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*Musical-Juridical Suite*

_Some Hermeneutical Considerations for Violin, Cello, Piano and Constitution_

«Uno degli obblighi etici più stimolanti per un interprete è quello di trovare il giusto equilibrio tra intelletto ed emozione. [...] La grande musica non è puramente intellettuale, né puramente emotiva: è contraddistinta dall’equilibrio dei due aspetti, com’è nella natura umana»

Daniel Barenboim

**SOMMARIO:**

1. The power of music  
2. Music and law as language expressions  
3. Interpretation and/as improvisation

1. *The power of music*

On March 18, 2010, popstar Simon Bikindi, a celebrated musician, singer, composer and artist from Rwanda, some kind of regional Michael Jackson and the most visible face of the Ministry of Youth and Sport of that civil-war-torn African country, was finally sentenced to 15 years in prison for committing crime against humanity, by a UN International Tribunal. His felony? Direct and public incitement of his fellow nationals of the Hutu ethnicity to commit the genocide of the Tutsi ethnicity, during the massacres of 1994. Musical compositions were recorded on cassette tapes and distributed to be played on loudspeakers around the country, on Radio Rwanda, and

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1 This text is based on the speech delivered by the author on August 16, 2018 opening a concert at the 2nd International Chamber Music Festival at the Federal University of Paraíba, to mark the 125th anniversary of death of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893).
live concerts. For practically creating the soundtrack to the Rwanda calamity, the five judges of the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, at the Hague (the Netherlands), found Simon Bikindi guilty of incitement to commit genocide through his works that mixed rap lyrics and traditional African melodies.

Never before had a musician been convicted for the content of his songs\(^2\), although it was obviously not the first time music was used to affront human rights, as a weapon of war, to foster racial hatred, or as an instrument of torture. Old and new examples are not few and must never be forgotten: from the Bible’s roaring Jericho trumpets, to the humiliating «Tauza dance», which Apartheid political prisoners were forced to perform stark naked before halls full of prisoners and officers, to ensure that no object had been smuggled into prison hidden in their body parts\(^3\), to the use of music as a form of psychological torture in the US prisons in Abu Grahib and Guantánamo, in cases of buildings occupied by hijackers or separatist rebels, or in the Soviet Gulag. There is still the drama of the Jewish musicians that were forced to play for their intimidators during the parties of the III Reich\(^4\) or Argentinian political prisoners that had to dance with officers of the military dictatorship in discos and events to entertain the troops\(^5\).

Thus, not always have music, State and law had a peaceful, harmonic or purely virtuous relationship. Censorship, vetoes, military music, xenophobic and controversial national anthems, normative decalogues with State-defined esthetics, spurious subventions, ostracism, musicians laid off from orchestras, ejected conductors, detained artists, acoustic barriers\(^6\), destruction of soundscapes and sponsoring official academies are all concrete indications of stormy relationships. Above all these diatribes, we are sure that, as much as law, the melody of music (and even art in general) can also shape and influence social behavior. Medical-scientific evidence


\(^4\) J. Nemtsova et al., _Music in the Inferno of the Nazi Terror: Jewish Composers in the Third Reich_, in _Shofar_, 18/4, 2000, 79-100, _passim_.


\(^6\) In the European summer of 2018, the Berlin subway started to play atonal music nonstop at Hermannstrasse station to prevent drug addicts, dealers and homeless people from hanging around the place at night. In 2016, one organization of shop owners and businessmen in downtown San Francisco, California, used Bach’s music on loudspeakers to avoid beggars and derelicts.
such as the «Stendhal syndrome» and «musicogenic epilepsy»\(^7\) reinforce and reiterate this argument: juridical norms and music may make individuals behave in a certain way, even against their will.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a young and promising teacher of Roman Law at the University of Moscow Faculty of Law experienced first-hand this baffling physical-chemical-physiological power of art. At the age of about 30, after a profane epiphany while listening to an ecstatic performance of Wagner’s *Lohengrin* in Moscow, this man abandoned law for good and embraced a career in the arts for the rest of his life, giving up a future chair in law in Russia to teach art in centennial Bauhaus, Germany, and become one of the greatest geniuses of contemporary abstract painting. This is the story of Wassily Kandinsky\(^8\).

More than talent for the arts, composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky shares with Kandinsky the studies in Russian law. Tchaikovsky wrote the «Jurists’ March» (or Jurisprudence March), in 1885, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Saint Petersburg’s Imperial School of Jurisprudence, where he had studied law\(^9\).

2. Music and law as language expressions

Much more than shape behaviors, music and law also constitute language expressions. It is impossible to imagine either cultural manifestation away from the universe of language. Both law and music can only exist, take shape and express themselves in and by language. At this point, it is worth

\(^7\) Stendhal Syndrome is a type of esthetical ecstasy that involves rapid heartbeat, vertigo, fainting, mental confusion, high blood pressure and hallucinations when an individual is exposed to a number of works of art. Many tourists visiting Florence were diagnosed with it (A.L. Guerrero, A. Barcelo Rossello, D. Ezpeleta, Síndrome de Stendhal: Origen, Naturaleza y Presentación en un Grupo de Neurologos, in *Neurologia*, 25/6, 2010, 349-356; L. Palacios-Sanchez et al., Stendhal syndrome: a clinical and historical overview, in *Arq. Neuro-Psiquiatr.*, 76/2, 2018, 120-123). Musicogenic epilepsy, in turn, is triggered by hearing a specific music part, or a type of music or instrument or even a specific composer, which may vary from patient to patient (M. Arias, Neurología del éxtasis y fenómenos aledaños: epilepsia extática, orgásmica y musicogénica. Síndrome de Stendhal. Fenómenos autoscópicos, in *Neurologia*, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nrl.2016.04.010> last access 30.01.2020).


underscoring that, early in his work «On the Way to Language», Martin Heidegger is emphatic as to the constancy and amplitude of language in its most different modalities:

*Man speaks. We speak when we are awake and we speak in our dreams. We are always speaking, even when we do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, and even when we are not particularly listening or speaking but are attending to some work or taking a rest. We are continually speaking in one way or another. [...] Language belongs to the closest neighborhood of man’s being. We encounter language everywhere.*

To sum up, we speak always and by various means, channels or instruments. We speak even when we «unspeak». Heidegger’s argument is reinforced by another famous German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer: «[...] *Being that can be understood is language. This is certainly not a metaphysical assertion*.»

The constancy and immanence of language in music and law materialize one more meeting point of theirs. Of this «languageessence» of law and music, following what Gadamer says, comes a new juridical-musical intersection: the need to interpret. Any juridical or musical act, work or production demands, requires, asks, calls for interpretation! It is impossible not to interpret them. There is a constant hermeneutic need in both fields of culture.

Someone who writes music, like someone who writes a big code or a constitution, does it also for the verb to be incarnated, executed, transformed into social behavior, action, performance, sound, noise, singing or voice. The composer and the legislator – as much as the playwright – do not want their writing to remain limited to the paper/law/score; rather, they want to convert and transform it into action, sound, word, act, behavior, through a performer – be it a pianist, violinist, conductor, artist, or a judge, prosecutor, police captain, contractor, heir etc. This vivifying transformation of the text into action cannot give up the hermeneutic intermediation that makes it concrete. Execution is interpretation; hermeneutics is performance – this makes music and law allographic knowledge.

However, both in law and in art, we are far from the ambivalence of

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right and wrong, correct and incorrect. It is common for people to — more and more — wish for security, certainty, predictability, in a risk-free environment. However, this is not the scenario of current society, which is ever more complex, risky and paradoxical. Unlike what common sense believes, musicians and jurists do not work with binary codes: right/wrong, black/white, adequate/inadequate, good/bad, hot/cold... The power of a hermeneutic act, both in art and in law, resides in its very coherence, profundity, historicity, consistency, not in a simple binary observation. For example, Martin Heidegger, Meyer Schapiro, Jacques Derrida, Marshall Berman, Fredric Jameson and Affonso Romano de Sant’Anna, each of them has a uniquely refined interpretation of «A Pair of Shoes» by Van Gogh.

About this, it is worth remembering the unforgettable evening of April 6, 1962, when prestigious New York Philharmonic would play the Concerto no. 1 in D minor by Brahms, with huge pianist Glenn Gould as soloist. Instruments in tune, the only person to take the stage was US conductor Leonard Bernstein, chief conductor of the New York Philharmonic, for a preliminary explanation. Strangely enough, Bernstein was not accompanied by soloist Glenn Gould on his entry. Very frankly, Bernstein uttered words that made history of erudite music and of the very theory of interpretation. In his speech to a flabbergasted audience, Bernstein said that they would listen to a «rather heterodox» performance of Brahms’ Concerto in D minor; a very different rendition from any other he had ever heard or conducted, or even dreamed of for that piece of music. He addressed the audience with a question: «In a concerto, who is the boss; the soloist or the conductor?» He also pondered that the discrepancies between Glenn Gould’s point of view and his own, on that music, were huge, but he would still conduct that night. He would still do the concerto because he was fascinated, glad to have the chance for a new look at that much-played work, «with astonishing freshness and conviction».

Bernstein's full disclaimer, spoken from his podium, was as follows: «Don’t be frightened. Mr. Gould is here. He will appear in a moment. I’m not, um, as you know, in the habit of speaking on any concert except the Thursday night previews, but a curious situation has arisen, which merits, I think, a word or two. You are about to hear a rather, shall we say, unorthodox performance of the Brahms D Minor Concerto, a performance distinctly different from any I’ve ever heard, or even dreamt of for that matter, in its remarkably broad tempi and its frequent departures from Brahms' dynamic indications. I cannot say I am in total agreement with Mr. Gould’s conception and this raises the interesting question: «What am I doing conducting it?» I’m conducting it because Mr. Gould is so valid and serious an artist that I must
the coherence, profundity, historicity, and consistency of Glenn Gould's interpretation, Bernstein decided to conduct that night. A similar reasoning validates the existence of piano contests and the exams in faculties of law and drives away any idiosyncratic allegation of juridical solipsism.

3. Interpretation and/as improvisation

Therefore, there is always room for improvisation, innovation, creativity, imagination, both in music and in law\(^{15}\). On the piano, the classic episode of Charles Rosen, much-respected contemporary musician and theoretician to whom there is an annoying note (!) on the first movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto no. 1: a high F natural where the melody obviously (sic) requires an F sharp. What explains Rosen’s musical activism for an «obvious» error of a classic music titan such as Beethoven is the state of technological development of the piano when Beethoven wrote his concerto: so far, the piano keyboard ended in F natural, which set the standards to what was physically possible for an interpreter to execute\(^ {16}\). Rosen has «retouched» or «transcreated» Beethoven ever since.

This is not much different with law and the judicial improvisation, take seriously anything he conceives in good faith and his conception is interesting enough so that I feel you should hear it, too. But the age old question still remains: «In a concerto, who is the boss; the soloist or the conductor?» The answer is, of course, sometimes one, sometimes the other, depending on the people involved. But almost always, the two manage to get together by persuasion or charm or even threats to achieve a unified performance. I have only once before in my life had to submit to a soloist’s wholly new and incompatible concept and that was the last time I accompanied Mr. Gould. (The audience roared with laughter at this.) But, but this time the discrepancies between our views are so great that I feel I must make this small disclaimer. Then why, to repeat the question, am I conducting it? Why do I not make a minor scandal — get a substitute soloist, or let an assistant conduct? Because I am fascinated, glad to have the chance for a new look at this much-played work; Because, what’s more, there are moments in Mr. Gould’s performance that emerge with astonishing freshness and conviction. Thirdly, because we can all learn something from this extraordinary artist, who is a thinking performer, and finally because there is in music what Dimitri Mitropoulos used to call «the sportive element», that factor of curiosity, adventure, experiment, and I can assure you that it has been an adventure this week collaborating with Mr. Gould on this Brahms concerto and it’s in this spirit of adventure that we now present it to you.


imagination, creativity and innovation that guarantee that positive (realized) law remains up-to-date and legitimate. The legal subsystem is never complete; it is up to the juridical system and its performers to try to bridge the occasional gaps through improvisation. However, juridical-musical improvisation must be understood as something different from a palliative, stopgap, collusion, corner-cutting. Both in music and in law, it is only possible to adequately improvise for those who deeply know their instrument and the score – the law, code, constitution, piano, melody, rhythm, tempo – otherwise improvisation will be chaotic, bad, and will transform the original score so much that it will not be acknowledged as legitimate. This is what allows differentiating, for example, a great rapper, a brilliant jurist, an amazing jazz player, a skilled MC or a spectacular DJ from someone mediocre, an apprentice, an amateur, or a non-professional improviser. Therefore, we may conceive a jazzy legal science or «jazzrisprudence»

In an instigating text of 2006, jurist and pianist Eugenio Picozza, professor at the Faculty of Law of Università degli studi di Roma Tor Vergata, pointed out that, over the last 200 years, the mechanical improvement and technological development of metronomes made the tempo – which seemed to be scientifically objective and definite – change in music and interpretation. This indicates that baroque and modern metronomic values will divert. Times/Tempos change and one adagio, allegro or presto are no longer the same... These and other details underscore the importance music and law still ascribe to creative intelligence, innovation, sentiment and improvisation in our algorithmic society. Perhaps for this reason, forty years ago, in the beautiful movie «Orchestra Rehearsal» (1978), by the ingenious Federico Fellini (he too used to be a law student), the character of the authoritarian German conductor was invited to return to his podium, after the uns submissive orchestra tried to unsuccessfully replace him with a huge metronome...

In that film’s plot, a group of Italian musicians gathers to be conducted by a severe conductor to rehearse a symphony in an old thirteenth-century chapel in Rome while a TV crew records interviews with every musician for a documentary. Fellini himself, whose presence is only heard, interprets the role of the interviewer with the team of TV documentarists. Each statement – obtained while the musicians tune up – reveals the grand complexity

18 E. Picozza, Il metronomo: problemi di interpretazione tra musica e diritto, in Ars Interpretandi, 9, 2006, 327, passim.
of the Fellinian oneiric characters: the humble copyist who longs for past times; the bassoon player who hates his instrument; the fat and lonesome harp player who is her colleagues’ laughingstock; the flute player who does his best to seem nice and kind; the vain and arrogant violinist; the demigod-dish despotic conductor. Plus, the alcoholic, the man in love, the alienated...

One faster-tempo segment of the music they are rehearsing raises the temperature in the room; the musicians strip off their jackets and coats. Tempers begin to fray, and the lack of harmony becomes more evident. Amid so much dissonance and discord shown in the documentary that is constructed by the fictional TV crew, little by little a grave conflict emerges among all characters. The clash in the bosom of the orchestra results in a radical strike of the musicians, followed by a violent revolution in the rehearsal room, and the conductor is deposed. The result is chaos. After bringing down the conductor through revolutionary violence, the musicians decide to replace him on the podium with a gigantic metronome, which will automatically set the tempo and the rhythm to the interpretation of the music, with precision, perfection, rigor and with no temper or mood swings. That would be the absolute interpreter. The perfect baton. However, before long the musicians realize that the conducting machine is insufficient and they decide to reinstate the conductor, with his passions and all. The chief of the orchestra is back and, without appealing to retaliations, asks for help to put back together the pieces of the destroyed stand, only to go back on and resume the rehearsal for his love of music.

Fellini’s allegory – as any great work of art – is polyphonic and polysemic. However, the passage of the useless replacement of the conductor with a huge metronome is particularly eloquent for us jurists since it reverberates the main theme of juridical science: hermeneutics. What is the value and significance of interpretation? What is personal and transpersonal in hermeneutics? – these seem to be some of Federico Fellini’s provocations in his «Orchestra Rehearsal», which demonstrates, more than once, that music and law have many aspects in common.

Vladimir Horowitz used to say that playing the piano well required reason, heart and technique in equal measure and proportion: «Without reason you are a fiasco, without technique an amateur, without heart a machine»19. This complex modulation does not seem to be far from the excellence of a great jurist. Using this tuning fork, while presenting his conclusions for the Joined

Cases C-11/06 and C-12/06, the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice, Dámaso Ruiz-Jarabo, stated there are three types of magistrates:

[…] the artisan, a veritable automaton who, using only his hands, produces mass judgments in industrial quantities, without lowering himself to consider the human aspects or the social order; the craftsman, who uses his hands and his brain, using traditional interpretative methods, which inevitably lead him merely to represent the legislatures intention; and the artist, who, using his hands, his head and his heart, broadens the horizon for citizens, without losing sight of reality or of specific circumstances.\(^{20}\)

For this very reason, a great musician and a great jurist share the duty of having that which John Cage, composer of the work 4’ 33” (1952)\(^ {21}\), once called «happy new ear»\(^ {22}\), one that is capable of reading/seeing/hearing/feeling, with equal dexterity, skill and sensitivity, talkative silences and sounds, just like a hunter hears the soft rustling of his prey through the leaves in the woods, or like a sailor hears the sound of the wave against the rocks when the sea is covered in mist. When the iconography of justice incorporated the blindfold over Themis’ eyes, sharper hearing was then indispensable for that allegory to go deeper and beyond the looks of things.

Sound and silence are fundamentally complex elements of music and law. There could not be music and law without them. Rest, pause, absence, are always charged with meaning in both music and law. The silence of the contract, the silence of the defendant in the criminal court, the silence of Public Administration, the silence of the legislator, the silence of the Judiciary Power, the silence a child victim of abuse, the science of the betrothed, the silence of law, the silence of custom, the silence of the witness, and even the silence of the chart and the graph is full of value (positive or negative) in the contemporary juridical systems. Before there is music and for it to exist, there must be silence\(^ {23}\). In addition, in music there are genres and classes of silence: prudent, complacent, unexpected, planned, denouncing, romantic, avant-garde, baroque, contemptful, admiring, hateful, loving silences…\(^ {24}\). This plurality

\(^{20}\) CJEU, Joint Cases C-11/06 and C-12/06, opinion issued on March 20, 2007.


\(^{22}\) In 1897, long before Cage, Frenchman Alphonse Allais composed his silent «Marche funèbre composée pour les funérailles d’un grand homme sourd». In 1919, Prague-born Erwin Schulhoff writes «In futurum», a composition that uses only silence.

\(^{23}\) J. Cage, De Segunda a Um Ano, São Paulo, 2013, 30.

\(^{24}\) A. Novaes, O Silêncio e a Prosa do Mundo, São Paulo, 2014, passim.
allowed Patrice Caillet, Adam David and Matthieu Saladin to edit and produce the vinyl LP «Sounds of Silence» in 2013, containing thirty silent tracks recorded in different times and places by artists such as Andy Warhol, John Denver, The Planets, Yves Klein, John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

Expressions such as to silence, give voice and lend an ear produce huge political and esthetical consequences in music and law. This leads to understanding, after all, that esthetics involves ethics, and vice-versa. *Nulla Ethica sine Aesthetica*. On this path towards the plural and far-reaching unity of culture, we note a communion between beauty and goodness. In other words, conceptions of beauty also imply conceptions of goodness. The difficulty of defining in an abstract way terms such as «beauty» or «goodness» is no less than the embarrassment of objectively understanding is the meaning of «dignity of the human person», «honor», «privacy» or «non-material damage», for example. This does not mean, however, that jurists and artists can, on a daily basis, give up trying to densify what a constitution, a contract, or one of Tchaikovsky’s scores, for example, attempt to say about those much-fundamental words: «beauty» and «goodness».

Given the symbolic convergence and cultural intertextuality established between music and law, it is not a bit strange that the great Italian luthier Andrea Amati, in sixteenth-century Cremona, decided to decorate his «Il Re», one jewel of lutherie and one of the oldest cellos ever known, with the beautiful image of *Iustitia*, the goddess of justice who holds a sword and scales. This iconographic discourse that approaches music and law was not limited to Cremona. Some kilometers to the south, a second example of pictorial juridical-musical representation is found in the frescos of the library of the Monastery of Saint John the Evangelist in Parma. Idealized by abbey Stefano Cattaneo da Novara in the 1570s, one fresco depicts the goddess of justice on her feet, surrounded by many musical instruments which symbolize harmony and proportion. Less than a century later, it was up to


28 To learn more about the library of the Monastery of Saint John, in Parma, go to <https://
Genovese Giovanni Battista Gaulli (*Il Bacicceio*) to draw, in the second half of the seventeenth century, a third allegory of justice which also unites the two themes. Entitled «Allegorical Composition: Music and Justice with the Spinola Arms», the drawing is today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City.²⁹

Not far from mid-sixteenth-century Italy, the French engraver Étienne Delaune, in 1569, followed that rhetoric and depicted Jurisprudence, the science of law, as an elegant and eloquent lady who leaves the scales and juridical books on the floor only to play the lute. This way, Étienne Delaune inspired and showed that everything vibrates in the universe, even law.

³⁹ One picture of that drawing can be seen at <https://bit.ly/2YyMVnv> (last access 30.01.2020).
Étienne Delaune, engraving, *La Jurisprudence*, 1569
Cabinet des Estampes et des Dessins, Strasbourg, France
GUIDA ALL’ASCOLTO


2. Tchaikovsky, Jurists’ March (or Jurisprudence March), 1885: <https://youtu.be/3Xyijfu039w>

3. Musica e silenzio: Mario Brunello at TEDxCaFoscariU: <https://youtu.be/-Q4DOxeiDAk>
