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## The Leitmotif in Early Romantic German Opera

A leitmotif is a type of musical particle that constitutes a self-contained dramatic symbol within an opera. This study is an inquiry into the consideration and usage of leitmotifs, based on their presence in a number of German operas from the first half of the 19th century. At the present time, structural analyses of leitmotif techniques have mostly been attempted through the comparison of mature leitmotif practices with a single preceding work. The result is that leitmotif techniques are largely presumed to be teleological; it has been commonly held that the primary application of the leitmotif can be understood through the study of Richard Wagner's mature music dramas. It occurred to me in earlier research that the previous research has not fully explored the historical implications of musical symbols as a continuous development.



In my study, I will be using a combination of resources and theories of musical and literary analysis to determine a general method for identifying, classifying, and charting the musico-dramatic implications of leitmotifs within an opera. Using this taxonomy, I will be probing the use of leitmotifs in a select group of German operas spanning from the late 18th century to the middle of the 19th century. By reading contemporary criticism and philosophy, as well as modern analyses alongside my own studies of the selected operas, I also hope to ground the use of distinct leitmotif techniques in their contemporary aesthetic theories. I will then compare my findings from each work to determine how leitmotif techniques developed.



By the end of the study I intend to posit possible answers to some of the key questions surrounding early uses of leitmotifs. Does it matter if a leitmotif is consciously heard? What exactly delineates a leitmotif proper? How does one best classify an amorphous symbol? Can leitmotif techniques be compared with one another on a fundamental structural level? Were leitmotifs being consciously developed towards a particular goal at all?



The research will be presented as a multi-part article with charts detailing some of the musical analyses.