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# Narratives and exploration in a musicology app: Supporting scholarly argument with the *Lohengrin TimeMachine*

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## ABSTRACT

We present the *Lohengrin TimeMachine* web application, consisting of video and textual musicological essays supported by an interactive digital companion. The digital companion allows a user to browse and compare all the occurrences of a motive in the opera *Lohengrin*, viewing them by text, vocal score and orchestration, with detailed views, segment labelling, audio excerpts and textual commentaries supporting the exploration. The video and essay modes show live links into the companion as the viewer or reader progresses through the narrative. This application is built on Linked Data technology and demonstrates the viability of such an approach, with the knowledge graph being traversed in the user's browser to gather the materials for display. It uses the Music Encoding and Linked Data (MELD) framework, which provides the basis for a range of music-related Linked Data applications.

In this paper, we describe and illustrate the application in use, its technological underpinnings, as well as the motivation and implementation experience.

## KEYWORDS

digital musicology, linked data, web applications, music encoding

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Musicology is often presented in linear, textual form, even though its materials are complex and multimodal. Scholarship must necessarily simplify and dramatically reduce complexity in order to make an ordered prose argument that others can follow. The process of producing these more constrained narratives is a central part of scholarly communication. The ability to step from such texts into a

more detailed interaction with the scholar's observations, and their intellectual and evidential bases, is also an important research skill.

In the digital realm, it becomes possible to bring these two sides closer together – the directed, expert narrative can be made available alongside its marshalled evidential materials. This supports a richer experience of scholarly narrative, but also the freedom to explore counter-narratives and alternative paths through the information provided.

In this paper, we introduce an application that is intended for just this purpose. We present the *Lohengrin TimeMachine*, a web application in which two pieces of linear musicological scholarship – a textual essay and a 30-minute video – are augmented by a digital companion that supports user-driven interactive, multiple-path exploration of related material. This material, which includes musical notation, audio, analytical content, and textual quotation, can be explored with or independently from the narrative.<sup>1</sup>

The application is intended to be accessible to enthusiastic amateurs as well as scholars, and concerns Richard Wagner's use of motives in his early opera, *Lohengrin*, advocating a more sophisticated understanding than *Leitmotiv* guides often communicate. It is optimised for use with a tablet, without excluding other means of browsing. The musicological content was conceived, written and, for the video, presented by co-author Laurence Dreyfus, a Wagner specialist, with the companion realised through a multi-disciplinary collaboration.

The application combines and presents web-published resources connected using Linked Data, maximising the ability for rich information to be reused by different parts of the system or, indeed, for other applications seeking to use the same material. The app thereby also serves as a practical demonstration of the strength and viability of building user-facing applications directly upon web-published Linked Data.

Central to the value of this digital companion is the combination of rich resources with an expert guide through them. The richer and more complex the data that we make available, the more helpful narrative structures become, particularly as we begin an investigation. These structures act as golden threads leading us through the complexity, giving perspectives and priorities for future exploration. We believe it is a necessary consequence of this mix that musicological, technical, and design expertise are all required for a successful result, leading inevitably to a significant joint endeavour. Improving software libraries and tooling can greatly reduce the time and effort required, but not remove them – instead we should

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<sup>1</sup>Links to the app and a standalone version of the video can be found at: <http://um.web.ox.ac.uk/lohengrin>

look to software to maximally convey the valuable knowledge and skills encapsulated in the digital resource.

## 2 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

Although hypertext is a well-established concept, and HTML and related technologies have long been capable of supporting rich multimedia applications, they have relatively rarely been used to support scholarly musical narratives. When they have been used, they are usually bespoke applications with little reuse possible of code or data.

In library and museum contexts, web content is usually produced by content management systems, enriched with plug-ins for browsing digitised material from the organisation’s collection. For example, the British Library system, SiteCore, powers sites such as *Discovering Literature* and *Discovering Music*. These are sites with an educational purpose, which are navigable by multiple paths and can be explored by topics (such as those required by UK schools’ curricula). Such sites are hypertextual in nature, but the articles within them remain linear texts, even though augmented with media plugins where figures might be, including page turning and zooming of images, viewing of videos and so on.

At the other end of the spectrum, less narrative-led, more exploratory digital library publishing systems such as Greenstone[1] can also provide powerful ways of search and discovery in large digital collections. A rich, music-specific browsing experience has also been realised using Open Linked Data as part of the DoReMus project, bringing together media, and music-analytical and historical information[6].

Going below the level of whole works and metadata, to incorporate musical extracts into the hyperstructure can produce richer hypermedia[9], but integration can be a challenge in terms of connecting temporal sub-units[3]. Often a spine is created in terms of clock ticks or absolute time slices (e.g. [11]) or, for music notation, spatial co-ordinates ([8]), while a more structural approach has been used for HyTime[2] and the Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL)<sup>2</sup>. Once resources are linked into a hypermedia publication, many applications become possible – as does the possibility of building multiple very different applications on the same hyperlinked data. Whether for want of commercial interest or lack of resourcing, compelling examples are rare (although, see [10] for some exceptions). Some attention has been given to the specifics of making musical extracts web accessible[12], but much modelling work remains to be done.

## 3 USING THE APPLICATION INTERFACE

The *Lohengrin TimeMachine* digital companion is presented as a multimedia web application, optimised for tablet – specifically an iPad Pro – but fully functional on a desktop machine with mouse control. Using the application can be divided into two types of activity: (i) following a provided musicological narrative and (ii) exploring a digital companion to those narratives. In the sections that follow, we refer to these as narrative-led and exploratory modes.

### 3.1 Narrative-led modes

We provide two **modes** of narrative-led interaction – a textual **essay** and a **video**. Both narratives assess the way in which Wagner transforms motives for dramatic purposes throughout the opera. These narratives discuss many musical elements, such as key region and orchestration, along with the structure of the motives themselves, particularly the motive known as *Frageverbot*.

This motive is associated with Lohengrin’s prohibition, banning his betrothed, Elsa, from asking about his identity or past. It is divided into two structures which can occur together or separately, an x-segment that introduces the ban (*‘Nie sollst du mich befragen’*, ‘Never shall you ask of me’) and a softer y-segment that alludes to Lohengrin’s secret past (*‘woher ich kam der Fahrt,/ noch wie mein Nam’ und Art!’*, ‘whence I came, my name or my kind’). These structures are indicated and labelled in the score pane on the left in *figure 1*. The antagonist character Ortrud aims to defeat them both by persuading Elsa to break the prohibition, and the conflict between Ortrud’s influence and Lohengrin’s is played out in transformations of the motive in a way that the essays characterise as the ‘magical realm’ (Ortrud) and the ‘grail realm’.

*The textual essay.* The text of the **essay** is presented to the user in the central pane of the screen (see *figure 2*). Below, as on all screens in the application, is an automatically-generated **timeline**. The **timeline** is divided into acts and scenes, and each iteration of the *Frageverbot* motive is marked on the **timeline** as a vertical line, giving an overview of its distribution through the opera. The colour of line used reflects the character of that iteration – which of the two realms (‘grail’ or ‘magical’) dominates that occurrence. One motive iteration that was cut before the first performance is represented as a dashed line.

The application provides two dynamic elements to the user, both in the right-hand pane. An index of motive iterations provides jumping points for the essay itself, with short quotes from the prose helping the user choose where to jump to. An alternative tab in the pane (shown in *figure 2*) responds to iterations mentioned in the visible text and provides recordings of them, along with navigable links into the relevant free-exploration part of the app.

The reader can thus either read the essay in a fully linear manner, with the added visual support of the **timeline** and audible support of the sidebar, or they can jump more freely around the essay itself, exploring the parts that discuss a particular iteration, or they can leave at any point to explore the application itself, returning to the point they left off.

*The video essay.* The **video** provides a very similar experience for the user, if they watch it from within the application – it is also available on YouTube. A similar pane layout (see *figure 3*) puts the video in the centre with the **timeline** below. As the video is viewed, the right hand pane again provides audio clips from the opera and links into the more self-driven parts of the application.

Unlike the textual essay, the video also serves as a guide to the app, explicitly showing and referring to it, when the viewer is encouraged to click on links or listen to particular motives. As with the essay, on their return, the viewer who followed an outward link will come back to the same point in the video at which they left it.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.w3.org/TR/REC-SMIL3-20081201/>

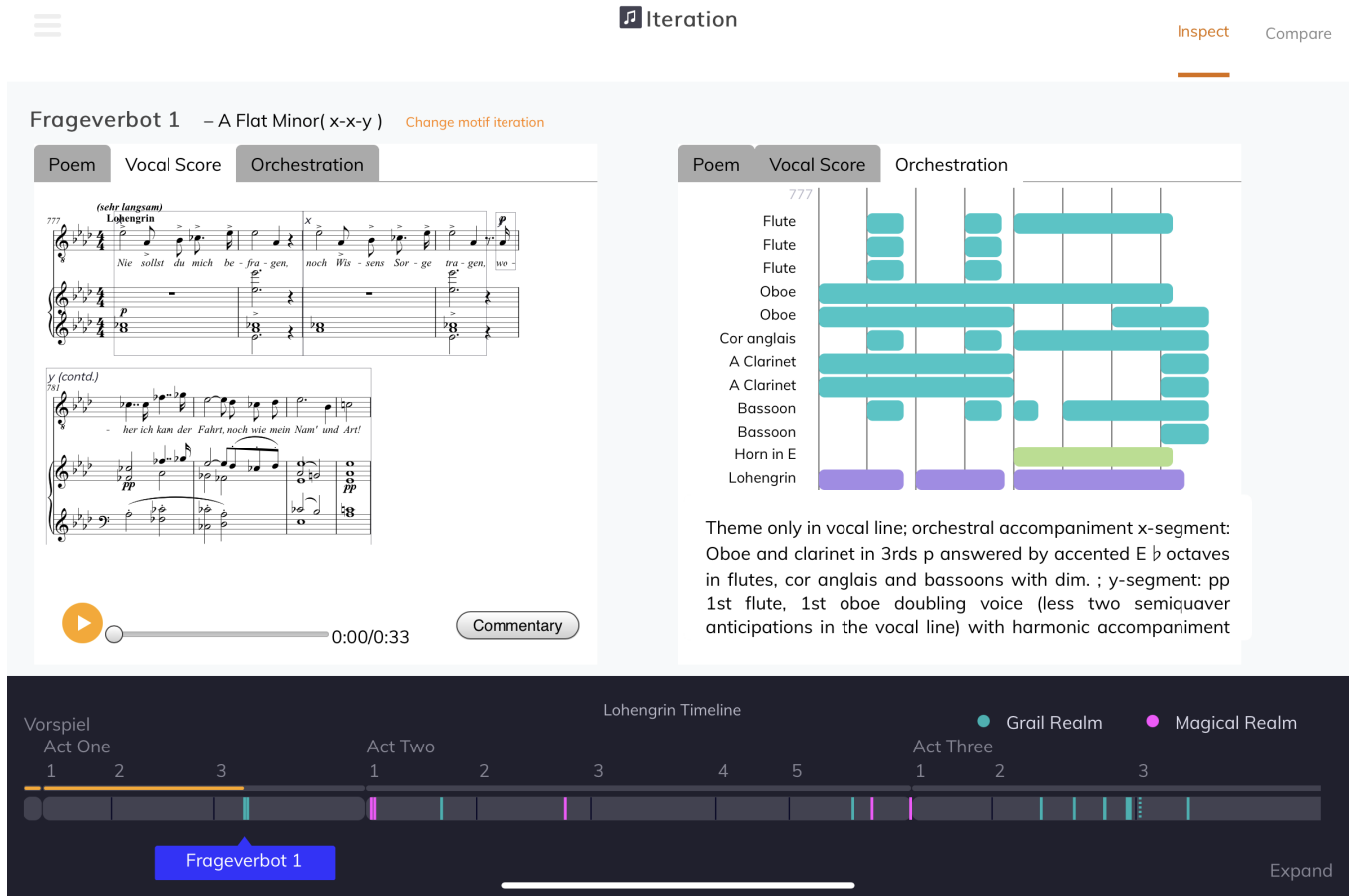


Figure 1: The inspector mode showing the vocal score and the orchestration visualisation side by side. The Poem, or libretto text, can also be viewed in German and English. The formal units identified in the score (for the x or y segments) can be selected, cueing playback to the beginning of that unit.

### 3.2 Exploratory modes

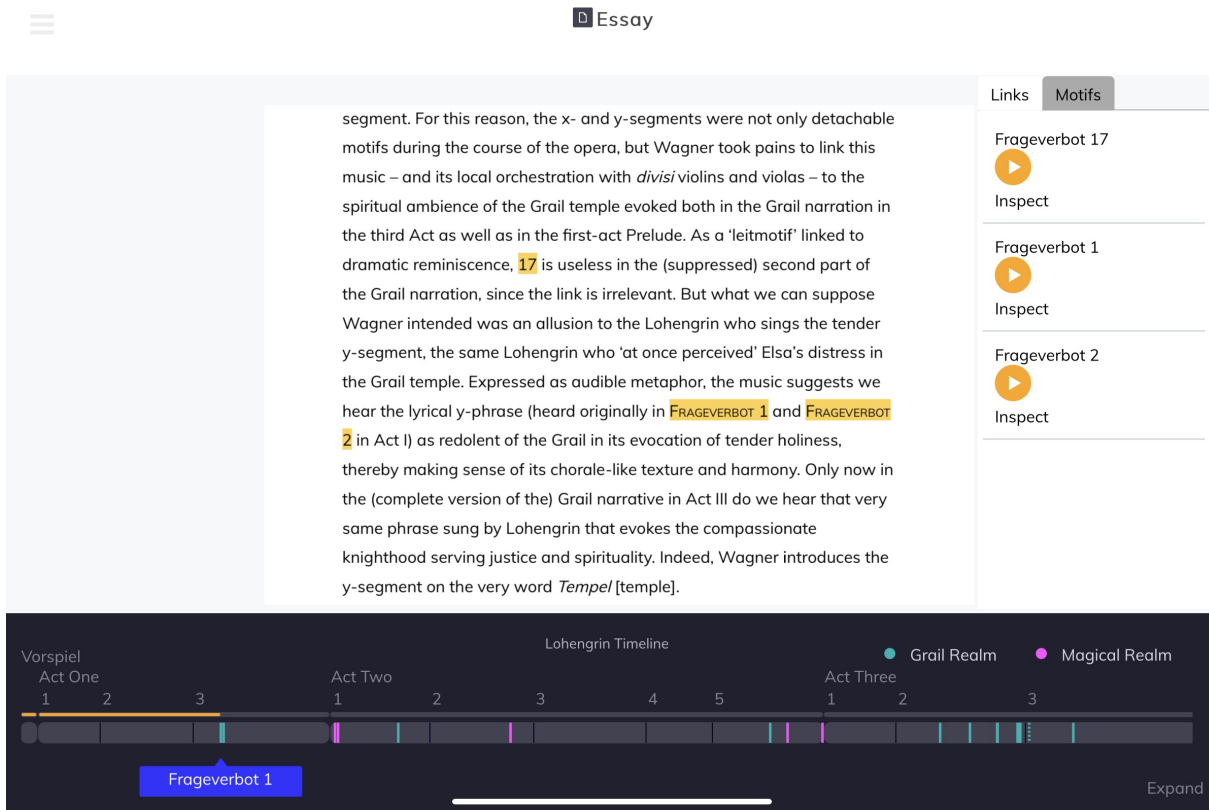
A user visiting the application website is presented with a landing page with links to the essay and video, but also offering two entry points into comparatively unguided exploration of the data – **inspector** and **TimeMachine** modes. These are two of the three exploratory modes in the application; the third, **comparison** mode, is less useful as a starting point. *Figure 4* illustrates the implemented navigation paths a viewer can take to move between modes.

The *Lohengrin* score is thousands of bars long (the second act alone has over two thousand bars), so it becomes crucial to support the reader in gaining an overview of change over time. The **timeline** introduced earlier provides a very high level abstracted overview of the opera, which also acts as an index – clicking on motives in the **timeline** jumps the application to that motive. We provide a second, more detailed, overview in one of the exploratory modes – the **TimeMachine** mode (*figure 5*). This mode summarises the sequence of motive iterations within the opera as an intuitive carousel-like interface, in which users can flick left or right to ‘time travel’ their way through the opera. The iterations in this mode

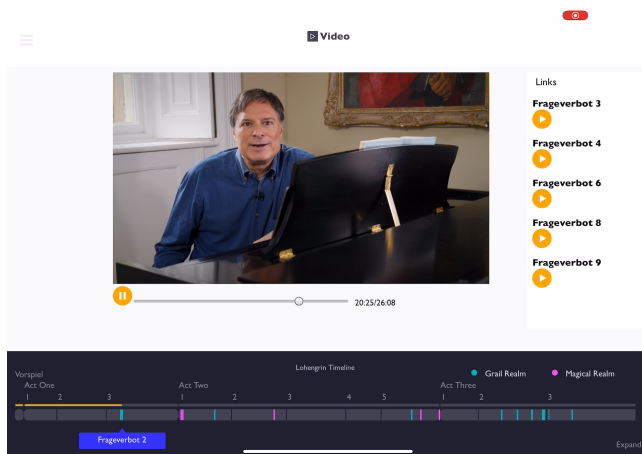
can be visualised as score, libretto (or ‘poem’) or as an illustration of their orchestration (described below). Commentary on each iteration is displayed to the side.

Selecting an iteration in the **TimeMachine** mode, or following a link from the **video** or **essay**, will bring the user to the detailed **inspector** mode (*figure 1*). This mode offers the most information about the motive, including key and structure, vocal score with structural segments labelled, text underlay and stage markings (in German and English) and a visualisation of the orchestration of the extract. The layout is designed to make it easy to see these visualisations side by side, rather than one at a time.

From the **inspector** mode, the user can choose to **compare** motive iterations, bringing the **TimeMachine** mode back so that they can select another iteration. These are then displayed side by side in the **comparison** mode (*figure 6*), which is functionally very similar to the **inspector** mode. The narrative-led modes can also link straight to a **comparison**, but in practice, only the **video** uses this capability.



**Figure 2: The musicological essay provides a traditional narrative that the reader can use as the basis for their exploration of the app. This mode shows the opera timeline (below) and links to other views (right). The Motifs tab on the right allows navigation within the essay text by motif iteration number, in a similar manner to a conventional index.**



**Figure 3: The video also provides an intuitive narrative-led introduction to the opera’s use of motive and to the application itself. This mode shows the opera timeline (below) and links to other views (right), which appear as the video plays.**

Even if their combination and deployment is novel, most of the visualisations illustrated above, taken individually, draw on relatively well-established practice in both conventional and digital modes of presentation. One visualisation is less conventional, and warrants attention. It is an important part of the musicological narrative that it is not simply the notes in the motive iterations that supports the dramatic logic, but the timbre and orchestration. For each motive iteration, we link to encodings of both the vocal score and orchestral edition, but a Wagnerian orchestral score presents challenges within the constraints of the application. We do not target established academic musicologists as the primary audience for the application – and even those users might struggle with a full orchestral score, especially a Wagnerian one fitted into the dimensions of a tablet screen. To sidestep this problem, but still to support an understanding of the orchestration, we use a new, more abstract visualisation of an orchestral score, simplifying its visual complexity. In our orchestration pane, each instrument playing at a particular time is shown as a coloured ribbon, with the instrument’s section of the orchestra providing the colour (seen in the right hand pane of *figure 1*). This visualisation, inspired in part by views in some music sequencer software, highlights differences in orchestration that may be invisible in a vocal score.

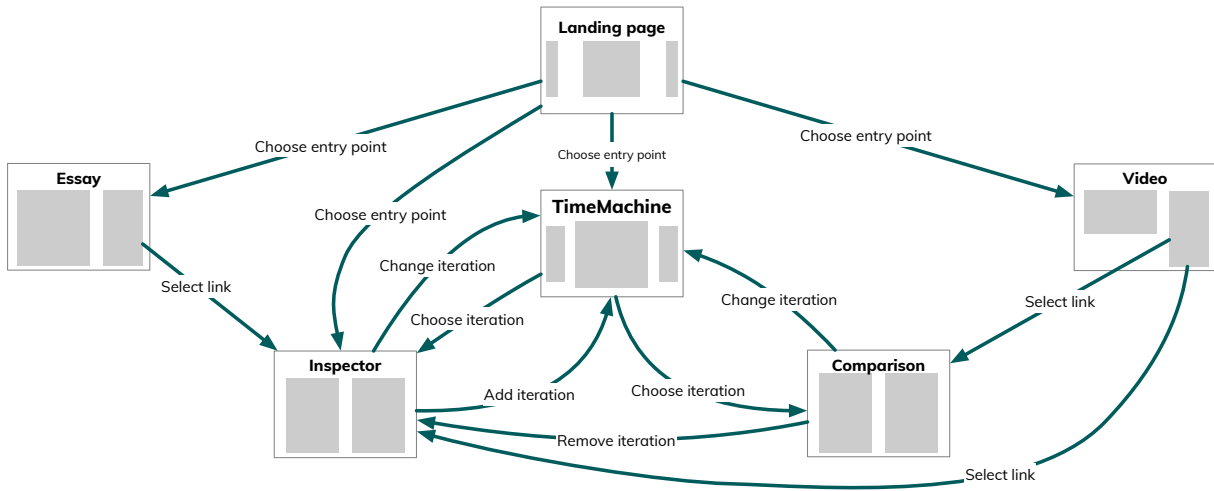


Figure 4: Diagram showing the main application pages and the flows between them. Links to exploratory modes can come from the essay or video modes, from the landing page, or from each other.

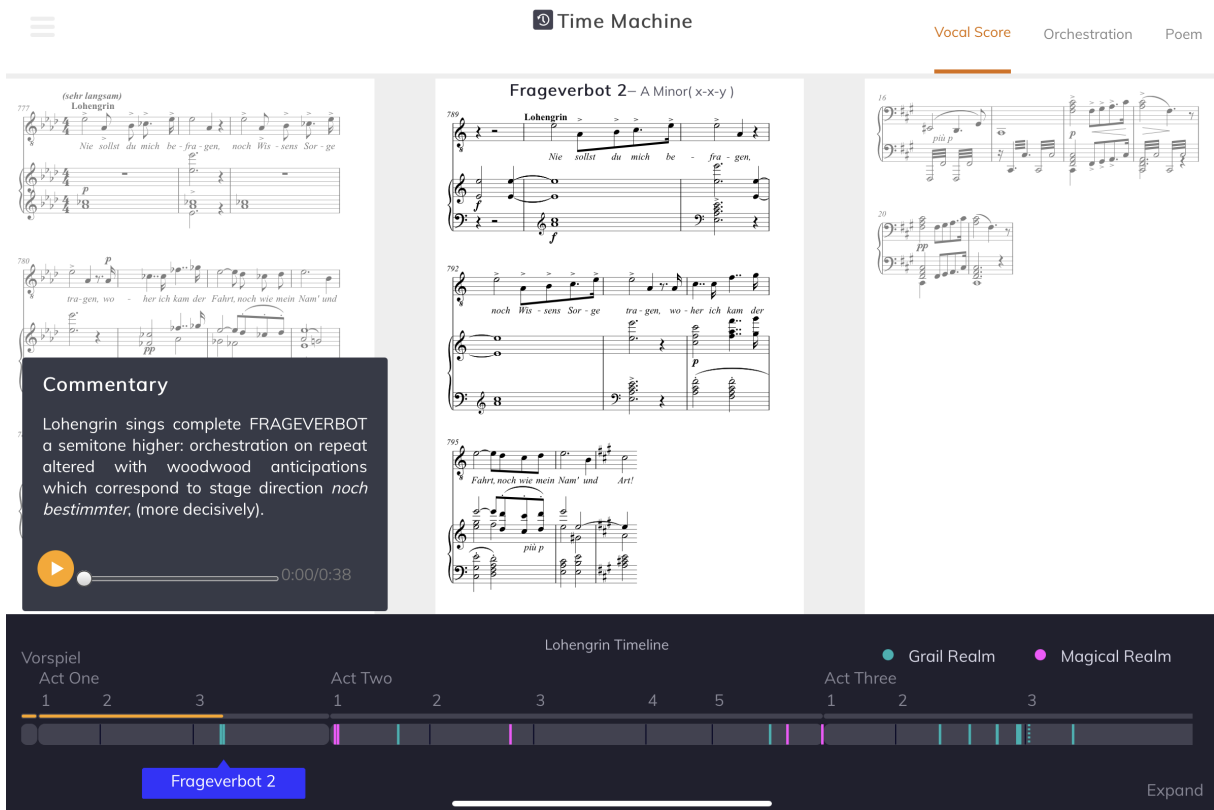


Figure 5: The TimeMachine mode, set to browse by vocal score. Flicking sideways scrolls through all the iterations in the order in which they appear in the opera, with the exact location highlighted in the timeline below. Browsing is also possible by orchestration and libretto (or ‘Poem’). Each iteration is accompanied by commentary text and a recorded extract.

Figure 6: The comparison mode showing two iterations side by side.

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION

### 4.1 Technical overview

The TimeMachine is constructed as a MELD application – that is, it uses the MELD 2.0 (Music Encoding and Linked Data) framework[14]. A MELD application can be seen as operating in two phases: graph building, and interaction. In its graph-building phase MELD traverses Linked Data graphs, ‘following its nose’ by successively requesting web-accessible Linked Data – with each document that is read potentially yielding links to new URLs to explore. These URLs may lead to more Linked Data, from which MELD builds up a local knowledge graph within the browser, or they may lead to the multimedia resources that will contribute to the presentation of the application. The traversal engine thus allows apps to discover, select and filter relevant information. For its interaction phase, the MELD framework provides reusable components for creating and retrieving annotations, as well as for displaying and interacting with musical, textual, graphical and audio-visual materials. Previous uses of the MELD framework include an interactive composition[4], a tool for annotating a score during a masterclass[5], and a visualiser for comparing piano performances[13].

Even a relatively simple application requires quite a complex web of data, and the MELD traverser requires a little explanation. Figure 7 shows a fragment of the larger graph of Linked Data that supports the digital companion. The traverser might start with the document labelled 1 (top left, <http://meld.linkedmusic.org/companion/Frageverbot>). This RDF resource describes the *Frageverbot* motive and lists the realisations of that motive (the 18 motive iterations), giving a URL for each. The MELD traverser creates agents to visit each of these – the first of them is shown in the diagram labelled 2 (bottom left, <http://meld.linkedmusic.org/companion/F1>). This document in turn adds information to the local knowledge graph, revealing that the motive is in *A<sup>b</sup> minor*, and that it has multiple parts. These parts (document 3) are then associated with formal

<sup>2</sup>The diagram in Figure 7 uses the following prefix abbreviations – **comp**: <https://linkedmusic.org/companion/>, **compVocab**: <https://meld.linkedmusic.org/companion/vocab/>, **meld**: <https://meld.linkedmusic.org/terms/>, **so**: <http://www.linkedmusic.org/ontologies/segment/>, **mo**: <http://purl.org/ontology/mo/>, **keys**: <http://moustaki.xtr3m.org/c4dm/keys.owl#>, **frbr**: <http://purl.org/vocab/frbr/core#>, **rdf**: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>, **rdfs**: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>.

segments (document 4a) and one or more smaller segments (4b) arranged on a single segment line for the whole opera and associated with embodiments for score encodings and audio recordings. The traverser will spot the circularity of going from 4a to 1 and will not request the document again. Similarly, the *Frageverbot* motive is associated with the opera itself by reference to the DBpedia URL (not shown in the figure). This URL is to be used as an identifier only – following links further into DBpedia itself would rapidly cause an explosion in the size of the graph. A list of domains not to investigate further can be provided by applications, and for the *TimeMachine* this includes [dbpedia.org](http://dbpedia.org), ensuring that MELD avoids expanding its graph into unwanted topics.

In this way, the traverser builds a local knowledge graph, including links to relevant resources. In the general case, MELD can gather information from a wide range of resources, taking advantage of the distributed nature of Linked Data. For applications such as ours, we publish a collection of RDF and resources specifically as evidential material the digital companion. The sum of these forms an independent, repurposable, and open Research Object[7]. Once the traverser has obtained enough of the knowledge graph locally to start the interaction phase, the application dynamically constructs views based on the information and resources it has discovered. As more is received, it can dynamically reload and redraw as necessary.

MELD is written in JavaScript (as are its apps, including the *Lohengrin TimeMachine*). It uses the React framework, and operates over resources and data structured using Web standards. Linked Data for the application both uses and extends those structures expected by core MELD libraries, drawing on ontologies including the Music Ontology, Dublin Core, FRBR and, crucially, Web Annotations. FRBR is used here not only at the level of the complete work, but also to relate the abstract concept of, for example, the *Frageverbot* motive to the iterations of that motive that occur in the original score and, from those, to the editions and recordings that we include (see figure 7). This helps bridge the semantic gap between addressable resources on the one hand (represented by URLs or collections of URLs with fragment identifiers) and musical ideas that would be named, discussed and manipulated in a musicological investigation.

For textual and musical materials, we benefit from the existence of stable XML-based standards for representing content in machine-readable ways: TEI<sup>3</sup> and MEI<sup>4</sup>. In both cases, the use of XML means that, putting a document on the web at a particular URL also makes all the elements within the document available to be specified as URLs. More directly, any element with an `xml:id` can be directly specified within our linked data using a fragment identifier (# in the URL). In the *Lohengrin TimeMachine*, all textual content, including the essay, commentary and historical texts, is served as TEI, and rendered to the screen using CETEIcean<sup>5</sup>. Music notation is encoded as MEI, and either rendered using a MELD component that calls the Verovio toolkit<sup>6</sup> (in the case of the vocal scores) or using our new orchestration viewer. The decision of which renderer to use is made dynamically, based on RDF indicating whether the score is for orchestra or for piano and voices. Both Verovio and

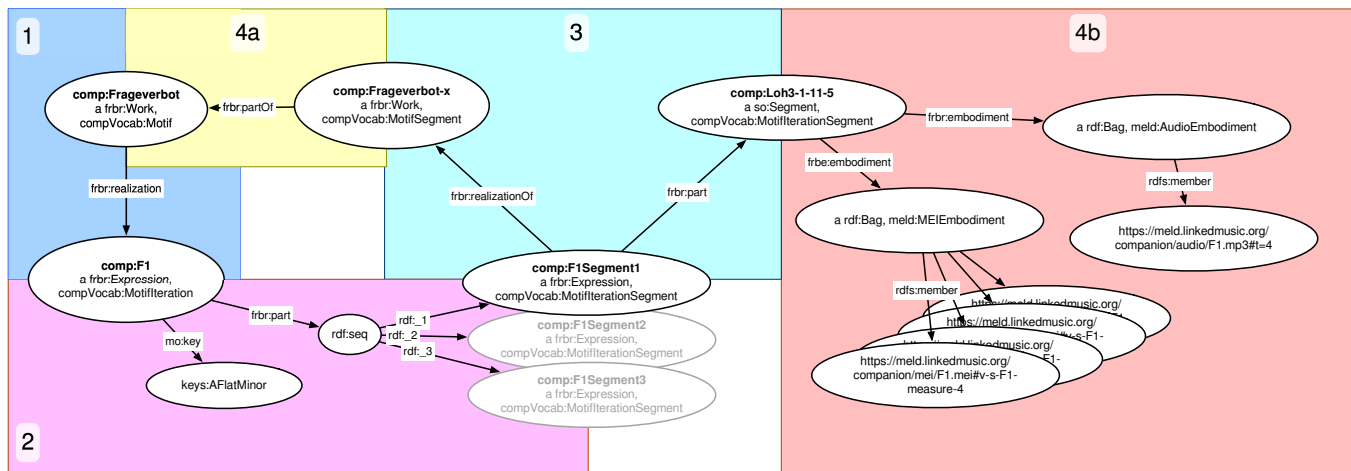
<sup>3</sup>The Text Encoding Initiative, <https://tei-c.org>

<sup>4</sup>The Music Encoding Initiative, <https://music-encoding.org>

<sup>5</sup><https://github.com/TEIC/CETEIcean>

<sup>6</sup><https://verovio.org/>





**Figure 7: A small (and slightly simplified) extract from the *Lohengrin TimeMachine* knowledge graph. Numbered boxes represent RDF resources at different URLs (this diagram shows 5 such documents).**

CETELcean preserve structures and `xml:ids` in their output where possible, allowing regions identified by the Linked Data as important to be located in the rendered output. Where Verovio (and the orchestration visualiser) outputs SVG images, CETELcean creates HTML with custom tags. Both of these are placed within the page DOM and can be easily manipulated with JavaScript and styled using CSS.

The orchestration viewer is implemented as a reusable React component within the main MELD module (`meld-clients-core`) and generates an SVG image which is placed directly into the DOM. Ribbons are drawn live from an MEI encoding of an orchestral score, extracting the locations and durations of notes, and instrument names. Instrument labels are derived from those in the file, but can be overridden in the component configuration. This configuration also allows the definition or redefinition of orchestral sections – defaults are provided, but unusual instruments and singer names will usually be configured by the calling application. The component is capable of merging instruments that play together throughout an extract, but limited manual merging (such as for the first and second flutes) was preferred for the *Lohengrin TimeMachine* app.

## 4.2 Implementation experience

As part of the Transforming Musicology project (2013-17), some explorations were made into innovative ways of presenting scholarship around the theme of *Wagner and the Leitmotiv*. This work also gave rise to the first version of the essay that forms the intellectual basis of the app. Co-author Laurence Dreyfus wrote this with the idea that it could be accompanied by a ‘digital companion’. Further funding in the form of the Unlocking Musicology project (2018-19) presented the opportunity to develop the idea into this app.

The development process had co-creation across the team at its core. The ideas for the presentational and interactive aspects of the application were developed through intensive workshoping between Professor Dreyfus and MELD researchers, with use of paper and whiteboard prototypes. Meanwhile, modelling work began, based on spreadsheets of information provided by the musicologist

and Sibelius files of music examples were converted to MEI (via MusicXML, the MuseScore package and the Verovio toolkit) and corrected.

Development of prototype software and versions of the modes described above could then begin. Again, this required collaboration between the researchers and the musicologist. At this point, it was felt that there was enough material to take to web designers. This order of working is extremely unusual for web development, and it proved difficult to find practitioners willing to provide design work and graphic design for a system that, largely, already existed, and which had fixed technical and resource constraints already in place.

The chosen designer took briefing documents and screenshots and met with the entire team at each significant stage. They provided low-fidelity wireframes and page flow diagrams that clarified the flow structures of the site and simplified the layout. Finally, they provided high-fidelity mock ups, with the necessary digital assets and specification documents. With a modular system and sensitive, precise design, implementation of the redesign proved quick and, for the most part, easy.

We have found that processes such as this, where conception and initial collaboration is carried out in the absence of a visual designer, and perhaps without a clear idea of the final goal, are not uncommon. It may prove useful to others in similar situations to note that bringing a designer in at a late stage can still produce a successful result, given a willingness to engage in collaborative discussions and development, and to deviate from norms of industry practice.

During the design process – even before the visual designer had become involved – it became clear that the richness of information about each motive given in the spreadsheet was more than could be displayed to a user while retaining an intuitive approachable interface. As a result of this some information was simply not encoded, and other information was removed. This again was a set of collaborative decisions taken by the whole team, which acts as a reminder that even in the ‘exploratory modes’ of the app, the



paths and the information presented are informed by the demands of narrative priorities.

### 4.3 Resource use and application responsiveness

The two phases of operation – graph building and interaction – are performed serially for the *Lohengrin TimeMachine*. The application traverses the Linked Data graph once on loading, with all subsequent interactions performed without any further synchronous page loads. Once the local knowledge graph has been built and processed, the interaction phase starts, and the application becomes fully available and interactive. Once this second phase has started, the running of the application is fast, smooth and responsive, with most redraws in the 10-100ms range. The graph building phase does have a cost, though, with an initial load time of 10-15s on a 2020 iPad Pro. Although this is perceived as a ‘loading’ time, the 78 documents requested and downloaded represent about 408KB of data and loading occupies a tiny fraction of this. Traversal itself is also very quick in this case. Instead, the time is taken by the JSON-LD library converting, flattening and then reframing the graph, ready for consumption by the application and its components. Prior versions of this application had loading times in excess of 200 seconds, and the reduction of this has come about primarily through updates to the JSON-LD library itself (there is less memory use and garbage collection during this time than was previously the case).

Once the application is loaded, the system is responsive and generally neither processor nor memory hungry. The processor generally reaches about 25% use for most mode changes, except for the **TimeMachine** mode, for which Verovio draws all its scores at once, resulting in a reported short-term peak of 168% CPU use on our test iPad<sup>7</sup>. Since this drawing is asynchronous, the user interface is available quickly, even though the score drawing itself takes approximately 4 seconds. Since the parameters given to Verovio do not change as much on a tablet as they might on a PC (where windows are more often resized), more use of caching for Verovio’s SVGs should reduce this overhead. Since Verovio is not a native React component, the SVG that it generates is less efficiently tracked by the framework, and this may also add to overhead.

## 5 DISCUSSION: AUTHORIZING DATA, AUTHORIZING NARRATIVES

The *Lohengrin TimeMachine* is neither a pure data set nor a pure musicological narrative – it combines these two elements in support of each other. Primarily, it is a set of gathered evidence that supports a musicological argument. This argument appears in two linear narrative presentations, and can be further explored through a user-led exploration of the supporting evidence. There are several consequences that arise from this.

Firstly, the creation of the Linked Data resource, including any supporting media, is motivated by the argument that it will support. Given the large amount of information that *could* be incorporated into such a resource, the narrative helps us delimit the extent of materials and data to include. This in turn puts a constraint on

<sup>7</sup>Since the tablet has 8 cores, usage figures over 100% are a sign that more than one core is being used at the time.

the generality of the resource. Whilst it can be used for a variety of exploratory purposes, it is optimised in terms of coverage and presentation for a specific use.

A second consequence of this approach is that we know the use of the application in advance. Designing applications for open exploration of data is conventionally challenging because design and scoping depends on user stories or research questions that cannot be enacted until the application exists. Again, because we built the exploratory modes to support a particular research approach – one that has musicological interest from the start – their design could be optimised for that. We can hope that other questions can be explored through the interface, but this was not an important design concern.

Nonetheless, the data is published as Linked Open Data, and includes MEI vocal and orchestral scores for the motives, key and structural analyses, bilingual libretto texts and audio excerpts. These structures, taken as a musical Research Object, could easily be extended and re-purposed for a broad variety of other uses. The combination of these structures with the MELD framework, which supports a broad exploration of web-published knowledge, also gives potential for future expansion, suggesting the addition of extra materials or the pursuit of alternative narratives.

It is our contention that designing an exploration of data this rich for a musical work of this scale and complexity requires (or at least benefits substantially from) such a musicological narrative, and that the alternatives risk being unsatisfactory on two levels – they will be impenetrable for the reader, and lack particular desired details for the researcher. Our aim, then, in making the musicologist a central participant when creating the app, is an endeavour to keep faithful to their narrative while enhancing the accessibility of that narrative to a reader.

It is inevitable that such an approach will require collaboration between musicologist, developer and designer, but it is perhaps less inevitable that it should be as labour-intensive. Some of the effort expended on this project, such as component development for MELD and ontology development, will reduce the load for future work, but one important hurdle remains. Currently, we have no software for authoring the information underlying the application – all Linked Data was assembled by hand, all MEI and TEI was converted and corrected individually, and the time indexes for audio and video were found and manually coded into annotations using generic tools and a text editor. This approach is possible within a research project, but extremely limiting if this were proposed as a viable means of publishing scholarship in the future. Whether a sufficiently adaptable and powerful authoring tool could be developed, and what form such a tool would take, is a crucial question for future research.

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