

Hendrik Rungelrath

Saarland University, Saarbrücken

Germany, Saarbrücken

Dreaming of a sailor – or dreaming at the bottom of the sea.

**Musically making sense of dreams in operas by Richard Wagner
and Christian Ofenbauer**

The question of the artistic means by which dreams can be constituted as making sense – or not making sense – arises in a particular way for the medium of *music*: For in an art form practically devoid of terminological language, it seems especially difficult to depict sense or its absence. The proposed paper therefore examines dream scenes in two operas in order to explore the devices of *musically* making sense of the dreams that are part of the operas' respective narratives.

Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* (1843) includes Erik's dream report: While Erik speaks of the unknown sailor he has dreamed about, the musical motif of the *Dutchman* is heard in the orchestra. Thus, as Sabine HenzeDöhring argues, not only is the mystery of the identity of the sailor from the dream resolved musically, but the finale of the opera is also anticipated. Wagner's work with motivic correspondences proves the dream to be, on the one hand, a foreshadowing with regard to the storyline and, on the other hand, as integrated into the overall musical form: In this way, sense is made of the dream in two respects.

Almost 160 years later, the contemporary Austrian composer Christian Ofenbauer (*1961) based his opera *SzenePenthesileaEinTraum* (2000) not only on Kleist's tragedy *Penthesilea*, but also on images taken from his own dreams. These dream scenes take place at the bottom of the sea and have no relation to Kleist's text. Instead, they apparently function to disrupt the continuity of the opera as a meaningful entirety and represent something »other« within the scenic – and sonic – reality.

The suggested paper will explore the two examples by analysing the respective motivics, form, harmony and time – dramaturgy. Thus, it proposes to conceive them as two different concepts of musically making sense or non – sense of dreams.