

## Heroic Melodramas *Kalevipoeg's Dream* and *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* by Rudolf Tobias: Background and Compositional Strategies

**Abstract.** Among the works of the Estonian composer Rudolf Tobias (1873–1918), the two melodramas for narrator and orchestra, *Kalevipoeg's Dream* (1907) and *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* (1913), hold a rather peculiar position. Based on the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* (1861) by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, these melodramas have mostly been neglected in discussions of Tobias's oeuvre as mere preparations for a more substantial *opus* that he never managed to write, a *Kalevipoeg*-related opera. As this article strives to demonstrate, these melodramas rather represent a genre that was well established by that time, and they can be considered as a significant contribution to musical mythologism in the post-Wagnerian era. While these melodramas appear as an outpouring of Tobias's national pathos, *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* is also an exercise in fin-de-siècle “decadent” imagery that was meant to appeal to an international audience. In the second part of the article, I propose a method for visually describing the relationship between spoken text and musical form in these works, facilitated by options provided in the Estonian speech recognition and transcription editing service (<https://tekstiks.ee>).

**Keywords:** melodramas, Estonian music, epic poetry, mythology, speech recognition.

“Vanemuine, lend me your lyre!” (“Laena mulle kannelt, Vanemuine!”). With this verse begins the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg* by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882), published in 1857–1861. The poetic device used in the opening section of *Kalevipoeg*, and typical of much of epic poetry, is known as “invocation”—an address the imaginary poet makes to a muse or deity (in this case Vanemuine, the Estonian equivalent of the godly bard Väinämöinen of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*)<sup>1</sup> with a request to help him “pour into a song” the legacy of ancient ages. A mission to elevate Estonian folk poetry<sup>2</sup> to Homeric grandeur in its twenty cantos and a total of slightly more than 19 000 lines of verse, Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* became what could be described as a “nation-building epic” (Talvet 2011, 507): a work of literature that seemed to capture the very essence of Estonian cultural and political aspirations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Kreutzwald's epic found its musical champion in Rudolf Tobias (1873–1918), whose output includes two concert melodramas for narrator and orchestra: *Kalevipoeg's Dream* (*Kalevipoja unenägu*; f.p. 1907) and *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* (*Kalevipoja epiloog*; f.p. 1913). Tobias's choice to pay tribute to *Kalevipoeg* in the form of melodramas is not as unexpected as it may seem. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, concert melodramas enjoyed much popularity in Northern and Central Europe, and remarkably many of such works are concerned with mythology or visions of the ancient past. Melodrama, a quasi-theatrical chimera of a genre that it appears to be, could not be more suitable in conveying certain mysterious or strange topics, the two melodramas by Tobias being a case in point: in *Kalevipoeg's Dream*, the hero Kalevipoeg (can be translated as “Son of Kalev” or “son of the Kalev Heroes”) falls into a magical slumber for seven weeks, and *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* depicts his gruesome death and afterlife as the guardian of the underworld.

In Estonian historiography, Rudolf Tobias traditionally enjoys the reputation of a founding figure in the musical scene in the early 20th century. Among the generation of Estonian composers who rose to prominence during the first decade of the 20th century, Tobias was exceptionally ambitious in setting his creative goals. Having received his musical training at the St Petersburg Conservatoire, Tobias contributed to the concert life in the Estonian city of Tartu and then, in 1908, settled in Germany. It was in Leipzig that his *magnum opus*, the Biblical oratorio *Jonah's Mission* (*Des Jona Sendung*), was premiered in 1909, and in 1912 he joined the teaching staff of Königliche akademische Hochschule für Musik in Berlin (Voelker 2012, 62–64). While striving to win recognition as a composer in Germany, he remained passionate about the Estonian national cause. As Tobias expressed in one of his articles in 1911, Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* was for him like a “telescope” through which he could observe his homeland while far away in Germany (Tobias 1995, 91).

<sup>1</sup> Despite some characters and narrative elements in common, the two epics—the Finnish epic *Kalevala* (published in the 1830s and 1840s) and the Estonian epic *Kalevipoeg*—are quite different in their overall tone. As noted in Hasselblatt (2006, 240), there appears to be more mystique and symbolism in *Kalevala*, while *Kalevipoeg* also exhibits a fair amount of bloodstained naturalism. The latter can be witnessed in the two *Kalevipoeg*-based melodramas by Rudolf Tobias.

<sup>2</sup> Kreutzwald's *Kalevipoeg* is written in Estonian alliterative verse, according to the metric structure of *regilaul*, a Baltic-Finnic tradition of folk poetry also known as *Kalevala* song, runic song or runo song.

The term “melodrama”—performing spoken text (either in prose or verse) against musical backdrop—accommodates various musical and theatrical practices. Melodramas can be stand-alone works, but melodramatic scenes also occur in opera or *Singspiel*. From its beginning in the 1770s, emotional explicitness in conveying its literary subject was one of the characteristics of that genre. The librettos of late 18th-century melodramas (for example, those composed by Jiří Antonín Benda) mainly drew on Greek or Roman myths and often “had at their core frenetic emotional outbursts and the oscillation between extreme affects” (Maurer Zenck 2009, 361). At the same time, the connotations of the word “melodramatic” were greatly shaped by 19th-century popular theater, in which “emotional impact facilitated by exaggeration was a primary objective of the playwright and an expectation from the observer” (Mabary 2021, 7).

In the Romantic era, visions of the “noble past” continued to be as influential as they had been in the Age of Enlightenment, but its roots were now perceived not so much in Greek antiquity but rather in one’s local rural past and folk heritage. The idea that folk songs are the true manifestation of “the spirit of the people” (*Volksgeist*), proposed by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), was embraced by movements of cultural and political liberation in various regions of Europe. In 1830s Norway, Henrik Wergeland coined the metaphor of two halves of a broken ring to describe the Norwegian state founded in 1814 on the one hand and its distinguished medieval past on the other—a divide that, he suggested, could be overcome by concentrating on Norway’s rural heritage and folk songs (see Grimley 2006, 34–35).

These moods of retrospection are exemplified in several of the melodramas written in the Nordic countries. *The Gold Horns* (*Guldhornene*, 1832) by the Danish composer Johan Peter Emilius Hartmann (1805–1900) is a contemplation on the gold horns of Gallehus, ancient artifacts that, stolen in 1802 and irretrievably lost, became a symbol of Danish Romanticism. Hartmann’s melodrama, its duration approximately 11 minutes, adheres closely to Adam Oehlenschläger’s rather voluminous poem where blissful and ominous visions of nature are juxtaposed, leading to the narrator’s exclamation against a fittingly *con fuoco* orchestral backdrop at the end of the melodrama: “Storm-winds bellow, blackens heaven! / Comes the hour of melancholy; / Back is taken what was given, — / Vanished is the relic holy” (English translation according to Oehlenschläger 1913).

A sense of loss predominates also in Edvard Grieg’s melodrama *Bergliot* (1871, orchestrated 1885), a story of how “the noblest chief of the Northland” Einar Tambarskjelve and his son Eindride were cowardly murdered by Harald Hardråda, as told from the perspective of Tambarskjelve’s widow Bergliot. Grieg’s *Bergliot*, based on Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson’s poem, aptly exemplifies the above-mentioned “emotional explicitness” that pervades much of the history of melodramas. In Grieg’s melodrama, Bergliot’s grief unfolds almost in accordance with what is known in psychology as the “five stages of grief” (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance)—a hypothesis proposed by the psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) to describe the grief experienced by a dying person, which later came to be applied in more varied grievous contexts.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Kübler-Ross’s observation about the various stages of grief, contested as it may be in more recent psychological research, has narratological precedents in 19th-century literature, as exemplified in Bjørnson’s poem and Grieg’s melodrama.

In the first half of the 1870s, Grieg was, in collaboration with Bjørnson, preoccupied with several works that drew on Norwegian history and legends. Among their joint plans was even a work as ambitious as a “Norwegian national opera” with the medieval Norwegian king Olaf Tryggvason as its protagonist, a project that, however, did not come to fruition (Dinslage 2018, 186).

Analogously to how Edvard Grieg planned to compose a “Norwegian national opera” in the 1870s, Rudolf Tobias is known to have been engaged with writing an “Estonian opera” on *Kalevipoeg* in the years preceding World War I. Estonian society, then under the rule of czar Nicholas II (the Estonian Republic was established in 1918), found itself in a process of political and cultural upheaval in the opening decade of the 20th century. The sentiments of that period are best summarized in a slogan that in 1905 was proposed by the poet Gustav Suits, a leading figure of the literary movement Young Estonia (Noor-Eesti): “Let us remain Estonian but

<sup>3</sup> In Bjørnson’s poem, Bergliot rushes to the battle scene and, in disbelief (“Oh, it is they! – / Can it so be? – / Yes, it is they!”), demands to see the two dead bodies, whom she recognizes as Einar and Eindride. In some editions, the narrator is instructed to “commence with solemn dignity and gradually lose her self-control” in *Andante molto*, as Bergliot announces the death of Einar and Eindride (“Fallen the noblest / Chief of the Northland; / Best of Norwegian / Bows is broken”). Bergliot then calls her people for vengeance, but—realizing that revenge, even if served by the gods, is ultimately useless because it cannot bring back the dead—returns home in silent acceptance, accompanied by a funeral march.

become Europeans at the same time!” What the Young Estonians had in mind was modernization of Estonian culture and literary criticism according to the fin-de-siècle models of Nordic and French literature, and Tobias was one of those who generally sympathized with these cosmopolitan objectives. In response to these calls for “Europeanization”, Tobias’s post-Wagnerian harmonic idiom in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* ventures arguably further into modernist grounds than in any of his other major works.

While Tobias’s opera never materialized, as he died in Berlin in 1918, the two Kalevipoeg-related melodramas eloquently demonstrate the fin-de-siècle sensibilities that fascinated him in connection with the epic perhaps even more than its national fervor. Unlike most of Tobias’s other works, which have enjoyed a renaissance in Estonia since the 1970s, the two melodramas remain in relative obscurity and are currently available only in manuscript. In the body of literature on Tobias available in Estonian, there has been a tendency to view these two melodramas as mere preparations for an opera that ultimately remained unwritten. This, however, is misleading: the two melodramas are self-sufficient works that were meant to be performed (and, indeed, were performed during Tobias’s lifetime) as concert pieces, similarly to a number of other concert melodramas written in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In view of the Baudelairean topics propagated by the adherents of the Young Estonia movement, Tobias’s choice of subject matter for his two melodramas was very much in line with the overall literary sentiments of the time. While *Kalevipoeg’s Dream* concentrates on the forging of Kalevipoeg’s sword (Twelfth Canto in Kreutzwald’s epic), *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* presents the gruesome demise of the Estonian troubled hero brought about by a curse put on that mighty weapon (Twentieth Canto). Therefore, in effect, Tobias’s melodramas can be regarded as a diptych: *Kalevipoeg’s Dream* provides the background necessary to understand the cause of the events depicted in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*. The final Twentieth Canto is the most substantial in Kreutzwald’s epic, and it can be described as a relatively independent “micro-epic” (an epic within the epic). At the same time, the literary topics Tobias chose for the two melodramas linger in the mythical realm of Richard Wagner’s *Ring* cycle, evoking magic weaponry (Kalevipoeg’s sword vs Siegfried’s Nothung) and bleak scenes of the “twilight” of heroic figures.

*Kalevipoeg’s Dream* draws on the story of Kalevipoeg’s magical sleep: fallen into a slumber for seven weeks, visions of his previous journey to the Finnish blacksmith Ilmarine (Ilmarinen) appear to Kalevipoeg, and so does the phantom of Ilmarine’s son whom he had killed in a bout of rage while drunk. In revenge, Kalevipoeg is destined to be slaughtered by his own sword. In the final canto, Kalevipoeg’s feet are severed by the cursed sword, previously stolen from him, as he steps into a certain Kääpa River. Tobias’s choice of Kalevipoeg’s death as the focus of his second melodrama is particularly emblematic of the turn-of-the-century artistic sentiments, which often found their manifestation namely in images of bodily dismemberment (consider, for example, the severed head of Jokanaan, as featured in Oscar Wilde’s tragedy *Salome*). *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* starts at the point when Kalevipoeg has already suffered fatal injuries and the sages of the deity Taara gather to judge his post-mortal destiny, and it concludes with a somber depiction of Kalevipoeg banished to the gates of hell, where he serves his double role as both a prisoner and the guard: “There he sits astride his horse / Now the son of the Kalev Heroes / With his hand bound to the cliff, / Keeps a watch o’er all the gates, / Guards in shackles th’other’s shackles” (English translation according to Kreutzwald 2011, 485–486; see also Kreutzwald 1961, 392).

Admittedly, the depiction of Kalevipoeg’s gruesome death in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*, extracted from its overall literary context, may appear to be nothing short of extravagant. Yet, this markedly morbid work was premiered on an occasion as festive as the opening of the Estonia theater and concert house in Tallinn on 25th August 1913 (O.S.)—a building erected, to the dismay of the czarist authorities, as an architectural symbol of Estonian cultural aspirations. Tellingly, the spoken text in Tobias’s melodrama ends just before the final verses in Kreutzwald’s epic, thus excluding the celebrated premonition of Kalevipoeg returning from dead as a quasi-Promethean hero: “But one day there comes a time, / When all spills at both their ends will / Start outright to flare up bright; / Flames of fire will cut outright / His hand from stone fetters loose—/ Surely Kalev will then come home to / Bring his people fortune true, / Build Estonia anew.” Although, hypothetically, other motivations behind the omission of these uplifting verses could be considered (such as exercising caution to avoid czarist censorship), purely dramatic reasons seem to have dominated in this case. In an article on the epic *Kalevipoeg*, Tobias (1995, 94) described these final verses, due to the faux optimism that Kreutzwald had injected in them, as the “weakest in the whole epic.” It was the gloomy vision of “dark clouds gathering”

in anticipation of the catharsis of a true *Götterdämmerung* that inspired Tobias in connection with the final canto of the epic, not its potential for political allegory.

That said, it was not uncommon in the period in question to deploy the genre of melodrama as a means of promoting certain political ideas: melodrama was regarded as a means of conveying the text in the most direct and evocative fashion, empowered by the presence of music. This is the case in Jean Sibelius's *Snöfrid* (1900), "an improvisation" for recitation, mixed choir and orchestra, based on a poem by Viktor Rydberg, which includes a melodramatic episode of undeniably combative undertones: "Better the noble poverty of battle / Than the dragon's deceitful repose upon the gold /... / Fight the hopeless fight and die nameless. / That is the true heroic saga of life."

*The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* was also featured in the program of a concert of Tobias's music on 22nd January 1914 at the Königliche Hochschule für Musik, Berlin (Voelker 2012, 66–68).<sup>4</sup> As Tobias recalled in his correspondence (Tobias 2012, 130), present at the concert was the composer Engelbert Humperdinck who came to congratulate him during the intermission and "praised" his works. Humperdinck, whom Tobias knew in connection with his duties at the Hochschule, was one of the most dedicated advocates of the genre of melodrama in Germany. Another notable presence at the concert was Jean Sibelius, as very briefly documented in Sibelius's diary (Mäkelä 2013, 179–180). Although the entry in Sibelius's diary does not quite reveal what his reactions to Tobias's melodrama may have been, one must have perceived this work as an Estonian response to the various *opuses* that Sibelius had written on the Finnish epic *Kalevala*.

### Ways of Storytelling in Melodramas: An Analysis Facilitated by Methods of Speech Recognition

In melodramas, the way of how spoken text is combined with musical (in this case orchestral) accompaniment emerges as one of the primary analytical concerns. Two main compositional strategies can be distinguished in this regard, also resulting in distinct ways of storytelling: 1) Orchestral sections (during which the narrator remains mute) alternate with recitation (without or with minimal accompaniment), the recitation thus serving as a poetic introduction to the orchestral section that follows. 2) Spoken text is performed consistently throughout the work, mostly simultaneously with the music played by the orchestra. These two compositional strategies can be encountered, respectively, in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* and *Kalevipoeg's Dream*.

Which one of these two strategies dominates in a melodrama can be demonstrated visually by analyzing recorded performances of that work. The goal is to represent the musical timeline of Tobias's melodramas so that segments featuring spoken text (with or without orchestral accompaniment) are highlighted. In analyzing Tobias's melodramas, I deployed the Estonian speech recognition and transcription editing service, developed by Aivo Olev and Tanel Alumäe (2022) at the Tallinn University of Technology, the graphical user interface of which can be accessed at the website <https://tekstiks.ee>. The sound recordings submitted to that service for speech recognition are: *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*, performed by the actor Heino Mandri, Estonian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and conductor Neeme Järvi (1973), and *Kalevipoeg's Dream*, performed by Tamar Nugis, Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, and conductor Olari Elts (2023). Although not designed for a usage scenario as specific as this (speech recognition in a musical context), the Estonian speech recognition and transcription editing service yielded overall reliable results in visualizing the presence or absence of spoken text by means of the audio player with navigable sound waveform included in the user interface.

Example 1 presents the sound waveform of the recording of Tobias's melodrama *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*, with segments featuring spoken text highlighted in gray (performed either by the narrator alone, as in the opening 24 seconds of the recording, or with orchestral accompaniment).<sup>5</sup> Also, an English translation (by Triinu Kartus in Kreutzwald 2011) of the text performed in those segments is provided in this example. Of the total duration of that performance (10 minutes and 45 seconds), segments with spoken text form only slightly more than 2 minutes in total, and the melodrama includes several substantial sections performed by the orchestra alone (relating to the verdict to revive Kalevipoeg's dead body in *Andante lugubre* and his ride on

<sup>4</sup> At the Berlin concert, the melodrama (*Epilog "Kalew's letzter Ritt"*) was paired with the ballad *Sest Ilmanetsist ilusast (Vom Ringlein der schönen Lufffee)* for soprano and orchestra, jointly described in the program notes as "two episodes from the Estonian national epic Kalevipoeg."

<sup>5</sup> In a few cases, the presence of spoken text was not detected by the software (in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* at 4:30) and, therefore, these segments have been highlighted manually in the scheme.



a white horse to the gates of the underworld in *Allegro*). Therefore, of the two compositional strategies mentioned, the first one dominates in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*: rather lengthy orchestral sections, during which the narrator remains mute, alternate with recitation. Considering that *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* is scored for a large orchestra with organ (plus male choir that enters to perform just one line of verse: “Hit your fist into the cliff!” [“Raksa kalju rusikaga!”]), this approach was inevitable, as otherwise the narrator would have been overshadowed by the orchestral forces.

Verses 981–990:

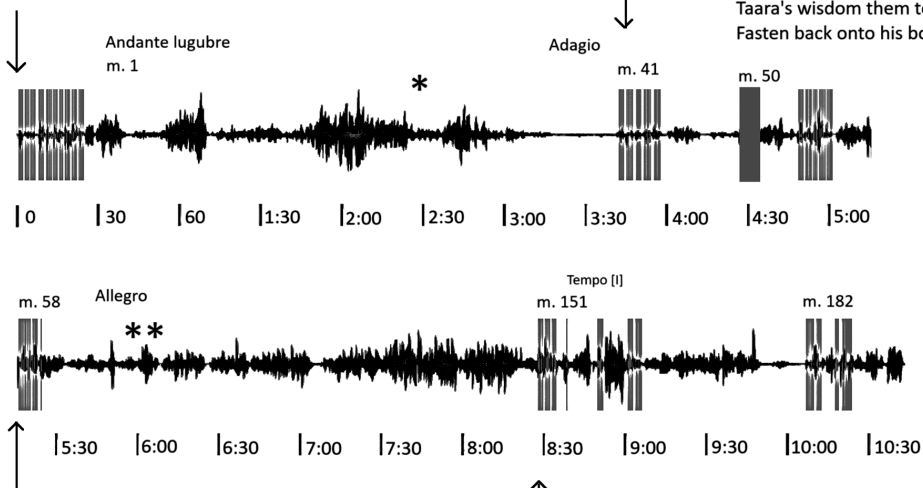
Taara's heavenliest of sages  
In one mind they then thought out a  
Ruling fin'ly all together:  
Mighty son of the Kalev Heroes  
Would be put to be Hell's warden  
Put to guard the underworld,  
Keep a watch o'er all its gates,  
To upbraid the Old Horned One,  
So that fellow from his ties,  
Evil one wouldn't slip his fetters.

Verses 991–995:

Spirit from his stiffened body,  
Dovekin, who had gone to heaven,  
Was compelled to right away  
Walk back in that now cold body,  
To take up position there.

Verses 996–1003:

The Kalev Hero's now cold body  
Rose again to be revived  
From his head down to the knees,  
But his legs left in the river,  
Hapless haunches torn from him  
No force of the gods was ever able,  
Taara's wisdom them to mend,  
Fasten back onto his body.



Verses 1004–1007:

Then the Kalev Heroes' son was set  
On a horse of white astride,  
'Long the secret paths was sent  
To the borders of Hell's kingdom

Verses 1012–1020:

[Narrator:] When the son of the Kalev Heroes  
Rolled up to those gates of stone,  
To the door of the underworld,  
From above there came a shout:  
[Male choir:] "Hit your fist into the cliff!"  
[Narrator:] Wrenching with his heavy hand he  
Split the mighty cliff asunder, –  
But his paw in stone was fettered,  
Fist was held fast in the boulder.

Verses 1021–1025:

There he sits astride his horse  
Now the son of the Kalev Heroes  
With his hand bound to the cliff,  
Keeps a watch o'er all the gates,  
Guards in shackles th'other's shackles.

\*  
Archi

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Example 1. Sound waveform of the 1973 recording of *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* (Twentieth Canto from Kreutzwald's epic): orchestral sections, during which the narrator remains mute, alternate with recitation.

In melodramas with orchestral writing as elaborate as in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*, the aesthetic premise is not dissimilar to that of a Romantic genre par excellence: the symphonic poem. As demonstrated in Joanne Cormac's (2017, 285) study of Franz Liszt's symphonic poems, the aesthetics of melodrama had a strong impact on Liszt's output and 19th-century musical sensibilities in general. A symphonic poem, if propelled by a work of literature or philosophical contemplation, is usually meant to be performed so that the program is revealed to the audience in printed program notes, allowing the listener to decipher the literary intentions of the composer as the music unfolds. In concert melodramas, a similar mimetic goal is achieved by different means: the literary program, rather than printed, is presented as recited text during the performance. If symphonic poems can be pictorial in musically representing their literary sources (for instance, César Franck's *Le chasseur maudit* exemplifies many of the 19th-century favorite musical topics related to hunting calls, horseback riding, and malediction), the same is true even to a greater degree in melodramas performed as concert pieces—a genre in which literary explanations are almost impossible to ignore while listening to the work.

*The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* relies on certain late 19th-century practices of musical signification in order to illustrate the uncanny story of reviving Kalevipoeg's dead body as a result of divine intervention. The central *Allegro* section, with its horn calls and tumultuous triplet figures, is built on the topic of horse riding ("Then the Kalev Heroes' son was set / On a horse of white astride"), and the melodrama concludes with a depiction of Kalevipoeg in hell, in which case descending whole-tone passages are in order—a device that, during the second half of the 19th century, became increasingly common in alluding to diabolical or otherwise mysterious topics.

The second compositional strategy (spoken text is performed throughout the work, mostly simultaneously with the music played by the orchestra) is represented in *Kalevipoeg's Dream* (Example 2). Here the narrator is active rather consistently for the whole duration of the work, with the exception of a short orchestral interlude at the beginning of *Andantino* (ca 6:00). It serves to depict daybreak and Kalevipoeg's awakening from magical sleep, surrounded by forest murmurs, and it includes a quotation of the well-known Estonian song *When I Was Still Young* (*Kui mina alles noor veel olin*). In this type of melodrama, musical form is tightly intertwined with the narrative presented in the recited text. The excerpt from the Twelfth Canto of Kreutzwald's epic that Tobias used as the basis of the melodrama is composed as a frame story (mm. 1–20, 21–102, and 103–134), the outer sections describing Kalevipoeg falling into slumber and awakening ("frame"), while the inner section contains a recollection of the forging of Kalevipoeg's sword in Ilmarine's smithy, as well as a story told by the ghostly bloodstained stranger (a reminder of Kalevipoeg's guilt) and Kalevipoeg's vain attempt to respond to his allegations. In conjunction with references to Kalevipoeg's slumber in the "frame" of the story (Example 2, music sample \*), Tobias uses a leitmotiv characterized by whole-tone chord structures and descending movement in the upper voice, in accordance with the 19th-century practice of depicting magical sleep by various means of chromatic harmony (e.g., the *Schlafmotiv* in Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*).

In Example 3, a page from the manuscript score of *Kalevipoeg's Dream* is reproduced, which serves to illustrate the problematics of reciting epic poetry in close relationship with orchestral accompaniment. The orchestration is markedly sparse in this particular episode in order to set the focus on the recitation. In Tobias's score, spoken text is provided above the staves of the string section, and although rhythm is not prescribed in the recitation part, the narrator must take care to keep pace with the music. For instance, as the forging of the sword is mentioned ("Secretly the sword was fashioned / In a small secluded smithy, / In a hidden cliff cave belly"), an imitation of the sounds of forging, played by cymbals, appears promptly. When the narrator continues to reveal that the workshop was of none other than the Finnish master blacksmith Ilmarine ("Deep inside this secret hill the / Journeyman of blacksmith Ilmar, / Master craftsmen underground, / Had set up the best of forges"), a figure of triplets, played by the clarinets, is given in Tobias's score—probably in reference to the opening movement of Jean Sibelius's Second Symphony (1902), elevated then to the status of a general symbol for Finnishness.

This kind of pictorialism, often encountered in 19th- and early 20th-century melodramas, underlines the role of melodramas as the *non plus ultra* of the literary mimetic preoccupations of the Romantic age. At the same time, this very feature has led melodramas as such to be perceived, at least from the viewpoint of certain threads in 19th-century aesthetics, as artistically problematic. While the multitude of melodramas composed in the 19th century attests to the former popularity of that genre in theater and on concert platforms, opinions over the aesthetic merits of melodramas remained markedly divided throughout that era.

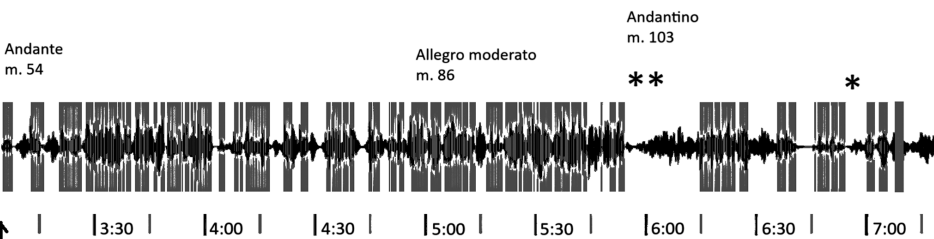
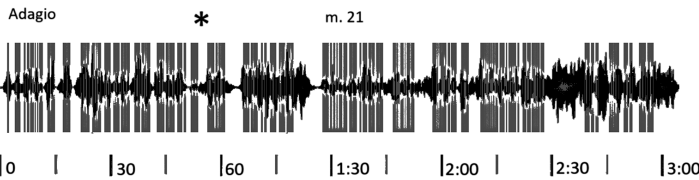
**Frame**

Kalevipoeg's Dream

Verses 496–505:  
 Came the night, then rose the sun,  
 Rolled the sun, then rowed the evening  
 There anew to seam the night,  
 In a twirling repetition  
 As laid down by Grandfather's law.  
 Into months the days had grown,  
 Into months stretched calm of nights;  
 Dear good son of the Kalev Heroes  
 On his couch lay motionless,  
 Slept the sleep of wretchedness.

Verses 523–:  
 Secretly the sword was fashioned  
 In a small secluded smithy,  
 In a hidden cliff cave belly.

Deep inside this secret hill the  
 Journeymen of blacksmith Ilmar [Ilmarine],  
 Master craftsmen underground,  
 Had set up the best of forges



Verses 565–:  
 With a timid tread these steps  
 Such a wan and pallid mankin  
 O'er the threshold in the smithy  
 /.../  
 Bloody welts were on his neck,  
 Bloody streaks were on his garment,  
 Bloody droplets were on his cheeks,  
 Some around his mouth congealed.

There the stranger started talking,  
 With entreaties speaking thus:  
 "Don't go using up your steel,  
 Wasting here your precious iron  
 On a sword meant for a murderer!"

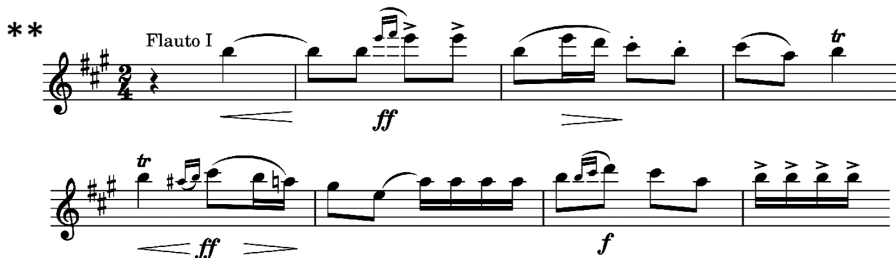
Verses 600–:  
 Mighty son of the Kalev Heroes  
 Wished the stranger merely liar,  
 Scandalmonger just to call him  
 /.../

**Frame**

Verses 628–642:  
 At this time the rising sun  
 Hemmed the sky with shades of scarlet,  
 Shook the fogbanks into hiding.  
 There the stars start waning as they  
 Fell asleep on heaven's edge.  
 Dew upon the grasses glistened,  
 In the tranquil shadows round him  
 Lay the world from night's lap risen.  
 From all this the strong man noted,  
 Dear good son of the Kalev Heroes,  
 That the forms he'd just now seen  
 Had just been deceitful dreaming;  
 But of this he had no knowledge,  
 That for seven weeks he had been  
 Sleeping in his couch's lap.



Kalevipoeg's Slumber



When I Was Still Young (*Kui mina alles noor veel olin*)

Example 2. Sound waveform of the 2023 recording of *Kalevipoeg's Dream* (Twelfth Canto from Kreutzwald's epic): spoken text is performed consistently throughout the work, mostly simultaneously with the music played by the orchestra.

Example 3. A page from Tobias's manuscript score of *Kalevipoeg's Dream*.

To illustrate the creation of Kalevipoeg's sword in the workshop of the Finnish blacksmith Ilmarine, an imitation of the sounds of forging appears in Tobias's score, as well as a Sibelius quotation played by the clarinets.

## Conclusions

Rudolf Tobias's melodramas *Kalevipoeg's Dream* (1907) and *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* (1913) are eloquent examples of the two main compositional strategies that can be encountered in melodramas for narrator and orchestra. Melodramas with orchestral accompaniment posed several problems in terms of compositional technique in the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century, as the text performed by the narrator could easily be sonically overshadowed by the orchestra. Therefore, in melodramas with a fully-fledged orchestral style (*The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*) it was inevitable to compose the work in such a way that orchestral sections, during which the narrator remains mute, alternate with those featuring spoken text (without or with minimal accompaniment). The recitation thus functions as a poetic introduction to the orchestral section that follows. A different compositional strategy can be experienced in *Kalevipoeg's Dream* in which spoken text is performed rather consistently throughout the work, mostly simultaneously with the music played by the orchestra. That method not only calls for a certain kind of transparency in the orchestration but also results



in a particularly close relationship between the recitation and its musical “comments” (the imitation of the sounds of forging in *Kalevipoeg’s Dream* being a case in point).

Which one of the two compositional strategies dominates in a melodrama can be visualized by analyzing a recorded performance of the work and deploying methods of speech recognition, as a result of which a sound waveform scheme is produced, with segments featuring spoken text highlighted. Depending on the properties of the recorded sound, the Estonian speech recognition and transcription editing service (Olev and Alumäe 2022), or similar tools developed for other languages, can be deployed to facilitate creating such analytical schemes.

Notwithstanding these differences in compositional strategies, Tobias’s two melodramas form a diptych by virtue of their common literary topic. *Kalevipoeg’s Dream* concentrates on the forging of Kalevipoeg’s sword—the very same cursed sword that, in *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*, causes the death of the protagonist by dismemberment. Based on the epic *Kalevipoeg* by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald, a monument of Estonian literature and a notable instance of European epic poetry in the Romantic era, these two melodramas inevitably appear to be an outpouring of Tobias’s national pathos. At the same time, however, the particular story that Tobias chose from the epic also evokes the kind of bloodstained symbolism that can be associated with the fin-de-siècle “decadent” cultural situation. Tobias’s Kalevipoeg-related works are remarkable manifestations of early 20th-century mythologism and warrant further scholarly attention in the growing body of research dedicated to the genre of melodrama.

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## Rudolfo Tobiaso herojinės melodramos *Kalevipoeg's Dream* ir *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*: kontekstas ir kompozicinės strategijos

### Santrauka

Dvi estų kompozitoriaus Rudolfo Tobiaso (1873–1918) melodramos pasakotojui ir orkestrui – *Kalevipoeg's Dream* (1907) ir *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* (1913) – užima savitą vietą tarp kitų jo kūrinių. Šios melodramos, sukurtos pagal Friedricho Reinholdo Kreutzwaldo estų epą *Kalevipoeg* (1861), aptariant Tobiaso kūrybą dažniausiai buvo ignoruojamos ir traktuojamos tik kaip pasirengimas stambesniai opusui (kurio jam taip ir nepavyko parašyti) – operai. Straipsnyje siekiama parodyti, kad minėtos melodramos veikia atstovaujant tuo metu jau nusistovėjusiam žanrui ir gali būti laikomos reikšmingu indėliu į muzikinių mitologizmą po Wagnerio epochos. Antroje straipsnio dalyje siūlomas metodas, kaip galima vizualiai reprezentuoti šių kūrinių sakinio teksto ir muzikinės formos santykį, kurį atskleisti palengvina estų kalbos atpažinimo ir transkripcijos redagavimo priemonių teikiamos galimybės.

Minėti Tobiaso kūriniai yra iškalbingas dviejų pagrindinių kompozicinių strategijų, su kuriomis susiduriama melodramose pasakotojui ir orkestrui, pavyzdys. XIX a. ir XX a. pirmaisiais dešimtmečiais melodramos su orkestro akompanimentu kėlė nemažai kompozicinės technikos problemų, nes pasakotojo atliekamą tekstą orkestras galėjo lengvai garsiškai užgožti. Todėl melodramos su visaverčiu orkestro vaidmeniu (tokios kaip *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg*) buvo komponuojamos taip, kad orkestrinės padalos (kaip pasakotojas tyli) kaitaliojosi su tomis, kuriose skamba sakytinis tekstas (be akompanimento arba su minimaliu pritarimu). Vadinasi, deklamavimas funkcionuoja kaip poetinė įžanga į paskesnę orkestrinę padalą.

Kitokią kompozicinę strategiją galima įžvelgti *Kalevipoeg's Dream*, kurioje kalbamasis tekstas skamba gana nuosekliai per visą kūrinių, dažniausiai vienu metu su orkestro grojama muzika. Tokiam metodui būtinas tam tikras orkestro faktūros skaidrumas, bet kartu jis lemia itin glaudų deklamavimo ir jo muzikinių komentarių ryšį (pvz., kalimo garsų imitacija *Kalevipoeg's Dream*). Kuri iš šių dviejų kompozicinių strategijų melodramoje dominuoja, galima pamatyti analizuojant kūrinio įrašą ir pasitelkiant kalbos atpažinimo metodus, kuriais sukuriamas garso bangos vizualinė reprezentacija su išryškintais sakinio teksto segmentais. Siekiant palengvinti tokių analitinių schemų kūrimą, galima pasitelkti estų kalbos atpažinimo ir transkripcijos redagavimo priemonę (Olev ir Alumäe 2022) arba panašias kitoms kalboms sukurtas priemones.

Nepaisant aptartų kompozicinių strategijų skirtumų, abi Tobiaso melodramos dėl bendros literatūrinės temos sudaro dipdiką. Melodramoje *Kalevipoeg's Dream* daugiausia dėmesio skiriama kalavijo kalimui – tam pačiam prakeiktam kalavijui, kuris kitoje melodramoje *The Epilogue of Kalevipoeg* lemia pagrindinio veikėjo mirtį. Šie du kūriniai, sukurti remiantis epu *Kalevipoeg* (estų literatūros paminklu ir žymiu romantizmo epochos Europos epinės poezijos pavyzdžiu), neišvengiamai atrodo kaip Tobiaso nacionalinio patoso išraiška. Vis dėlto konkretūs kraujo simbolika prisodrinti epizodai, kuriuos pasirinko Tobiasas, gali būti siejami ir su *fin-de-siècle*, t. y. dekadentiška, kultūrine situacija.