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Exploring Maximalism in Music, Comparing the Selected Works of Richard Strauss and Kanye West: Annotated Bibliography

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Abstract

In the realm of music theory, many terms are used to simplify characteristics of musical compositions. Many of these terms become “ism’s” as a way to easily group many characteristics or techniques that composers implement. A well known ‘ism’ that is taught often in American music theory/history courses is minimalism, where composers made music with techniques like repetition, simplification, etc. This paper seeks to define another emerging ‘ism’ in music theory, Maximalism. This term broadly refers to the over exaggeration of compositional techniques in music, and their effects. I propose that in many ways the composers Richard Strauss and Kanye West both exhibit traits of maximalism in their selected works, even though their respective techniques vary greatly. Discussing these composers and their work will further the topic of maximalism, while using two popular, yet distinct composers.

1 Delville, Michel, and Andrew Norris. *Frank Zappa, Captain Beefheart and The Secret History of Maximalism*. Cambridge: Salt Publishing, 2005.

This source is another trove of information regarding the topic of Maximalism, which is hard to find. Although there may be little overlap between the discussion of Frank Zappa in my paper, having more sources that at least mention Maximalism makes the source worthwhile. Both authors are musicians, with Delville having much easier information to find. He currently is a professor at the university of Liège, and professional guitarist.

2 Kaunitz, Galit. "An Examination of Stylistic Elements in Richard Strauss's Wind Chamber Music Works and Selected Tone Poems." Doctor of Music, The Florida State University, 2012.

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/1034571332/ABF26A793D3A4A8BPQ/1?accountid=14608>

This source does a fantastic job with giving base level knowledge on Richard Strauss' life, as well as going very in depth on selected compositions. The pieces that are discussed in this source that are relevant to my discussion are the analysis of Don Juan and Ein Heldenleben. Discussing these two works by Strauss give me an arsenal of tools that could be defined as 'maximalist'. This excellent source was written by Galit Kaunitz, in pursuit of a Doctor of Music degree, which was earned in 2012.

3 Kautz, J.. "Kanye West." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed October 25, 2021.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kanye-West>.

With any discussion about a composer comes context regarding their upbringing, certain key life events, accomplishments, etc. This britannica article goes into depth exploring Kanye West's upbringing, musical influences, and many relevant accomplishments. The editor of this entry is Justin Kautz, who has exclusively contributed to Encyclopedia Britannica on this topic.

4 Kristiansen, Morten. "Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism." *Notes* 63, no. 2 (12, 2006): 374-377. <https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/richard-s Strauss-orchestral-music-german/docview/196717111/se-2?accountid=14608>.

Literature that reviews Strauss' compositions are extremely useful for this paper. Identifying influences and compositional techniques and their effects make the

comparison between West and Strauss easy to make. Dr Morten Kristiansen is now an associate professor of Musicology with Xavier university.

5 Leerssen, Joep. "Romanticism, Music, Nationalism." *Nations & Nationalism* 20, no. 4 (October 2014): 606–27. <https://search-ebscohost-com.du.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=98419601&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

This source discusses trends in early twentieth century European music, and their cultural influences and ties. Bringing historical context to Strauss, his works, and what it was like to live in that time period is all relevant to my paper. Joep Leerssen is now the chair of Modern European Literature at the university of Amsterdam.

6 Molokov, Kirill, and Ekaterina Zueva. "Rap Poetry and Postmodernism." *Journal of History, Culture & Art Research / Tarih Kültür ve Sanat Arastirmalari Dergisi* 6, no. 4 (September 2017): 1358–64. <https://search-ebscohost-com.du.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=125952908&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Finding academic sources pertaining to rap music are tough to find. This source compares Rap music to the idea of postmodernism, which is almost exactly in the same vein as the claim I am making with West's music being maximalist. Unfortunately both authors do not have easily found websites/biographies.

7 Strauss, Richard. *Don Juan, Op. 20: Symphonic Poem*. New York: Kalmus, 1933.

When examining the works of Strauss, having original scores can prove to be useful. Having original music can showcase use of harmony, instrumentation, dynamics, etc. Being able to specifically pinpoint where things happen in a piece of music is invaluable, especially in an academic setting.

8 Sulcas, Rosyln. May 14, 2007. "Maximalism, Minimalism and a Few Narratives Askew." *New York Times* 156 (53944): E7.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/14/arts/dance/14lamama.html>

Mentioning maximalism in other art forms besides music is useful towards the discussion of the terms' definition. Seeing how the term may be used in a different art form can better inform readers of how the term can be used in differing contexts. Sulcas still writes for the New York Times, focusing literature mainly on dance.

9 Taruskin, Richard. "Strauss: Maximalizing Opera. Music in the Early Twentieth Century."

Oxford History of Music. Accessed November 13, 2021.

<https://www.oxfordwesternmusic.com/view/Volume4/actrade-9780195384840-div1-001012.xml>.

This source goes out of its way to define maximalism as a general term, and then use it to describe works from Richard Strauss to exemplify the definition. Having a source be so relevant to my topic is extremely useful, and the way it's written is both accessible and easily used to further the discussion within my paper. Taruskin is an incredible source for this topic, being a prominent musicologist, and professor at UC Berkeley. These specific writings on maximalism, and Strauss are perfect for the points I make within my paper.

10 West, Kanye. *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*. Roc-A-Fella Records, 2010, Streaming Audio.

https://open.spotify.com/album/20r762YmB5HeofjMCiPMLv?si=ZYCWX_LWTKaHJv81uV-vFw

A large portion of my observations regarding Kanye West comes from this album, so being able to use it in this paper is paramount to my success. This album encases most of the defining features of maximalism in my paper, and is widely considered to be one of the best rap albums ever made. Citing this album is quintessential my paper.

11 Youmans, Charles. "The Role of Nietzsche in Richard Strauss's Artistic Development."

Journal of Musicology 21, no. 4 (Fall 2004): 309–42.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/role-nietzsche-richard-strauss-artistic/docview/204967625/se-2?accountid=14608>

Examining prominent ideologies and influences in composers and their works holds value when comparing said composer or their art. Finding Nietzsche's influence on Strauss and his works can help better contextualize compositions/techniques used.

Youmans is a professor of Musicology and Music history with Pennsylvania State.

12 Zywiets, Michael. "Strauss, Der Fortschrittliche - Der Rosenkavalier Und Das Musiktheater

Der Moderne." *Archiv Für Musikwissenschaft* 65, no. 2 (2008): 152-167.

<https://du.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/strauss-der-fortschrittliche-rosenkavalier-und/docview/235109862/se-2?accountid=14608>.

Many of Strauss' works are used as comparative sources, in this case being compared to works by Wagner and Brahms, and the discussion of modernism too. The analysis of Rosenkavalier in the context of an 'ism' proves to be fruitful in my paper. Zywiec is an active author in many subfields of music, as well as a musicology professor for Musikhochschule Bremen.