mind, despite the similarity of these aspects, they raise further questions as to how they relate to one another, as well how they relate to the album's Western art music contexts: does the SM activity on the album artwork suppose to represent the 'raping' of Rossini, and is the gimp-mask wearing man suppose to represent Rossini? Why is the composer 'raped' at all? Are the included sexual-violence tracks targetting Rossini, given that he is not explicitly mentioned in their lyrics (e.g., see Figure 71[530] for the track "Castration")? Is the notion of 'raping' Rossini something that can be identified on the auditive level? I will argue that one way to interpret the relation between the aforementioned violent/aggressive aspects is through the dominatrix persona's characteristics such as establishing power, feminist-interpretable motivation for violence, and using the violent aspects towards strenghtening her own heavy metal credibility, thus offering a more detailed understanding of the album's engagement with the Western art music composer in this release.

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[527] An example of the artwork can be found on the webpage of the following bibliographical entry: Metallica (1984a).

[528] Whilst I was unable to locate examples in which the topic of sexual violence has been engaged with by progressive music performers, Keister and Smith discussion of the "nasty side" of progressive rock (Keister and J. L. Smith 2008), offer a potential parallel relating to the framing of more controversial violence-related topics. Specifically, in the introduction of their article, the authors suggest that the "aggressive pan-tonal works with apocalyptic lyrics and dystopian imagery" of some progressive rock bands such as Van der Graaf Generator, Magma or Faust served as forerunners for the "experiments in extreme rock music by latter-day groups such as The Mars Volta and John Zorn's Naked City, who have drawn controversy over their depictions of systematic human torture, execution and criminal violence" (Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 433). As I remain sceptical at the ideas of 'direct influence' – not to mention The Great Kat being a contemporary/appearing before some of these examples – I hope that this parallel helps to illustrate the ability to frame The Great Kat's engagement with violence as equally relatable to heavy metal as well as progressive music contexts.

[529] The source of the image can be found under the following bibliographical entry: The Great Kat (2000d).

[530] Image sourced from webpage in the following bibliographical entry: The Great Kat (2000b).

The presentation of the SM activity on the album artwork can be interpreted as an attempt of the dominatrix persona to exert power and dominance over Rossini, by paralleling or re-creating similar power-relations between the composer and women in his life, as observable in his biography. Several academic overviews of the composer's career include brief mentions of his operatic output being supposedly influenced by his affair, and later marriage, to the Italian soprano Isabella Colbran in 1822. Whilst Philip Gossett argues that contemporary developments have re-evaluated "the exaggeration of [Colbran's] influence on [Rossini's musical style]", it is possible to view the "image of Rossini led by the whims of his prima donna" (Gossett 2001, n.p.) as represented in the album artwork, filtered through The Great Kat's dominatrix persona i.e., the dominatrix stands for a Colbran whose influence is extended from the musical output of the composer to the domination of his sexual life. Another interpretation here draws from Rossini's relation to his second wife Olympe Pélissier as discussed in a 1965 paper by Daniel Schwartz. The author presents a psychoanalytical investigation that attempts to contextualise the composer's sudden ceasing of composition, suggesting that "'the great renunciation' was directly related to the death of Rossini's mother and his intense ambivalence toward her" (Schwartz 1965, 563), whereby the author argues that Rossini's 'ambivalence' towards his mother stemmed from a combination between his parents "wander[ing] from town to town, [the father] playing in the orchestra and [the mother] singing on the stage, while the boy was generally left behind at Pesaro in the care of his aunt and his grandmother" (Schwartz 1965, 555) as well as the effects of his mother's death. Of note here is Schwartz's somewhat puzzling conclusion which states:

> "Only when [Rossini] had established sufficient obsessional defenses and a stable enough dependent, sadomasochistic relationship with his second wife […] could he compose music again, albeit still not opera". (Schwartz 1965, 569)

Whilst I am not able to fully extrapolate from the text what aspects support the claim that Rossini's marriage to Olympe Pélissier is to be described as a 'sadomasochistic relationship' – most likely due to my own lack of familiarity with psychoanalysis-related methodologies – nevertheless, this conclusion can be employed in framing The Great Kat's artwork as paralleling this ascription. On the one hand, the image can be viewed as forefronting the 'physical' aspect of the 'sadomasochism' implied by Schwartz's conclusion, and on the other hand, focusing on the idea that the relationship allowed Rossini to compose again, the artwork can be framed as an interpretation that positions The Great Kat as the source from which Rossini's compositional abilities were reformed. This latter aspect can be supported based on similar practices visible in videos by The Great Kat (see my discussion of this aspect in the next interpretation), though it should be pointed out that the piece by Rossini in the current album – the overture of his *William Tell* opera – is both associated with an opera, which as we will see is not without its issues, as well as the piece was composed prior to his introduction with Pélissier in 1832, thus making the connection to the composer's history somewhat more ambivalent.

Whilst the interpretations regarding the dominatrix persona as establishing a form of power-dominance are somewhat addressed, the sexual-violence connotations of the album's title, and their potential motivations, still remain unclear. Where some connection can be drawn is between the dominatrix' feminist underpinning of sexual violence and the biography of Rossini are the composer's "numerous sexual liaisons" (R. Osborne 2007, 50) in his younger years – an aspect that can also be

related to the "delinquent behaviour[s]" caused by composer's "inability to sustain [his mother's] absence and control his ambivalence [towards her]" (Schwartz 1965, 563) – as well as Rossini's extramarital relationship with Olympe Pélissier whilst he was still married to first wife, Colbran (see Gossett 2001). In other words, from this perspective the title of the album suggests that the sexual violence towards Rossini represents a feminist (and possibly moralistically motivated) perspective, that retaliates to the composer's less-than-admirable behaviour[531] – though it should be mentioned that Rossini's life-long battle with (and accompanying painful treatment for) gonorrhoea attained in his younger years (R. Osborne 2007, 50; see also Volk 2002 for a discussion of the composer's illnesses and treatments) may have already been a timely repercussion for his own behaviours.

Additional arguments as to interpreting the sexual violence towards the composer may be extrapolated based on the perspective of the treatment of women in his operas. Specifically, given that The Great Kat's album includes a metal transformation of the overture of Rossini's *William Tell* opera, it is possible to consider the act of the composer's supposed 'rape' to be a critical transferral of the opening scene from the first act of the libretto. In said scene, the narrative outlines a village celebration that is interrupted by the minor character Leuthold who reveals to have killed an Austrian soldier, the latter caught attempting to rape the former's daughter (see R. Osborne 2002 [1992], for a summary of the libretto). Whilst this partial act of sexual violence against a female character takes place outside of the 'visible' section of the narrative, an interpretation may be offered that the dominatrix persona's 'raping' the composer transfers the violence from a 'narrative drive' section to a central location in relation to the performer's album. Furthermore, it may be suggested that The Great Kat's sexual violence towards Rossini may have viewed the composer as facilitator[532] of a piece that trivialises female-focused sexual violence and thus her action intends to emphasise that such topics are not something to be brushed aside.

Whilst the discussion thus far has focused on the front album artwork and has presented arguments in relation to the dominatrix persona's feministic critical position, I want to also offer some

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[531] It is also worth noting that The Great Kat's violence discussed here is completely absent from her developing a connection to the myth of Paganini, which in my opinion can be interpreted not as an omission or selective behaviour by the performer, but potentially as representing the distinction that Paganini's supposed violence against women was part of a myth, whereas Rossini's extramarital behaviour is a much more tangible fact touched on by the composer's biographies.

[532] With that in mind, given that librettos are normally written by someone other than the composer (in this case Victor-Joseph Étienne de Jouy and L. F. Bis, adapting a play by Friedrich Schiller), to specifically target Rossini as the recipient of retaliatory sexual violence may appear somewhat illogical. However, from the perspective of The Great Kat's focus on the most recognisable person (be it real, or fictional) related to a piece of Western art music (e.g., the video "Vivaldi's Four Seasons" engages with the performer Anna Maria della Pietà, yet it is Vivaldi who is the focus of the track's name), the impact of her act would have most likely been reduced had she chosen the librettists. Furthermore, choosing Schiller as the writer whose version of the story was adapted may have strayed far from the Western art music medium that serves as focus of her output.

"CASTRATION"
All Music & Lyrics
By The Great Kat
©2000 The Great Kat
Slice off his penis
Cut his disgusting
testicles!
Crush his balls!
SMASH EM! SMASH EM!
Flog that moron!

CASTRATION

Sever off his PENIS
Chop off his balls
Squeeze his DICK OFF
SLIT HIS HAIRY ASS!

CASTRATION

GET DOWN FUCKER!
GET DOWN!
LET ME HAVE YOUR
LITTLE DICK! HA! HA!

"SODOMIZE"
All Music & Lyrics
By The Great Kat
©2000 The Great Kat
BEND Down! Open Your
legs!
WIDE!
I'M GONNA SCREW YOU!
I'm GONNA SHOVE THIS
BIG FAT STICK UP YOUR
LITTLE ASS!

SODOMIZE HIM!!

COME ON! SPREAD EM.
FAG!
SPREAD EM!

I'M GONNA STRIP
EVERY
INCH OF DIGNITY YOU
HAVE!
Lick my ass, you fucking
piece of shit, slime,
moron FAG!
Swallow my vomit,
Muther Fucker!

SODOMIZE HIM!!

SODOMIZE HIM! RAPE
HIM!
HUMILIATE HIM!
SCREW HIM! SCREW
HIM!
SCREW HIM! SCREW
HIM!

WHORE!

Figure 72: The Great Kat – *Rossini's Rape* (2000), booklet

perspectives on an additional image found in the booklet of the CD as shown in Figure 72.[533] The image depicts The Great Kat wearing a gimp-mask and holding a phallic-object covered in 'blood' as well as her wide-open mouth also covered in 'blood'. Referring back to the queer-contexts in relation to the BDSM community, this image can be viewed as a queer-interpretative performance approach to representing the violence in relation to the 'rape' of Rossini that contributes to the violent connotations of The Great Kat's performance persona in heavy metal contexts.

If the gimp-masked man on the album artwork is understood as representing Rossini, based on my earlier argumentation of the dominatrix establishing power over the composer, then one way to interpret the image's utilisation of a similar leather gimp-mask[534] by The Great Kat is as an extreme example of her paralleling and co-opting classical composers' identities (e.g., the allusions to the myth of Paganini discussed in the previous section). In this instance, it can be argued that the performer is seemingly adopting Rossini's implied image as depicted in her own artwork and constitutes a process of 'embodying' the male composer through The Great Kat's female body. Beyond the utilisation of an item of clothing shared between the album artwork and the booklet, the suggestion that The Great Kat may be drawing parallels between herself and the composer may be supported by exploring the music video for one of the included tracks, "Rossini's 'William Tell Overture' For Symphony Orchestra & Band" (see The Great Kat 2018h). Whilst created much later than the original album, in addition to The Great Kat self-framing in relation to the quasi-recreation of the eponymous opera's libretto (e.g. the performer is depicted in a dirndls-reminiscent costume [e.g., 00:24 – 00:27] which can be interpreted as alluding to the Swiss-focused setting of the narrative), several shots present the performer as engaging with a 'conductor' role to either an invisible orchestra [e.g., 00:00 – 00:02; 00:20 – 00:22], or the accompanying rock band [e.g., 00:23; 00:34]. Whilst this may be interpreted as a simply drawing from the broad role of the orchestra conductor in Western art music contexts, the biography of Rossini highlights that during the early stages of his career the composer had engaged with some conducting activities (R. Osborne 2007, 9), and also Rossini had been appointed as a *maestro al cembalo* (Gossett

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[533] Image sourced from webpage in the following bibliographical entry: The Great Kat (2000b).

[534] An important clarification to be made here is that my argument intends to connect the use of the gimp mask in the discussed image and the front album artwork, and does not mean to suggest that the gimp mask itself is to be associated with maleness or masculinity. As shown in Gary Needham's discussion on the cultural framing of 'the gimp', the term is not directly gendered i.e., "gimp is a clothed or costumed Sadomasochistic (SM) body, frequently a submissive that often wears a leather or rubber costume that effectuates the entire body including the face" (Needham 2014, 149).

2001, n.p.), a somewhat multifaceted title which, whilst not entirely synonymous with a conductor role, certainly touches on similar contexts, namely "a conductor or a leader of an ensemble, as in concertmaster, *maestro al cembalo* (leader of the 18th century Italian opera orchestra)" (n.a. 2001, n.p., italics in original). Based on these contexts, it is possible to suggest that The Great Kat's 'composer' role in the video can be interpreted as relating to the biography of the composer, and by extension that the earlier associated music release – *Rossini's Rape* – to potentially also feature visual aspects through which The Great Kat's self-framing partially overlaps with the composer.

The significance of The Great Kat's 'embodying' Rossini can be summarised as the image presenting the violence towards the composer through a queer-interpretable performative act, yet also polysemically allowing the dominatrix to become more strongly associated with the violence and power-related aspects of heavy metal's myth making processes. As a broad description, it is not only important that The Great Kat is supposedly representing a man, but rather that she is representing a man who she is either 'raping' as hinted by the title, or a man she implies wishing to 'sodomize' and even 'castrate', as suggested by the sexual violence lyrics of the included tracks visible as surrounding the aforementioned image. From this perspective, by presenting herself as both holding a phallic object as well as showcasing her opened and 'blood'-covered mouth, this suggests a complex representation in which the acts of a woman 'embodying' a man that is to be subjected to sexual violence, seemingly necessitates an act of inflicting self-harm. In this instance almost implying that The Great Kat has utilised the phallic object to violate her own mouth, thus explaining the 'blood'. Pushing this interpretation further, it is possible to view the phallic object as not simply an 'object', but rather as a representation of Rossini's severed penis thus implying that the act of castration may also be symbolically represented as part of the image. This would suggest that the image represents The Great Kat as a (self?)-castrated Rossini who violates himself using his own severed phallus.[535] From this perspective, the potential quasi-retaliatory feminist underpinning of the implied act of (self-)castration can be contextualised as paralleling the aforementioned theatricalised castrations by queercore bands such as tribe 8.

Conversely, if the 'embodiment' perspective is ignored and the image is considered as co-dependent to signifying the act of 'raping' Rossini, as represented on the front artwork, then

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[535] Whilst the discussion of castration is not something one commonly finds in progressive music contexts, there are nevertheless some instances in which a partial parallel can be evoked. Genesis' album *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*, and more specifically the track "The Colony of Slippermen" involves the surreal/fantastic narrative's main character, Rael, about to undergo castration so as to revert the effects of a deforming quasi-venereal disease he attracted a few tracks earlier (Holm-Hudson 2008, 86, 90–91); after the procedure, the removed organ is given back to Rael within a yellow plastic container. Holm-Hudson's analysis draws from the work of myth scholar Joseph Campbell with the latter suggesting that ritual acts such as castration enabled "to conduct people across those difficult thresholds of transformation that demand a change in the patterns not only of conscious but also of unconscious life […] the mind is radically cut away from the attitudes, attachments, and life patterns of the stage being left behind" (Campbell, quoted in Holm-Hudson 2008, 91). From this context, despite the differences of context, performance character, and narrative intention, some broad parallels can be suggested between the change of personality that the character Rael experiences as a result of the castration (Holm-Hudson 2008, 123) and that of the difficult-to-pin-down gender perspectives found in The Great Kat's album artwork. It goes without saying however, that any parallel is intended to strengthen the relation between The Great Kat and progressive music performers and not to directly compare the borderline retaliatory sexual-violence of the former to the psychology/religious undercurrents of Genesis' surreal/fantastic narrative.

depending on whether the phallic object covered in blood is to be viewed as an 'object' or a severed phallus, the interpretation may change from the image representing the violent conclusion of the aforementioned 'raping', or conversely the image showcases a 'crazed' violent woman wearing the mask of the man she just castrated as a battle trophy. As such, the depiction of blood on the mouth of The Great Kat may to represent licking the phallus as representing the dominatrix' 'bloodthirst', or an attempt to use the bloodied phallus so as to create 'battle-paint' for herself (i.e., as a permutation of the theatrical use of 'corpse paint' in genres such as black metal), both of which would be thematically appropriate to the aggressive manner of expression related to The Great Kat, as well as the broader realm of heavy metal aesthetic.

Beyond the general violence implications of the image, the utilisation of the gimp mask by The Great Kat can also be interpreted as contributing to the performer's heavy metal-relevant theatricality in relation to horror aesthetic. Gary Needham has pointed out that "[w]ithin the expanse of the SM wardrobe, there is one particular outfit that is the most efficacious in signifying […] sexual transgression, horror, and risk-attachment – namely, the gimp" (Needham 2014, 151) and further describes that in popular culture "[t]he gimp is expressly connotative of extreme bondage, suffering, torture and sexual slavery, deprivation, and debasement – even terrorists and serial killers are invoked by the gimp mask" (Needham 2014, 152–53). From this context, The Great Kat's wearing of a gimp mask may be seen as a subtle way of presenting an ambivalent association that, on the one hand, relates the performer's dominatrix persona to the extreme violence and horror emerging from the item as well as the implications that said 'suffering, torture and sexual slavery' may have been acts to which (the front artwork) Rossini was subjected. And on the other, it reiterates the self-inflicted sexual transgression and body horror from the queer-interpretable representation of 'Rossini' as outlined above. As such, the theatricalised combination between implied violence inflicted to oneself and others, as well as the elements of (body) horror, may be framed as paralleling and synergising forms of (extreme) stage theatricality by precursors to heavy metal: as between the self-damaging acts of Iggy Pop and the horror-aesthetic of Alice Cooper's nightly theatricalised 'deaths' during his early career (Waksman 2009, 70–103). From this perspective, the inner artwork of *Rossini's Rape*, can be interpreted less as the oddity of the performer's self-framing but rather an important component to interpreting how the act of 'raping' Rossini is constructed, as well as an image contributing to the violent underpinning of the dominatrix persona, and by extension the performer's theatricality as authentic in heavy metal contexts.

At this point of the discussion, it is worth considering some of the auditive components of this phenomenon, whereby I elected to outline two tracks from the album in consideration as to whether the act of 'raping' the composer, is also enacted on the auditive level: track "Castration" represents the sexual-violence based tracks, as well as "Rossini's 'William Tell Overture' For Symphony Orchestra & Band".[536] The former track was chosen as its title connotated the more violent act from the two

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[536] For the interpretations of the tracks "Castration" and "Rossini's 'William Tell Overture' For Symphony Orchestra & Band" I utilised the tracks as found on the release *Rossini's Rape* (The Great Kat 2000e).

included sexual violence-based tracks, whilst the latter was a fairly obvious choice, given the focal point of the album's name.

"Castration" is an interesting case as it is one of the few sexual violence pieces by The Great Kat that 'reaches over' and includes auditive elements usually reserved for the performer's Western art music -transformation pieces. Specifically, the piece can be described as featuring a harpsichord-sounding instrument that underpins the otherwise heavy metal musical aesthetic and its fast-paced 'shredding' virtuosic guitar playing, growled vocals and fast paced rock drumming,[537] all of which presented in extremely fast tempi. In addition, some of the harmonic changes strike me as having a much more Western art music-inspired tonal-changes (e.g. [00:26], [00:40] and especially the triadic movement at [01:06]) rather than the more modal and/or riff-based approach to writing found in popular music settings, and heavy metal specifically (see Lilja 2009, 154–57, or Elflein 2010 for music-analytical discussions of riffs in heavy metal). I believe that the inclusion of a harpsichord elevates its use in the piece from being a somewhat atypical decision for The Great Kat, into information relevant to my argumentation based on the combination between aforementioned context that Rossini had been appointed as *maestro al cembalo*, as well as other biographical contexts mentioning Rossini's early studies of "keyboard instruments (also basso continuo)" (P. Fabbri 2016 [2005], n.p.), the latter technique being performed on harpsichord (see P. Williams and Ledbetter 2001). Whilst it is difficult to determine whether the inclusion of the harpsichord was a direct allusion to Rossini's biography, I would nevertheless argue that such contexts enable to view the instrument's appearance, as well as the aforementioned classical connotative harmonic elements, as implying that the male-targeted sexual violence lyrics of "Castration" can be interpreted as an auditive (and textual) means through which the idea of Rossini being 'castrated' is further enacted.[538]

With regards to "William Tell Overture", determining whether aspects contributing to the 'rape' of the composer necessitates a somewhat more involved description. Beginning with a brief overview of the track, The Great Kat's rendition of this track serves as another example of the performer's typical approach to compressing and re-arranging the piece through metal music aesthetic, rather than creating an original composition that weaves themes or motives derived from Rossini's work. Similar to the "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" example discussed earlier, the performer focuses specifically on the final Allegro Vivace section of Rossini's overture, and specifically, the main (and extremely well-known) theme of the section, whereby the section is then further shortened. With that said, if a listener examines the track together with the overture's original score, it is noticeable that once the specific jump-points are established, The Great Kat's version mostly follows the development of the original composition, as suggested by the inclusion of several counter-themes and transitions, as well as the general pause before the piece's conclusion. This is not to imply that The

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[537] The drum style here can be described as close to the previously outlined blast-beat drumming however it does not alternate snare-drum hits with that of the double-bass drums, rather performing the former at half-speed to the latter.

[538] Broyles' discussion of The Great Kat includes a brief summary of the "Castration" video as including her "pos[ing] as a Geisha, Salome, and Black Widow before pulling out the knife" (Broyles 2011, 314), though I was unable to locate the video to determine whether any of the visual elements there can be related to the discussion of Rossini.

Great Kat's version does not alter the original as she does remove certain sub-sections or repetitions, but rather that in contrast to other popular music tracks that borrow from a piece of Western art music, "William Tell Overture" does not jump backwards to draw from other sections from the original so as to match a specific transition e.g., Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow track "Hall of the Mountain King" (Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow 1995) which, whilst focusing on the main theme of the fourth movement of Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite* the piece, also briefly borrows from the opening of the suite's first movement at [2:18 – 2:29] (see Duxbury 2000, 177).[539] Although some may dismiss such approach as not particularly 'adventurous', in the context of this examination, one may suggest that there is a certain level of respectfulness, rather than an attempt to parody,[540] towards the source material as may be potentially expected based on the album's title. This argument can also be strengthened by considering that The Great Kat utilizes a variety of synthesized instruments so as to closely fulfil the original score's arrangement, for example the opening section of the song [00:00 – 00:10] which retains the opening trumpet, and shortly after the French horn motif (see Figure 73, outlined bars),[541] as well as its timpani conclusion (see Figure 74, outlined bars); or [00:30 – 00:34] which retains the utilization of woodwinds and trumpets in parts of the arrangement where their role is most prominent (see Figure 76, outlined bars).

Whist this general description outlines that The Great Kat is approaching the transformation of the piece in a manner that contributes to her showcase of arrangement and virtuosity capacity, I am hesitant to suggest that this track contains the same fairly direct violence or 'rape' connotations as implied by the album artwork or the lyrics/music of "Castration". However, this is not to suggest the piece cannot be broadly interpreted as contributing to this line of argumentation, as several auditive aspects or employed techniques within the piece's arrangement can be interpreted as having decisively aggressive connotations.

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[539] On a side note, at a different point of the book Duxbury frames the use of Grieg's music by Ritchie Blackmore as inspired by "Nero and the Gladiators 1961 single 'In the hall of the mountain king'" (Duxbury 2000, 127), which is useful for pointing out that, even someone classically trained such as Blackmore, may have taken the idea to perform a classical piece in a popular context from another popular musician.

[540] For a brief discussion on parody in Western art music contexts see Denisov (2015).

[541] The notated examples in this discussion are derived from a 2006 Eulenburg edition of Rossini's score: Figure 73 (see Rossini 2006, 64); Figure 74 (see Rossini 2006, 65); Figure 75 (see Rossini 2006, 66); Figure 76 (see Rossini 2006, 70); Figure 77 (see Rossini 2006, 76); Figure 78 (see Rossini 2006, 89). Furthermore, please note that the bar numbers outlined for each of these figures represent the range for the entire visible selection, whilst the sections outlined in red showcase the bars pertinent to the discussion.

Figure 73: Rossini – William Tell Overture, bars 226-234

Figure 74: Rossini – William Tell Overture, bars 235-243

Figure 75: Rossini – William Tell Overture, bars 245-252

Figure 76: Rossini – William Tell Overture, bars 274-279

Figure 77: Rossini – William Tell Overture, bars 313-318

Figure 78: Rossini – William Tell Overture, bars 411-417

First, the track's focus on the distorted electric guitar can be related to the broad perception of distortion effect as more aggressive (see Mynett 2016, 71),[542] though this 'base level' of aggressiveness is enhanced by the performance of the main theme from the selected 'William Tell' section on the lower strings of the guitar. When taken together with the sound-'thickening' effect of (most likely) a palm-muting guitar technique, the combination of the full-bodied distorted tone and the short-melodic idea can be framed paralleling Cope describing Slayer's use of "down-tuned, grinding riffs" as components "magnifying the aggression of earlier developments [in heavy metal]" (Cope 2010, 104).[543] In addition, after the opening's use of synthesized timpani, the drum-set predominantly represents percussive instruments within the arrangement, whereby the performance of the main theme by the double-bass drum and bass-toms together with the electric guitar can be described as further enhancing the theme's aggressiveness, whilst the final three eight notes of each half-statement (see Figure 75, outlined bars) are performed on the snare drum which helps to outline the end of a phrase in a punchier and more accentuated (i.e. stressed) manner.[544]

An additional effect that can be related to 'aggressive' or 'violent' contexts can be observed towards the end of the track [01:24 – 01:29], whereby the drums shift from having a somewhat more typical rock-ensemble role (e.g., providing fills on the upper percussions), to more closely matching the timpani's original score (see Figure 78, outlined bars). However, a notable difference is that rather than employing a trill as in the original score, the drums seemingly perform multiple series of sixteenth notes on the snare. This not only produces a more accentuated sound than the trill, but also can be compared to other metal performers' use of such sixteenth-note based drum patterns to signify

[542] An important distinction to be made here is that my framing of 'aggression' draws from the aforementioned Mynett text, but also from 'aggression' as one of the effects and/or emotions that can be generated when experiencing distorted i.e., 'heavy' guitar sound (see Berger 1999b, 58–59; Herbst 2018, 105). This clarification is important not only to avoid oversimplistic arguments regarding metal music as 'causing aggression' or 'inciting violence' in listeners, but also to acknowledge the complexity of connotations relating to the term 'aggression'. As well as to emphasise that heavy metal can be discussed as employing aggression in a variety of ways e.g., the broad aggression associated with the genre's semiotics, thematic intertextual framing of aggression in lyrics or imagery, the controlled aggression of mosh dancing, performing in an aggressive manner or utilising different vocal, or instrumental performing techniques described as aggressive etc.

[543] Jan-Peter Herbst's (2017) discussion of the co-relation between the use of distortion and the performance practice of guitar 'shredding' has showcased that the former effect is difficult to master though, when used thoughtfully, contributes to the expansion of expressive potential of a performer (Herbst 2017, 146–50). Based on this idea, one may argue that the use of distortion effects in The Great Kat's shredding performance also has a potential to contribute to her perception as a virtuoso, however the author's conclusion also addresses a somewhat negative perception that can be discerned in online forums, namely that the use of the distortion effect conceals mistakes during performance (Herbst 2017, 133–35). Despite Herbst's argument offering a more differentiated perspective than viewing distortion as masking errors during performance, the circulation of such perspectives should not be fully excluded as potential critical arguments towards The Great Kat's utilisation of the effect in relation to her virtuosity.

[544] I draw the understanding of drums as providing an aggressive aspect here from a combination of the broad effects stressed notes can provide (e.g., a note performed using a marcato technique) and summary of the aggressive drumming by the drummers of Led Zeppelin's John Bohnam and Black Sabbath's Bill Ward (Cope 2010, 34). In simpler terms, the aggression stems from the intensity of the drumming, combined with the stressing of the articulation technique.

machine gun fire e.g., in Metallica's track "One" from their album *...And Justice for All* (Metallica 1988) at [4:36 – 5:17] as performed on bass drums and the electric guitar and bass.[545]

Second, it is noticeable that in addition to performing the Western art music-transformation in a fast and virtuosic manner – which by itself can be related to the idea that for heavy metal "virtuosity has always been crucial to its evocation of power and aggression" (Berger 1999b, 57) – The Great Kat's arrangement omits most if not all aspects of the piece that are associated with a softer contrast, be it thematically or dynamically. For example, in the presentation of the main theme rather than include the original's separation between the first motif in pianissimo and the second in fortissimo, their corresponding appearances in The Great Kat's track [00:10 – 00:20], and [00:21 – 00:29] are delivered 'full blast', so to speak, without any reduction in dynamics. Also, at [00:54], rather than continuing the original's transition towards contrasting softer section (see Figure 77, outlined bars), said section and its material are completely removed. The only instance where a dynamic contrast can be somewhat observed is in [0:31], though this may be resulting due to the original arrangement's presenting the melodic material in woodwinds and French-horns (see Figure 76, outlined bars) thus effectively reducing the overall dynamic intensity. That said, the audible repeated sixteenth note motif in the violin and electric guitar is fairly dominant in The Great Kat's studio mix, thus seemingly allowing to suggest that The Great Kat's arrangement retains a certain sense of quasi-reassertion of dominance, in even if the performer does not deliver the main melodic line. Altogether, these aspects create the impression that the piece is both more intense due to its faster tempo, but also more forceful due to the 'flatter' dynamic range.

Whilst the aspects observable in the "William Tell" track do not fully allow to interpret the auditive level as carrying the same 'rape' or 'violence' connotations as observed in relation to the imagery/lyrics, the aggressive and some quasi-militaristic connotations that underpin the rendition of Rossini's overture allow it to be interpretable as overall more intense and stressed. Following Heesch's (2019) discussion on the representation of aggression by heavy metal female performers, and to avoid essentialisms regarding the notions of violence and aggression as 'untypical' or 'uncharacteristic' for women in general, I will suggest that the aggressive connotations that can be identified in the track can be interpreted as drawing from The Great Kat's own female masculinity and the associated violence aspects of the dominatrix, thus enabling the interpretation that the piece represents the performance persona as 'forcing herself' on Rossini's music, and thus as somewhat extending the idea of aggression/violence as aimed towards the composer.

Moreover, situating the 'aggressiveness' observations in broader contexts, a more conservative viewpoint (e.g., Miehling 2006, 2010 come to mind) may suggest that the mere act of playing Rossini by a metal ensemble represents an act of 'musical violence', whether this is derived by the extreme reduction of the piece, its performance through mechanical means (i.e., synthesized

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[545] A most likely coincidental resemblance that is nevertheless worth briefly commenting on is that the accentuated three eight notes at the end of the main theme in The Great Kat's piece bear some resemblance to Metallica's own use of accentuated notes at the end of some phrases in the aforementioned segment of "One" e.g. [4:43] or [4:47] which combines the final two eight notes in the guitars/bass with two hits on the snare and one of the cymbals.

instruments) rather than their real counterparts, or that continuously brought up (and ever so tiresome) implication that popular music is mostly about the body and sex as per due to the overall framing of the album (for a recent rendition of this so called analytical 'argument' see e.g., Mahnkopf 2016, 103–22). That said, the same implication may be positively framed through heavy metal culture's valuing of the ideas of transgression as, in addition to the track's broad transgression of musical genres, the notion that a classical piece's performance in a metal style may signify 'musical violence' implies a form of cultural transgression that parallels the culture's acceptance of aesthetic representation and problematisation of taboo and or socially-challenging acts/topics.

As a concluding remark to this interpretation, I would like to offer a brief context situating The Great Kat's combination of Western art music topics and sexual-violence through a parallel to the work of American avant-garde artist Diamanda Galás.[546] Specifically, in an interview presented as part of Andrea Juno's (1991) book highlighting the work of innovative female artists overtly engaging with the topics of sexuality and violence/aggression, Galás highlights multiple aspects from her biography, as well as relating to her performance persona, that both parallel the work of The Great Kat, but also help in contextualising the latter's techniques discussed in this interpretation in a larger field of female performers.

Similar to The Great Kat, Galás shares a long history with formal (classical) music education, having studied classical piano in her youth and avant-garde piano during her university years (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 10), and showcases a common genre-transgressive tendency when stating that "I don't respect the boundaries of any art form" (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 17). In addition, parallels can be observed between the disruptive effects The Great Kat's presentation of a distinctively brash and aggressive persona and Galas' own interest in constantly subverting forms of media (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 13). Also, Galás' political activism is visible through albums such as avant-garde/operatic trilogy *The Divine Punishment* (Diamanda Galás 1986b), *Saint of the Pit* (Diamanda Galás 1986a), and *You Must be Certain of the Devil* (Diamanda Galás 1988) in which the performer attempts to both engage with, and quasi-represent the intense negative emotions by people suffering from AIDS, can be compared to the political implications of The Great Kat's own general feminist ascription. Galás' interview also presents several ideas that are central to The Great Kat's work, such as the former's critiquing the concept of the 'genius' as almost exclusively applied to men and rarely to women (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 17), which the latter consistently self-ascribes to her performance persona and thus can be read as a form critique as well.

Parallels can be outlined with regards to how both performers' performance personas function as Galás' suggestion that her work has been framed as having "an occult, shamanistic and ritual feeling" (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 9) which can be compared to The Great Kat's drawing parallels to the myth of Paganini outlined in an earlier part of the discussion. Moreover, similar to The

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[546] Galás has been briefly mentioned by Chris McDonald as part of a history of genres and performers that have been influenced by progressive rock's engagement with Western art music (see McDonald 2014, n.p.). For an additional analysis on Galás in relation to her performative violence in the engagement with the topics of Armenian and Greek genocides in the 2003 album *Defixiones, Will and Testament: Orders from the Dead*, see P. Grant (2017, 236–38).

Great Kat, the parallel extends to the idea of occult contexts as a source of 'power' (or empowerment) and as incorporating similar gender-blurring aspects as, when discussing the intense effect produced by her voice, Galás states that:

> "From the Greeks onward [the woman's voice] has always been a political instrument as well as a vehicle for transmission of occult knowledge or power. It's always been tied to witches and the shamanistic experience – the witch as transvestite/transsexual having the power of both male and female". (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 10–11)

Both performers also share the depiction of anger through their musical personas as part of a female empowering process (see quote below), with Galás arguing that women need to express "attitude" as well as not "mak[e] themselves invisible as they go down the street" (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 8). This latter perspective is of importance as it parallels The Great Kat's signature 'in-your-face' approach to interviews (and the focus on 'aggression' in her music), which by reclaiming the (usually male-related) boastful behaviour of metal performers and utilising it from a female perspective, can be interpreted as a potential female-empowering example to be taken up by other female performers:

> "Anger is an emotion which must be reclaimed and legitimized as Woman's rightful, healthy expression – anger can be a source of power, strength and clarity as well as a creative force. […] Women have a different, less destructive relationship to anger than men – especially since it has been a taboo expression for them. Theirs is not the frozen rage of serial killers, which festers internally, but rage that can be channelled creatively – as dramatized by performance artists such as Karen Finley. Anger can spark and re-invigorate; it can bring hope and energy back into our lives and mobilize politically against the status quo". (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 5)

With regards to aspects touched on in Galás' interview that contextualise The Great Kat's techniques mentioned as part of the interpretation of *Rossini's Rape*, on the one side, Galás expresses strongly held feminist beliefs especially in terms of women's interactions i.e. "I think women should have an 'ideal': the only people you treat as equals are other women. And when you want subordinates, you can fuck a man in the ass!" (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 15) which helps in framing The Great Kat's approach to *Rossini's Rape* as the latter establishing dominance over the male composer. Simultaneously, however, Galás expresses significant disdain towards, and a desire to inflict physical harm to, male rapists, which seemingly parallels The Great Kat's own feminist-underpinned implied/theatricalised sexual violence towards Rossini as discussed earlier.[547]

Considering The Great Kat's quasi-embodying of Rossini in the inner artwork, the approach to ambivalent self-framing strikes me as a permutation of the Galas' track "Wild Women With Steak Knives" in which the latter presents "the homicidal love song of a schizophrenic woman" and furthermore aestheticizes the implications of certain mental conditions such as "schizophrenia or multiple personality disorder [as] an essential liberation, a form of freedom from permission" (Galás,

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[547] To be clear, in this statement I am comparing the desire to inflict violence towards men as a whole, and I am not implying that Rossini should be compared to contemporary sexual offenders, nor that the implied sexual violence discussed as integrated in Rossini's opera should be considered as (directly) comparable to the real repercussions that victims of sexual abuse have to deal with.

quoted in Juno 1991, 8). Also, the interpretation that said self-framing in the booklet of The Great Kat's album can be considered as bordering on a self-targeted act of sexual violence by embodying Rossini in her female body, strikes me as comparable to two aspects mentioned by Galás, namely her interest in drawing inspiration from "the witch as transvestite/transsexual having the power of both male and female" (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 10–11) as well as her expression of the idea that "most pop music is descriptive; it's *about* the thing, not the thing *itself*. Whereas my work is the thing itself, it is the sound of the plague, the sound of the emotions involved" (Galás, quoted in Juno 1991, 14).

Overall, although the two performers operate in different music genres, and their respective outputs have fairly divergent focus, the presented parallels contribute to framing the discussed piece from The Great Kat's output as not simply a popular music 'fantastic' depiction of sexual violence, but rather as incorporating practices connoting transgression as well as contributing to female empowerment, thus situating the performer in relation to a broader field of female performers aestheticizing violence in their work.

As a summary to this interpretative close reading, the discussion of The Great Kat's *Rossini's Rape* showcased that the album offers more than a combination of using Rossini's music as a source together with an evocative word-play in relation to the term 'rape' in its title. Rather, I argued the album can be interpreted as incorporating a complex process through which the dominatrix persona, and the related sexual-violence, alters the interpretation of the performer's engaging with Western art music context. My discussion highlighted that notions of 'rape' and/or violence/aggression towards Rossini can be interpreted both visually on the album's front cover and its implied signification of the composer, but also auditively, in relation to classical-transformative tracks such as "Rossini's 'William Tell Overture' For Symphony Orchestra & Band" and sexual violence tracks such as "Castration". Through this process, I suggested that The Great Kat's dominatrix persona can be interpreted as either developing a sense of 'power' and dominance over the composer based on aspects in his biography, or potentially enacting feminist-underpinned retaliatory violence in response to how women and sexual-violence to women are framed in his work. Furthermore, by examining an additional image from the album's artwork I suggested that The Great Kat self-framing seemingly presents a 'embodiment' of Rossini that, together with connotations of the enactment of sexual-violence towards the composer, showcases an interplay between queer-interpretable performance strategies, as well as contributes to the violent underpinning of the dominatrix persona, and by extension strengthens the perception of the performer's theatricality as authentic in relation to heavy metal contexts. Finally, I briefly situated The Great Kat's combination between Western art music and sexual-violence topics within a larger context of female performers engaging with techniques connoting and/or expressing aestheticized violence by presenting a brief comparison between The Great Kat and Diamanda Galás.

The femme, feminism and adoration/devaluation perspectives in the video "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture"

When considering how the aesthetic of The Great Kat is generally constructed, the late 2000s showcase what can be described as a near-paradigmatic shift in the performer's self-presentation. The explicit references to violence, the dark aesthetic and (presumably fake) blood, the 'roar' like facial

Figure 79: The Great Kat – *Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture* (2019), DVD artwork

expressions and the BDSM-costumes of the dominatrix all give way to a (relatively) new persona, with a more colourful aesthetic and, as previously mentioned, a new and more overtly suggestive primary mode of expression: the femme persona.[548] To my knowledge, this persona has not been mentioned, let alone fully accounted for, in the examinations of The Great Kat, and whilst I make no claims that my work will somehow address everything, in the following close reading I will offer some perspectives on how the persona's integration influences an artefact's interpretation.

As it may have become apparent by now, The Great Kat's Western art music-transformative pieces can often be interpreted as developing some connection to the composer in the corresponding release, and indeed, I have included a DVD artwork (see Figure 79)[549] that both showcases said tendency as well as many of the aspects that can be considered as representative to the femme persona. On the one hand, the image showcases the more directly feminine and colourful framing of the persona, yet also presents the two manners of expression (aggression in the lower left corner, and suggestion in the upper left and lower right) that can be identified in the femme. On the other hand, the image highlights that the release name is more descriptive of the Western art music piece to be included, and less evocative of a specific act directed at the composer, though also hints at the potential direction of the engagement via the multiple red hearts around the included historical portrait of the composer (upper and lower corners on the right side of the image). My highlighting of this image is, of course, not a coincidence but aims to offer a broad context for the investigation of the artefact contained in the DVD release, namely the music video for "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture" (The Great Kat 2019e).[550]

The following sub-section will examine the video for "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture" (as well as briefly examine the auditive track), whereby the interpretation will focus on presenting two arguments. First, I will discuss a common practice in The Great Kat's approach to narrative-development in music videos, namely the re-creation of the related opera's narrative.

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[548] I refer to the persona as 'relatively new' as, despite the aforementioned paradigmatic shift, The Great Kat's early self-framing is not constructed exclusively from the BDSM-aesthetic of the dominatrix e.g., see front cover of her first album *Beethoven on Speed* (The Great Kat 1990c). Also, as previously mentioned, the dominatrix persona is not fully supplanted, but rather can be identified as briefly re-appearing in some of the music videos of the performer after the shift to a femme aesthetic e.g., see video for "Sarasate's 'Carmen Fantasy' For Violin & Band" (The Great Kat 2018i).

[549] Source of image can be found under the following bibliographical entry: greatkat.com (n.d.j).

[550] Similar to my interpretative reading of "Paganini's Caprice #24" video I utilised a digital distribution/streaming version of the video (via Amazon Prime Video) and as such all references to timecodes in the video are accurate with regards to that version. I also used the Spotify release of the track as part of an eponymous single from 2019 (see The Great Kat 2019a) as an additional close-listening source, whereby all effort has been taken to ensure that there are no inconsistencies between assigning the timecodes in the final interpretation.

Specifically, I will consider how the interplay between The Great Kat's performance persona as one of the narrative's main characters and her interactions in several of the video's scenes can be interpreted as subtly introducing feminist-underpinned perspectives that undermine the heteronormativity of narrative.[551] Second, I will outline that the presentation of an ambivalent relation to the composer and the associated contradictory processes of adoration and devaluation as emerging from the femme persona both present some queer-interpretable perspectives towards the femme as a desiring subject as well as contribute to strengthening The Great Kat's own empowered positioning.

The video for "The Marriage of Figaro" can be described as representative of one of the more consistent practices in The Great Kat's output, namely, constructing a narrative through a re-creation of recognisable scenes from the related opera's libretto.[552] As in most videos in this approach, this re-creation is facilitated by The Great Kat as well as actors/band members which represent a limited number of characters. Additional scenes are also added in which performative situations are framed, either via multi-depictions of The Great Kat and/or supported by other actors representing her back-up band. The argument that this principle is intentional can be supported by the description for the DVD "Mozart's Marriage of Figaro Overture" as found on The Great Kat's website, which highlights the video's quasi-narrative as including scenes re-creating Mozart's eponymous opera, as well as provides hints as to the complexity of The Great Kat's involvement:

> "The Great Kat's Mozart's The Marriage Of Figaro Overture music video stars The Great Kat, Juilliard grad violin/guitar virtuoso and the only uninhibited musical genius since Mozart, shredding Amadeus' comic opera overture at outrageous speeds on both guitar and violin. The Great Kat stars as the guitar/violin shredding Susanna. Her betrothed, Figaro, gets down on one knee & the lovers tie the knot. Count Almaviva tries to seduce Susanna, but only gets 'Kat-Abuse' from Susanna (The Great Kat!). The delicate and demure bride turns into a modern day [sic] dominatrix bride and whips Figaro into submission. Total insanity breaks out!" (greatkat.com n.d.k)

Arguably the most important aspect highlighted by the quote in relation to this approach to narrative re-creation is the inclusion of multiple versions of The Great Kat: the performance persona, Susanna as the specific character depicted in the video, and the latter's transformation into a 'modern day dominatrix bride'. Whilst the description of a 'dominatrix bride' hints at the inclusion of the eponymous performance persona by The Great Kat, I will instead suggest that this video incorporates

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[551] For academic discussions on women in Mozart's operas as well as broader gender and sexuality perspectives see e.g., Brown-Montesano (2007) or Ford (2016); for feminist perspectives on the realm of opera see e.g., Abbate (1996); Clément (1988).

[552] As an example of the video re-creating a scene from the opera can be identified at [00:06] depicting one of the actors using a measuring tape on a piece of furniture, which corresponds to the opera's opening scene from Act 1 in which Figaro is measuring a room for a bed, relating to his upcoming marriage with Susanna. With that in mind, there are some shots in the video that seemingly exist outside of the continuity of the original libretto e.g. [00:22 – 00:25] which showcases the actor representing Figaro falling on one knee and placing a ring on Susanna's hand thus implying that he is proposing marriage. Whilst this shot may be partially related to a scene in Act 4 in which count Almaviva gives Susanna (actually the countess in disguise) a jewelled ring as a sign of his genuine affection, considering that the video follows some rudimentary order of scenes as derived from the narrative, it is possible that this partial match with Act 4 is accidental. Rather I would argue that the 'proposal' scene in The Great Kat's video is added to more clearly frame the events of a wedding in the overall narrative.

the femme persona, as in my opinion, the latter-term more accurately represents the combination between the aesthetic and general suggestive manner of expression, with a female masculinity-underpinned BDSM-act that is enacted through the femme's aggressive manner of expression.[553]

The implied overlap between these 'permutations' of The Great Kat raises a fundamental question as to which 'version' is enacting which activity, as in many ways the boundaries between them are actively eroded. As Figure 88 showcases, the overlap is achieved via The Great Kat wearing what can be described as a quasi-wedding outfit as well as holding flowers. This implies a connection to the character of Susanna whilst simultaneously holding the performance persona-associated electric guitar and surrounded by her fellow bandmates during the act of performing. Similarly, the transformation into a 'modern day dominatrix' is not accompanied by a new 'costume', thus obscuring whether the femme persona or the character of Susanna enact the aggression throughout the video.

I will argue that the increased ambivalence allows for the original narrative and the character of Susanna to be recontextualised through the lens of The Great Kat's femme persona and the related female masculinity/aggressive manner of expression, and that the overlapped femme/character of Susanna can be interpreted as contributing to the undermining of a purely heteronormative reading of the video. To discuss this potential, I will focus on the two scenes hinted by the DVD description: Susanna's rejection of count Almaviva's advances [01:24 – 01:27] (see Figure 80 and Figure 81); and her 'whipping [Figaro] into submission' [01:51 – 01:56] (see Figure 82 and Figure 83).

Figure 80: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:24]

Figure 81: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:26]

Figure 82: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:52]

Figure 83: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:56]

As a primer, the original libretto (adapted by Lorenzo de Ponte from Pierre Beaumarchais' stage play) is centred around the characters of Figaro and Susanna, a soon-to-be-wed couple of servants

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[553] Although the video can be considered as including some instances of the dominatrix persona (e.g. [00:03], [00:09]) they are presented as a superimposed image thus creating a separation between the dominatrix persona and the character within the narrative.

(respectively the valet and maid as part of a nobleman's court), and the development of a complex plan to deceive and shame count Almaviva, a vasal making advances towards Susanna, as well as to also aid his distraught wife countess Rosina Almaviva who suspects her husband no longer loves her (see Rushton 2002 [1992] for a summary of the original libretto). In addition to the class-distinctions commentary of the tale, multiple female-focused stereotypes can be observed as built-in within the narrative. First, it is noticeable that the plan to deal with the Count is instigated first by Figaro's desire to overcome the former's advances towards his bride-to-be, and later facilitated through the countess. Whilst the libretto presents Susanna as not fully capable to independently deny Almaviva, due to latter's attempt to reinstate *droit du seigneur* – a supposed vassal's right to engage with intercourse with any female member of his respective court on her wedding night[554] – by not allowing her to be the originator of the plan, a certain level of helplessness is ascribed to her as incapable to facilitate her own liberation from unwanted sexual advances. Second, the libretto's presentation of Almaviva's attempts to buy his way into Susanna's bed, "substitute[s] a power relationship based on money for a previous one based on legal class hierarchy" (Andrews 2001, 217) and thus introduces male-dominance implications. Namely, that it is a matter of money exchanging hands so as to gain the sexual favours from some women, a notion that denigrates women both directly via prostitution-related connotations; as well as indirectly, by implying stereotypes of female promiscuity. And finally, the plan to deceive Almaviva hinging on a combination of Susanna's supposed acceptance of Almaviva's advances, as well as through the necessity for Susanna and countess Rosina to consistently be in disguise, can be mapped to contemporary understandings of gender stereotypes of women, namely to the dimensions of "agency" (e.g., lack of assertiveness or leadership normally associated with masculinity) and "communality" (e.g., passivity working in groups rather than independently) (see Eckes 2010; Hentschel, Heilman, and Peus 2019).[555]

In contrast, The Great Kat's re-creation of the narrative – whilst admittedly presenting a much more simplified version of the libretto – reframes the character in manner that introduces a female-masculinity assertiveness whilst avoiding the female-aimed negative stereotypes that the original opera seemingly introduces. Specifically, the video depicts Almaviva's advances towards Susanna (see Figure 80) as resolved by him being unceremoniously 'kicked out' from the scene (see Figure 81) and

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[554] Whilst this supposed feudal right "became a fecund symbol for a world of different rules for different people" (Mitchell Cohen 2017, 305) and was "used by many writers and dramatists of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment […] as a useful example of the abuses of feudalism and of the Church" (Andrews 2001, 216–17), studies of Mozart's opera point out that the custom never existed "in any formal juridical sense" (Andrews 2001, 216). Although the practice is referred to as "mythical"/"mythological" (Andrews 2001, 216; Mitchell Cohen 2017, 305), "it may have been extorted in practice, as an act of informal tyranny" (Andrews 2001, 216).

[555] The perspective of women having to work together can be read in a positive manner as discussed by Martha Nussbaum (2010) who argues that "[u]nlike the men […] [Susanna and The Countess] use their similarity not for mutual combat but for cooperation [and] when we focus on their teamwork, we notice, as well, that there is absolutely nothing like teamwork and reciprocity among the men" (Nussbaum 2010, 404). Moreover, comparing the aforementioned teamwork to the philosophical writings of Rousseau and Herder that informed cultural life in Mozart's time, Nussbaum argues that "the sort of reciprocity exemplified by Mozart's women, a reciprocity based on plotting, joking, a sense of the free space within which people can live and be themselves" (Nussbaum 2010, 411) is reflective of the composer's dedication to newer ideas regarding social equality through "feminiz[ing] the culture of male one-upmanship" (Nussbaum 2010, 413).

subsequently laughed at by both The Great Kat as Susanna, and the actor representing Figaro. This scene frames Susanna as utilising the female masculinity-related assertiveness of the femme persona which she applies to engage and resolve the quasi-conflict with Almaviva through a direct confrontation, thus becoming the primary vessel of her own liberation.[556] Furthermore, by not including the character of countess Rosina, the video omits a stereotypical negative connotation of multiple female characters having to work together to overcome an issue through behind-the-back scheming, misdirection via donning disguises, and feigning sexual interest so as to achieve the desired outcome. And finally, by facilitating the resolution of Susanna's problem independently and through her own means, this also effectively reduces Figaro's importance within the narrative as the instigator of the plan to deal with Almaviva.

With that in mind, the increased independency should be seen as presenting a more complex 'equation' as to how the character's empowerment is 'calculated'. Specifically, Richard Andrews's (2001) discussion of the sexual politics of Mozart's opera suggests that a dramatic texts can incorporate two types of power relationships "between one character and another within the fictional *fabula*, and those between the character and the audience", and in reference to the narrative analysis methodological approach by Mirella Saulini, argues that "characters can be categorized as 'subjects' or 'objects' of the fictional intrigue, and the 'subjects' can then be divided into 'winning subjects' and 'losing subjects'" (Andrews 2001, 226). Moreover, the author suggests that in theatrical settings "there exists another type of 'victory', by which a character, or a category of characters, is granted sufficient stage time to impose its presence and point of view on the audience more successfully than others" (Andrews 2001, 226). In relation to the idea of power relationships between characters, discussing the opera's narrative Andrew points to a duet between Susanna and the countess as an act through which "the female characters express their point of view and take control of the spectacle" (Andrews 2001, 225). From this perspective, due to the countess' omission in The Great Kat's video, the latter's version of Susanna is not able to 'take control of the spectacle' as outlined in the first type of power relation. However, in relation to the ideas of who represents the 'winning subject' in this theatrical framing, it is possible to interpret that The Great Kat's framing as certainly presenting a Susanna that has taken control both of the situation, as well as in presenting the most 'compelling' argument in the power relationship between "characters and the audience" (Andrews 2001, 216).

With regards to the shot of Figaro being 'whipped into submission' by The Great Kat's version of Susanna, this scene can be interpreted as highly polysemic in its ability to refer to multiple aspects pertaining to the opera's libretto and beyond. First, echoing the aforementioned framing by Andrews regarding power relationships in the opera's narrative, this scene's depiction of Figaro's quasi-'violent' submission can be viewed as a gender-based parallel of the duet with countess, in its capacity to establish Susanna's dominant role in the narrative. Second, the 'emergence' of Susanna's BDSM tendencies after the wedding ceremony, can be interpreted as a process of queering the 'happy

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[556] The Great Kat's reframing also amplifies the pre-existing centrality of Susanna, as argued by Joan Bernick's (1983) comparative analysis of Beaumarchais' play and Da Ponte's libretto, who highlights that "[Susanna] is the central character of the drama. She is on stage more than anyone else, and in the opera, she participates in all the ensembles. If more than one person is singing, Susanna is, or soon will be, singing also" (Bernick 1983, 84).

ending' that concludes the original libretto through a modified version of the queer-related expression 'coming out of the closet'. Third, the BDSM-related act can also be interpreted as signifying a broad reconfiguring the motivations for Susanna's pre-existing aggression within the narrative. On the one side, the lack of other visible female characters in the video decouples the depiction of violence from multiple scenes in the libretto which present Susanna slapping Figaro as an expression of jealousy e.g., a scene from Act 3 showcases Susanna slapping Figaro due to suspecting that he is now more interested in the character of Marcellina; or a scene from Act 4 in which Susanna slaps Figaro multiple times in a jealous exchange taking place whilst the former was in disguise. By framing the violence in the video as stemming from a quasi-BDSM context, and also as an act that spontaneously emerges after the marriage has begun, this allows the video's handling of the narrative to sidestep the (still persisting) stereotype of women as driven by emotions. On the other hand, the submission of Figaro may also be read as a response to multiple instances in which the character's viewpoint of Susanna is either driven by uninterested selfishness e.g., Martha Nussbaum discusses Figaro's aria "Se vuol ballare" in which the character verbalises the discovery of Almaviva's advances towards Susanna as "if we simply look at what Figaro says in the aria, we would not discover that any such creature as Susanna ever existed. All his thoughts are about his rivalry with the Count" (Nussbaum 2010, 400). Or as borderline misogynist, as a scene from Act 4 depicts Figaro complaining to his mother about the supposed infidelity of Susanna, and then vowing vengeance on all unfaithful wives.[557] From these examples, Susanna's 'violence' can be read as potentially a result of the femme persona's feminist perspectives 'bleeding-through', with the purpose seemingly being to address the Figaro's selfishness, the female stereotypes of female promiscuity and borderline misogynism as found in the latter character's statements.

Stepping briefly outside the two aforementioned scenes, I will refer to two additional shots that strike me as contributing to the feminist argument at hand. [00:22] represents Figaro's proposal to Susanna whilst surrounded by giant red hearts at the borders of the screen, whilst [00:46] presents a variation of the scene, yet now surrounded by a much smaller border consisting of a chain.[558] This utilisation may be interpreted as underpinned by The Great Kat's own feminist self-positioning, as on the one hand, it may be echoing Nussbaum's suggestion that Figaro and Almaviva both share similar motivations of 'ownership' over Susanna i.e. "the Count imagines Susanna, his own future property, being possessed by Figaro" (Nussbaum 2010, 400). On the other hand, visually relating upcoming marriage with shackles may imply a critical perspective towards the entire concept of marriage, and

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[557] A similar framing can be related to Figaro's soliloquy in Act 4 summarised by Bernick as "Figaro agrees with Don Basilio that he is foolish, but he describes his foolishness differently: he was foolish, he says, in failing to perceive that women are like beasts; foxes, cats, bears … unfeeling and treacherous" and the author further commenting that "[t]here is disgust here too—sexual disgust" (Bernick 1983, 88).

[558] Despite the clearly performative context of The Great Kat's marriage to a man, this nevertheless brings forward a heteronormative connotation to the situation. It is notable, however, that in addition to the level of abstraction that is the overlap between the femme persona and the character of Susanna, there is a fairly distinct line between shots depicting the highly theatricalised activities related to marriage customs (e.g., being proposed to, drinking a toast etc.) and shots where The Great Kat is depicted in an erotically-connotated manner. This allows for The Great Kat's femme persona to invite the male gaze, yet to undermine its voyeuristic effects by separating the quasi-erotic shots from those involving interactions with Figaro.

specifically outdated stereotypical understandings of women's role as 'belonging' to the domestic realms. It is also possible to extend this interpretation to include the utilisation of shackles and chains as surrounding the image of Mozart at [01:10] (see Figure 86) as an example in which the femme persona-influenced version of Susanna is either been given the opportunity to extend her 'whipping into submission' to the only other person dictating events other than her, or perhaps she is drawing from the aforementioned feminist concepts and thus 'hitting' Mozart's image surrounded by chains as a way to express her criticism against the negative stereotypes regarding women's role in marriage.[559] Overall, these shots support the argument that, by basing the representation of Susanna on The Great Kat's femme persona, the latter's aggressive mode of expression as well as the underlying female masculinity seemingly affect the perception of the narrative by expressing heteronormative-disruptive elements.

Figure 84: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:08]

Figure 85: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:09]

Figure 86: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:10]

Figure 87: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [01:10]

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[559] This idea can be tentatively expanded by drawing from Mitchell Cohen's discussion of Mozart's operas, specifically the book's introduction, in which a shared thematic point of pushing against nobility in operas such as *Marriage of Figaro* or *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is framed as reflective of the composer's "difficulties with authority" (Mitchell Cohen 2017, 267). Describing Mozart's altercation with Graf Joseph Arco whereby the latter "finally ran out of patience with the quarrelsome composer and evicted him from his rooms with what Mozart described as 'a kick on the arse'" (Mitchell Cohen 2017, 269, text in single quotation marks quotes Daniel Heartz), Cohen suggests that Mozart's "disrespect for counts would resound in *The Marriage of Figaro*. In it a master – a count – will end up dancing to the tune of servants" (Mitchell Cohen 2017, 269). Cohen does not openly state that Mozart identified with the character of Figaro, though if such connection can be suggested, then The Great Kat's 'whipping' of Figaro may be read as 'attacking' the composer in addition to her 'hitting' his printed image. See also Cohen's chapters fifteen and sixteen from the same volume for a detailed discussion of Mozart's music and its relation to political and social perspectives prevalent at the time, as well as biographical information on Mozart, Da Ponte and Beaumarchais with contexts pertaining to the political underpinning of *Marriage of Figaro* and several of Mozart's operas (Mitchell Cohen 2017, 267-300, 301-334).

Transitioning to the second argument in this examination, whilst the discussion up to this point focused on the broader heteronormative-undermining capacity of the femme through the character of Susanna, I want to consider several shots that more directly signify the femme persona. It is noticeable that, despite focusing her aesthetic on quasi-suggestive self-framing and the centrality of the suggestive manner of expression, The Great Kat's femme persona is very rarely depicted as a desiring subject and with a potential recipient of such aspects. The video for "The Marriage of Figaro" can showcase one such example through the expression of adoration/desire towards Mozart's historical portrait, as implied by the DVD artwork in Figure 79, yet this is disrupted by the implicit undermining or disregarding of the composer's representations within the video. As such, I would argue that this combination both offers queer-interpretable readings that undermine the heteronormative aspect of the relation, but also extends the femme's aggressive manner of expression and overall contributes to The Great Kat's perception as the central figure and strengthen the 'power' implications of her framing.

As a first step, I wish to establish a foundation for my argument that The Great Kat's femme persona develops a connection to Mozart by highlighting several shots in the video (see Figure 84 to Figure 87).[560] The first pair of illustrations (see Figure 84 and Figure 85) represent fairly directly interpretable expressions of adoration/desire by the femme towards Mozart, as well as engaging with the persona's suggestive manner of expression: Figure 84 showcases the composer's historical portrait[561] positioned at the centre of a red heart, whilst Figure 85, presents the composer's portrait as part of a collage including a variety of red hearts. In contrast the second pair of illustrations that appear immediately after (see Figure 86 and Figure 87) represent the quick interjection of aggressive manner of expression: Figure 86 quickly transitions to The Great Kat holding an electric guitar and 'whipping' the image of the composer, the shot surrounded by a border consisting of chains and shackles, whilst immediately after Figure 87 returns to the femme seemingly playing the violin at the printed portrait of the composer. In addition to highlighting the femme persona's balance between primarily suggestive, and secondary aggressive manners of expression, these images can be interpreted as framing the persona's expression of adoration/desire towards Mozart's historical portrait, thus introducing a certain queer-element to said expression.

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[560] The selection of images (as well as Figure 88) is derived via screenshots from The Great Kat's video "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture" (see The Great Kat 2019e).

[561] As most historical portraits used by The Great Kat, the image can be found in the Library of Congress' search engine (see Detroit Publishing Co. [Contributor] 1915-1925). As for the specific artist, some sources claim that the portrait was created in ca. 1880 by the German painter Ernst Hader (see kunst-fuer-alle.de n.d.), however whilst such an artist existed (see Boetticher, Friedrich von 1891, 444), no mention is made of a portrait of Mozart and examining academic sources discussing Mozart's depictions include neither the portrait nor the author (e.g., Jenkins 2006; Landon 1971; Luise 2018; Speyer 1916, 1919; Squire 1923; Zegers, Saeed, and Wiersinga 2005).

Figure 88: "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture", timecode [00:08]

As for the perspective that Mozart is implicitly undermined or disregarded, the focal point of this argument is the dual-inclusion of Mozart throughout the video, as illustrated by Figure 88,[562] showcasing the composer both as represented by his printed historical portrait in the back of the set, as well as represented by the actor in a red suit at the far right of the image.

The composer's double visibility can be described as a variation of The Great Kat's approach to presenting multiple copies of Beethoven in the artwork of "Beethoven's Violin Concerto", which quasi-demystifies the composer's central role in the Western musical canon by disrupting his 'naturalistic connection' and the created work of art, though it can be argued that both visible versions of Mozart are inherently subjected to devaluing processes. The included historical portrait of the composer – derived aforementioned selection of portraits by Carl Jaeger – is represented by low-quality print-outs with the composer's name photoshopped, which can be described as stripping down Rimbault's framing the portraits in the original publication as "to be held valuable as works of art" (Rimbault 1874, 7). Moreover, whilst the textual inclusion of Mozart's name in the image may have been done for pragmatic reasons – the portrait is further back in the shot, thus obstructing visibility – the text can be interpreted as interpretation as addressing cultural challenges i.e., some observers may not relate the portrait to Mozart without the inclusion of the name. That said, whether the inability to recognise the composer stems from the relative obscurity of the original image, or perhaps hints at a destabilisation of Mozart and/or other 'pillars' of Western art music to wider cultural contexts remains difficult to determine. Even if the composer's portrait simply reflects The Great Kat's general DIY aesthetic, a certain level of disregard can be inferred to this piece of printed paper, especially in contrast to the effort put into decorating the video sets. Thus, this approach can be interpreted as substantially devaluing one of Mozart's main representations in the video.

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[562] Source of image outlined in Footnote 560.

With regards to the actor implied to be representing the composer, I base my framing of said actor as signifying the composer from several aspects. First, from a direct perspective, the actor bears some resemblance to the utilised portrait of the composer, an aspect enhanced even further by the utilised white wig. Second, the illustration above (Figure 88) is the first image in which the actor is shown in the video [00:08], and of specific importance is his holding a piece of paper, as if writing something down. At [00:15] the video introduces its title card as incorporating Mozart's name, with the shot also including both the historical portrait of the composer as well as a person in a red robe holding a piece of paper, thus creating a (however tentative) connection between the two shots. And third, the actor's involvement in other videos by The Great Kat can serve as a broader context as in multiple instances (e.g., "Vivaldi's The Four Seasons" [see The Great Kat 2018j], "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" [see The Great Kat 2020b], and to some degree "Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody #2", [see The Great Kat 2018e]) the actor's (video-specific) costume and behaviour can be interpreted as strongly implying the representation of the composer whose piece is being transformed.

Concerning how this actor-'Mozart' is engaged with, it is noticeable that his involvement is never directly acknowledged in relation to the performed role, nor with regards to his conflicting involvement in the narrative of the opera. For example, [00:22] – a shot in which Figaro proposes to Susanna – 'Mozart' can be seen directly behind the two persons, waving a conductor's baton, yet despite the close proximity, his involvement in the shot is not acknowledged by The Great Kat. Rather, based on some of the shots depicting the actor-'Mozart' as writing something on a piece of paper (e.g., [01:18]), it appears that one (if not the) primary 'function' of the composer in the video is said 'writing down' action. Specifically in the majority of such 'writing down' shots, it is implied that Mozart is struggling to write down something that The Great Kat's performance persona is playing, an interpretation that can also be supported by similar activities that the actor performs when representing composers in The Great Kat's videos (e.g., "Vivaldi's The Four Seasons" can be summarised as presenting an implied narrative that Vivaldi was inspired by his student Anna Maria della Pietà, the latter performed by The Great Kat). This perspective creates two forms of undermining Mozart's significance and relation to the work: first, the composer's importance as a whole is visibly reduced as the shots position The Great Kat, by way of the femme persona, as a figure whose skill make it difficult for the composer to record. If the parallel to "Vivaldi's The Four Seasons" is extended further, one may argue that Mozart is not simply 'writing down' The Great Kat's performance, but rather that the musical material serves as a quasi-inspiration to the composer's compositional process thus resulting in the creation of *The Marriage of Figaro*, in turn further reducing his importance when compared to that of The Great Kat. Second, the act situates Mozart as part of a serialisation process within the performer's output i.e., composers needing to write down The Great Kat's inspiring performances thus becoming a 'trope' to be included in videos at the performer's behest.

Based on these aspects, The Great Kat's femme persona presents a series of contradictions regarding her relation to Mozart. In contrast to the signalling of adoration/desire that both the DVD-cover as well as Figure 84 and Figure 85 help to establish, the majority of acts described in the previous paragraphs can be summarised as a broad process of emasculation that ascribes to the male composer aspects related with negative stereotypes of women: passivity (e.g., representation through a

portrait); artificiality (e.g., the portrait being presented as a low-quality photocopy); insignificance (e.g., the actor-representation being ignored throughout the video). Or even some inverted 'positive' female stereotypes, such as being attentive learners (e.g., the actor-representing the composer trying to write down what The Great Kat is performing). In addition, these factors also contribute to undermining the composer's more powerful historicized (and thus masculine) position by situating him closer to the realm of popular culture, and thus with the latter's more 'feminine' associations.

The emasculation process is also accompanied by a myriad of effects strengthening the perception that The Great Kat is in a position of power in this framing, thus presenting an image conducive to the femme persona's female masculinity as well as some queer-implications. Specifically, regardless of what tools The Great Kat may be employing, Mozart's role in Western culture is so ingrained that it is difficult to imagine a process of fully stripping him from his status as a 'musical genius'. Thus, the video creates a situation in which The Great Kat's 'person' of desire is surrounded by impossible standards i.e., a virtually unreachable long-gone composer of incredibly high cultural significance, considered to be one of the pillars of Western art culture. The significance of this situation is that it overwrites the heteronormative context of the desired person being male, as well as reduces the potential for (erotic) engagement applicable to those whose gaze may land on The Great Kat's femme videos. Overall, these aspects therefore signal a "'failed' model of patriarchal femininity" (Hoskin 2017, 99) that hinges on both presenting a queer interest in an impossible-to-reach yet also impossible for others to match person, and moreover said person being represented in ways that clearly undermine his status and masculinity and thus transferring power to the femme character.

As a final consideration, I will briefly reflect on whether the aforementioned critical perspectives towards Mozart are also identifiable in the auditive level of the track. The approach to transforming this piece can be described as fairly symptomatic for The Great Kat via the inclusion of typical characteristics such as: increased tempi; the depiction of virtuosity; an ensemble consisting of common metal band instruments – electric guitar, (most likely) bass, and drums – and extended via synthesised orchestral sonorities; and the emphasis on the quasi-soloistic overdriven electric guitar. The dynamic range is restricted (or perhaps 'cranked up') to forte and above, whereby any noticeable dynamic contrasts are produced via the differing sound levels of instrumental groups in the mix; in other words, when the main instrument delivers such dynamics, the independent audibility of the supporting instruments is perceived as quieter and thus as constituting a dynamic contrast. In terms of structure, the shorter length of Mozart's overture enables The Great Kat to deliver a substantial portion of the piece, without much of the 'arrangement gymnastics' seen in the "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" example, whereby she seemingly excludes only some of the thematic development found in the mid-section of the piece (see Mozart 1900, 11–12 and 15–20).[563] Also similar to the previously discussed examples, this approach to following the original development of the score leaves no room for dedicated solo sections, or sections in which original material by the performer is included.

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[563] The notated examples are derived from a 1900 Cranz edition of Mozart's overture: Figure 89 (see Mozart 1900, 3); Figure 90 (see Mozart 1900, 4); Figure 91 (see Mozart 1900, 12). The captions of these quotations point to specific themes due to the edition lacking bar indications.

The arrangement also continues the performer's typical approach of focusing on the general continuity (and melodic contour) of the original achieved via a mixture of heavy metal (and more broadly popular music) contextualised techniques whilst retaining a fair amount of detail from the original arrangement. For example, the opening of the piece delivers the main theme in a unison that prioritises the electric guitar sonority, yet also involves the drum-set that generally follows the rhythmic patterns of Mozart's main theme (see Figure 89). This is continued shortly after with the introduction of the woodwind counter-passage found at the latter half of the theme's statement e.g. [00:04 – 00:07] (see Figure 90, red outline), and later on, at [00:22 – 00:28] the drum-set switches to blast-beat drumming thus returning to a heavy metal-contextualised performance technique. Another example of this 'metallising the original' approach can be observed at [01:06], where the electric guitar provides chordal accompaniment that matches the half notes-based portion of the corresponding phrase (see Figure 91, red outline). The half note chords are presented in a lower pitch, and by gliding the hand down the neck of the guitar, the produced typical sliding sound sustains the chords whilst strongly implying the freer performance practices of popular music, rather than the expectations of restraint and adherence to notation in Western art music contexts.

With regards to the soloistic performance, main melodic lines are predominantly performed by the electric guitar in very much virtuosic manner due to the combination of fast tempi and the melodic contour's oft inclusion of sixteen-note passages. The melodic lines are delivered in the higher registers of the instrument thus producing a fairly thin and 'piercing' sound, and incorporate techniques such as tremolo e.g., [00:28] or a whammy-bar vibrato e.g., [00:07], [00:18], [01:38]. My referral to the delivery as quasi-soloistic aims to reflect the instrument's centrality in the arrangement, yet never separating from the pre-established melodic contour.

Figure 89: Mozart – The Marriage of Figaro, opening theme

Figure 90: Mozart – The Marriage of Figaro, woodwind answer

Figure 91: Mozart – The Marriage of Figaro, chordal accompaniment

What is the significance of these elements in the auditive track to the current investigation? I would argue that whilst there are no elements in the track that can be interpreted as an explicitly introducing a targeted gender commentary – that is beyond the depiction of virtuosity as emerging from a female performer's body – many of the outlined elements can be mapped to the observations on the visual level of the artefact.

This brief outline of the auditive level of "Mozart's Marriage of Figaro Overture" showcases that the piece is clearly based on the performer's typical approach to transforming Western art music pieces, by retaining much of the piece's continuity and arrangement, which are filtered through heavy metal aesthetic. The emphasis on the electric guitar is not only a clear indication of the performer's importance, but can also be interpreted as an expression of The Great Kat's general female masculinity. Specifically, whilst the focus is on the overdriven electric guitar as an instrument connotated with masculinity in heavy metal contexts, the emphasis on its upper registers may be interpreted as touching on the framing of higher pitches as more feminine and thus seemingly echoing the non-normative representation of femininity by the femme persona. Also, it can be argued that the femme's aggressive manner of expression is also retained via the overall speed and virtuosity presented, even if the 'aggressive' implications of the overdriven guitar may be less pronounced due to the higher pitches. Whilst the attention to detail in retaining aspects from Mozart's original arrangement may be seen as an expression of the femme's adoration/desire towards the composer, the aforementioned centrality of the electric guitar certainly exemplifies the notion that she is the identity to be perceived as central here and for what purpose is the piece presented, i.e., showcase of the performer's virtuoso skills. In addition, by applying her usual approach to transforming the piece, as well as cutting out things that are not beneficial to the presentation of the performer's skill, this can be viewed as both an act of undermining the composer's legacy via a standardised serialisation of the piece that removes its 'uniqueness'.

One way to interpret this lack of direct or extensive continuity between the auditive and visual level is as means of subversion of expectations. If the track is heard on its own it presents nothing truly novel, as a listener may assume that this is yet another example of The Great Kat's typical transformation of a Western art music piece, namely, all about the performer and her virtuosity. To those also observing the artwork, the framing of generally suggestive components and the composer's portrait can also be seen as fairly typical in its presentation of intertextual elements of the classical through the femme's colourful aesthetic. Yet when examined together with aspects of the video, elements such as the re-creation of the opera's narrative and the included heteronormativity-undermining and/or queer-interpretable aspects become observable, in turn potentially altering the framing of the previously mentioned visual and auditive components. Once again, the presentation of these subversive gender components serves as additional levels of the piece's interpretation, yet they do not undermine the main purpose of the piece in signalling the performer's power and virtuosity to listeners or observers. Conversely, the separation of the gender elements may be framed as a different approach to The Great Kat's implicit presenting a challenge to those interested in her work, similar to the necessity for knowledge and patience in exploring a piece's deeply embedded references in pieces such as "Paganini's Caprice #24".

In summary, this interpretation of the music video (and corresponding track) of "Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro Overture" showcased how the femme persona and her manners of expression can alter the interpretation when integrated into one of The Great Kat's pieces. I highlighted that, in addition to showcasing a common practice of a video re-creating the narrative of the opera related to the piece, the adoption of the femme introduces a complex overlap between said persona and the character of Susanna. This overlap then enables to interpret some of the presented interactions such as Susanna's denial of count Almaviva's advances or the submission of Figaro as a figure, to become transformed into acts of gender empowerment and/or feminist underpinning responses to the male characters' (at times sexist) actions or motivations, thus collectively undermining heteronormative capacity of the video. Furthermore, I argued that whilst aspects of the video can be interpreted as showcasing the femme persona as expressing a certain adoration or desire, this is seemingly framed as a form of queered desire based on the interest towards the portrait of a (no longer existing) composer. The femme persona seemingly undermines said desire by devaluing Mozart's multiple inclusions in the video, and drawing from her female masculinity-inheritance, presents a connection that both frames her in a position of centrality and power, yet simultaneously by signalling a 'failed model of patriarchal femininity' discourages a predominantly male-gaze focused erotic reading by the video's observers. Finally, I briefly examined the auditive component of the track and suggested that, when viewed independently, it presents some notable parallels to the general argumentation of the video without a directly observable contribution to the gender commentary of the transformation. However, when viewed in relation to the video, I suggested that the overall artefact (video and its track) become interpretable as presenting a subtle gender subversion that, in turn, potentially implicitly challenges the performer's audiences.

Section conclusion

This chapter focused on presenting a thorough examination of The Great Kat by presenting a series of contextualisations and interpretative close readings of artefacts associated with, what I consider as the two main performance personas that can be identified in the performer's output, the dominatrix and the femme. My discussion not only allowed to present a more detailed understanding of common aesthetic and costume-choices employed by The Great Kat, but more importantly, the presented arguments also allowed to offer interpretations as to how these self-framings are constructed. Specifically, by situating the aforementioned personas in relation to the corresponding broad-culture framings of the BDSM-role or gender identity, these perspectives offer a general framework against which The Great Kat's approach towards heavy metal culture can be contextualised in more detail.

As a brief summary, I argued that the more commonly identified framing of The Great Kat in BDSM-costume, and in relation to her 'aggressive' behaviour, can be contextualised through the figure of the dominatrix. And that through a combination of said contemporary role's theatricality and transgression, as well as the historical contexts within The Great Kat's output informing said role as violent, the performer manages to draw from a 'power' and 'violence'-interpretable female figure and thus to effectively navigate processes of myth making in heavy metal. Furthermore, I outlined that when the violence of the dominatrix is viewed from the perspective of The Great Kat's feminism, a

quasi-retaliatory component can be interpreted allowing to contextualise the performer as paralleling the work of similar feminist-underpinned heavy metal performers, as well as some performers from the broader queercore genre.

I also argued that the more recent and (at the time of writing) predominantly ignored colourful and much more suggestive self-framing of the performer can be situated in relation to the concept of the femme. Said term not only connotates the general utilisation of femininity, but also its application reflects the performer's presentation of a divergent form of femininity as both a source of empowerment, as well as incorporating a sense of engagement with aspects such as heteronormativity. The usage of this term strikes me as a much better suit to The Great Kat's feminine, yet ironic and/or somewhat 'aggressive' self-framing, as opposed to referring to said self-framing as simply 'feminine'. Moreover, I argued that said combination between suggestive, yet disrupting, femininity can be contextualised as part of an approach by female heavy metal performers that despite engaging with self-sexualising practices, both maintain their heavy metal-signification potential, as well as introduce empowering and/or male-gaze disrupting components.

An important aspect of the examination of these personas is that, although they present fairly distinct manners of expression – aggressive for the dominatrix, and suggestive for the femme – these should be seen as a primary form of self-expression that is supplemented via the implicit mirroring of the other persona's manner of expression, as well as due to their co-relation to the broader female masculinity that underpins the performer. This overlap is not to be overlooked as not only it allows to contextualise the personas in the overall output of the performer but also so as to account for some of the 'inconsistencies' in the personas' presentation or behaviour during examination.

Rather than recount once more the specific observations based on the interpretative close readings, I will highlight how they can generally contribute to a more encompassing understanding of the performer and her engagement with heavy metal culture. An argument that a large study produces more in-depth understanding towards a performer can be somewhat unnecessary; thus, I will instead argue that a major benefit of this examination was offering interpretations on what, how, and from what self-positioning, the performer is pursuing aspects within their output. In contrast to the more limited examinations of The Great Kat that situate the performer as simply an example of a female virtuoso, my work focused on offering an in-depth examination of the performer that attempts to extrapolate and contextualise the tools through which her Western art music-transformative output is constructed, whereby each instance aimed to balance discussions of gender components as well as music-interpretative aspects. Whilst I make no claim of universality, I hope to have shown both some of the common approaches to The Great Kat's construction of her metal-transformations of Western art music, as well as that the procedure often involves fairly complex processes that engage with the histories and practices from the broader cultural field associated with said persona. Moreover, I attempted to engage with multiple medial-levels of the performer's output, from lyrics, through artwork or music videos, as well as the facets of the auditive level such as arrangement and its relation to the original piece being transformed.

With regards to benefits of more directly contextualising the two performance personas, the interpretative close-readings were aimed primarily 'inwards', that is to say, their purpose was to

present interpretations that balance between how the two personas' further the understanding, and specific changes, of The Great Kat's transformation of Western art music contexts. As well as to showcase how the examined pieces contribute to the strengthening of The Great Kat's perception within heavy metal contexts. To that effect, whilst each of the discussed artefacts can be easily framed as part of the generalised notion that The Great Kat undermines the co-relation between virtuosity and masculinity in heavy metal contexts, when these pieces are viewed through the contexts of the corresponding personas, their manners of expression, and even the broader self-positioning of The Great Kat, additional levels of the interpretation emerge that, to my knowledge, have not been overtly considered in academic discussions.

Finally, similar to my focus in previous sub-sections of this chapter, my efforts in situating the parallels of the dominatrix and femme personas to other female performers in, and beyond, the field of heavy metal, can contribute to not only considering The Great Kat's output as saturated with meaning, but also to contextualise the various actions in relevant broader contexts. I believe that such an approach is of importance as it goes beyond simply aiming to more directly outline The Great Kat's work, and towards the realm of decoupling her work from the notions of co-dependence to other male performers i.e., being referred to primarily in relation to attempts in disrupting the co-relation between virtuosity and male performers. To be clear, I believe that this perspective is very much valid, yet similar to my argument in the discourse analytical portion of my work, I remain critical to perspectives that consistently situate a phenomenon as 'starting from a relation to X', and view them as less useful than an attempt to suggest that a phenomenon 'moves towards the direction of Y'. In other words, it is more productive to discuss what the performer is doing going forward, rather than how said act of 'doing' ultimately relates her work to pre-existing perspectives, whose meaning has already been mentioned and/or exhausted its descriptive capacity.

I am certain that some will argue that this work has, effectively, achieved a similar result by presenting a co-relation between The Great Kat and several Western art music composers. However, I would suggest that the purpose of such a direction emerged from the artefacts themselves, and my arguments were not ultimately aiming to present a co-relation in which 'canonised', and thus more 'culturally potent', composers were 'exploited' as sources from which The Great Kat can extract power. Rather, I hope to have shown that in each discussed example, the 'power' was generated by The Great Kat's actions and/or interactions, thus positioning its source from the performer or the persona, rather than the aforementioned 'cultural potency'.

Overall, I consider the theoretical framing of The Great Kat as presenting distinct performance personas, and that their application in her output to be a productive way through which the performer's artefacts, including the engagement with Western art music contexts, can be more accurately engaged with. However, as my work cannot hope to address all aspects pertaining to these personas in the continuing output of the performer, I hope that further scholars will continue the investigation relating to The Great Kat's self-framing and related gender-components.

11.6 Chapter conclusion

As an overall conclusion to my discussion of The Great Kat, this text presented a series of examinations that allow to more accurately outline the processes underlying the performer's output that have not

been considered in academic writing: from the importance of principles such as popularisation of Western art music pieces to her creative output; through approaches to authenticating her virtuosity in heavy metal-appropriate ways; to various engagements with composers from Western culture through which The Great Kat's own female masculinity and power-related framing as a heavy metal performer is strengthened. Although I was able to discuss only a small selection of video shots, images and auditive components out of The Great Kat's ever-increasing catalogue, nevertheless I believe that through this in-depth approach I was able to address some of the challenges outlined both in this chapter's opening as well as the preceding summary of academic work on the performer.

My work emphasised outlining the performer in a thorough and detailed manner, situating aspects such as her aesthetic, behaviour, self-positioning, as well as her approach to music-making and construction of gender perspectives, in a way that not only balances the investigation of gender and music-interpretative aspects, but that also prioritises interpreting how the observations stem from, and are conducive to, the performer's purposes. I showcased the extreme density of allusions and their polysemic potential that can be interpreted in multiple of the examined artefacts, thus overall framing the performer's output as, if not fully overcoming, then strongly opposing a denial of credibility and authenticity for women that primarily perform material not created from them. By highlighting the potential for discussing The Great Kat's work through the lens of her multiple performance personas, this approach allowed not only an updated summary of the performer's self-framing, but also enabled to offer more detailed understanding of the significance and interpretation-altering potential of a specific framing's integration in artefacts engaging with Western art contexts. Finally, the discussions attempted to situate The Great Kat in a variety of contexts through which the performer's (at times, challenging) output becomes less a combination between 'flaunting sexuality' and 'empty virtuosity', but instead can be interpreted as saturated with meaning. Also, given the number of not-insubstantial parallels to a number of female performer-related contexts, The Great Kat's work can hardly be presented as an 'oddity', a 'novelty', or as 'shallow' and thus not necessitating closer examination.

Despite dedicating nearly half this book on the exploration of the performer's work, I firmly believe that The Great Kat's older, current, and upcoming repertoire was, and continues to be, as saturated and as open to interpretative possibilities as the examples presented here. As such, I would suggest that a great deal of untapped potential arguably still remains in terms of further contextualising her complex relation with Western art music and culture, gender aspects, and further topics. Having hopefully provided a well-situated starting point for future examinations,[564] rather than reiterating on previously outlined conclusions, I want to direct interested scholars towards perspectives that I was unable to address and are relevant to further research on progressive metal.

During my exploration of The Great Kat's work, I noticed several reoccurring references to geographic locations and/or cultural groups, the examination of which may potentially uncover new aspects pertaining to how her performance personas operate, and specifically, in relation to the

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[564] It goes without saying that I by no means consider the presented perspectives as 'done and dusted', and in addition to the arguments in the following pages, I also very much encourage scholarly investigations to re-examine, re-evaluate or simply continue the discussion of aspects outlined in this study.

engagement with Western art music contexts. The performer's quasi-patriotic viewpoints towards the US are exemplified through the use of US flags on the artwork of her *Wagner's War* CD, and interviews in which The Great Kat admonishes the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 1999 (framed as an attack on 'her city', see McClenathan n.d.). In turn, the album's references to Western art music are framed as a response (or an attempt to 'fight back') at the aggressors, thus potentially engaging with new perspectives pertaining to the performer's female masculinity and/or the framing of aggression and violence towards her heavy metal-authenticity. Additional examples include the video for "Bazzini's The Round of the Goblins" (see The Great Kat 2017a) featuring a myriad of references to the French-American holiday of Mardi-Gras (as well as possibly engaging with gender aspects of the associated 'flashing for beads' practice, see Chatel 2014), or the lyrics of her song "Made in Japan" which suggest that the ubiquity of Japanese brands constitutes a quasi-world domination effort e.g. "There's no place left for Americans! They're buying out the WHOLE DAMN WORLD!" (see The Great Kat 1990d, booklet). These latter aspects are arguably rather puzzling in relation to The Great Kat's virtuoso and Western art music-derived authenticity, though despite the more conservative underpinnings, they may be interpreted as in line with metal culture's ambivalent engagement with socio-political perspectives, and may be pursued further as contributing to the contextualisation of the performer in relation to progressive metal's own engagement with political topics (e.g., see Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 270–72).

The Great Kat's work also includes of references to Germany, through combining music-specific and broad German culture references e.g., the video for "Brindisi Waltz for Violin and Piano" is steeped in symbols related to the province of Bavaria; the use of German language in her video "Chef Great Kat Bakes German Apple Strudel with Mozart" (see The Great Kat 2019d); the performer emphasising that her violin was made in Germany; or the somewhat puzzling (not to mention disturbing) utilisation of both Wagner's *Walkürenritt* and footage from an American documentary film on atrocities committed against the Jewish populace during World War II in the video for the track "War" (see The Great Kat 2018d; also Stevens, George 1945). This emphasis may be pursued as another facet of popularisation-perspectives that engages with the German/Austrian nationality of several figures at the 'core' of the Western art music canon (e.g., Bach, Mozart, Beethoven; see Weber 2001 [1999]), or as means for the performer to be positioned in close proximity to one of the more 'potent' nationalities in said canon, and in a manner relevant to heavy metal contexts. And finally, multiple subtle allusions can be found to 'gypsy' music and culture filtered through Western pre-twentieth century culture (e.g. her recording of "Sarasate's Gypsy Violin Waltz 'Zigeunerweisen'" or The Great Kat's depiction of the character Carmen in her video "Sarasate's Carmen Fantasy", see The Great Kat 2018i). Through their association with virtuosity in some Western art contexts in the nineteenth century, not to mention arguments regarding heavy metal's as echoing a distinct strand of musical orientalism (Lilja 2009, 172–75), these references may be framed as contributing to The Great Kat's complex engagement with the virtuoso concept (see Piotrowska 2012; also Baumann 1996).

Another perspective worth examining in more detail is the visibility and interactions between The Great Kat's performance personas and other historical figures in various examples of her work. I would argue that this idea can be examined from two perspectives: On the one hand, a number of

music videos include allusions or references to historical female performers related to Western art music contexts e.g., the music video for "Vivaldi's The Four Seasons" can be framed as a counterpart to my discussion of "Paganini's Caprice #24" as The Great Kat presents a series of notable allusions to the historical figure of Anna Maria della Pietà (see Talbot 2001), whom the performer seemingly represents in the video. Whilst in other instances, the appearances are much briefer such as a few shots in the video for "Sarasate's Carmen Fantasy" which contrast an image of The Great Kat as the character of Carmen against the same role presented by the opera/film representations by Geraldine Farrar and Barbara Kemp, respectively. These can be seen as furthering the performer's framing of virtuosity and potentially a combination between suggestive theatricality and popularisation, as both Farrar and Kemp have been cited as fairly accomplished and popular performers during their time (see Blyth-Schofield 2016 [2003]; Shawe-Taylor 2009 [2001]).

On the other hand, similar to the implicit relation between "Beethoven's Violin Concerto" and Franz Clement, several pieces seemingly engage with male virtuoso figures e.g. the original composition on which The Great Kat's "Brindisi Waltz for Violin and Piano" (see The Great Kat 2019a) is based was written by the French virtuoso Delphin Alard (see B. Schwarz 2001). Whilst this latter category raises the question as to whether such connections are a result of her choice of virtuoso repertoire, or whether the examined relation between herself and Paganini constitutes the 'tip of the iceberg' in terms of (unspoken) virtuosity-investing gestures, other more critical perspectives also emerge. Specifically, given The Great Kat's self-ascription of feminist perspectives, the lack of reflection on issues of gender and canonisation in Western art music contexts is somewhat noticeable. Whilst her transformations of male composers contribute to her framing, in contrast to her push-back against male virtuoso metal performers, it is difficult to find an explicit critical perspective towards the Western art music composers whose pieces she transforms, not to mention that, at the time of writing, her repertoire does not engage with works by female Western art music composers.

It should also be mentioned that although the discussion focused on specifically exploring the work of The Great Kat, this was not meant as an effort 'in isolation', but rather intended to point out the potential in terms of exploring the role and contribution of women in progressive metal. Throughout this examination I attempted to point out further ways through which the discussed perspectives in relation to The Great Kat can be seen as paralleling progressive music contexts, though I am certain that my choice of this performer will remain controversial to some. Nevertheless, I contend that the examination of the performer served as means of framing an extremely 'provocative' (and hopefully 'thought provoking') example showcasing the utilisation of gender perspectives. To that effect, I will reiterate that the discussions of female masculinity, transgressive gender aspects in relation to growled vocals or the reframing of how a 'serious engagement with Western art music' is presented can be of benefit to future examination of progressive metal performers.

As a few examples to that effect, the work of the Swedish progressive/power metal band Triosphere serves as a notable representation of female masculinity, which is framed as emerging from her not-stereotypically-female sounding voice as pointed out by reviews in the PA and MA

archives.[565] This can also be interpreted in relation to her framing in the band's promotional material (e.g., see afm-records.de n.d.), or in videos such as for the band's track "Onwards, Part II (Decadent One)" (see Triosphere 2007). Furthermore, in addition to the outlined parallel between The Great Kat and virtuoso female performers and/or suggestive topics in progressive music, I briefly mentioned that her work engages with growling vocals. The gender-transgressive properties of such vocal techniques can be of use in further examining and situating in broader contexts growling female progressive metal performers such as Laura Pleasants from the US-based progressive/sludge metal band Kylesa (see Metal-archives.com n.d.l; Progarchives.com n.d.n), Amanda Kiernan from the Canadian progressive metal band Into Eternity (see Metal-archives.com n.d.h; Progarchives.com n.d.k), or Dr. Mikannibal (stage name of Mika Kawashima) from the Japanese band Sigh, the latter described as engaging with "influence of experimental composer Karlheinz Stockhausen" in their album *Hail Horror Hail* (J. Wagner 2010, 303, also 303–305) and thus paralleling the occult thematic similar to some pieces by The Great Kat. Overall, the focus on the transgressive potential of growled vocals may be of great use in understanding the gender-bending aspects of progressive metal, and one that complements observations on queer-connotations on falsetto-based male singers such as Yes' Jon Anderson (see Rycenga 2002, 159), or Rush's Geddy Lee. Finally, The Great Kat's approach to engaging with Western art music pieces and contexts can be seen as offering a contrasting perspective that extends beyond existing suggestions regarding classical-related perspectives in metal contexts as connoting progressive music in symphonic metal bands (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 267–68). Specifically, in addition to showcasing that female participation in such Western art music-transforming contexts is not focused only on vocal work, The Great Kat's work showcases an intricate, multi-medial, and deeply embedded approach to allusions/references to Western 'high' culture that parallels (not to mentions matches in complexity) approaches by male performers.

Overall, even if the broader effect of this examination is a more consistent and involved effort in exploring the role of women in the progressive metal, or serves as an impulse for further critical discourse that problematises gender aspects in the genre, then I consider my work here to have been worthwhile. It goes without saying however that the exploration of gender elements should be a first step of many that can help address various aspects of diversity in the genre, and that future research will hopefully explore aspects related to critically under-researched facets in the genre, such as the general lack of non-white performers, age as a factor relevant for performers and fans, as well as questions of religion and disability.

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[565] I will provide some examples of this principle, with references coded in a similar manner to those in the main discourse analytical section, as per the same consideration of privacy: "Quite deep and raspy in delivery for a female, I almost mistook her for a male vocalist […] I was left awestruck with the passion, power and might in Ida's voice. Admittedly however, Haukland's voice may not be for everyone as it is quite masculine in sound" (MA-Triosphere-#3, 2010); or "Ida, as I mentioned earlier being the unique aspect, has quite an interesting voice. Technically accomplished for sure, but with a tone I rarely hear these days, metal or otherwise. She sounds tough. Tough as in that her huskier than average voice gives me the impression of a woman who chain-smokes and can crush foolhardy blokes at arm-wrestling or a beer can against her forehead" (PA-Triosphere-#1, 2013).

PART 4: CONCLUSION

12. Conclusion, research limitations and future perspectives

Returning to the question that I posed in the opening of this book, namely, whether aspects related to the classical have relevance for the framing of progressive metal, the multiple chapters in this study have showcased the variety and complexity of auditive, visual, or even general-conceptual classical-interpretative perspectives that can be identified in progressive metal audience discourses. What I hope to have contributed through this study is the understanding that the classical may not be a central trope or a key aesthetic component in progressive metal, as one may suggest for genres such as symphonic metal or neo-classical metal. However, the extrapolated discourse key-terms are not simply showcasing the existence of various meanings behind terms such as 'symphonic/orchestral', 'operatic' or 'theatrical/dramatic', but rather reflect the existence of codified characteristics that clearly circulate in the culture, yet remain unexplored by academic perspectives. As such, identifying multiple classical-connotative elements in a near-random selection of progressive metal artists offers both an additional set of audience-derived characteristics as to what may be expected when the progressive metal genre-label is applied to a band, as well as an alternative understanding that contrasts the occasional academic framing of the genre's relation to the classical as a derivative component with marginal relevance. It is important to reiterate, however, that such argumentation is not intended as a roundabout way in imposing my individual definition of the genre. In other words, I am not implying that my conclusions should lead to a paradigmatic shift from earlier academic understanding on either progressive metal's rhythmic complexity as a (near stereotypical) trait, or research that situates the genre as inherently indebted to progressive rock. Rather, my work has been motivated by the need for the genre to be mapped in a more flexible, forward-directed, and differentiated manner. My highlighting of the substantial variety of phenomena that can be identified in relation to progressive metal and its classical-connotative aspects will hopefully aid other researchers in opening inquiries, if not of this topic, then in relation to the principle of critically examining and challenging 'set-in-stone' definitions or perspectives surrounding the genre.

Some of the core principles that guided this investigation was the focus placed on the perspectives of progressive metal's audiences, whilst balancing the exploration of both facets of the genre that have been overlooked/under-researched in academic discussions, as well as to push back against the canonical practices that I perceived as present in currently available research. The decision to draw heavily from audience discourses proved their immense meaning-potential that, with a few notable exceptions, has remained unaccounted for in the discussion of progressive metal, or (as was the case in some of Halbscheffel's writing) has been disregarded in favour of presenting more limited and/or genealogical definitions. To summarize the benefits of such audience-centric direction, the album reviewers have identified and differentiated (to a not-insubstantial degree) classical-connotative elements which are then discussed in relation to the application of the progressive metal genre-label, and thus serve as active regulators to the genre's classical-related boundaries. When considering the more limited role that the classical plays in the genre's aesthetic, the audience discourses aid in overcoming what I would characterise as an innovation- or (compositional) complexity-centricity in some research, or some journalistic perspectives that disregard progressive

metal for similar reasons. More importantly, however, audiences aid in uncovering the existence of classical/popular transgressive behaviours by progressive metal artists that, for the most part, are rarely the focal point of the cultural artefact or the culture as a whole, thus allowing for a more detailed and differentiated understanding of the genre to be developed in academic settings. From the perspective of the principles of popularisation, it is important to acknowledge that the incorporation of the classical in the genre allows to view such performers as more subtly transgressive, potentially without replicating the elitism/pretentiousness criticisms that were symptomatic of progressive rock's treatment by rock journalists in the 1970s (e.g., see Keister and J. L. Smith 2008, 436; Edward Macan 1997, 167–78). That said, as I briefly outlined in the relation to the ambivalent reception of Western art music/formal training in heavy metal contexts, and to some degree to the framing of operatic heavy metal vocalists, it is possible that broader reverberations of these accusations still persist.

The repurposing of the otherwise reductive principle that progressive metal is merely a sum of its progressive rock- and heavy metal- parts towards an investigation into the communities related to said meta-genres allowed to also highlight the genre not only as a genre system (as per Fabbri's rules) given its multiple sub-genres, but also that the two communities offer at times contrasting, or even contradicting, perspectives that are to be navigated as means of fully exploring the genre's cultural framing. As I stated in my data triangulation section, I have purposefully avoided separating the two communities' utterances in lew of presenting a more encompassing listener's perspective that highlights the internal struggles and contradictions – thus further encouraging a more differentiated look at the genre's inner workings, without instilling negativity towards one audience group.

A similar principle was also applied towards the literature chosen to inform the contexts that were to circulate in progressive metal's discourses i.e., a selection of academic and journalistic writings that stem from not only progressive rock, as appears to be the predominant direction in current academic research, but also those of heavy metal contexts. To be very clear – the issue I perceived here was not a complete or systematic disregard of metal music scholarship or of heavy metal contexts, but rather a prioritisation of progressive rock scholarship and aesthetic contexts at the expense of the heavy metal counterparts. Whilst such criticism can be partially diminished by pointing out that some of the early progressive metal contributions were made relatively close to one another and at a time before metal music studies had sufficiently developed, this does not account for other issues. These include a certain implicit diminishing of heavy metal components or contexts in progressive metal's 'genre-compound' or the, in my view, somewhat uncritical adoption of problematic perspectives such as 'classical in rock music as inherently a progressive rock component' and thus outside of heavy metal's effective aesthetic expressive range – a notion that, even during the early 1990s, was implicitly challenged by scholarly work such as those by Walser. That said, as some scholars have engaged with Walser's work (at times with debatable results), the core of this criticism that my work hoped to address is that those supporting the idea of progressive metal as a 'sum of its parts' genre should engage not only with said author's early contribution but rather endeavour to also survey the growing academic literature on heavy metal. I would even suggest that scholars should consider moving past such a 'composite' approach and for the connection to (both!) previous

historical periods or precursor genres to serve as an *addition* rather than a core definitional principle when discussing the genre.

It goes without saying that the emphasis on the importance of cultural understandings is not based on blind faith or on misguided positivism, but rather are supported by the additional music-interpretative close-readings. These have attempted to balance between strengthening the agency of the audience perspectives through presenting a form of interpretative translation, and introducing further contexts that offer additional layers of the interpretation. In each instance, the close examination of the discourse codes has revealed the possibility to relate the audience observations with more traditional music-interpretative perspectives, thus further strengthening the potential for such perspectives to be productively integrated in further research. With that in mind, I hope that through the presented interpretations this study has mostly avoided an unwarranted return to problems relating to the (whether intentional or not) 'ennobling' of the genre as criticised in relation to progressive rock scholars during the early stages of the field's conception (e.g., Edward Macan 1997), but also, from my perspective, persists in some recent scholarly texts on progressive metal (e.g., Mądro 2017).

To avoid repeating the multiple conclusions that can be found at the end of each chapter, I want to briefly summarise how the significance of the selected examples in this study contributes towards the further examination of the genre. The chapter on the term 'symphonic/orchestral' has presented evidence that progressive metal audiences are receptive of, and praise performers that engage with, orchestral parts despite such characteristics to appear as somewhat simple in their construction and integration into the overall arrangement. This observation is of importance as it contrasts the critical outlook of some progressive rock-based discussions of the term symphonic, and more specifically the implication that progressive metal's orchestral components are not of sufficient complexity and thus are left out of some academic research. It is important to reiterate that progressive music audiences have expressed a desire for performers to adhere to some notions of compositional complexity and/or to present a challenge to the listener. However, despite the progressive metal's orchestral segments to fall under the classification of simple 'orchestral accompaniment', there is sufficient positive reception of such approaches in the audience discourse to suggest that more attention needs to be paid when directly transmitting progressive rock-aesthetic expectations to the analysis of progressive metal. The same chapter also offered a counter-argument to the suggestion that symphonic metal is a sub-category of progressive metal, the former characterised to some degree by its emphasis on classical/orchestral components. In contrast, audiences perceive differences in terms of how orchestral segments are integrated in progressive metal as opposed to practices identified as seemingly relating to symphonic metal aesthetic. This distinction suggests that further work is necessary towards understanding progressive metal's own orchestral approaches, as well as regarding some tensions in the connections between symphonic metal and progressive metal.

The examination of the term 'operatic' not only argued that, despite its oft popular music-contextualisation, the term rock opera has the potential to be interpreted by broader observes as connotating the classical, but also suggested that the current understanding of rock opera should be

expanded via considerations of a substantial number of pieces emerging from non-Western/Anglo-speaking contexts. Also, the presented succinct attempt at theorising what characteristics constitute operatic vocals both offered a general foundation from which the practice can be more thoroughly defined in heavy metal contexts, but also together with my discussion of (synthesised) vocal choirs as a component to the music arrangement, allowed to outline an alternative perspective to the general framing that vocals are of lessened importance than instrumental components to the progressive metal genre. When taken together with both the large number of audience discussions on the vocalists in several of the examined bands, not to mention theoretical work of scholars such as Frith that have argued for the importance of vocals in popular music contexts, this leads me to more boldly suggest that a re-evaluation of the importance of vocals to the reception of the progressive metal genre should take place in future research. Moreover, from a gender perspective, considering the predominant involvement of women in progressive metal as vocalists as pointed out by Berkers and Schaap (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 75), the more involved discussion of the vocal work in the genre may encourage further research engaging with contributions by female vocalists in the genre, operatic or otherwise.

The examination of the term 'theatrical/dramatic' allowed to gain some insight into how progressive metal engages with the notion of theatricality, which is of importance as, to my knowledge, there has been almost no academic work on said aspect's role in the genre. Specifically, some audience's discourses suggested that, in the context of a recorded track and that of an album with some overarching concept, theatricality is perceived through a series of vocal- and compositional practices. Whilst to some such observation may appear inconsequential – to suggest that a narrative-focused large-scale musical work will draw from some vocal techniques for dramatic effect is not exactly revelatory – this observation nevertheless allows to theorise that, even with the genre's more static stage behaviour, progressive metal incorporates theatricality aspects in concept albums as types of recordings associated with the genre. Furthermore, this re-emphasises the need for future investigation on the role of vocal delivery and vocals in general as discussed in the previous paragraph.

Finally, both the 'theatrical/dramatic' and 'operatic' chapters included in-depth close readings on album artwork as means of reflecting the visual aspect of a popular music cultural artefact that is not discussed commonly by the album reviews, and as well as a potential source for the classical's perception in progressive metal. These investigations allowed to not only account for the visual level of the cultural artefacts, but also to theorise several culture-transgressive aspects in relation to progressive metal. Namely, the participation in a long-standing tradition of popular musicians signalling their popular/classical transgression, and the potential to relate the self-framing of progressive metal band members on album artwork together with classical-connotative imagery as a classical-relevant approach to theatricality with broader potential relevance.

Overall, these conclusions help to outline the high degree of audience-attention to details and the seemingly more flexible and open view towards the progressive metal genre. Moreover, it highlights and strengthens the suitability of these perspectives as sources and contributing perspectives to the academic understanding of the genre. I will go a step further and somewhat provocatively suggest that, when compared to some academic/journalistic voices that disregard or even dismiss the genre, the criticism offered by Fabbri in the 1980s that most music fans are much

more keenly aware than musicologists as to what various genre-labels constitute and what appear as the corresponding genre boundaries, remains somewhat true in relation to progressive metal. To ensure that this criticism is properly communicated, the point is not to say 'audiences know more than academics' or vice-versa, but that I believe that any worthwhile extension of the genre's investigation going forward should at least reflect on the perspectives of the audiences before offering yet another 'progressive metal *is* XYZ' definition.

Having criticised what I perceive to be processes of canonisation in progressive metal academic discourse – though in the interest of fairness, it bears repeating that the issue can be identified in some journalistic overviews as well! – this study attempted to address some of the preconceptions that have restricted the genre's examination. On the most immediate level, the near-random selection of artists allowed to extend the broad/generalised perspectives on the role of the classical in the genre in a manner that balanced emphasising the phenomenon's spread with avoiding purposefully selected artists known for their classical-connotative approaches. Based on this approach, I believe to have exemplified that such approaches/concepts can be found in a fairly saturated manner as part of the output of a small near-random selection of artists, as well as offered more detailed perspectives as to how these were achieved and integrated. With that in mind, I will continue to advise future scholars to avoid pushing this argument towards the levels of universal validity, without further examinations to have taken place.

With regards to the aforementioned academic understanding on progressive metal as defined by its rhythmic/metric complexity, I resisted the urge to dedicate my efforts in developing a counter-argument, however it is worth briefly reflecting on the centrality of this understanding for the genre. Specifically, it was noticeable that whilst the output of the bands I examined incorporates rhythmic/metric complexity, not all performers engage with this compositional approach throughout their output, and moreover reviewers rarely offered arguments suggesting that the lack of such characteristic raises concerns about a band's 'progressive metal' status. This is not to say that the inclusion of rhythmic/metric complexity was not thematised by some writers, however, I was left with the impression that the close association of such characteristic (and that of the incorporation of multiple virtuosic solos) to bands such as Dream Theater, engages with the culture's perception of what constitutes creative individuality or authenticity, rather than implying that a strict adherence to this specific performance characteristics is necessitated. This could be attributed to a combination of some performers being positioned at the onset of the (culture-understood) genre history, such as Crimson Glory that do not engage with rhythmic/metric complexity; or that some performers may have been added to the genre's contexts at a time when the genre definition was expanding further, as is suggested by some scepticism regarding Savatage's eligibility due to their early power- /heavy metal albums, that is contrasted by the acceptance based on the band's engagement with conceptual and classical-interpretative aspects. Even if one argues that the classical (be it directly observed in discourse or extrapolated via this research) remains a marginal element in such 'untypical' progressive metal bands' inclusion, what I hope scholars will take from this approach is the significant challenges for future scholarly discussion to continue maintaining a contradiction between 'progressive music is

inherently eclectic' and simultaneously arguing that 'rhythmic/metric complexity' is the primary (or only) relevant aspect through which progressive metal is to be identified.

Reverting the attention to the second half of the book (beginning with Part 3), as I outlined in the introduction of my investigation into gender perspectives in progressive metal, barring a few recent instances in which diversity aspects are considered, gender remains an unaccounted-for perspective in the genre. Furthermore, in both academic and journalistic/scene-members perspectives there appears to be an implicit understanding of the genre and its audiences as primarily male dominated, both historically as well as in contemporarily. Beyond the general lack of discussion, additional challenges that I perceived were the notion that female participation in progressive metal consists primarily of female-fronted symphonic metal bands (Hegarty and Halliwell 2013 [2011], 266–68), with other studies pointing out the gendering of instruments in metal culture which extends to progressive metal contexts as well (Berkers and Schaap 2018, 75). When taken together with the 'blind spot' of progressive metal audiences to that of female performers in the genre – i.e., pointing out the positive impact of female performers when they appear, yet failing to acknowledge female contributors in canonisation processes in the genre – the discussion of gender struck me as one of the most important aspects that I can engage with without straying too far from the classical contexts that the first half of the book (outlined in Part 2) chose to focus on.

The approach to the investigation of The Great Kat's work was a stark contrast to that of the opening portion of this book in that it eschewed the community-focused selection, the emphasis on discourse, and prioritised a single performer, rather than a group/selection of performers. This decision was not taken lightly but was rather motivated by my desire to dedicate a portion of this study to providing a series of extensive interpretations of a single performer, rather than risking the dedicated investigation of female performers to be misinterpreted as a process of gender segregation. Also, upon initial inspection The Great Kat's output proved remarkably saturated with allusions to, and transformation of, Western art music which initially introduced some doubt as to whether choosing her work would match the underlying principles of this study. However, when considering that the opening portion of the book had already established the ability to identify relations to the classical in a near-random selection of artists, the point became rather moot.

What remained close to identical, however, was the dedication to providing multi-medial close-readings that not only fully examine the cultural artefacts at play, but also contrast some of the issues I identified in The Great Kat's academic examination to date. Specifically, given the performer's emphasis on suggestive costume, personas, and behaviour, the majority of previous investigations prioritised her study in relation to gender aspects, at the expense of considering the auditive level or even the deeper classical-connotative potential that her output appears to be saturated with. Furthermore, I was confronted with the reality of The Great Kat being discussed in relation to a set of performance perspectives that she appears to have since supplanted, yet neither said change nor the implications of it were documented or investigated.

In order to address this, I elected to fully situate her general performance persona in relation to Auslander's eponymous concept, as well as a gender-theoretical extension that contextualises the primary behaviour, namely that of Halberstam's female masculinity. These were then further

extended via consideration of the broader cultural framings or gender-concepts that help to contextualise the two main personas visible in her work, namely the dominatrix and the femme. More importantly, the presentation and discussion of these performance personas were supported by the weaving-in of theoretical concepts such as popularisation, authenticity, or paratextual considerations, and accompanying interpretations that helped to situate the depicted gendered elements to the auditive and visual levels of the pieces that The Great Kat has created.

The presented investigation into the output of The Great Kat enabled offering a perspective into both female participation in progressive metal, but also the potential for the genre to incorporate not just gender but gender-bending components. Whilst I am certain that some more conservative readers may object to my choice of performer for in-depth investigation, I believe that The Great Kat remains a valid choice in representing female participation in progressive metal, which I supported by highlighting parallels between her work and multiple practices found in progressive music contexts. From a general perspective, focusing on the work of The Great Kat allowed to present an argument contrasting the notion of co-relating female performers in progressive music with femininity or with specific gendered instruments. Instead, through my argumentation I aimed to confront readers with female performers that take on roles or utilise performance techniques (stereotypically) associated with male players. A secondary benefit of this choice was also echoing some of the directions in the opening half of this study, namely introducing heavy metal-culture specific considerations to the examination of progressive metal, such as the masculinity-based gender demands faced by female performers.

When framing the implications of these interpretations, on a broader level, the examination of The Great Kat's work serves as a point of departure on several perspectives. In contrast to historical performers whose transgressive behaviour may have appeared as overall more respectful to the source material, The Great Kat's approach to popularisation retains the attention to detail on a musical and referential level, yet these are accompanied by a balancing act (most often in visual levels) that engages with the transformed piece and its composer's significance, whilst applying feminist-critical, irony-related, or 'overpowering' approaches that divert any potential benefits to her own persona in the process. When combined with The Great Kat's own approach to self-representation in the position of power and in a heavy metal-relevant manner, the resulting cultural artefact becomes an interesting case of subversion of gender power relations both in the original material as well as the intended culture to which the performer is situating herself.

Examining The Great Kat's self-framing as a whole, one of the significant parallels that I feel merit repetition is that of her erotic-suggestive yet empowering self-framing that contributes to the undermining of masculine-normative gender expectations of heavy metal culture. The performer's self-framing incorporates a complex representation that, whilst seemingly positions the quasi-sexualised female body to the male gaze, is presented in an ironic manner and often in combination with behaviours or activities that are considered as part of the masculine domain i.e., virtuosic instrumental performance, the presentation of aggression, framing of power etc. When compared to the work of contemporary female performers, The Great Kat's output seemingly parallels both feminist-underpinned quasi-retaliatory behaviours against men of some critical female metal

performers and/or queercore bands, as well as to how other female performers in heavy metal contexts operationalise the culture's performative expectations and combine them with self-framing/behaviours that draw from their perception as objects of desire. This therefore allows to view The Great Kat as not only a part of a general trajectory in altering heavy metal culture's gender-framing, but also as a potential source of inspiration for other female performers to not only undertake virtuosic guitar playing as a desired output in the genre, but also to critically evaluate how their own behaviours and self-framing is in dialogue with various facets of the culture, and the potential for such approaches to be productively utilised.

From the perspective of The Great Kat's work as representative of the unmapped practices exhibited by progressive metal performers, the performer's work incorporates multiple notable perspectives. In addition to serving as example of female instrumental virtuosos that certainly match the skills and bravado of their male counterparts, other notable parallels can be established to female performers that utilise vocal growling/grunting techniques (e.g., Amanda Kiernan from Into Eternity), or female masculinity-interpretable lead performers (e.g., Ida Haukland from Triosphere). Moreover, The Great Kat presents all of these with a sense of irony, of over-the-top presentation, and a mixture of perceived aggression and sexual suggestiveness that mark her work as not merely a heavy metal centric-version of Emerson, Lake and Palmer's oft discussed tour/compositional excesses. Rather, her output allows to further challenge the male dominance of the genre, and especially from the perspective of adhering to its ascribed core instrumental-virtuosity principle. Another way of viewing her work is as an aggressive mirror image to Tory Amos, and more specifically the latter's cover of Slayer's song "Raining Blood". Amos transformed Slayer's track to present a complex engagement with the her own traumatic experiences, which changes the track's arrangement and recontextualizes the violent lyrics towards the subtle framing of feminist or female-targeted violence (see Bellemare 2016). In contrast, I have argued that The Great Kat's own feminist-underpinned approach retains a sense of aggression and theatrically 'weaponizes' it against male figures (be they the composers or the potential originators of the male-gaze), whilst simultaneously re-writing established narratives (e.g., Mozart's opera *The Marriage of Figaro*) in a way that prioritises the female characters' perspectives.

Given how majority of The Great Kat's tracks are structured in terms of thematic focus and overall length, an additional broader benefit to her investigation should be mentioned. In my experience, the 'core' progressive metal's selection of lyrical (and visual) themes tends to borrow from (dystopian) science fiction, and often prioritises the notion of the individual's emotional state or engagement with more universal questions on human experience. The Great Kat's output provides a different perspective here as her work engages with a combination between Western art music contexts that are filtered through her suggestive framing, occult setting, or even in relation to aspects such as male-targeted sexual violence. Whilst it is difficult to infer whether the genre will see other performers discussing such matters in a similarly explicit manner, the lyrics at hand struck me as yet another example of inverting gender-focused power relations that present the female perspective as the dominant one. This can be discussed as contrasting lyrics by other female progressive metal performers, such as the track "Marionette" (Triosphere 2010) from the progressive metal band Triosphere which presents a tale of self-doubt and engaging with one's disillusionment and

disappointment. However, as I have kept emphasising in this study – progressive metal's aesthetic will benefit from it being perceived not as a predictable series of elements, but as incorporating various contradicting perspectives depending on the performers.

As for the auditive component of The Great Kat's tracks, two aspects are worth reiterating. First, it can be argued that the relative short length of The Great Kat's tracks offers an alternative perspective to the near-stereotypical notion of progressive metal (and progressive music as a whole) as defined by the extended length of the tracks. This is not to say that such a characterisation is incorrect or cannot be applied to many-a-performer in the genre, but that The Great Kat's succinct approach to writing should not to be ignored due to simply representing a contrasting and less-often utilised direction. Second, the close-readings helped showcase that whilst The Great Kat's work can be summarised as a frantic heavy metal rendition of a classical piece, the transformations retain a remarkable attention to detail which is further supplemented by a complex series of visual allusions that imply her knowledge of the biography of the composer at hand. This is of note as it continues the line of argumentation presented in the first half of the book, namely that despite their initial 'simplicity' these tracks are surprisingly intricate and dense with references that demand a great deal of attention and knowledge from the listener/observer.

The visual component of The Great Kat's output should also briefly be mentioned as, whilst the performer's emphasis on erotic/suggestive content initially appears as a superficial, irrelevant or even potentially 'damaging' to the impact of her heavy metal transformation of Western art music pieces, I believe to have shown its substantial density and interpretative potential. When considered as part of The Great Kat's expressed artistic goals, I argued that in addition to the ability to suggest that she draws from the masculinity and virtuoso-authenticity of composers such as Beethoven or Paganini, the presentation of feminine aspects simultaneously undermines the canonised status of the composer, thus ultimately allowing The Great Kat's own position to benefit. Furthermore, The Great Kat's approach to presenting femininity can be related to a series of contexts ranging from pop art, the depiction of the naked female body in traditional painting, or even the presentation of nudity as part of Western art music CD releases which help to redirect surface criticism such as 'popular culture as sex-centric' to be applied as means of dismissing the performer. With that in mind, the emphasis of such contexts was not intended as injecting 'high' culture aspects thus validating the presentation of suggestive content as 'truly important'. Rather, these comments were supplemented with considerations of how The Great Kat's self-framing can be interpreted as in line with contemporary suggestive practices of some female metal performers, as well as incorporating heteronormative-undermining aspects when embodying female characters from traditional opera, thus contributing to the situating of the performer in a position of power, as mentioned earlier.

Shifting the perspective towards the methodological approach presented in this study, I want to be clear that whilst I had no intention of 'developing' my own approach, I would be remis not to reflect on not only its limitations, but also potential for further application. As I outlined in the introductory section of this study, the combination between discourse analysis and music-interpretative close readings resulted from my interest in comprehensively examining the phenomenon. A core consideration was grounding the observations in both the cultures from which

the audience discourses emerge, yet simultaneously to not be so restricted by limitations that neither in-depth discussions nor more involved interpretations can be included. Whilst it was necessary to constantly navigate between progressive music and heavy metal audiences based on the genre's compound framing, the triangulation principle that I extended beyond the textual level of the discourse analysis and into determining the corpus of artists, can be a useful approach in avoiding fully subjective selection of artists or choosing a performer based on their canonized status. As I previously mentioned in this conclusion, I was also heavily concerned with avoiding the trappings of discussing the classical in relation to the progressive metal genre such as the earlier 'ennobling through classical terminology' approach.

With that in mind, there are several important limitations that I want to outline. First, despite my best efforts, the differing quantities of album reviews generated for the corpus of artists meant that some of the selected performers received close to no 'screen time', so to speak, in relation to their discursive representation. Whilst it is possible to brush-off this challenge as a parallel to the discourses themselves i.e., some reviews are 'richer' in potential than others, I believe that, depending on the subject of investigation, future applications of this method can be improved by providing brief topical excursions thus allowing less represented performers from the corpus to also be subject to investigation. This will result not only in a more encompassing investigation, but will potentially strengthen the de-canonising practices that my approach attempted to overcome. If a more direct continuation of this study is pursued, there were also additional layers of meaning that I was unable to explore: from the importance of dramatic narratives in various songs, through some metaphorical comparisons between progressive metal performers and Western art music symphonies, to the co-relation between operatic vocals and their presentation via multi-tracking recordings that some have ascribed to progressive metal, to name a few. Each of these can serve as a meaningful point of departure that can expand on aspects that this study already opened inquiries to.

Second, even accounting for the longevity of internet-based audience-writings, there are some limitations to the effectiveness of framing album reviews written five, ten, or even fifteen years earlier, as representations of the discourse at hand. It goes without saying that scholarly work, especially when engaging with larger pools of data, cannot reasonably stay on the 'cutting edge' of the cultural narrative, though it may be worth for future applications of similar methods to compare the audience discourses to more contemporary journalistic sources. Doing so will both allow to verify whether the examined audience discourses reflect a more deeply rooted perspective, as well as serve as means of further triangulating the examination of the subject. That said, the principle of choosing journalistic sources that stem from culture-mainstream (i.e., Anglo-American contexts) and less 'central' contexts (i.e., German-, French-, Spanish-, Nordic-, or Central/Eastern-European settings) should be preserved so as to match the (inherently) multi-cultural aspects within the discourse.

Third, reflecting on the circuit of culture theoretical model and its inclusion of the category of identity processes, beyond a few instances in which I briefly outlined what can be described as the audiences' drawing from certain wider-cultural contexts, I have been fairly conservative in offering perspectives as to how the engagement with the classical has affected the identity of the said audiences. The deemphasis of the overt discussion of this category was a purposeful omission on my

part as a fruitful integration of the identity processes would have placed additional demands on the study's theoretical and methodological foundation, especially when accounting for the implications of the international origins of the audiences.

Fourth, when referring to the music-interpretative component, it is important to acknowledge that not every close-reading could be equally inter-medial and encompassing in their construction. Whilst I am not advocating for future work to engage with everything related to a track/album etc., interpretations can always be strengthened by referring to the potential for other facets to have influenced the discussion: e.g., a reading that prioritises the auditive and lyrics-levels will likely benefit from an examination of the album artwork as, at least in rock music contexts, the artwork may provide additional context that may supplement the interpretation of the lyrics. Similarly, the inclusion of a music video interpretation may also be of benefit as an inter-medial component that may have likely been 'taken in' by the audiences, thus allowing for not only another point of comparison, but also a series of possibilities as to how the subject can be contextualized in the final interpreter-centric segment.

One aspect that I was not able to explore whatsoever, was whether progressive metal's relation to the classical can be extended to the realm of literature, a regrettable omission given that scholarly research has showed that the broad field of heavy metal has engaged with literary sources, including those related to classical literature (e.g. see Bielmann 2011; Bernardini 2009; Botero Camacho and Picón del Campo 2017; Campbell 2009; Lusty 2013); and similar literature-related observations have been made about progressive rock as well (e.g., see Holm-Hudson 2002b, 13–14). As such I will only briefly point out that bands from within my corpus have drawn from/alluded to literary sources or tropes e.g., Redemption's eponymous first album includes the tracks "Desperation, Part I" (and consecutive parts to "Desperation, Part IV"), as well as "Something Wicked This Way Comes" (Redemption 2003) that respectively transform Stephen King's and Ray Bradbury's novels of the same names. Also, the album artwork of Savatage's *Poets and Madmen* (Savatage 2001b) can be described as evoking a broader allusion via incorporating visual elements associated with (American) Gothic tropes i.e., the right side of the image depicts a large mansion surrounded by barren grounds and high metal fence (which can be compared to the isolated mansion as the substitute for the dilapidated castle in American Gothic stories), and the left side shows a crow/raven with open wings (which can be interpreted as relating to Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven* [Poe 1997]).[566] As such, to consider the broader notion of Stephen King, Ray Bradbury and Edgar Allen Poe's works as 'classics' of the realms of fantasy, horror, and gothic fiction would be an interesting direction to pursue, in addition to broad considerations as to whether progressive metal has engaged with elements from classical literature.

Finally, referring to the interpreter's own role, as beneficial as this method can be for balancing culture- and academic-perspectives, the plurality of positions necessitated for a full examination of an artefact place a significant obstacle to the interpreter. In simple terms, for this

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[566] An example of the album artwork can be found in the webpage of the following bibliographical entry: Savatage (2001a).

method to be considered as fully applied, the interpreter has to either be highly versatile in their own socialization – that is to say, not to rely on only their core discipline – or, to be willing to both navigate the additional disciplines required for a multi-medial investigation, and be prepared for the (arguably inevitable) criticism of the study as representing an overview that is a 'sea a mile wide, but an inch-deep'. Even beyond the potential criticism by scholars native to disciplines from which the interpreter borrows, the time required for reading into, and isolating the relevant information from, said fields can lead to significant delays. That said, some such delays or expansions into different fields could, theoretically be circumvented: e.g., as analysis of song lyrics has been considered by scholars in the popular music studies field as well as cultural studies (e.g., D. Brackett 2000 [1995], 29–31; Frith 1996, 176–82; Middleton 1990, 227–38; A. F. Moore 2016c, 108–118, 285–330), I do not believe that it is necessary for the interpreter to delve into the realm of literary studies when attempting to interpret the lyrics, unless a literary-centric perspective is specifically pursued.

It should also be pointed out that this approach will remain a balancing act between progressive music scholarship and metal music studies research until scholarly work offers a substantial foundation as to how the genre functions that is not based on reiteration of previous concepts. Whilst it is impossible to separate progressive metal from its progressive rock precursor, I believe that the research of the genre, its constitutive parts, and boundaries, will remain limited to perspectives that effectively come down to a 'progressive metal band X builds on progressive rock Y's heritage' equation, that is more concerned with developing genealogies, rather than situating progressive metal in contemporary popular music culture. I will admit that for the purposes of academic accountability, I have inherently contributed to this principle with each chapter incorporating a small overview of progressive rock/heavy metal research on a particular phenomenon. However, I hope to have showcased that when the research emphasis lies on opening forward-looking inquiries, the results have a greater interpretative and descriptive potential than that of some previous examinations. Once more, I am by no means the first in offering such argumentation e.g., see Smialek's (2008) discussion on Meshuggah and its discussion of audience discourses and the band's own serious virtuosity-undermining humour which can be framed as an example of how even if a 'progressive metal = rhythmic complexity and virtuosity' perspective is maintained, it should be accompanied by the examination of the surrounding contexts.

A final reflection to offer here is how the methodologies, approaches, and underlying principles of this study position it, and myself as a researcher, in relation to contemporary musicology as well as the field of popular music studies; as framing, I will refer to the 2017 overview article on "Musicology" by Florian Heesch. One of the most significant concerns I had during the research and writing process was being able to present a discussion of the role of the classical without inadvertently reinforcing its highly canonised and supposed 'central' role in Western culture. This related not only to the aforementioned challenges in progressive rock's earlier scholarship, but also as research on popular music topics has been historically marginalised and undervalued, an unfortunate reality that despite over forty years of scholarly efforts (Heesch 2017, 296–97), is still not completely overcome to this day. Despite my own Western art music training, I have long been bothered by the lack of emphasis on popular music phenomena, instead supplemented by an (seemingly endless) return to

not just Western art music, but often the 'hallowed' canon of composers that need no introduction here. In addition to having a rather critical view of canonisation as a challenge in academic discussions, I wanted to ensure that the Western art music canon is not inherently the focus of my investigation. Or, as was the case for The Great Kat's transformation of the work of Beethoven, Mozart or Paganini, I grounded the discussion through the principles of popularisation and focused the discussion on the power implications as emerging from the agency of the performer, rather than The Great Kat as simply 'drawing' from the prestige of the composers. To be clear, however, my goal was never to offer a Western art music-targeted mirror of what Heesch (drawing from Middleton) refers to as the "ideological grounds" for popular music's supposed irrelevance (Heesch 2017, 296). Rather, I remain dedicated to offering a critically-reflected work that acknowledges the importance of Western art music or its central figures, yet refusing to position them on a cultural pedestal.

From the early publications on popular music phenomena in the 1970s, scholarly contributions have continuously emphasised the importance of sociological, socio-economical and identity perspectives, and since the 1980s with a critical reflection on the power structures in culture and society, which were challenged through feminist, post-colonial and post-structuralist perspectives (Heesch 2017, 297–98). One of the larger points raised by Heesch in relation to this is the issue of formulating what constitutes musical analysis as well as the complementing questions of what the object of analysis is, whereby he echoes Tagg's criticism of "notational centricity" and also offers a critique of the limited music-analytical target of "the music itself" as espoused by one editor of the *Popular Musicology* journal (Heesch 2017, 298). Beyond my methodological influence by one of the authors Heesch's article discusses as having contributed to the development of a methodological toolset for engaging with popular music's media-focused principles, David Brackett, this study's (almost complete) eschewing of notational examples supports the field's critical re-evaluation of how the analysis of popular music can be represented given said visual aid often failing to capture the necessary aspects of discussion (Heesch 2017, 298). Similarly, the presentation of not just music interpretations but also perspectives pertaining to cover artwork and music video contribute to my own resonating with the critical argument of music analysis as but one approach to the analysis of popular music-related cultural artefacts (Heesch 2017, 299). A notable exception here was the examination of The Great Kat in which I opted to include notation for discussing how a specific Western art music piece was dramatically condensed by the performer. I am certain, however, that given progressive music's audience prising repeated listening of an album, readers will be able to identify the same principles via auditive means, should they choose to verify my interpretation.

I will be somewhat bold here and suggest that my work does more than simply follow established directions, but also engages with those aspects that Heesch identifies as demanding further elaboration or critical reflection in the popular music studies field. Having expressed criticism against some previous progressive metal research regarding the limited selection of examined artists, this study's reflexive engagement with how a quasi-representative sample of progressive metal performers may be identified, as well as on where these performers are stemming from, engages with both Heesch's suggestion that "[a]ny research on recent popular culture has to deal with issues of globalization […], not least in order to expand the research-historical focus on the USA and Great

Britain"[567] as well as with the idea that "researchers primarily deal with objects that they particularly value themselves or that are familiar to them from their biography"[568] (Heesch 2017, 299). In the interest of fairness, I will point out that despite including a series of perspectives challenging the geographic-restricted framings that some scholars suggested for progressive metal, the contents of the discourses precluded offering interpretations beyond bands located in the Anglo-speaking world.

The general prioritisation of audience discourse derived from Internet user-driven databases as the core object of investigation, and as having an equal (if not higher) validity towards formulating how a genre, a band, a track, or a musicking approach is viewed, addresses not only Heesch's point for the need to reflect that "[s]ounds, images, performances and others are not accessible as objects per se, but are conveyed through various media and distributed through various communication channels",[569] but also with what the author describes as the seldomly engaged with "reflection on discursive preferences of certain types of music from the diversity of popular culture"[570] (Heesch 2017, 299). Together with the emphasis placed on the examination of diversity and specifically gender (and to some degree queer-) interpretable practices, the approach can also be viewed as continuing one of the core principles of popular music studies, namely the 'turn to the social' that recent contributions by scholars such as Susan Fast, Doris Leibetseder, Steve Waksman exemplify. Furthermore, my work's strong emphasis on examining and interpreting Internet-mediated discourse that is not superseded but *represented* and *expanded* via interpretations of the music, strengthens the argument that music is culturally experienced via mediatised processes and practices, and that scholarly music analysis should not perpetuate "a traditional model, according to which the musicologist uses the analysis to prove his/her sovereignty over the musical object"[571] (Heesch 2017, 299).

I hope that my emphasis on this book's ability to address aspects needed in popular music studies will be viewed as neither misguided sense of self-importance, nor as a claim of universality. Rather, same as the core principles of my work, I am reflecting on how my work can be interpreted when viewed in relation to its core discipline. As I have previously stated, the goal of my work is not to overturn accepted definitions, but to point out deficiencies and suggest useful means of expanding the understanding of the genre and how its audiences shape its meaning. Whether future scholars choose to not adopt my selection of methods was never an argument for their selection and my engagement with this line of inquiry merely aims to offer encouragement that underscores the

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[567] Ger. Orig. "Jede Forschung zu jüngerer Populärkultur hat sich mit Fragen der Globalisierung auseinanderzusetzen […], nicht zuletzt, um die forschungsgeschichtlich gewachsene Fokussierung auf die USA und Großbritannien zu erweitern".

[568] Ger. Orig. "Wie in den Popular Music Studies generell besteht das Problem, dass sich Forschende primär mit den Gegenständen auseinandersetzen, die sie selbst besonders schätzen oder die ihnen aus ihrer Biografie heraus vertraut sind".

[569] Ger. Orig. "Klänge, Bilder, Performances und andere sind nicht per se als Objekte zugänglich, sondern werden über verschiedene Medien vermittelt und durch diverse Kommunikationskanäle distribuiert".

[570] Ger. Orig. "Überhaupt kommt die Reflexion über diskursive Präferenzen bestimmter Musiken aus der Vielfalt der Populärkultur noch viel zu kurz".

[571] Ger. Orig. "Eine Überbewertung der Musikanalyse als disziplinäre Kernkompetenz perpetuiert letztlich ein traditionelles Modell, wonach die/der Musikwissenschaftler/in durch die Analyse ihre/seine Interpretationshoheit über das musikalische Objekt unter Beweis stellt – ein Modell, das im Fachdiskurs längst infrage gestellt wird".

principles of adaptation based on what the research phenomenon necessitates, rather than adjusting one's study for the purpose of following (at times) too narrow definitions.

I have never been particularly articulate when it comes to wrapping up most things in life, and this text is no different. Thus, to avoid repeating what I have already said in this concluding chapter, I will offer a small anecdote that perhaps helps to illustrate why future research into progressive metal needs to remain open in its search for the genre's boundaries. Shortly before concluding this project (summer of 2021), I stumbled upon a twenty-minute video titled "The Problem with 'Progressive' Music…" by the YouTube channel *The Punk Rock MBA*, run by Finn Mckenty, a zine creator, graphic designer, and marketer who frames himself as having a near two-decade experience with metal- and hardcore-culture (see The Punk Rock MBA [channel name] 2021). More importantly, this was followed by a thirty-five-minute response video by the channel *Become The Knight*, itself a progressive metal project band with a fairly wide selection of pieces (see Become The Knight [channel name] 2021). Whilst it may be easy to dismiss this debate as either a typical 'YouTube drama' behaviour or even as the overly-detailed arguing between a member of the progressive metal community and a more external observer, I am not interested in discussing the arguments presented by the two channels. Rather, such videos should be seen as an example of the ongoing debates regarding the genre's principles, direction and contribution of prominent members. I would argue that future academic examinations of progressive metal need to pay attention to such debates or, even if academia chooses to ignore them, to take on a similar question-filled and canon-destabilising direction, rather than fall back to placing progressive metal in the 'too derivative' or 'not complex enough to be investigated' drawers. The same argument can be extended for the need to reflect on, and actively address, aspects such as the genre's lack of diversity or as supposedly existing in primarily some parts of the world.

Ignoring how the culture that surrounds the genre responds to questions such as who plays what, how, where, and why, will not only continue to widen the divide between academia and the performers or the genre's audiences, but will also fail in transferring one of the reasons for which progressive *rock* is praised, namely its plurality and eclecticism, to the investigation of progressive *metal*. Even in a culture as dedicated to its past and history as progressive music, the sense of movement and change should not be ignored. I am not suggesting that the movement is always *forward* or that it should ultimately have to do with the role of Western art music, but that as academics, our contributions to understanding the genre will only benefit from reflecting on and incorporating said movement. Through the medium of the internet, as one such example, audiences have long engaged with more than passive consumption, but rather in very direct and active participation and meaning co-creation. Such perspectives can be informed by a variety of temporal, geographical or socio-cultural contexts and can be then taken up by other participants in the culture, thus shaping how a genre such as progressive metal is perceived in its own culture, but also in relation to the broad culture. Scholarly work has, and should continue to, critically engage with such perspectives and, in that sense, I believe that my work has contributed to the ongoing efforts in academia, and the progressive music community, to incorporate the perspectives of the genre's audiences, and that doing so reveals not just potential but tangible and not-insignificant contributions to understanding how the genre functions.

Editorial note on the organisation of bibliographical information

I divided the study's bibliography into several categories for ease of organisation and access. The categories are internally alphabetically sorted and their naming convention offers fairly self-explanatory outline. However, I will briefly point out some of the specifics. The **primary sources** category lists all academic and journalistic books or edited collections, journal articles, conference contributions and archive-material entries etc. mentioned in the book. I have included all names as appearing on their respective sources, however, where appropriate, I have also provided English translations of the entry's title. The category of **referenced webpages** is where referenced web-based sources can be found such as journalistic interviews or articles in online publications, specific pages related to the metal-archives.com and progarchives.com databases, as well as online pages in which mentioned (but not directly included!) exemplary images can be found. As a number of pages had no identifiable author and/or date, and to facilitate easier surveying of the information, I elected to use the name of the website in the 'author' field.

Bibliographical data on music albums and music tracks that appear in this study can be found in the **discography** and **music tracks** categories. The section on **image sources** includes relevant information regarding where all images directly included in this study can be found; the names of entries for artwork of specific albums, can be used for cross-referencing with corresponding entries in the discography section. The category of **videography** encompasses entries on both films as well as (music) videos mentioned in this study, with relevant links outlining where specific videos were accessed. These entries are organised based on the name of the film/video's director, the user-name of the YouTube.com account that uploaded the video, or if such information is not available, I used the name of the performer. Finally, the **ludography** lists bibliographical entries on video games either directly discussed in the study, or provide a complementary entry to the game's soundtrack I referred to. Any inconsistencies to these rules should be seen as accidental editorial oversights.

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