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Expressive features of a music and visual project

Abstract. This study aimed to identify the expressive features of music and visual projects in contemporary academic and public art, with a focus on how visual elements influence the reception, dramaturgy, and emotional perception of music. The methodological basis of the research was a comparative analysis of three representative formats of music and visual projects, carried out using fixed video recordings and critical reviews. The analysis, which encompassed three music and visual projects – The Seasons, Piano Light Show performed by Oleksii Botvinov, and Contrapunctus 14 by J.S. Bach – demonstrated that the visual component in each format served not only an aesthetic, but also a structural function, significantly enhancing the artistic expressiveness of the music. In the concert format, specifically in The Seasons project, it was established that multichannel video projections integrated into the architecture of the multimedia New World Center concert hall created an immersive effect and spatial interaction between music and image. The visualisation resonated with the musical dramaturgy of the piece, emphasising cyclicality, dynamic transitions, and emotional accents, forming a complex audio-visual unity. In the public format of the Piano Light Show project, it was shown that video mapping in open-air settings or on stage (including projections onto the piano itself) served a communicative function, making classical music more accessible to a wider audience. The improvisational interaction between the pianist and the Video Jockey (VJ) enabled real-time visualisation of the music, fostering a high level of emotional engagement among the audience. In the studio format, particularly in the Contrapunctus 14 project, the visual sequence acted as a tool for interpreting the fugal structure of Bach's composition. The video provided a narrative understanding of the musical material, highlighting thematic elements and symbolism, while also constructing a metaphorical space that visualised ideas of incompleteness, autobiographical reference, and the search for meaning. The results obtained have practical significance for the practice of performing arts, music education, digital directing, and cultural management, and are useful for application in the field of cultural management, for the development of multimedia programmes of academic and interdisciplinary orientation

Keywords: concert format; screen presentation; visual component; multimedia art; intermediality

Introduction

Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, musical art has undergone significant transformation under the influence of digital technologies, which have radically altered both the modes of performance and the ways in which music is perceived. With the advent of television, digital platforms, and the online environment, a coincidence of auditory and visual channels has emerged, giving rise to new artistic practices in which music no longer functions as an autonomous phenomenon but rather in combination with visual representation. In this context, there has been growing interest in so-called music and visual projects – synthetic forms of screen-based presentation in which classical music performance is complemented by a thoughtfully constructed visual component. These projects not only renew the format of communication between performer and audience, but also reshape the artistic experience, transforming the listener into an active viewer. On the one hand, this leads to the

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disappearance of certain attributes of the traditional concert act – such as live presence, formality, and emotional authenticity. On the other hand, new screen formats create alternative opportunities for aesthetic engagement, allowing for a focus on the inner dramaturgy of the work, the visual structuring of complex musical forms, and the highlighting of thematic or affective elements. Thus, the music and visual project emerges as an independent phenomenon of contemporary art, requiring systematic theoretical analysis from the perspectives of intermediality, artistic expression, and the transformation of musical performance in the era of screen culture.

Music video projects represent a new form of presenting a musical work. From the perspective of authorship and artistic design, this format of communicating music of the academic tradition to the listener remains largely unexplored in musicology. A musical video project refers to the synchronous integration of relatively autonomous artistic video imagery – displayed on screen – into a traditional concert performance. These visual components are coordinated with the artistic content of the chosen musical work and with the musical performance process itself.

Despite the rapid spread of such formats as the video concert and audio-visual composition, the research field concerning music and visual projects remains insufficiently defined in scholarly literature. Within Ukrainian musicological discourse, the interpretation of musical text has mainly been developed through the lenses of the theory of musical semantics and the phenomenology of perception. O. Shyian (2022) examined the transformations in the operations of Ukrainian concert institutions – particularly the National Philharmonic – in the context of digitalisation. The author highlighted the challenges of transitioning to online communication formats, adapting marketing strategies to new media formats, and shifting audience expectations regarding the quality and modes of music presentation. However, aesthetic aspects of the screen representation of music were left outside the scope of this analysis. T. Sydorchuk (2023) explored the genre and stylistic specificities of musical screen formats, identifying such types as video albums, musical short films, conceptual video recordings, and other hybrid forms. Nevertheless, her research remained primarily focused on popular music culture, without reference to the academic repertoire or an analysis of multimedia practices within the classical domain.

Within the European tradition of the interpretative approach, S.C. Izen *et al.* (2023) viewed music as a form of sociocultural discourse, emphasising its communicative potential. However, their approach overlooked the visual dimension of musical experience, limiting the applicability of their analysis to multimedia projects. S. Finke & M. Solli (2024) examined the instability and polysemy of musical meaning that arises during performance, highlighting the significance of interpretative agency. At the same time, they did not consider visual mediation as an integral element of the artistic process, leaving room for further research in the field of audio-visual synaesthesia. Significant attention to synaesthetic perception was given by C. Spence & N. Di Stefano (2024), who, based on empirical observations, demonstrated that sound and image form a unified multisensory experience. Their findings confirmed the idea that audio-visual signals are not perceived in isolation but as interdependent channels of aesthetic information, which directly pertains to music and visual projects.

In the field of digital music visualisation, P. Georges & A. Seckin (2022) employed innovative methods for visualising sonic relationships, which enabled the identification of new patterns of stylistic influence. The authors showed that such visualisations may function not only as analytical tools but also as means of aesthetic mediation, tailored to the expectations of contemporary listeners. A.B. Melchiorre *et al.* (2023) analysed the EmoMTB interface as a means of organising musical space according to emotional criteria, in which colour and spatial structures guide the user toward a selected mood profile. This example highlights the importance of visual design as a factor in emotional engagement with music. In the study by J. Borgohain *et al.* (2023), it was shown that music induces visual imagination shaped by the listener's emotional states. Particular attention was given to the cross-cultural aspects of this phenomenon, with a comparison of Western and Indian classical traditions, thereby enhancing the relevance of the findings to various types of music and visual practice.

In the context of the concert format, S.P. Sekar (2024) examined the audience's receptive experience at film-with-live-orchestra events, emphasising the significance of the "presence" effect as a component of aesthetic impact. The researcher demonstrated that the emotional intensity of perception increases precisely through the real-time synchronisation of music and image. P. Gomes-Ribeiro & A. Malhado (2024) drew attention to the tension between the academic status of musical content and its commercial functionality, which is often apparent in multimedia formats. Their study underscored the importance of overcoming hierarchical biases in musical discourse to enable a comprehensive analysis of visualised forms.

Despite the presence of certain interdisciplinary approaches, the music and visual project as a form of presenting classical music has yet to receive systematic scholarly attention. Comprehensive classifications of music and visual formats are lacking, and the boundaries between concert video recordings and synthetic artistic acts remain ill-defined. Key questions remain open, including the transformation of a work's intonational structure under the influence of visual imagery, the emergence of new forms of reception, and the aesthetic autonomy of the visual within a musical context. This study aimed to examine the specificity of the music and visual project as an intermedial genre that combines

elements of classical music performance with artistic visualisation, with a focus on its expressive features and reception. In pursuit of this aim, the following research objectives were set: to analyse three formats of the music and visual project – concert, public, and studio – using representative examples; to investigate the nature of the interaction between musical and visual components in each format, taking into account their artistic structure, technical environment, and receptive dynamics; and to conduct a comparative analysis of the results in order to identify the typological features of the music and visual project as a form of cultural communication.

Materials and Methods

The study of the expressive features of the music and visual project as a contemporary intermedial genre was conducted during 2024-2025. It was directly linked to the exploration of modern forms of screen-based presentation of classical music, which have emerged in response to the societal demand for new channels of musical communication. The focus was placed on the music and visual project as a distinct form that combines elements of concert film and music video, yet is characterised by a heightened degree of artistic interaction between the sonic and visual layers, as well as a more complex receptive structure. The analysis was based on three representative examples of music and visual projects, each reflecting a different type of realisation: a concert format as embodied in The Seasons by John Cage, performed in 2013 at the New World Center in Miami under the direction of M. Tilson Thomas (Making the right choices..., 2024); open-air multimedia performances by Ukrainian pianist O. Botvinov (Piano Light Show, 2021) in collaboration with the group Videomatics; and a studio format in the form of a video interpretation of Contrapunctus 14 by J.S. Bach (Bach: Contrapunctus 14, BWV..., n.d.). The selection of these projects was guided by their distinctive artistic structure, varied visual strategies, and differing degrees of audience immersion in the performance process.

The work with each example involved a frame-by-frame analysis of the video material alongside an audio examination of the musical texture. A synchronised timeline layout was used for both audio and video fragments in order to identify points of intersection between musical and visual form-building. Particular attention was paid to the correspondence between colour, spatial, and cinematic imagery and the rhythmic and harmonic structure of the music. In The Seasons project, visual dominants were analysed in detail, especially those associated with the associative use of colour in each section, guided by symbolism derived from Indian philosophy, which underpinned the lighting design concept. In Botvinov's projects – particularly Piano Light Show and the studio video version of Ludovico Einaudi's Fly (Alexey Botvinov PIANO LIGHT SHOW..., 2019) – the technical aspects of projecting visuals onto the surface of the instrument were examined, as well as the role of architectural space in shaping the screen composition and the enhancement of intonational expressiveness through colour and light orchestration. A defining feature was the integration of digital noise, lighting effects, and the pianist's musical gesture into a three-dimensional unity of visual expression.

The studio format, represented by the interpretation of Contrapunctus by J.S. Bach, was examined as an example of chamber visual dramaturgy. The video sequence was analysed in terms of its function in expanding the musical narrative, with attention given to visual details that directed the viewer towards an awareness of the psychological tension within the work. The metaphorical imagery – such as a fireplace, sunlight, forest, and sheets of music – accompanying the musical themes was studied, along with the sequence of video transitions as a formal expressive device. The research methodology involved a multi-stage process: an initial description of the projects; formalisation of their structural parameters; analysis of the expressive means in both channels (musical and visual); identification of points of integration and contrast between them; and comparison of the results to determine the typological features of the music and visual project as an artistic phenomenon.

Results

Concert-based music and visual project in a multimedia space (New World Center)

The concert-type music and visual project is exemplified by the New World Center – a state-of-theart concert hall specifically designed for multimedia performances and the digital integration of visual art into classical music practice. Located in Miami Beach, USA, the New World Center is a pioneering venue that combines the traditional symphonic concert with advanced visual technologies and new forms of audience engagement (Herring & Hall, 2021). The hall's architecture, designed by world-renowned architect Frank Gehry, features a fundamentally new approach to spatial design: integrated into the structure are unconventional projection surfaces, known as "sails", positioned above the stage and around the auditorium, forming a multi-level audiovisual arc (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Interior of the New World Center concert hall
Source: New World Center/Gehry Partners (2011)

This architectural solution enables full-scale video projection onto the interior walls of the hall during musical performances, transforming the traditional concert into a spatial multimedia event. Instead of a conventional stage separated from the audience, an immersive effect is created, placing the listener at the centre of an interaction between sound and image (Suchkov, 2024). Projections can be cast not only onto screens, but also onto the architectural features of the space itself, turning the hall into a unified panoramic scenographic surface. The technical equipment of the complex has been one of the key prerequisites for such integration. The media infrastructure includes a system of multichannel projectors, notably high-powered Christie Roadie HD devices (Canada), each capable of projecting at a brightness level exceeding 30,000 lumens, along with Coolux Pandora's Box media servers (Germany), which enable the synchronisation of visual content with live musical performance in real time. This equipment allows for projection across more than 600 square metres of interior surfaces, making it possible to display visuals with maximum precision concerning the musical structure, including instantaneous responses to changes in tempo, dynamics, or articulation during the performance.

The visual and structural characteristics of this type of project lie in the meticulous synchronisation of the video sequence with the musical form. Projections within the hall may be either abstract (geometric shapes, colour fields, lighting effects) or figurative (photographic or animated imagery), depending on the nature of the musical work. This format of interaction requires the careful coordination of audio and visual layers: changes in musical dynamics, tempo, texture, or form are accompanied by corresponding shifts in the visual imagery – both in stylistic tone and in the rhythm of the visual montage. The visual element thus serves not merely a decorative or illustrative role but contributes to the creation of the work's semantic structure. During performances of works with a clearly defined programme, the visual component may directly illustrate the music's narrative content. In the case of abstract compositions, video projections acquire a symbolic character – conveying the emotional atmosphere and structural essence of the work through colour, form, and motion (Budmen, 2025).

A striking example of a concert-based music and visual project is the staging of The Seasons by John Cage, performed by the New World Symphony under the direction of M. Tilson Thomas (Making the right choices..., 2024) at the New World Center. This project formed part of the large-scale festival Making the Right Choices: A John Cage Centennial Celebration, marking the composer's centenary, and became a model of innovative synthesis between music, scenography, and digital visualisation. The multimedia design of the concert completely reimagined the traditional format of classical performance. During each part of the cycle – Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall – artistic video imagery was projected onto the interior surfaces of the hall, visually conveying the symbolic qualities of each season in accordance with Cage's concept. These images did not serve as direct illustrations, but instead created a stage-visual environment aligned with the ideas of transformation, cyclicality, and the spiritual dimension of the musical material. Figure 2 illustrated the visual palette and lighting solutions used in the multimedia staging of The Seasons. In Winter, conceived as an image of stillness and suspended motion, the visual effects were based on a muted colour scheme and a slow lighting rhythm. Spring featured animations with floral elements and abstract forms that gradually "blossomed" in synchrony with the unfolding of the music. In Summer, the visuals reached a high level of intensity: bright light, rhythmic image fragmentation, and rich colour saturation. Finally, Fall included visual allegories of decline and decay: dimming light rhythms and projections in deep, blood-brown tones created the effect of colour slowly falling away.

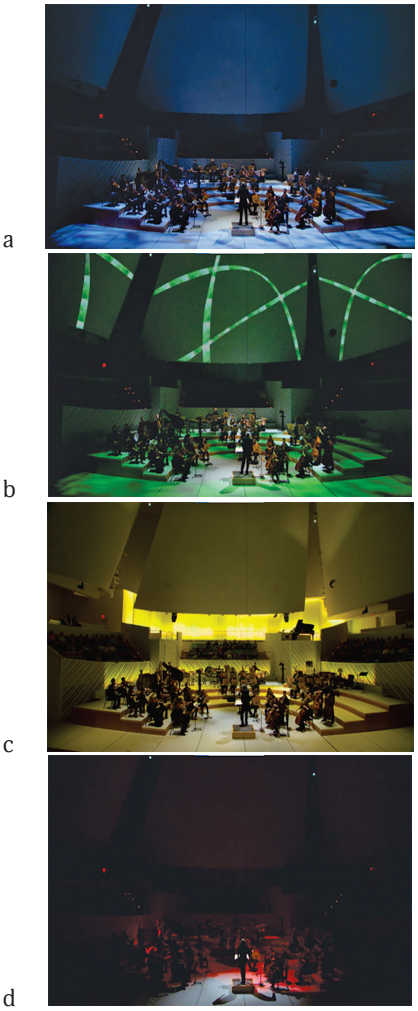

Figure 2. Visual highlights during the performance of The Seasons by John Cage at the New World Center
Note: a – Winter section; b – Spring section; c – Summer section; d – Fall section
Source: The Seasons (1947) by John Cage (2013)

The visual sequence was created with consideration of Cage's musical structure, which is not traditionally narrative, but follows an internal rhythmic and textural logic. This logic was translated into video through a combination of colour language, spatial transitions, and tempo-rhythmic editing. As a result, a visual narrative was formed that resonated with the music not in terms of content, but through compositional logic, texture, and dynamics. This approach positioned the visual layer not as an illustration of the music, but as an independent artistic system that interacts with it, creating a complex polyphonic relationship between auditory and visual experience.

The outcome was a performative unity in which the listener also became a viewer, immersed in a synaesthetic environment. This contributed to a deeper reception of the musical work: emotional accents were enhanced through light and visual movement; structural transitions in the music were visually marked by shifts in colour or geometric form; and the very architecture of the hall – with its multi-level projection surfaces – was transformed into an integrated visual instrument. It is also worth noting that the multimedia capabilities of the New World Center are used not only for the audience inside the hall, but also externally. The outer wall of the building serves as a giant screen for WALLCAST® projections – open-air concert broadcasts for the public gathered in the adjacent park (Fig. 3). This expands the boundaries of the concert space: the music and visual project encompasses both indoor and outdoor settings simultaneously. From a technical standpoint, high-definition video is synchronously transmitted to the façade, which covers approximately 650 m^2, accompanied by powerful sound via an external acoustic system (WALLCAST® concerts and park events, n.d.). In this format, the visual layer serves a dual function – accessibility and spectacle. On the one hand, large-scale projection makes classical music accessible to a broader audience beyond the concert hall (including passers-by); on the other, the very format of the broadcast transforms the concert into an urban audio-visual event.

Figure 3. WALLCAST® concert broadcast on the façade of the New World Center
Source: WALLCAST® concerts and park events (n.d.)

Thus, the concert-based music and visual project in a multimedia venue demonstrates how modern technologies can enrich traditional performance: video content integrated into the concert space enhances the artistic expressiveness of the music, clarifies its meanings, and broadens its audience – without altering the musical text itself, but instead complementing it with a visual dimension of the work.

Public music and visual project with visualisation (case study: Oleksii Botvinov)

The public type of music and visual project in this study was explored through the creative work of Ukrainian pianist O. Botvinov (Piano Light Show, 2021), particularly his original multimedia concert Visual Reality of Music, widely known under the title Piano Light Show. The project was positioned as a new format of concert performance that combined classical piano interpretation with real-time digital video art. It represented not only an artistic innovation, but also a conceptual synthesis of audio and visual expression in public art.

In contrast to projects implemented in fixed multimedia venues with established technical infrastructure – such as the New World Center in Miami – the Piano Light Show was distinguished by its mobility and adaptability to different spaces. Botvinov's performances took place in a wide variety of settings, ranging from traditional classical venues (e.g., Odesa Regional Philharmonic, Lviv Opera Theatre) to open-air public spaces, such as the Potemkin Stairs in Odesa, Sofia Square in Kyiv, the Colonnade of the Vorontsov Palace, and other sites of notable urban significance (Piano Light Show..., 2021). This spatial variability became a defining feature of the public music and visual project, which was oriented not only towards aesthetic experience, but also towards a sociocultural function – engaging new audiences with classical music by making it more accessible and relevant through visual technologies (van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2020).

Regardless of the architectural parameters of the venue, the visual component functioned not as an auxiliary element, but as an equal and integral part of the performance. The video sequence was projected onto large screens, building façades, or stage objects – including the instrument itself: a white concert grand piano specifically designed for video-mapping purposes. During the performance, real-time visuals were projected directly onto the surface of the piano, evolving in accordance with the musical structure – its rhythm, dynamics, harmonic shifts, and timbral nuances. This created a powerful effect of total fusion between image and sound, transforming the instrument into a living screen that visualised the music not as mere illustration, but as spatial energy in motion. This approach was especially striking in the performance of Fly. The visual layer was structured according to video-mapping principles: the imagery was projected not only onto a background screen, but directly onto the piano itself, which was visually transformed into part of a cosmic landscape. In the opening minutes of the piece, the audience saw a deep, dark sky gradually filled with stars, the silhouette of a planet, and pulses of light. This visual space did not simply illustrate the music – it resonated with it, unfolding in parallel, conveying its inner meanings, moods, and philosophical undertones. The visual effects were carefully selected to align with the distinctive musical language of Einaudi. The repeated harmonies and gradual build-up in dynamics were enhanced by an increasing number of light and colour layers, the acceleration of animation tempo, and the expansion of the image scale. During climactic moments – when the music reached its full resonance and the texture became more saturated – the visual space exploded with streams of light, vivid outlines, and shimmering effects, creating a sense of emotional spatial expansion (Fig. 4). In contrast, in quieter or repetitive passages, the video slowed down and the image "froze", producing a pause not only in the music but also in the visual experience. This established a profound interdependence between the auditory and visual layers.

Figure 4. Moment of piano performance of Ludovico Einaudi's Fly in the Piano Light Show project
Source: Piano Light Show a new dimension of visual reality of musical classics (2021)

Thus, the expressive features of the public music and visual project Piano Light Show found their fullest realisation in the interpretation of Fly by the Italian composer Ludovico Einaudi (Alexey Botvinov PIANO LIGHT SHOW..., 2019). This performance exemplified the synthesis of classical piano artistry and real-time interactive video art, created through collaboration between pianist Oleksii Botvinov and visual artist Video Jockey (VJ) Videomatics. The selected piece – a meditative, emotive composition with a recognisable harmonic language and fluid melodic development – provided ideal conditions for a synaesthetic reading through the fusion of sonic and visual dynamics.

A defining feature of this project was the improvisational interaction between the performer and the media artist. Although the visual material – comprising a set of abstract scenes, thematic elements and graphic styles – was prepared in advance, the actual process of projecting the video within the stage space was not rigidly predetermined. During the performance, the VJ adjusted the visual sequence in real time, responding to the tempo, dynamics, pauses, accents, and mood shifts in the piano playing. This collaborative format resembled a jazz "jam session", where the musician and the visual artist co-created an integrated audio-visual event characterised not by a fixed hierarchy, but by an equal artistic partnership (Pogrebniak, 2023).

In the case of Fly, the semantic richness of the project was not linear. The visual imagery did not replicate a narrative based on the composition but instead created a space for interpretation. Images of the cosmos, stars, the Earth's rotation, light and darkness could be perceived as metaphors for flight, introspection, self-immersion, or transcending boundaries. This approach is closely aligned with Einaudi's own compositional concept, which avoids overt programmatic content in favour of emotionally immersive listening. Additionally, the use of visual metaphors contributed to an expanded sense of time and space within the piece. In synthesis with the music, the imagery is transformed at the level of aesthetic experience: simple harmonies acquire new associations, the inner rhythm of the piece resonates with the pulsation of the visuals, and the image of the instrument dissolves into silhouettes of light that envelop the viewer. In this way, Fly, as performed by Botvinov, takes on the qualities of an artistic installation, in which music, image, and the listener's presence merge into a unified synaesthetic experience. This type of public music and visual project invited a rethinking of the boundaries of academic musical art. While preserving the technical virtuosity and depth of musical interpretation, it presented the music in a renewed format, responsive to the expectations of audiences in the digital age. The visual channel here played not a supporting role, but becomes an equal component of the artistic gesture. Notably, the synthesis of music and video enhanced the audience's emotional engagement – listeners are not passive

recipients of the work, but live through it as a space of personal experience, sensation, and association. Thus, the performance of Fly within the Piano Light Show illustrated the effectiveness of multimedia synthesis in an academic context. Botvinov's project demonstrated that the visualisation of classical music is not merely decorative accompaniment, but a powerful means of artistic expression that enables a fresh representation of the traditional musical repertoire.

Studio music and visual project (case study: Contrapunctus 14)

The studio type of music and visual project is exemplified by the video interpretation of J.S. Bach's Contrapunctus 14 (from the cycle The Art of Fugue) (Bach: Contrapunctus 14, BWV..., n.d.). In contrast to concert formats, the studio project was created under controlled conditions of audio recording and video production, allowing for a carefully planned and edited interaction between music and imagery. This studio realisation resulted in a music and visual narrative in which visual elements guide and support the listener's perception of the work's intricate fugal structure.

The research began with an analysis of the musical structure of Contrapunctus 14, which serves as the foundation for both its semantic content and its visual interpretation. Bach originally conceived the work as a quadruple fugue (MacKnight, n.d.). The surviving manuscript includes the exposition and development of three themes, while the fourth subject is only hinted at and remains incomplete. The first to appear is the main Theme (Theme I) – a characteristic melodic incipit from The Art of Fugue that sets a restrained and solemn tone for the piece. In the given excerpt (Fig. 5), the Theme consists of a concise melodic line in D minor that gradually unfolds within the span of an octave. Sustained notes and a dotted rhythm evoke a calm, monumental mood. This Theme then becomes the basis for polyphonic development: in the full version of the fugue, it engages in dialogue with other voices, imitated in the middle and lower registers, forming a richly contrapuntal texture typical of the fugal style.

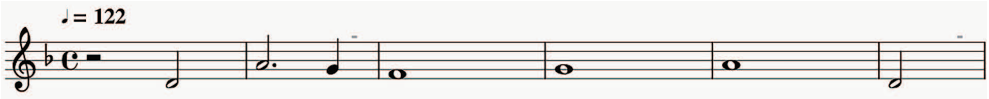

Figure 5. Incipit of the main Theme (I) from J.S. Bach's Contrapunctus 14
Source: compiled by the author

The second to appear is Theme II, which introduces new melodic and rhythmic material (Fig. 6). In contrast to the measured motion of the first theme, the second is characterised by a livelier movement – it is built on rapid passages and sequential patterns. Its entry into the fugue creates a striking contrast and increases the dynamic momentum of the development. Bach masterfully combines Theme II with Theme I: they are heard simultaneously in different voices, forming a complex contrapuntal texture. While the first Theme unfolds in longer note values (minims or crotchets) in one voice, the second develops in shorter durations (quavers, semiquavers) in another, filling the pauses of the first and creating a polyphonic dialogue. At this stage, the fugue becomes a double fugue, where two independent melodic lines intertwine, presenting the listener with a richly layered musical stream.

Next, the composer introduces Theme III, which was intended as the culminating element of the fugue (Fig. 7). In the surviving portion of the manuscript, this Theme is notable for being based on the musical cryptogram B-A-C-H (according to German notation) – that is, the sequence of notes B♭-A-C-B natural. These notes are clearly marked in the musical score with letters above the corresponding pitches, indicating the deliberate inclusion of the composer's name in the thematic material of the fugue. The B-A-C-H Theme is distinctly dramatic in its intonational profile. In this way, Bach transforms the polyphonic Theme into an autobiographical musical statement.

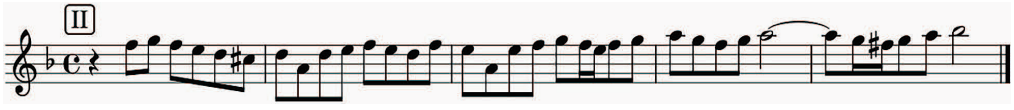

Figure 6. Incipit of the second Theme (II) from J.S. Bach's fugue Contrapunctus 14
Source: compiled by the author

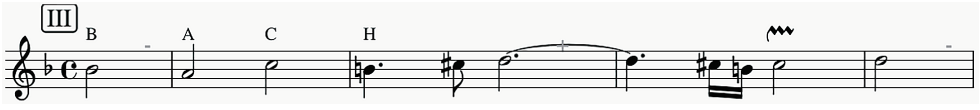

Figure 7. Incipit of the second Theme (III) from J.S. Bach's fugue Contrapunctus 14
Source: compiled by the author

When the B-A-C-H Theme begins its development within the fugue, the musical score abruptly breaks off – this is precisely, where the composer stopped, unable to complete the work. Historically, this interruption has often been interpreted symbolically, as if Bach departed from life, leaving his musical "signature" unfinished. In the studio project, a unique vision of the fugue's conclusion was realised. By developing the B-A-C-H motif along with the previously introduced themes, the work was brought to an artistically and compositionally satisfying coda. The ending is rendered in the style of late Romanticism – "with restrained Busoni-esque sweep" – adding a new emotional depth to the piece (Distler, 2022). This interpretation is itself a form of expressive act – a dialogue with the composer across centuries – and it undoubtedly influences the construction of the visual sequence in the studio project.

A visual-structural analysis of the studio video Contrapunctus 14 reveals that the visual narrative is shaped by the musical form, though it employs entirely different artistic means than the previous two project types. While in concert performances the main "spectacle" is the musicians on stage and the surrounding projections, in the studio video, the performer and setting themselves become part of the symbolic concept. The directorial treatment of the visual layer is executed with great precision. Every visual image, change of perspective, or lighting shift is coordinated with the progression of the fugue. The music and visual project opened with a stage composition centred on the figure of a person seated in a dimly lit room, immersed in contemplation (Fig. 8). The atmosphere of restraint and focus was enhanced by soft lighting, the stillness of the interior, and the soundscape – the gentle crackling of a fireplace created a sense of presence, emphasising the intimate nature of the space.

Figure 8. Opening stage composition of the studio project Contrapunctus 14

Source: Bach: Contrapunctus 14, BWV 1080, 19 (Compl. Trifonov) (n.d.)

In this context, the first Theme of Contrapunctus began to sound, accompanied by shots of the pianist's concentrated gaze, sheets of music pinned to the wall, and an open grand piano (Fig. 9). These visual elements conveyed a sense of symbolic anticipation for the completion of the work left unfinished by Bach. As the video progressed, the imagery gradually shifted towards brighter visuals – sunlight streaming through a window, transitions between spatial planes, and dynamic camera movements. These visual changes resonated with the development of the musical theme, encouraging a deeper emotional engagement. Gradually, the camera focused on details – particularly the pianist's hand movements – which intensified the effect of a complete fusion between auditory and visual impressions, drawing the viewer closer to the musical action as though it were a visual canvas.

Figure 9. Visual frames from the studio project Contrapunctus 14

Source: Bach: Contrapunctus 14, BWV 1080, 19 (Compl. Trifonov) (n.d.)

The visual narrative of the project unfolds along two parallel planes: the first is the figure of a protagonist, who metaphorically searches for a lost page of the musical score; the second is the smooth, continuous development of the fugal structure in Contrapunctus. Their interplay creates a complex dramaturgy of internal searching, reflected in movement, fluctuations, and shifts in lighting. The musical development of the second Theme is accompanied by increased dynamic tension, which is visually expressed through heightened contrast in the frame, a faster editing pace, and a transition in colour palette – from a dark, chamber-like atmosphere to an open natural landscape, particularly to scenes of a vivid emerald forest. In this context, the forest functions as a symbol of deep introspection, of unity between the human being and nature, and of a return to origins – a kind of metaphorical homecoming.

In the third episode of the fugue, based on the cryptogram B-A-C-H, which serves as the composer's musical signature, the visual imagery takes on a symbolic character. The B-A-C-H motif (B♭-A-C-B♮) signifies Bach's autobiographical presence in the work and represents the completion of a life and creative cycle, emphasising the polyphonic intricacy and profound spiritual depth of the music. The key characteristics of the visual interpretation include:

- a subtle yet clearly structured narrative unfolding in parallel with the musical dramaturgy;
- a focus on the physical act of performance – close-ups of the pianist's hands, interaction with the keyboard, and the instrument's mechanical details;
- the use of natural symbolism (fire, forest, light), which adds artistic depth and evokes semantic associations;
- an emphasis on visually supporting the structure of the fugue through colour, lighting, and rhythmic editing.

Overall, the studio-based music and visual project is characterised by the highest degree of conceptual cohesion, with each visual element carefully planned and filmed in advance. This allows for a strong unity of ideas between the audio and visual components. The result is a fully realised art film, in which the piano performance is only one element alongside direction, cinematography, and editing. The analysis of this example demonstrates that the visual layer in a studio project can do more than reinforce the music – it can interpret it. Through imagery not possible in a concert setting, it adds an additional narrative dimension, making visible what remains hidden in the music. The video version of Contrapunctus 14 serves simultaneously as a scholarly commentary – revealing the structure of the music and illustrating each theme – and as an artistic meditation on life and death in Bach's work, expressed through the symbols of incompleteness and their resolution in the final scene. This in-depth approach exemplifies how studio-based music and visual projects can convey the complex meanings of classical music to contemporary audiences using the language of cinema. The summarised findings of the analysis of the three examined types of music and visual projects are presented in Table 1. Each type has distinct features in terms of spatial organisation, visualisation method, semantic focus, and the nature of interaction between musical and visual components.

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of music and visual project formats

Type of project	Performance space	Nature of visualisation	Semantic emphasis	Interaction between music and visuals
Concert-based (multimedia hall)	Fixed indoor venue (New World Center)	Multi-channel projection onto architectural surfaces of the hall; panoramic screens surrounding the audience	Enhancing the emotional atmosphere of the work; visual clarification of musical imagery	Precise synchronisation with musical form and dynamics; visuals shift according to musical sections and climaxes; technological integration into the architecture of the hall
Public (open-air or traditional stage + video art)	Open urban spaces or traditional concert venues (e.g., projects by O. Botvinov)	Real-time VJ projection onto screens or stage elements (e.g., video mapping on the piano)	Engaging wider audiences; offering new meanings to works of the academic tradition; increasing emotional impact through visual spectacle	Flexible visual response to live performance; improvisational interaction between pianist and projection; musical climaxes emphasised through intensified visual effects
Studio-based (music and visual project with elements of a music video)	Studio recording without an audience (staged video – Contrapunctus 14)	Post-production video, cinematic imagery; symbolic visual dramaturgy structured through editing	Interpretation of the work's deeper meaning; highlighting the composer's intent (e.g., the B-A-C-H Theme as a symbol); dialogue between past and present	Close parallelism between visual editing and musical form; each theme/section accompanied by a corresponding visual motif; use of cinematic symbolism to express what is musically implicit (rendering the invisible visible)

Source: based on WALLCAST® concerts and park events (n.d.), Bach: Contrapunctus 14, BWV 1080, 19 (Compl. Trifonov) (n.d.)

The analysis of the table has made it possible to identify the key differences between concertbased, public, and studio music and visual projects. First and foremost, the spatial context influences the methods of visualisation and the nature of interaction between the audio and video components. In concert formats, static multi-channel projection predominates, integrated into the architecture of the venue to provide full immersion in the musical space. By contrast, public projects focus on flexible, dynamic interaction with audiences, which necessitates the use of VJ techniques, video projections onto architectural objects, and improvisational presentation. The studio format is characterised by post-production direction and edited dramaturgy, in which imagery is not created in real time but conceptualised in advance. This allows for a high degree of semantic density and profound symbolism. Thus, the differences between formats are linked to the level of control over the audio-visual composition, as well as to the communicative purpose – from eliciting an immediate emotional response in a public setting to offering complex interpretations of the composer's ideas in a studio environment. The findings demonstrate that music and visual projects significantly expand the expressive possibilities of musical art. Despite differences in format, all three types share a common tendency: the visual component enhances and complements the musical one, creating a synergistic effect.

Discussion

The findings of the study have confirmed that the visual component plays a significant role in shaping the expressiveness of musical projects across various formats. This involves not merely an aesthetic supplement, but a profound transformation of artistic expression, in which imagery functions as an equal bearer of meaning alongside the sound. In all three analysed cases – concert-based (New World Center), public (Piano Light Show), and studio (Contrapunctus 14) – the integration of music and visual imagery demonstrated the potential to broaden the horizons of reception, intensify emotional engagement, and reveal new dimensions of artistic expression. In each format, the visual element fulfilled its own functional and aesthetic role: from spatial-architectural immersion in the New World Center concert hall to interactive audience engagement in an open urban environment, and to intellectually symbolic interpretation of polyphony in the studio video. All three cases confirmed that audio-visual unity not only extends the boundaries of musical communication, but also fosters a new quality of perception, in which music acquires a visible – and therefore multi-layered and deeper – interpretation. The results obtained may be applied in the integration of visualisation into the teaching of music theory and the development of multimedia educational programmes. Furthermore, the analysed presentation formats could serve as a reference point for concert organisers, artists, and creative teams in exploring new ways of engaging audiences.

The findings of this study align with numerous scholarly works that demonstrate how the integration of music with visual media significantly enhances the emotional expressiveness of an audio-visual composition. In the analysis of Oleksii Botvinov's Piano Light Show, it was observed that visual effects constructed in alignment with the colour palette and rhythm of the music's emotional tone elicited heightened arousal and satisfaction among the audience. These observations directly correlate with the conclusions of M. Franěk & J. Petružálek (2024), who showed that even background musical accompaniment can transform the perception of visual imagery. In the case of this study, the video component did not serve merely as a backdrop but as an organic part of the composition, contributing to a cohesive sensory experience. In line with the Intention-Attention-Reaction-Retention model proposed by J.N. Dasovich-Wilson *et al.* (2022), the results indicated that video synchronised with the musical intonation (as exemplified in the piece Fly) enhances attention, supports better retention of musical content, and creates a lasting emotional impression.

Although no experimental measurement of cognitive engagement was conducted in the studio project Contrapunctus 14, qualitative analysis of the video sequence enabled the formulation of a theoretical assumption: cognitive concentration appears to increase at moments of structural climax, particularly during the introduction of the B-A-C-H theme. A similar rationale was confirmed by the study conducted by S. Tanaka (2021), which demonstrated that the presence of visual imagery activates mirror neuron mechanisms, while its absence reduces the effect of emotional empathy. Thus, although the present analysis was based on visual-structural and content observation, it resonates with empirical findings from previous research and supports the assumption that cohesive visual direction enhances the perception of musical and dramaturgical content. In this respect, the findings of this study contribute to existing understandings of the mechanisms of emotional and cognitive interaction between the visual and auditory within a music and visual project.

The results of the study by J. Millet *et al.* (2021), which showed that music in film can alter the emotional perception of visual content, align with the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the public music and visual project Piano Light Show. In Botvinov's performances in particular, the visual effects (such as colour modulation and flashes of light) amplify the emotional tone of the music, producing an integrated artistic impression comparable to the effects of cinematic music scoring. Moreover, the analysis confirmed that the visual component does not merely accompany the music but also introduces additional layers of meaning, similar to film practices. Findings on the influence of facial expressions and gestures on the perception of musical content, as report-

ed by P. Miksza *et al*. (2024) and N. Moura *et al*. (2024), were partially reflected in the case of Piano Light Show, where significant emphasis is placed on the visual representation of the pianist during performance. These observations are also demonstrated in the study by M.-L. Juntunen *et al*. (2023) which highlighted the importance of beat gestures, iconic and metaphoric gesticulation in creating visual-musical correspondences. Here, gestures are not merely elements of stage presence but act as carriers of musical meaning – they embody form, emotion, and even structure in a bodily form that is accessible to the audience. In contrast, the studio project Contrapunctus 14 frequently replaces the performer's visual presence with a metaphorical video sequence, offering a more abstract mode of visualisation. This partially diverges from the research data, emphasising the dominant role of facial expressions: in this case, it was the abstract imagery rather than the physical presence of the performer that ensured deep audience engagement.

Similarly, the results of J. Kim & N. Pellegrino (2023), who reported improved comprehension of music through visual accompaniment, are echoed in this study through the analysis of video interpretations, particularly in the case of Contrapunctus 14. The visual layer, synchronised with the musical form, helped the audience follow the development of the fugue, while the introduction of new themes was marked by changes in lighting, camera focus or colour palette, supporting the cognitive structuring of the composition. These observations are consistent with the findings of A. Czepiel *et al*. (2021; 2025), who noted the activation of orienting responses in reaction to shifts in the audio-visual stream. Inter-brain synchronisation, recorded by V. Müller & U. Lindenberger (2023) during collective viewing of a concert video, supports the assumption of a similar effect in this study's examination of public formats, where emotional resonance among the audience was achieved through the combined impact of powerful visual and musical elements. Although the present research was not empirical in a psychological sense, the observational results confirmed the presence of collective emotional engagement in open-air settings (such as the Potemkin Stairs), where the music and visual event functioned as a large-scale aesthetic experience. The findings also confirmed that the effectiveness of visual media largely depends on its semantic alignment with the musical context.

The analysis of concert, public, and studio projects demonstrated that when the visual sequence resonates organically with the dramaturgy and emotional tone of the music, the audience's perception of the piece becomes more cohesive and profound. For instance, in the studio video project Contrapunctus 14, it was the visual accompaniment that drew attention to the moment of the B-ACH theme's introduction, creating a sense of tense anticipation and closure, which enhanced the overall expressive impact. These findings align with the conclusions of A. Cheţan & I. Iancu (2023), who argued that the authenticity of the visual image – including the artist's style and scenography – generates a powerful emotional and semantic field. At the same time, research by P. Modestini & C. Weining (2025) highlighted the risk of reduced engagement in digital broadcasts due to the absence of the performer's visual presence. This conclusion partly corresponds with observations from the current study regarding the studio format: although the visual elements in Contrapunctus 14 compensated for the lack of a live stage, it was the symbolic visual narrative – rather than the pianist's physical presence – that proved crucial in achieving the emotional effect. Thus, the research confirms the broader trend but clarifies that it is not necessarily the performer's physicality or facial expressions that are central. In some cases, a well-conceived visual strategy that reflects the meanings embedded in the musical material may be sufficient. This clarification adds nuance to ongoing discussions about the role of visual context in musical reception.

In conclusion, the results of the study align harmoniously with the academic tradition while simultaneously highlighting the need to examine the role of visual semantics, spatial modalities (stage, studio, public environment), and audio-visual congruence in conveying the artistic expressiveness of a musical project. The discussion of the findings demonstrated that the integration of visual technologies with musical performance significantly affects not only the character but also the intensity of artistic expression. Such synthesis has a complex impact on both emotional and cognitive perception, opening new channels for meaning-making that are not available within the confines of purely sonic art. Each of the formats examined contributed its own nuances to the overall picture, showing that the spatial, technical, and communicative conditions of realisation directly influence the form, structure, and rhetoric of music and visual expression.

Conclusions

The study established that the integration of visual elements into musical performance greatly enhances expressiveness, emotional perception, and communicative effectiveness. Visual components were not merely auxiliary features, but instead constitute a fully-fledged artistic layer that revealed the deeper meanings of the music, reinforced its dramaturgy, and shaped the channels of communication with the audience. Based on the observations and analysis of music and visual formats, it can be concluded that the interaction between sound and image enabled academic music to move beyond a narrow elitist framework, making it more accessible to a broader audience of listeners and viewers. It was established that in a concert multimedia hall such as the New World Center (Miami), the use of high-tech visual projections – including panoramic video, interior lighting, and synchronised graphics – created a fully immersive artistic experience. This spatial-temporal integration of

audio-visual signals enhanced the reception of musical material, particularly in complex instrumental genres. The findings confirmed the effectiveness of coordinated interaction between music and image in amplifying emotional resonance, increasing audience engagement, and generating a multisensory perception of the work. In the public format, as exemplified by the Piano Light Show project, it was demonstrated that digital visualisation in urban spaces activated new models of cultural consumption and established alternative channels of communication. In particular, audiences, who do not typically attend classical concerts showed greater engagement, specifically due to the accessibility of the visualised format. In the studio format, as illustrated by the video project Contrapunctus 14, it was found that carefully crafted visual design served not only an illustrative, but also an analytical function. The visual narrative in such projects acts as an interpretative tool, enabling the exposition of the internal structure of complex polyphonic material, the highlighting of semantic focal points, and the symbolic framing of musical events. The resulting qualitative indicators include a differentiation of the functions of the visual layer according to format: dramaturgical (in the concert hall), accentual (in public space), and symbolic and didactic (in the studio format).

The results obtained hold significant practical value for musicology, stage art, interdisciplinary performance practice, and multimedia pedagogy. They may be applied in the development of concert programmes, the design of enlightenment project in intermedia art, the formation of multimedia cultural policies, and the engagement of new audiences with classical music. It is recommended to further deepen and expand the practice of multimedia interpretation, to create specialised intermedia platforms, and to incorporate VJ art into philharmonic or chamber performance formats. Among the limitations of this study is its focus on only three case studies, which does not allow for a comprehensive typology of all existing visual strategies. To address this limitation, future research should expand the empirical base by employing tools such as surveys, biometric analysis, neuropsychological monitoring, and experimental studies involving alternative genres and performance spaces. Further investigations may focus on comparing audience responses to different types of visualisations (from schematic to metaphorical), examining the neuroaesthetic mechanisms of audio-visual perception, and developing classifications of visual strategies relevant to specific musical genres and sociocultural contexts.

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Conflict of Interest

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Виражальні особливості музично-візуального проєкту

Анотація. Метою цього дослідження було виявлення виражальних особливостей музично-візуальних проєктів у сучасному академічному та публічному мистецтві, зосередження уваги на тому, як візуальні елементи впливають на рецепцію, драматургію та емоційне сприйняття музики. Методологічною основою дослідження став порівняльний аналіз трьох репрезентативних форматів музично-візуальних проєктів, здійснений на основі фіксованих відеозаписів та критичних оглядів. У результаті дослідження, що охоплювало аналіз музично-візуальних проєктів – «The Seasons», «Piano Light Show» у виконанні Олексія Ботвінова, а також «Contrapunctus 14» Й.С. Баха, було доведено, що візуальний компонент у кожному з форматів виконує не лише естетичну, а й структуроутворюючу функцію, суттєво підсилюючи художню виразність музики. У концертному форматі, а саме в проєкті «The Seasons», було встановлено, що багатоканальні відеопроєкції, інтегровані в архітектуру мультимедійного залу New World Center, створюють ефект занурення та просторової взаємодії музики й зображення. Візуалізація резонує з музичною драматургією твору, підкреслює циклічність, динамічні переходи та емотивні акценти, формуючи складну аудіовізуальну єдність. У публічному форматі проєкту «Piano Light Show» показано, що відеомапінг у відкритому просторі або на сцені (зокрема проекції на рояль) виконує комунікативну функцію, роблячи академічну музику доступною ширшій аудиторії. Імпровізаційна взаємодія піаніста з Video Jockey (VJ) дозволяє візуалізувати музику в реальному часі, що зумовлює високу емоційну залученість публіки. У студійному форматі, зокрема в проєкті «Contrapunctus 14», візуальний ряд виступив інструментом інтерпретації фуґальної структури твору Баха. Відео наративно осмислило музичний матеріал, акцентуючи теми та символіку, і водночас сформувало метафоричний простір, що візуалізував ідеї незавершеності, автобіографічності та пошуку сенсу. Отримані результати мають прикладне значення для практики сценічного мистецтва, музичної освіти, цифрової режисури та культурного менеджменту й корисні для застосування у сфері культурного менеджменту, для розробки мультимедійних програм академічного і міжпредметного спрямування

Ключові слова: концертний формат; екранна презентація; візуальний компонент; мультимедійне мистецтво; інтермедіальність