



Submitted: 16/04/2026 - Accepted: 17/05/2026 - Published: 28/06/2026

Mediating Cultural Identity Through Music: A Social Analysis of Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Composition

**Iryna Antonyuk^{1*}, Myroslava Zhyshkovich², Anton Sopiga³, Yurii Kurach⁴,
Antonina Lisohorska⁵**

Department of Music History, Faculty of Musicology, Composition, Vocals and Conducting,
Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, Lviv, Ukraine

Department of Academic Singing, Faculty of Musicology, Composition, Vocal and Conducting,
Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, Lviv, Ukraine

Senior Lecturer, Department of Folk Instruments, Orchestral Faculty, Mykola Lysenko Lviv
National Music Academy, Lviv, Ukraine

Department of Folk Instruments, Orchestral Faculty, Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music
Academy, Lviv, Ukraine

Department of Academic Singing, Faculty of Musicology, Composition, Vocals and
Conducting, Mykola Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy, Lviv, Ukraine

* irant2007@ujis.in.ua

DOI: 10.26417/wcyxnd58

Abstract

The article explores how the synthesis of traditions and innovations in the work of contemporary composers functions not only as an aesthetic phenomenon, but also as a mechanism for the formation of cultural identity and a resource for educational practices. The relevance is due to the need to comprehend music as a socio-cultural and pedagogical tool in the era of globalization. The goal is to identify strategies for mediating identity through stylistic synthesis in the work of G. Zimmer, J. Tiersen, and E. Selvik. The methodology is based on qualitative content analysis and case studies within the framework of a socio-cultural approach, which allows interpreting stylistic features as manifestations of social meanings. Three models are identified: technological hybridization (Zimmer), which constructs a transnational emotional community; methodological low-fi authenticity (Tiersen), which articulates the values of individual sincerity; archaeological reconstruction (Selvik), which reactualizes ethno-cultural memory. These strategies have been shown to promote social cohesion, identity redefinition, and can be integrated into educational programs to develop critical thinking

and intercultural competence. The results are important for the sociology of culture, music pedagogy, and cultural policy.

Keywords: style, traditions and innovation, composer, performer, instrumental music, vocal music.

Introduction

The relevance of the article is due to the transformational processes that have engulfed modern composers' work, where an active synthesis of academic traditions and technological innovation is taking place. The stylistic evolution of musical art in the 21st century, especially in the context of global changes and technological progress, is one of the most multifaceted problems of modern musicology. As the composer and author of the soundtrack to the cult film "Amélie" Yann Tiersen noted in one of his interviews, "In more general terms, I think we're living in exciting times for music. This can be an exciting period or it can be really bad because it could go the other way and all the way back to the 50s" (Fifteen Questions Interview with Yann Tiersen, n. d.).

The composer's activity goes beyond the purely aesthetic function, acquiring a socio-performative and ideological-cultural significance. The need to study these processes is dictated by the need to understand a new stylistic language that is formed at the intersection of the hybridization of genres, the rethinking of the role of the artist as an active social subject, and the archaeological reconstruction of archaic instrumental and vocal layers.

The study of the synthesis of tradition and innovation requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses external socio-cultural, economic and technological factors, which we more specifically note in the literature review. In particular, scientific research related to the analysis of the role of a musical instrument in media transformations, hypermusic and the methodology of mixed approaches to enhance innovation are gaining importance. The connection of music with the political and cultural sphere and the radical changes in form, harmony and rhythm caused by the synthesis of traditional and new technologies are also emphasized. A separate, rapidly growing vector is the impact of AI on the creative process. However, a comprehensive stylistic analysis of the work of specific, polarly different composers who represent different strategies of innovation remains poorly studied, which determined the choice of the topic of the article and the methodology of its preparation and writing.

However, the social and educational role of such a synthesis remains neglected. In the 21st century, music has increasingly become a platform for discussing collective identity, historical memory and values, as well as a powerful didactic resource. Stylistic analysis of the work of composers who work at the intersection of tradition and innovation allows not only to describe artistic techniques, but also to understand how music constructs meanings that affect social cohesion, cultural belonging and

educational practices. Thus, this study shifts the focus from purely musicological stylistics to the sociocultural and pedagogical implications of composers' strategies.

The aim of the article is to reveal how the strategies of synthesizing traditions and innovations in the work of G. Zimmer, J. Tiersen, and E. Selvik function as tools for mediating cultural identity and what educational potential they have.

The object of research is the work of contemporary composers working in hybrid, instrumental, and vocal genres. *Subject of research*: stylistic synthesis of tradition and innovation, manifested in the compositional method, instrumentation, and philosophical concepts of Hans Zimmer, Jan Tiersen and Einar Selvik.

The research results have significant practical value for musicology and the educational process, providing an empirical basis for the study of innovative compositional techniques, particularly in the fields of neofolk, film composition and electronic minimalism. They can serve as a reference for creative industries and be used by sound designers and producers in the formation of a unique musical product.

Literature Review

In the monograph "New Paradigms for Music Research. Art, Society and Technology", the authors covered a number of important issues related to the modern functioning of musical practices: the role of a musical instrument in the context of media transformations and the concept of the media world; hypermusic as a tool for generating new practices and deepening the connection between art, philosophy and music; methodology of mixed approaches in the artistic, aesthetic and academic spheres to enhance the innovativeness of composition and performance; the growing trend towards convergence and blurring of the boundaries of classical music; the interpenetration of music and science (Murillo Ribes et al., 2022).

P. Tschmuck in his monograph offered a historical-analytical view of the music industry during the 20th century, which allows one to obtain one of the possible answers to the question of the mechanisms of generating novelty in this sector. The author outlines a network structure in which the production and distribution of music is a process based on the division of labor and the involvement of the latest technologies. It is this complex network that provides the possibility of mass consumption of music (Tschmuck, 2006).

J. Wang looked at classical music as a particular form of culture in everyday life, emphasizing its connection to the political-cultural sphere and society, rather than just individual creativity (Wang, 2018). *X. Y. Ma* emphasizes that 21st century music, especially piano music, is evidence of radical changes and multifaceted creative searches. Composers of the new century are actively experimenting with form, harmony, rhythm and classical timbres, synthesizing traditional and innovative methods of composition and the latest technologies. This has led to the emergence of a wide range of styles and genres that require performers to have high technical skills and individual interpretation (Ma, 2025). The article by *M. Borysenko, M. Chernyavska*

and N. Ocheretovska analyzes the experience of modern instrumental/orchestral transcriptions and improvisations on the works of Ludwig van Beethoven as an example of a virtual creative dialogue between the Viennese classic and artists of the 21st century. Beethoven's works become objects of composer interpretations in secondary genres (transcriptions, variations, improvisations, fantasies, pastiches, musical humor) in the work of many modern composers (Borysenko, Chernyavska & Ocheretovska, 2022).

N. Mozgalova and A. Novosadova in their article considered current musicological approaches to the definition of the concepts of genre and style in Ukraine, summarized the theoretical and methodological basis for studying the issues raised, identified and systematized genre and style features in the work of modern Ukrainian composers (O. Kozarenko, L. Dychko, V. Sylvestrov, E. Stankovych, etc.) (Mozgalova & Novosadova, 2023). G. Astalosh and Y. Sokolovskyy in their study focused on postmodern paradigms in Ukrainian music of the late 20th century, highlighting its national specificity. The authors emphasize that Ukrainian musical art, having been influenced by profound social and spiritual changes, has entered a qualitatively new phase, which is characterized by the synthesis of the experience of previous eras, European and national traditions, integrated through the Ukrainian mentality (Astalosh & Sokolovskyy, 2023). The article by I. Dovzhynets, M. Petrenko, A. Martyniuk, I. Kondratenko, H. Holiaka is devoted to the study of the philosophical foundations of the stylistic evolution of modern Ukrainian musical art, the analysis of its connection with national identity, global influences and socio-political events (Dovzhynets et al, 2024). The work by O. Batovska, N. Grebenuk, N. Byelik - Zolotaryova, Y. Ivanova, T. Sukhomlinova, I. Kaushnian. The article emphasizes the importance of preserving the classical principles of academic vocals as a fundamental basis, their active mixing with discoveries and achievements of other artistic spheres, as well as the modernization of the performance process (Batovska et al, 2022). Folklore elements in modern music were studied by I. Guliyeva and L. Kopanitsa. The authors emphasize that modern musicians are actively engaged in the cultural recontextualization of musical works, endowing them with new personal and sociocultural meanings (Guliyeva & Kopanitsa, 2024).

Also, given the rapid development of technologies, in particular artificial intelligence (AI), scholars are increasingly paying attention to the issues of the possibilities and limitations of using AI in the work of composers. In particular, S. Trump in his article focused on the integration of AI into music, considering it as a potential for rethinking traditional creative boundaries and forming co-creation that goes beyond the scope of human experience (Trump, 2024). F. Solomon analyzes the revolutionary impact of AI on the music industry, in particular on the processes of composition, performance and distribution. The author considered how tools based on machine learning, neural networks and generative models are used for melody creation, harmonization and orchestration (Solomon, 2025). The impact of AI tools and the creative productivity of music practitioners was examined by Haixia Ma, Yan Zhang, Xin Shan, Xiaoxi Hu.

The researchers found that the adoption of AI technology in the music field is significantly correlated with the level of creative training (formal education, experience with music software). At the same time, the integration of AI into the creative process is influenced by socio-economic indicators, among which age, gender and professional experience are key (Haixia Ma et al., 2025).

Music as a social phenomenon has long been a focus of cultural sociology. *Bourdieu & Ortiz (1983)* viewed musical tastes as markers of social distinction and cultural capital. In today's globalized world, music has become a space for identity negotiations (*Hay, Hall, & Grossberg, 2013*), where tradition serves as a symbolic resource and innovation as a tool for adapting to new social conditions. Research shows that hybrid musical forms can strengthen both national and transnational identities, creating "imagined communities" (*Sakalar, 2024*). Thus, stylistic synthesis in composers' work appears not only as an artistic but also as a socially constructive practice.

In parallel, there is growing interest in the pedagogical potential of contemporary music. Critical pedagogy (Freire, 2022) emphasizes dialogicity and the awakening of consciousness, and music education increasingly turns to contemporary repertoire to develop intercultural competence, critical thinking and emotional intelligence (Dobrota, 2024). The work of composers who combine tradition with innovation offers rich material for discussing themes of heritage, globalization and environmental awareness in educational settings. However, there is a lack of research that specifically analyzes how the stylistic features of such compositions can be used in pedagogical practice.

Research objectives (Aims)

The aim of the research is to identify strategies for synthesizing traditions and innovations in the work of G. Zimmer, J. Tiersen and E. Selvik. Through a stylistic analysis of their compositional methods, we systematize approaches to instrumental, technological and vocal creativity. This will allow us to classify synthesis strategies in the context of modern aesthetics.

Materials and methods

The methodological basis of the study is based on a comprehensive approach that combines theoretical and empirical methods. The systemic approach allows us to consider the creativity of composers as a holistic system of interconnected elements, while the historical-cultural method provides for the contextualization of their works within the framework of socio-historical processes. Using the methods of analysis and synthesis, complex stylistic components are decomposed into components and combined into a single conceptual picture.

The comparative method allowed us to compare the creative strategies of composers according to the criteria of the toolkit and attitude to traditions, identifying three vectors of innovation. Stylistic analysis provided a detailed study of the musical

texture and technical innovations of each artist, while conceptual analysis focused on the philosophical ideas and social mission of their work. Semiotic analysis helped to interpret the symbolic content of musical images, and the generalization method allowed us to formulate theoretical conclusions regarding the uniqueness of each author.

Conceptual analysis allowed us to explore the ideological and narrative foundations of creativity, in particular the social role of music and the archaeological mission of composers. Semiotic analysis provided the interpretation of musical signs and symbols that reveal the deep meaning of the works. Thanks to these methods, it was possible to combine the analysis of philosophical ideas with the interpretation of specific symbolic images.

Results

The analysis of the work of G. Zimmer, J. Tiersen and E. Selvik shows that the synthesis of tradition and innovation is a defining feature of contemporary music, realized through technological expansion, subjective reinterpretation and archaeological reconstruction. These composers demonstrate how the use of traditional foundations in combination with digital tools forms a new socio-cultural consciousness and ensures commercial success. The selected vectors of innovation, industrial, personal and archaeological, confirm the complex, non-monolithic nature of the contemporary compositional process. The examples presented reveal key trends: the rethinking of the social role of the artist through performative practices and the deconstruction of classical orchestration methods with the help of technology.

We have found that innovation manifests itself in two key dimensions: the reinterpretation of the social role of the artist through performative practices and the deep deconstruction of classical orchestration methods using digital technologies. Below, examples illustrating the outlined trends are examined in detail.

In this context, innovation is manifested in the synthesis of tradition and innovation and the rethinking of the role of the composer as an active social subject. This is confirmed by the tendency to shift the compositional focus from the object to the event. A striking example is the action of the famous Italian composer *Ludovico Einaudi*. The performer and composer performed his piece "Elegy for the Arctic" on a floating platform in the Arctic Ocean in 2016. This performance-installation, created in collaboration with Greenpeace, functions not only as instrumental music, but also as a musical act and a performative installation (The Best of Ludovico Einaudi. Greatest Hits 2024. [2 HOURS], 2016). Instrumental music has become a mediator of social will, broadcasting the voice of eight million people who demanded the protection of the Arctic. Here, art goes beyond the boundaries of the traditional concert hall into a real convivial space of global dialogue, demonstrating an ethical expansion of the traditional role of the artist. This illustrates how the integration of music and public activism creates a new, socially oriented model of compositional creativity, where the tools of art are used for effective social intervention and drawing

attention to pressing human problems, such as climate change. Thus, the compositional tradition takes on a new form, combining with social innovation. And the genre of classical music once again demonstrated its relevance and timelessness. For example, the composer Ludwig van Beethoven used his musical works to reflect the ideals of freedom and equality that prevailed during the French Revolution. A striking example is Symphony No. 3 ("Eroic"), which he originally dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte, admiring his revolutionary principles. However, after Napoleon proclaimed himself emperor, Beethoven, expressing his protest against tyranny, destroyed the page with the dedication, symbolically abandoning his former idol (Luigi, 2023).

The influence of classical music on popular culture through film and media emphasizes that contemporary creativity is not only an individual quest, but the result of a synthesis of tradition and innovation. Changes in the stylistic approaches of composers reflect their active involvement in a broad socio-cultural dialogue (Wang, 2018).

In particular, the big screen has become a key channel for bringing classical music to a wider audience. Iconic films such as Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* have presented the captivating beauty of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, associating the composition with a dystopian future. In addition, the modern Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer successfully integrates classical motifs into his film scores, such as *Inception* and *Interstellar*, capturing the imagination of millions and highlighting the timeless power of classical music (Luigi, 2023).

We will dwell in more detail on the work of composer G. Zimmer, because he is not only one of the brightest modern composers-performers, the most sought-after composer in Hollywood, who combines traditional approaches in music writing with innovations, but also a person with an active civic position (United 24, 2024).

G. Zimmer's work is an example of stylistic synthesis, where classical orchestral texture is deconstructed with the help of digital technologies to create unique soundscapes. The composer skillfully combines deep personal experiences with innovative sound processing, achieving maximum psychological depth without excessive sentimentality (Linton, 2025).

The soundtrack to "Pearl Harbor" is an example of stylistic synthesis, where G. Zimmer abandoned militaristic clichés in favor of the melancholic piano theme "Tennessee", expanded by digital processing of orchestral parts. This approach, which took root after "Gladiator", provided the music with a high degree of autonomy, turning it into an independent cultural phenomenon. In *The Da Vinci Code*, the composer employed a different strategy, combining orchestra, choir, and organ to create an atmosphere of sacred mystery, making the soundtrack an emotionally charged experience that received critical acclaim even despite the film's mixed reviews.

As director Ron Howard aptly noted, Zimmer's music is memorable and self-sufficient, allowing it to be enjoyed both in the context of the film and separately, which emphasizes its high artistic value and ability to create its own reflection for the listener. This indicates that the composer's stylistic decisions go beyond the scope of purely functional film accompaniment (Roberts, 2025). Thus, G. Zimmer uses technological innovation to enhance the traditional emotional expressiveness of music.

The creative collaboration between composer G. Zimmer and director K. Nolan is a landmark example of a creative symbiosis that has set new standards in the field of film composition. Their creative collaboration, which lasted for more than a decade (for example, the Batman trilogy), proved that the visual series and sound design are a single, inseparable whole, setting new trends in the audio design of modern blockbusters. For example, at the request of K. Nolan to form a powerful low-frequency sound that would resemble a distant signal from Space, G. Zimmer created a unique sound effect known as the "HORN BRAAM" (or "BRAAAM").

To achieve the desired effect, the composer used unconventional means, including mechanically holding down the damper pedal of a piano (with a heavy book) and using the brass section to simulate a piano echo. This element, created for only 5 seconds of music in the trailer, became a key stylistic marker and was quickly copied in trailers for many other blockbusters (Transformers, The Avengers, Prometheus), confirming its significant influence on the industry. The artist also demonstrated a deep understanding of the film's conceptual foundations by integrating Edith Piaf's song "Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien" as a structural element. The composer used the track in six-times slow motion (slowing the tempo), which became the musical equivalent of the cinematic idea of slowing down time at different levels of sleep. This trick with a stretched track confirms that G. Zimmer uses music to reflect the complex internal architecture of the plot (Varlamova, 2021).

It is worth noting that G. Zimmer's music acts not only as an accompaniment, but also as a catalyst for the formation of the plot. The musical theme created by G. Zimmer for K. Nolan in one day (without knowing the plot) became the basis for the future film "Interstellar", confirming that the musical idea can act as the primary architectural element of a cinematic idea. For example, and In "Interstellar" the authors see a conscious use of sound design to convey meaning, even at the cost of temporary intelligibility of dialogue. K. Nolan's decision about sound balance demonstrates their shared belief that music and sound effects are equal carriers of meaning alongside the characters' lines (Interstellar. Imperial Orchestra. Hans Zimmer's Universe, 2024).

The theme of time is the philosophical core of most of the duo's joint works, which is directly reflected in G. Zimmer's compositional method. The composer pays special attention to the rhythm and sound of a clock ticking, which serve as a metaphor for conveying the passage of seconds, minutes and years. This was most clearly manifested in the score for Dunkirk, for which K. Nolan provided his pocket watch to

sample its ticking. G. Zimmer's outstanding work with percussion and rhythm has led to his recognition as a trendsetter in the industry. *Spitfire Audio* has even released a collection of samples based on his percussion instruments, highlighting his contribution to the development of modern orchestral rhythm (Varlamova, 2021).

Over time, G. Zimmer formed his recognizable stylistic signature, which is based on a combination of traditional orchestral arrangements with electronic sounds. His style is characterized by high dynamics, tension and clear rhythmic pattern. These are the features that make his music universal, applicable both in video games (*Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*) and in futuristic cinema. For example, for the film "Dune" the artist created a unique musical world. The score for "Dune" is characterized by deep sound innovation. G. Zimmer did not limit himself to traditional orchestration and electronic samples, but actually "invented" audio dialects, that is, fragments that function as an alien language. In particular, a significant innovation is the signature sonic "riff," which the composer created in collaboration with vocalist Loire Kotler. This exclamatory wail functions as an aural signature of the desert planet, symbolically depicting Arrakis as a "banshee's cry." The use of harsh solo voices that permeate the music emphasizes the drama and exoticism of this world (Dune. Imperial Orchestra. Hans Zimmer's Universe, 2023; Roberts, 2025). This confirms his stylistic method of using technology to create unique, immersive soundscapes, which are an integral part of the fantasy narrative.

G. Zimmer's creative method is distinguished by a combination of intellectual search, emotional depth and extraordinary efficiency, which elevates film music to the level of conceptual art. Thanks to the careful contextualization and personalization of experience, the composer creates universal narratives that provide him with the status of a global innovator. If G. Zimmer acts as an architect of large-scale film canvases, then Jan Tiersen achieves similar emotional authenticity through the chamber form of acoustic miniature and lyricism. Both approaches demonstrate different strategies for rethinking music as a means of influencing the listener's consciousness.

Analysis of the work of composer G. Zimmer allows us to identify the main principles of his work, which underlie stylistic uniqueness and commercial success. These principles explain how the composer achieves a qualitative synthesis of traditions and innovation, determining the fate of motion pictures. For a clear understanding of his creative method, the authors propose to present the relevant material in the form of Table 1.

Jan Tiersen's creative style was formed at the junction of academic tradition and punk rock experiments, which later transformed into his author's sound signature using both classical and toy instruments (Rousseau, 2019). A significant stage for the composer was the album *Le Phare*, after which he began active concert activity. His latest release, the two-part album *Rathlin* from a *Distance / The Liquid Hour*, deeply explores the relationship between individual and social consciousness. In the first

part, based on the experience of a sea voyage in 2023, Tiersen offers introspective piano pieces that help to reject social stereotypes.

Table 1. Summary of Hans Zimmer's creative method

No. p/p	Defining a creative approach	Interpretation of the creative approach
1.	Careful research and integration of context	G. Zimmer does not view composition as an isolated musical process, but as an intellectually rich study. He immerses himself in the study of everything related to the project (literary sources, visual and color scheme). Contextualization ensures that the music always has a deep conceptual idea and is organically integrated into the overall aesthetics of the film.
2.	Emotional authenticity and personalization	The defining element is emotional sincerity and the ability to invest personal, lived experience in soundtracks. This authenticity transforms music into great art, as seen in his works dedicated to personal themes ("The Lion King" - the memory of a father, "Interstellar" - the relationship with his daughter). Personalizing emotional content is a powerful tool for achieving universal response.
3.	Methodical working capacity and accumulation of professional and life experience	The exceptional quantity and quality of the artist's works are a direct result of methodical and diligent work almost since childhood. Innovative success in the field of film composition requires not only talent, but also constant, purposeful activity aimed at creating not just another accompaniment, but an extraordinary musical artifact.

Source: (Varlamova, 2021; Roberts, 2025)

The composer views music not only as an artistic expression, but also as a call to real action and the fight against social restrictions. Tiersen skillfully combines minimalism and electronic experiments, creating a dialogue between personal experiences and collective responsibility (Yann Tiersen 's musical journey showcase this constant evolution and experimentation, n. d.).

Y. Tiersen's creative philosophy is based on the rejection of fixed forms and the constant rethinking of musical dogmas in a dynamic modern world. The composer puts sincerity above all else, viewing his own music not as an object of analysis, but as a "magical, shamanic force" (Fifteen Questions Interview with Yann Tiersen, n.d.). Tiersen consciously rejects the pursuit of perfection and tradition, preferring innovative electronic instruments, which he considers the most sincere means of transmitting energy. As an example, he cites work on a remix at the beginning of a full-scale war in Ukraine, when modular synthesizers allowed him to directly, without unnecessary dramatization, transfer his own anxious state into musical form (Fifteen Questions Interview with Yann Tiersen, n.d.).

Within his philosophy of unfixed identity and rejection of musical dogmas, J. Tiersen actively develops innovative strategies for working with sound, which involve a conscious avoidance of the computer. The composer notes that instead of using ideas in their traditional sense, he seeks to record them as a "sound bank" for further manipulation. This method is based on analog and physical experimentation. J. Tiersen demonstrates this with the example of creating remixes, where he uses the physical montage of a voice recording: a cassette was randomly cut into pieces and then glued back together. In addition, he actively uses granular synthesis and lo-fi techniques, such as recording instruments (for example, tubular bells) on a cheap tape recorder with subsequent playback at low speed (Fifteen Questions Interview with Yann Tiersen, n. d.). His fascination with cassettes and analog methods, despite their time-consuming nature, is a source of high creative potential for the artist, underscoring his transition from digital to tactile and experimental sound engineering.

If the creative methods of G. Zimmer and I. While Thirsen demonstrate an innovative evolution in the field of instrumental and electronic music, from the architecture of large-scale cinematographic settings to intimate acoustic miniatures, the vocal genre offers a third, no less important, path of contemporary composer innovation. In the context of growing interest in alternative spirituality and the blurring of the boundaries between sacred and secular music, this path lies through the archaeological reconstruction of the past. A vivid example is Einar Selvik (Wardruna), whose work, located on the border of ancient pagan folk music and neofolk aesthetics, creates a unique composer scene (About Wardruna, n. d). Unlike the technological synthesis of G. Zimmer and J. Tiersen, E. Selvik achieves his contemporary relevance through the revival of deep cultural and vocal traditions, which confirms the multi-vector nature of innovative processes in contemporary music.

The fading of traditional religiosity and interest in esotericism have contributed to the emergence of neofolk, which blurs the boundaries between the sacred and the secular. A striking example is Einar Selvik (Wardruna), who, through the synthesis of pagan traditions and metal aesthetics, revives ancient cultural layers and creates a new format of interaction with the listener.

The creative style of E. Selvika (Wardruna, founded in 2003) r. with Lindy-Faye Ella and Christian "Gaal" Espedal) is a unique example of innovation based on authentic tradition. Although modern neofolk is closely associated with Norwegian black metal (in particular, through the involvement of former members of this genre in Wardruna), E. Selvik consciously departed from his aesthetics, offering a radically different sound (Kapralova, 2021; Videos, n. d.).

Wardruna's innovation lies in the complete rejection of distortion and the use of exclusively acoustic instruments, which forms a naturalistic, ambient sound space. A key element in the synthesis of tradition and extreme genre is E. Selvik's vocal manner. He developed a unique singing style, partly inspired by Tuvan throat singing, which, at the same time, has stylistic proximity to the distorted vocals of Norwegian black metal bands. The artist gives this style a deep traditional, sacred meaning, comparing it to seid, that is, a form of magic mentioned in Scandinavian mythology (Videos, n. d.). Thus, the composer performs a double innovation: he purifies the sound to its acoustic essence, but at the same time preserves the energetic and vocal connection to the radical music scene.

E. Selvik revives archaic traditions, using authentic instruments and symbols of Scandinavian paganism combined with a simple aesthetic. Performing in historically significant locations, he sacralizes contemporary performances, transforming them into a holistic project of cultural heritage restoration (Artist Profiles: Einar Selvik, 2020; Roe, 2019, p. 17).

E. Selvik's creative method demonstrates conceptual innovation, based on the revival of the Scandinavian tradition and its opposition to modernity. Wardruna's lyrics are integrated into an ancient cultural tradition, inspired by Scandinavian mythology and skaldic poetry. The songs are performed not only in modern Norwegian, but also in Old Norse and Proto-Norse (Videos, n.d.). The focus is on Scandinavian culture and its contrast to modern Norwegian society, which, in E. Selvik's opinion, is excessively focused on Christianization. The composer publicly expresses his skepticism about the current representation of history (for example, in the context of the bicentennial of the Norwegian constitution), which emphasizes his ideological mission as a catalyst for historical consciousness. The desire to emphasize and revive the connection with the pagan past influences the choice of locations and times for recording and performances. In addition to using historically significant venues, the band time their performances to key dates, such as the winter solstice. By performing at sacred locations and at specific times of the year, Wardruna not only offers music, but also encourages the audience to further historical exploration, transforming the concert into a cultural and educational experience (Kapralova, 2021; Roe, 2019, p. 22).

E. Selvik stands out among neofolk performers with his academic approach to art. His deep knowledge of pre-modern Scandinavian paganism is a meaningful basis for his work. Wardruna often performs at cultural festivals aimed at the reconstruction and preservation of knowledge, and E. Selvik himself conducts seminars (for example, at Midgardsblot in 2019) on the topic of Old Norse heritage. Almost all of the band's

lyrics are taken directly from the Younger and Elder Edda and the poetry of the skalds. For example, the song "MannaR - Liv" is thematically based on the story of Asku and Embla from "Gylvi's Visions". The album "Skald" demonstrates vocal innovation through the minimization of the instrumental part, focusing on E. Selvik's vocals and the reinterpretation of early songs in the form of skaldic poetry and episodes from "The Prophecies of Velva" (Kapralova, 2021; Roe, 2019, p. 24).

Einar Selvik's creative style demonstrates a rare compositional innovation, based on a deep ecological dialogue and the philosophy of "new through old." Selvik does not simply imitate the past, but creates a modern, authentic and unique sound, using the wisdom and instruments of ancient times in combination with modern soundscapes and nature recordings.

E. Selvik conducts a "continuous dialogue with nature", considering his creative process as a "hunt for songs" among the elements. This philosophy is embodied in his sixth studio album "Birna" ("She-Bear" in Old Norse, 2025). Tradition here acts not only as an aesthetic source, but also as a deep conceptual tool. The album is dedicated to the image of the She-Bear, the guardian of the forest, who in the myths of the Northern Hemisphere appears as a totem, a respected mentor and guide. Through this archaic symbol, the artist appeals to the forgotten identification of Man with Nature (About Wardruna, n. d.). E. Selvik's innovation lies in reinterpreting the ecological crisis through mythological imagery, such as the composition "Birna", which recalls the unity of man with nature. He achieves this by synthesizing archaic instruments with modern soundscapes and environmental recordings (Videos, n. d.).

Thus, the creative method of E. Selvik is not limited to reconstruction. It is an active philosophical act that provides an opportunity to remember the past for the sake of the future. Tradition for E. Selvik is not just an inspiration, but a methodological basis for modern musical and vocal art.

A stylistic analysis of the work of three contemporary composers demonstrates that the synthesis of tradition and innovation occurs along three main, yet complementary vectors. *Hans Zimmer* embodies technological innovation, where the classical orchestral tradition is deconstructed and amplified through digital processing and unique sound effects ("BRAAM"), transforming music into an architectural element of the cinematic narrative.

Jan Tiersen is a representative of methodological innovation, consciously rejecting digital dogmas and the idea of perfection. His path is connected with tactile, analog manipulation of sound, where acoustic miniatures are opposed to electronic experimentation, which serves as a means of directly translating emotional states into musical form.

Einar Selvik (Wardruna) offers archaeological innovation, achieving contemporary relevance through a profound revival of archaic vocal and instrumental traditions. His method includes the purification of sound to its acoustic essence, the use of Old Norse languages and musical instruments, and the sacralization of performative space (performances in historical locations).

Thus, the compositional tradition of the 21st century is not monolithic, but represents a complex, borderland space where innovation manifests itself both in futuristic technologies and in a conscious return to ancient cultural origins. For clarity, the authors suggest focusing the results obtained in the form of a diagram (Figure 1).

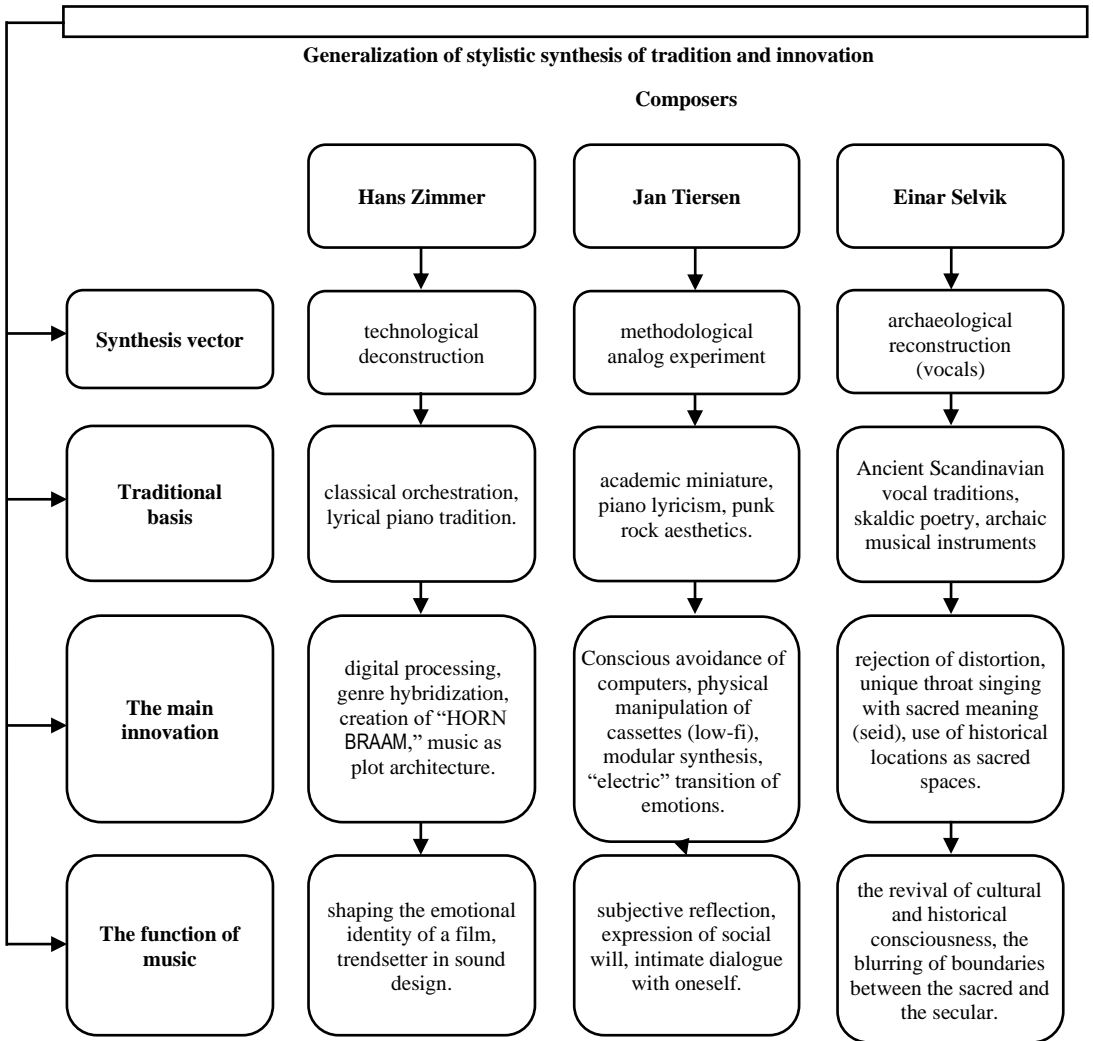


Figure 1. Generalization of the stylistic synthesis of traditions and innovation. Source: About Wardruna (n. d.); Fifteen Questions Interview with Yann Tiersen (n. d.); Kapralova (2021); Roberts (2025); Roe (2019); Rousseau (2019); Varlamova (2021); Videos (n. d.)

Stylistic analysis demonstrates that composers' creative strategies not only renew musical language but also shape social meanings. From Zimmer's transnational emotional communities and Tiersen's quest for authenticity to Selvik's ethnocultural reconstruction, each approach offers a unique educational resource.

Discussion

Contemporary musical practice demonstrates a deep integration of extra-musical factors into the artistic process, where the individual identity of the composer and his stylistic articulation become important objects of aesthetic reception (Murillo Ribes, Monreal, Tejada & Carabías, 2022). Art critic and art historian N. Bourriaud proposed the concept of “relational art” (“art of interaction”) in the second half of the 1990s. This approach, within the framework of “relational aesthetics”, demonstrates a fundamental rejection of the object as the sole source of meaning (Patow, 2019; Ungprateeb Flynn, 2022). A key innovation of relational art is the shift in compositional focus from a static artifact (such as a painting or sculpture) to the creation of an open, shared space. The tendency the authors have identified to shift the compositional focus from the object to the event (for example, L. Einaudi's performance “Elegy for the Arctic”) is a direct confirmation of the principles of relational aesthetics, where instrumental music becomes a conglomerate of social communication in a convivial space. Artistic activity is a dynamic process where viewers or listeners become co-authors, creating a space for the interaction of subjectivities. In modern conditions, the criterion of “novelty” loses its exclusivity, and the synthesis of genres becomes a reaction to social changes and a rethinking of traditions (Bourriaud, 1998; Gelbart, 2007).

In the context of modern music culture, the reception of a musical product is inextricably linked to the identity (persona) of its creator, which is a significant factor in influencing the listening audience. The performer cultivates and exploits a unique, discrete image (brand), which is manifested through visual, verbal and performance elements, reinforced by mass communication and digital platforms (Sylvester, 2017).

The formation of a personal stylistic code is a fundamental factor in musical perception, determined by the interaction between the sound structure and its semantic load. The effectiveness of such communication is measured by the authenticity and ability of music to cause catharsis, questioning the dominance of the verbal text as the main instrument of expression (Marston, 2020, p. 11). The studied composers demonstrate different ways of achieving this communicative goal: Zimmer through the personalization of emotions in cinema, Tiersen through the “electric” transmission of sincere experiences, and Selvik through archaeological authenticity and the revival of ancient traditions.

The analysis of contemporary compositional practices requires the study of how non-verbal parameters of music, such as timbre, rhythm, harmony and form, affect the psycho-emotional state of the listener. Stylistic analysis should take into account not only the internal structure of the work, but also the socio-cultural context and the

ideological mission of the author, since it is this complex of factors that forms the synthesis of traditional and innovative means of expression.

Conclusions

Stylistic analysis of the work of Hans Zimmer, Jan Tiersen and Einar Selvik confirmed our thesis about the multi-vector nature of the synthesis of tradition and innovation as one of the defining features of contemporary compositional practice. Contemporary music functions as a border space, where innovation manifests itself not only in futuristic technologies, but also in a conscious, methodological return to archaic cultural origins.

The authors discovered and identified three synthesis strategies that form the stylistic code of 21st century composers. *First*, this is technological innovation (Hans Zimmer). This is characterized by the deconstruction of the classical orchestral tradition through hybridization with digital processing and sound design (for example, the "HORN BRAAM" effect). Innovation consists in transforming music from accompaniment into an architectural, conceptually rich plot element (as in the films of K. Nolan), which establishes the status of a composition as a self-sufficient and commercially viable artifact.

Secondly, it is about methodological innovation (Jan Tiersen). This model is based on subjective experimentation and a conscious rejection of the idea of perfection and digital dogmas. The innovation lies in the use of analog and lo-fi techniques (physical manipulation of sound), which allows achieving an authentic, undramatized transition of personal emotions into musical form.

Thirdly, this is archaeological innovation (Einar Selvik). The authors consider it the most radical vector, where relevance is achieved through a deep reconstruction and sacralization of archaic traditions (Old Norse languages, flour instruments, vocal techniques). Innovation in this case consists in creating a new ecological and historical dialogue with the past, where the concert space becomes a cultural, educational and sacred act.

Innovation in contemporary music is not exclusively stylistic, but has a distinctly socio-performative dimension. Through the prism of relational aesthetics (N. Bourriot), it is clarified that there is a clear shift in compositional focus from the object to the event. Performances (for example, L. Einaudi's action in the Arctic) create a convivial space where music becomes a mediator of social will and dialogue. This expands the traditional role of the artist, establishing the composer as an active social subject capable of influencing social processes and cultural identity

The synthesis of traditions and innovations in the work of composers serves as a powerful tool for the formation of cultural identity. Such approaches have significant educational potential, developing critical thinking, intercultural competence and civic awareness. Thus, the results of the study become a valuable resource for the implementation of new interdisciplinary training modules in art education.

References

- [1] About Wardruna (n. d.). *Wardruna*. URL: <https://www.wardruna.com/about/>
- [2] Artist Profiles: Einar Selvik. (2020, Yuly 18). *World Music Central*. URL: <https://worldmusiccentral.org/artist-profiles-einar-selvik/>
- [3] Astalosh, G., & Sokolovskyy, Y. (2023). Postmodern Accents in the Works of Ukrainian Composers of the Late XX Century. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*. Volume 15. Issue 2. P. 324-341. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/15.2/736> URL: <https://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/rrem/article/view/6103>
- [4] Batovska, O., Grebenuk, N., Byelik-Zolotaryova, N., Ivanova, Y., Sukhomlinova, T., & Kaushnian, I. (2022). Traditions and innovations in contemporary vocal and choral art. *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai – Musica*. № 2 (67). P. 73-98. URL: <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1083928>
- [5] Bourdieu, P., & Ortiz, R. (1983). *Pierre Bourdieu* (Vol. 39, pp. 122-155). URL: <https://surl.li/zzxmke>
- [6] Borysenko, M., Chernyavska, M., & Ocheretovska, N. (2022). Composers' Dialogues with Beethoven. *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*. Volume 53. № 1. P. 37-56. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48689100>
- [7] Bourriaud, N. (1998). *Relational Aesthetics*. Les presses du reel. 40 p. URL: https://www.kim-cohen.com/seth_texts/artmusictheorytexts/Bourriaud%20Relational%20Aesthetics.pdf
- [8] Dobrota, S. (2024). Cultural Intelligence, Intercultural Efficacy and Age as Predictors of Students' Musical Preferences—the Role of Intercultural Music Education. *International review of the aesthetics and sociology of music*, 55(1), 159-180. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48778407>
- [9] Dovzhynets, I., Petrenko, M., Martyniuk, A., Kondratenko, I., & Holiaka, H. (2024). Philosophical foundations of the stylistic evolution of modern musical art: the Ukrainian dimension. *Synesis*. Volume 16. № 4. P. e3186-16 - e3186-41. URL: <https://seer.ucp.br/seer/index.php/synesis/issue/view/149>
- [10] Dune. Imperial Orchestra. Hans Zimmer's Universe. (2023, April 9). *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yclmAXaS0Pg&t=1s>
- [11] Fifteen Questions Interview with Yann Tiersen. (n.d.). *Fifteen Questions*. URL: <https://15questions.net/interview/fifteen-questions-interview-yann-tiersen/page-1/>
- [12] Freire, P. (2022). *Pedagogía liberadora: Antología Paulo Freire*. Los libros de la Catarata. URL: <https://surl.li/rdvapb>
- [13] Gelbart, M. (2007). *The Invention of «Folk Music» and «Art Music»»ю Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*. Cambridge University Press. 287 p. URL:

- https://hugoribeiro.com.br/area-restrita/Gelbart-Invention_folk_art%20music.pdf
- [14] Guliyeva, I., & Kopanitsa, L. (2024). Folklore in contemporary music: Revival of cultural traditions. *Interdisciplinary Cultural and Humanities Review*. Volume 3 (2). P. 24-34. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59214/cultural/2.2024.24>
- [15] Haixia Ma, Yan Zhang, Xin Shan, & Xiaoxi Hu. (2025). Exploring the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Creativity Perception of Music Practitioners. *Journal of Intelligence*. № 13(4), 47. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence13040047> URL: <https://www.mdpi.com/2079-3200/13/4/47>
- [16] Hay, J., Hall, S., & Grossberg, L. (2013). Interview with Stuart Hall. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 10(1), 10-33. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2013.768404>
- [17] Interstellar. Imperial Orchestra. Hans Zimmer's Universe. (2024, Mai 27). *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vopJjERwRSg&t=69s>
- [18] Kapralova, A. Kapralova, A. (2021, February 3). Against the Modern World: Neofolk and Authentic Ritual Experience. *Plomin*. URL: <https://plomin.club/neofolk-against-modern/>
- [19] Linton, S. (2025, March 25). Hans Zimmer says the Lion King score was a requiem for his late father. *Classic FM. The Most Relaxing Music*. URL: <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/zimmer/hans-zimmer-lion-king-interview/>
- [20] Luigi, F. (2023, July 10). Classical Music: The Harmonious Voice of Social Change. *Piano lessons London. WKMT Specialised Piano Teachers For All Ages*. URL: <https://www.piano-composer-teacher-london.co.uk/classical-music-in-the-society/>
- [21] Ma, Xin Yu (2025). Eatures of 21st century piano music. *Scientific notes*. Series: Pedagogical sciences. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36550/2415-7988-2025-1-219-381-385>
- [22] Marston, K. (2020). *Critical Listening. An Introduction to Classical Music*. Mount San Antonio College, Walnut, CA. 230 p. URL: <https://files.znu.edu.ua/files/Bibliobooks/Inshi78/0058119.pdf>
- [23] Mozgalova, N., & Novosadova, A. (2023). Genre-style innovations in the oeuvre of modern ukrainian composers. *Baltic Journal of Legal and Social Sciences*, № 4. P. 56-63. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30525/2592-8813-2022-4-7>
- [24] Murillo Ribes, A., Monreal, I., Tejada, J. & Carabías, D. (2022). *New Paradigms for Music Research. Art, Society and Technology*. ARTSLAB Contemporary Art Education. Universitat de València. 202 p. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7203/PUV-OA-532-0> URI: <https://hdl.handle.net/10550/84460>
- [25] Patow, C. (2019). *Relational aesthetics: creativity in the inter-human relational aesthetics: creativity in the inter-human sphere*. Virginia

- Commonwealth University Virginia Commonwealth University. VCU Scholars Compass VCU Scholars Compass. 40 p. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25772/XXVZ-AD37> URL: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/5756/?utm_source=scholarscompass.vcu.edu%2Fetd%2F5756&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages
- [26] Roberts, M. S. (2025, September 12). Hans Zimmer's 10 best film scores – ranked from good to Interstellar. *Classic FM. The Most Relaxing Music*. URL: <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/zimmer/best-film-scores-interstellar/>
- [27] Roe, S. (2019). Against the Modern World: NeoFolk and the Authentic Ritual Experience. *Literature & Aesthetics*. Volume 29. No. 2. P. 15-31. URL: <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/LA/article/view/14263>
- [28] Rousseau, Yann Tiersen - Comptine d'un autre été (Amélie). (2019, January 14). *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PaXKf0JEzEA&t=2s>
- [29] Sakalar, A. (2024). The role of musical practices in the formation of transnational identities among migrant communities. *Journal of Music Theory and Transcultural Music Studies*, 91-104. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15031815>
- [30] Solomon, F. (2025, April 28). The Influence of Artificial Intelligence on Music Composition and Performance: Opportunities, Challenges, and Ethical Considerations. *Zenodo*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15295637> URL: <https://zenodo.org/records/15295637>
- [31] Sylvester, S. (2017). *A transfixive tale: life of the artist as a self-brand*. PhD Thesis, Cardiff University. *ORCA. Online Research @ Cardiff*. URL: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/106366/>
- [32] The Best of Ludovico Einaudi. Greatest Hits 2024. [2 HOURS]. (2016, June 20). Joan Alfons's Piano. *YouTube*. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwM4ajjPrzI>
- [33] Trump, S. (2024). AI Composers and Cyborg Performers: More-than-human Creativity in Music. *Cultural Science Journal*. № 14 (1). P. 71-76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/csj-2022-0010> URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383990375_AI_Composers_and_Cyborg_Performers_More-than-human_Creativity_in_Music
- [34] Tschmuck, P. (2006). *Creativity and Innovation in the Music Industry*. Published by Springer, P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands. 282 p.
- [35] Ungprateeb Flynn, A. (2022). Relational Art. *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea2480> URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea2480>
- [36] United24. (2024, October 14). Hans Zimmer, the acclaimed composer known for his work with films like Dune, The Lion King and Gladiator, supported

- Ukraine during his concert in Los Angeles. *Facebook*. URL:
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1080930206883367>
- [37] Varlamova, N. (2021, November 3). Soundtrack Monopolist Zimmer. How Hans Zimmer Became the Most Popular Composer in Hollywood. *Skvot Mag*. URL: <https://skvot.io/uk/blog/monopolist-saundtreka-zimmer>
- [38] Videos. (n. d.). *Wardruna*. URL: <https://www.wardruna.com/videos/>
- [39] Wang, J. (2018). How classical music is embedded in a cultural public sphere? *Música Hodie, Goiânia*. Volume 17. Nº 2. P. 112-120. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5216/mh.v17i2.46860> URL: <https://revistas.ufg.br/musica/article/view/46860/25590>
- [40] Yann Tiersen's musical journey showcases his constant evolution and experimentation. (n. d.). *Yann Tiersen*. URL: <https://www.yanntiersen.com/about>