An Adult Is Born of a Child: The Evolution of André Hajdu's Conception of Childhood and Adulthood in *Ludus Paschalis* and the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*

YIFAT GELBER

Introduction

André Hajdu (1932–2016) was a composer, performer, ethnomusicologist, lecturer, and teacher. His multifaceted activity within the field of music occupies a prominent place in the landscape of Israeli musical production and continues to influence both composition and scholarship in Israel after his death. Born in Budapest, Hungary, Hajdu immigrated to Israel in 1966, where he composed the majority of his works, in a wide range of genres. His output includes vocal and dramatic works, chamber music, and concertante music, as well as piano music, some intended for performance in concert halls and some conceived as pedagogical repertoire. Thematically, Hajdu's works likewise address a broad spectrum of subjects, encompassing contemporary and traditional concerns, Israeli themes, and universal human issues.

In numerous interviews, lectures, and written texts, Hajdu asserted that the pinnacle of his artistic career lay in composing for children and about childhood. He demonstrated this commitment in several ways: through works written specifically for young performers – such as *The Milky Way* (1979), *Book of Challenges*, and the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists and Orchestra* (1978), among others;[1] by incorporating children's improvisations within his compositions (for example in *Book of Challenges* and in other public performances, including appearances in the media);[2] through collaborations

[1] André Hajdu, *The Milky Way: An Introduction to Piano Playing* (Hamburg: Sikorski Musikverlag, 2002); *Book of Challenges: The Player as a Partner*, 4 vols. (Tel Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 2001–06); *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists and Orchestra* (Tel Aviv: Israel Music Institute, 1978).

[2] See, for example, *Intermezzo with Arik*, hosted by Arie Vardi and broadcast on Israeli Educational Television from 2003 to 2018.

with musicians several decades younger than himself (most notably in his leadership of the Ha'Oman Hai Ensemble founded by his students, with which he performed until his final years); and through works that explicitly address the theme of childhood (*Ludus Paschalis* [1970], *Stories about Mischievous Children* [1976], *Overture in the Form of a Kite* [1985], among others). This article focuses on two of Hajdu's works, conceived for two separate groups of performers: children and adults. In *Ludus Paschalis* (Easter play) the adults are represented as "Jews" while the children appear as "Christians." In the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* (1978) the adults take the form of the orchestra, whereas the children are the pianists. Both works address the tension that emerges between these two groups; however, each proposes a different resolution. In *Ludus Paschalis*, composed only a few years after Hajdu's immigration to Israel, the final section concludes with the silencing of the boys' choir and the performance of a somber lament by the adult choir alone. By contrast, the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* ends with a joyful rondo in which children and adults participate together, creating a shared musical dialogue grounded in listening and reciprocity. I propose that the differences between these works reflect a development in Hajdu's psychological processing of the childhood experience, a processing of experiences from different stages of childhood, and, finally, successive phases in Hajdu's reception within Israeli society and his attitude to the establishment.

The linking of musical analysis with biographical–intra-psychic aspects on the one hand and objective historical contexts on the other is by no means self-evident. Nevertheless, precedents for such an approach may be found in scholarly literature from the 1990s onward. A well-known example is the book *Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis* by psychiatrist Stuart Feder, which draws on Gustav Mahler's declaration: "My entire life is contained in my two symphonies . . . everything will become clear to those who know how to listen."[3] Feder interprets the "life" that becomes audible in the music as finding personal meaning, arguing that "Mahler demonstrated that a composer may consciously choose to reveal autobiographical material in his music. Yet even in music . . . there exists a concealed dimension of personal meaning of which the composer himself is not aware. The attentive listener is able to hear and interpret both."[4] Feder locates evidence for this claim in the emotionally charged and tragic annotations that Mahler inscribed in his own hand in the score.

Approximately two decades earlier, Solomon, in his article "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending," sought to address the question of Beethoven's numerous revisions to the endings of his works by identifying

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[3] Stuart Feder, *Gustav Mahler: A Life in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
[4] Ibid., 12.

personal and psychological traits that might account for this practice. One of Solomon's propositions is that "constant reaffirmation postpones the end. Alternative finales defeat mortality by constantly creating new endings, revising old ones, and finding forgotten ones."[5] In this reading, changes to musical endings constitute a confrontation with the fear of death and possibly with the death drive—psychological concepts articulated by Freud.

David Schwarz, in his book *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture*, similarly argues that pauses, silences, and even the absence of certain musical elements are not merely dramatic devices, but rather reflect deeper structures of the human unconscious and of language, connected to configurations of lack and absence.[6]

In the current article, I follow these scholars in proposing that reverberations of a composer's psychological and historical biography may be evident through attentive listening to the composer's works. In both compositions examined here, the music is structured around a tension between children and adults. I interpret this as a tension between childhood and adulthood and demonstrate how it is constructed musically and how it may be understood in relation to the composer's life history.

Ludus Paschalis

Ludus Paschalis (1970) is a dramatic musical work divided into seven scenes. Its narrative centers on the tension that emerges between two groups: one consisting of Jewish adults engaged in the study of texts from the Talmud and the Book of Psalms, sung according to traditional Ashkenazi cantillation, and the other consisting of Christian children involved in musical children's games. At the beginning of the work, the children taunt the adults; subsequently, they redirect their provocation toward a child within their own group who has disguised himself as a Jew.

At the climax of the work, the children strangle him until he dies. While this scene could be interpreted as a children's game gone tragically awry, Hajdu's dramatic construction invites another reading: the death functions as a symbolic murder, arising from the children's escalating collective ecstasy and temporary detachment from reality rather than from explicit premeditated intent. The child is held in a pose that visually evokes crucifixion, after which the children fall silent.[7]

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[5] Maynard Solomon, "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: The Sense of an Ending," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991): 289–305, at 298.

[6] David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

[7] For a different interpretation see Assaf Shelleg, *The State of Afterness: Contemporary Music in and about Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2025), 35–73.

The work was performed on two occasions. Its first performance took place in January 1971 as part of the Second Testimonium concert, which was devoted to medieval Judaism. The festival was initiated by Recha Freier (1892–1984), a German-born poet, educator, and Zionist activist. In the late 1960s, she founded the Testimonium project to bring contemporary art music into dialogue with Jewish history, commissioning composers from Israel and abroad to create new works inspired by its figures, events, and texts. This premiere provoked public controversy, as some critics perceived the work as offering a platform for Christian antisemitism and Jewish passivity. The composition was regarded as provocative, and the Israeli president Zalman Shazar, who was present at the performance, left the hall in protest.

In 2001 the work was staged again, conducted and directed by Jonathan Lesser as part of the annual "Sounds in the Desert" (Tzelilim ba-midbar) music festival held at Kibbutz Sde Boker in the Negev. In contrast to the high-profile premiere, held at a central venue and widely covered by the media, the second performance took place in a peripheral location and received almost no media attention.

In a published statement, Hajdu explained that the work was inspired by medieval Easter plays or *ludi paschales*, musical dramas performed during Holy Week that often contained antisemitic elements and depicted Jews as wicked.[8]

Beyond its national dimension and its engagement with antisemitism, however, the work directly addresses the encounter between a group of adults and a group of children. The narrative may be read as a critique of the adults' "absent" presence, portrayed as they are as detached and unresponsive, alongside a courageous confrontation with the instinctual world of childhood and its inherent aggression. In this context, play becomes entangled with reality, and unrestrained cruelty finds expression in murder.

The conflict between the two groups is articulated most clearly in the first, fourth, and sixth scenes. In these scenes, the transformations undergone by both choirs may be observed in light of their joint interaction. I will analyze the process undergone by the children in these scenes with reference to Sigmund Freud's conceptualization of the Oedipus complex, a foundational concept in Freud's psychosexual theory, systematically formulated in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905).[9] According to Freud, approximately between the ages of three and six the child develops an unconscious fantasy of union with the mother as the primary love object, alongside an experience of the father as a rival and a threatening figure. This fantasy is accompanied by castration

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[8] "Ludus Paschalis – The Composer's Response," *Haaretz*, January 15, 1975, 24.

[9] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 7 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953; orig. pub. 1905).

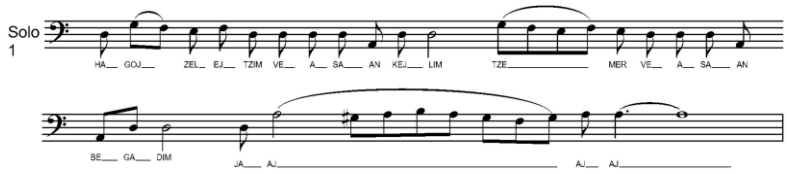
anxiety, arising from a fear of punishment for the forbidden desire, and functions as a decisive factor in the dynamics of the conflict. Such anxiety compels the child to confront the limits of desire and to move from direct instinctual gratification toward the symbolic working through of the triangular relationship between child, mother, and father.

A successful resolution of the Oedipus complex, according to Freud, occurs through acceptance of the mother's pair-bonding with the father, renunciation of the exclusive wish for the mother, and adoption of the father's position through identification with him as the bearer of law, prohibition, and authority. This identification enables the formation of the superego, the consolidation of sexual identity, and the transition to mediated and mature relationships with objects of love. When such resolution is not achieved, the Oedipal conflict may remain active within the psyche and manifest itself in difficulties with intimate relationships, conflicts with authority figures, anxieties, and patterns of dependency or sexual fixation. In more severe cases, failure to resolve the Oedipal conflict may indicate a structural disturbance in one's psychic development, where prohibitions and laws are not adequately internalized. Such impairments may manifest in antisocial or delinquent behavior.

This Freudian framework will serve as the basis for understanding the tragedy enacted in the narrative of *Ludus Paschalis*: the symbolic murder of the child who is acting as an adult is interpreted as enactment of the fantasy of killing the father, in response to castration anxiety. At the conclusion of this section, I will connect this interpretation to the composer's personal biography, and specifically to his relationships with his parents and to his childhood in the shadow of the Holocaust.

In the first scene, the children's choir and the adult choir are presented as two groups that differ from one another in almost every musical and textual parameter. At the same time, they share two significant features: an identical pitch range and the use of religious texts. The men's choir, consisting of eight soloists, opens the work. The voices enter gradually, with each voice performing a different Talmudic or Mishnaic text. The vocal style constitutes a faithful imitation of the chanting by learners in the Eastern European *beit midrash*: the melody is written within a narrow range, with no fixed rhythmic values, characterized by small intervallic movements and a syllabic vocal style (one syllable per note). The text is sung predominantly in eighth notes, which resolve into longer note values, typically on neutral syllables such as "ai" (A). The use of the syllable "ai" as the sole vocal sound in both this scene and the seventh and final scene provides a phonetic frame for the work as a whole. An example

from the entrance of the first soloist illustrates this style. The Mishnaic text is "One who steals wood and fashions it into vessels" (see Example 1).[10]



Example 1 Ludus Paschalis, scene 1, line 1: the entrance of the first soloist.

The texture between the voices is heterophonic. As Ruth HaCohen observes, "the heterophonic character of the synagogue's soundscape over many centuries gave rise to religious rituals that were less regimented and more democratic."[11] HaCohen argues that heterophony was perceived as noise, an acoustic phenomenon standing in opposition to the harmonic order of the church. Indeed, the absence of meter and regular rhythm prevents any genuine dialogue between the voices, and the resulting sonority emerges as an incidental product of the juxtaposition of different vocal lines coexisting within the same musical space. Consequently, each performance generates a slightly different sonic outcome.

The children's choir performs three play songs in Latin and Old German. The melodies occupy a narrow range and lie in a high register suited to children's voices; their text setting is predominantly syllabic. The songs are characterized by major-mode harmonies, extensive repetition, and question-and-answer structures. The texts derive from Christian religious sources and center on the search for the Savior and the denunciation of Jews. Beyond their religious significance, they may also be understood as reflecting conflicts characteristic of childhood: competitiveness, jealousy, friendship, and confrontations arising from the need for a sense of belonging.

In contrast to the heterophony that characterizes the adult choir, the children's choir is marked by cohesion. This cohesion is expressed through collective unison singing, high dynamic intensity (*forte*), and religious content centering on obedience to a single religious authority. Nevertheless, even at this early stage of the work, hints of aggression and violence, features that will characterize the songs in subsequent scenes, are already present. These indications appear both in the competitive textual content and in the musical

[10] Bava Kamma 9:1.
[11] Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 1–32.

setting, including imitative gestures that may be interpreted as rivalry between groups. Moreover, the choreography devised by the conductor Jonathan Lesser depicts shoving followed by a conciliatory handshake performed uniformly by all the children, resembling a game or dance governed by rules familiar to all participants. An example from the first children's song (lines 17–20) draws on a text from the New Testament, John 18:5–8.

Quem quaeritis?
Jesum Nazarenum.
Ego sum.
Dixi vobis quia ego sum.
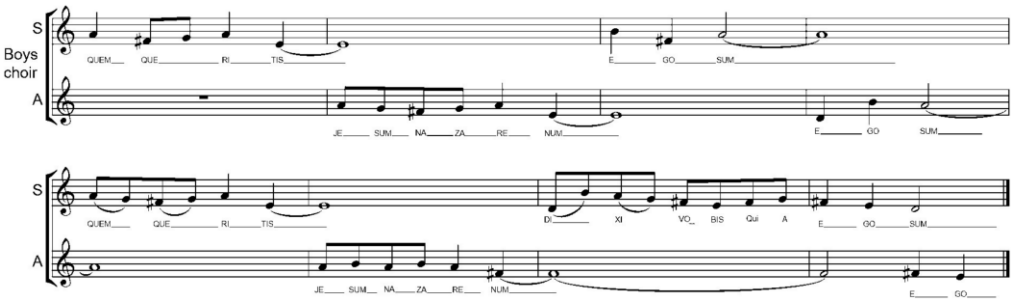
Whom do you seek?
Jesus of Nazareth.
I am he.
I told you that I am he.

These verses describe the dialogue where Jesus identifies himself to his pursuers in the Garden of Gethsemane. According to the New Testament, when Jesus uttered the words "ego sum" (I am he), his pursuers fell to the ground.

In keeping with the dialogic nature of the text, the song is performed both as a canon between the two soprano groups (S1 and S2) and in a question-and-answer format between the soprano groups (S) and the two alto groups (A). The song exhibits many characteristics of children's songs: a narrow pitch range, a predominantly syllabic setting, major-mode harmony, a question-and-answer structure, frequent repetition, and clear, simple rhythmic patterns. All of these features contribute to the song's memorability. The words "ego sum" are emphasized through the use of long note values.

The song is performed twice. In its first appearance, imitative entries are added to the melody in the two additional choir groups. These imitations echo the tune and create the impression of natural children's singing that is simultaneously unified and non-unified. Against the backdrop of this echoing texture, the song's second appearance is rendered in a tighter manner, uniform, controlled, and devoid of echoes, an effect that may foreshadow the subsequent course of the work, where the children will become a unified and brutal collective.[12] Example 2 shows the notation of the song at its second appearance.

[12] It is noteworthy that the melody of this song closely resembles that of a Hungarian Christian children's song that calls upon the shepherds (or disciples/priests) to hasten to Bethlehem and witness the birth of Jesus Christ. Hajdu may have been familiar with this song from his childhood and have drawn upon it in composing the work. Alternately, both songs may derive from even earlier sources within the tradition of medieval Easter games. A recording of the Hungarian song is available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqCCENNWObs (posted 3 November 2016).



Example 2 Ludus Paschalis, scene 1, the first children's song in its second appearance, mm. 24–31.

Following Ruth HaCohen's interpretation, the first scene can be read as presenting the Jews through an antisemitic lens, portraying them as a dissonant collection of isolated individuals incapable of producing "harmony." From another perspective, the Jews may be perceived as solitary adults, melodically and rhythmically impoverished, clinging to liturgical texts whose meaning may remain opaque to the listener. Moreover, their singing is unable to exist independently and requires a dialectic relationship with another group to acquire meaning.

Viewers of this scene are left disoriented, uncertain with which of the two groups to identify. Jewish-Israeli spectators may experience an even greater sense of confusion: is this an antisemitic work? Is the choice of children intended to elicit the audience's sympathy, or conversely, to articulate a critique of a racist society portrayed as childish?

From a psychodynamic perspective, the relationship between children and adults may be understood as a reflection of the relationship between a child and a parent or, more specifically, the father. Hajdu constructs a scene where the children are enclosed within a world of their own, while the adults are detached and unresponsive to the invitation to maintain a relationship. Such failure of response disrupts the children's capacity to establish a sense of safety and trust in their environment. Rather than experiencing a supportive milieu that enables the expression of authentic needs and emotions, the children are compelled to construct a rigid and detached inner world (the measured and rhymed musical world) as a defensive strategy. In the absence of a consistent and empathic response, damage is inflicted upon the "potential space"[13] that transitional area where play, creativity, and symbolic development become possible, and which serves as a vital bridge between inner and outer reality. This impairment foreshadows the later collapse in which play will be transformed into harsh reality.

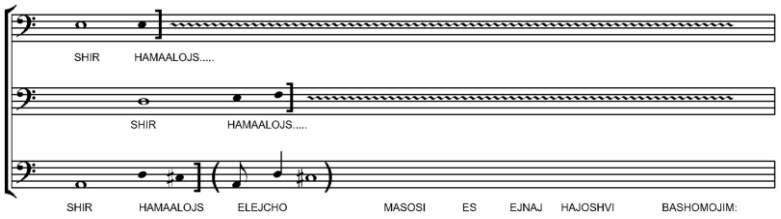
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[13] Donald W. Winnicott, "The Location of Cultural Experience," in *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005), 128–39.

In the following two scenes, only the children's choir takes part. A single child is selected, placed by his peers on an elevated platform, dressed in a *tallit*, and pointed at as the children call him "Jude" and subsequently "Rabbi," the leader of the Jews, as though choosing him to represent the Jew. Musically, the children's songs become less melodic and more recitative-like, relying on calls and shouts and at times incorporating glissando effects. Percussion instruments play a prominent role in these scenes, and in the third scene a trumpet enters with what Hajdu himself designated a "pastoral" melody in the score. The children join this melody by drumming on their bodies and clapping their hands. This melody serves as the musical backdrop for the child's "coronation" as "Rabbi" by his peers.

The men's choir reappears in the fourth scene, "Coronation of the Rabbi." There are clear parallels between this scene and the first: in both, the opening consists of a gradual entrance of the adult choir, and in both, a marked contrast is established between the adult and children's choirs. Nevertheless, the vocal forces and compositional style differ in this scene. The men's choir is reduced to only three soloists, whose singing is sparse in sonority and generates a harmony based on a shared sonic space of individual voices. The choir performs the text of Psalm 123, which addresses the believer's posture of humility before God; consequently, the shared space is textual as well as musical.
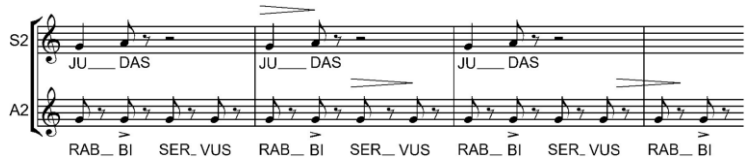
In Example 3 (from line 68), the entrance of the men's choir is articulated through the pitches A, E, and D, tones that appear to indicate the general direction of the chant, while most of the music is not notated in conventional staff notation at all.



Example 3 Ludus Paschalis, scene 4, line 68: entrance of the men's choir.
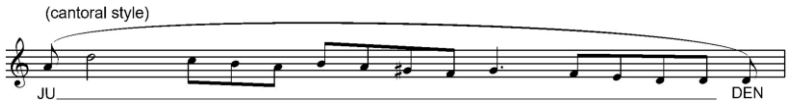
The children's choir is initially divided into three parts: R (the Rabbi), S, and A. Immediately afterward, in Scene 5, the choir is divided into four parts (L1, L2, S, and A), and percussion instruments are added. The children declaim religious elements alongside shouted calls and rhythmic drumming, all performed with cohesion, rhythmic uniformity, and collective coordination. This disciplined unity evokes a quasi-fascist dynamic, in which childlike innocence is mobilized in the service of a form of militarization, initially

playful, yet gradually assuming a more concrete and unsettling form (see Example 4).



Example 4 Ludus Paschalis, scene 4, line 66: calls and shouts.

In contrast to the first scene, where no connection is established between the children's group and the adult group, this scene presents an unusual, one-sided interaction between the choirs. The child soloist R, who at this stage is dressed in stereotypical Jewish attire, a skullcap (kippah) and tzitzit, having been "crowned" in the previous scene as both "Jew" and "Rabbi," performs a stylistic imitation of the adult choir with a mocking melismatic ornament on the word "Juden" (Jews; see Example 5). These developments propel the narrative toward its climax: the murder of the "Rabbi" in the next scene.



Example 5 *Ludus Paschalis,* scene 4, line 72: the "Rabbi" soloist's mocking melismatic ornament on the word "Juden" (Jews).
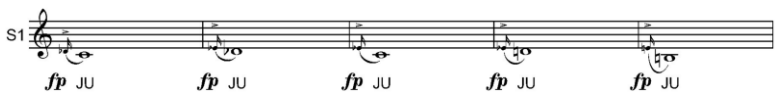
With respect to the tension between childhood and adulthood, the adults in this scene undergo a process of development: their singing becomes more cohesive both textually and harmonically, and they engage in dialogue with one another. The children's choir likewise undergoes a transformation, moving from short play songs to symbolic play involving the assignment of roles and imitation.

From a psychodynamic perspective, the childhood presented here is now more developed in terms of play, insofar as role playing comes into effect. Healthy play requires a constant balance between fantasy and reality, in which the child knows that he or she is playing while simultaneously believing the fictional scene.[14] When the child disguised as an adult transgresses the boundaries of the "play acting" and assumes the role in a concrete manner (and when his peers likewise respond to him as though he were the "Jew" or the

[14] Ibid.

"real" adult), the transitional space collapses. Play loses its protective function and becomes a threatening psychotic or anxiety-laden reality. In such a situation, the child's experience falls into an internal "environmental failure,"[15] in which dramatic reality takes destructive control over the capacity to process experience in a creative and secure way.

The sixth scene constitutes the climax of the work. Dramatically, it depicts the murder of the child disguised as the Rabbi. The men's choir does not participate in this scene; instead, the role of the Jewish adult is assumed by the child dressed as the "Rabbi." The music of the children's choir is characterized by rhythmic shouts, glissandi, and chant-like singing in a dotted rhythm, almost entirely devoid of definite pitch. A bass drum articulates a beat on every second measure. The cry "ju" is uttered by the children's choir throughout nearly the entire scene, 86 times (see Example 6), while the Rabbi performs a melody in a Jewish (cantorial) style.
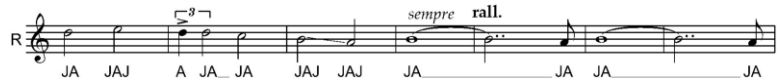


Example 6 *Ludus Paschalis*, scene 6*: the* children's cry "jo."

In lines 107–09 the child soloist, the "Rabbi," performs a melody described in Hajdu's score as being "in a Hasidic style." The melody is sung in a high register and at a slow tempo and consists of five pitches, A, B, C, D, and E. The notes are each sustained for a quarter note or a half note, move primarily in small intervals, especially seconds, and are performed at a *fortissimo* dynamic level. The melody is circular in structure, with the final pitch returning to the tonic (see Example 7).
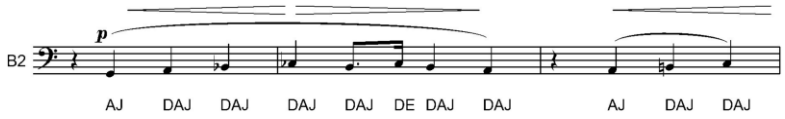
This melodic line erupts into the children's cries as the dynamic level of their singing diminishes to *pianissimo*. It concludes with the sustained pitch D held across seven measures, a gesture that is technically demanding and requires extended breath control. From a theatrical perspective, during this prolonged note the soloists of the children's choir strangle the Rabbi, so that the depletion of breath is directly aligned with the staged action.

[15] Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971), 57–82.



Example 7 Ludus Paschalis, scene 6, line 108: the "Rabbi" sings a melody on the nonsense syllable "ja," in long note values and in a high register approaching a cry.

The melody of the Rabbi's song resonates with that of the seventh scene, the lament, which is performed by the adult choir. In both the Rabbi's singing and the lament, the melodies are constructed from long note values, small intervals, and open syllables that evoke a prayer-like utterance, "ja" in the Rabbi's part and "ai" in the adult choir. However, whereas the Rabbi's song is performed by a single soloist with no harmonic support and concludes with a prolonged note requiring sustained breath, the threnody is sung in four-part harmony and reaches a planned and structurally contained conclusion (see Example 8).



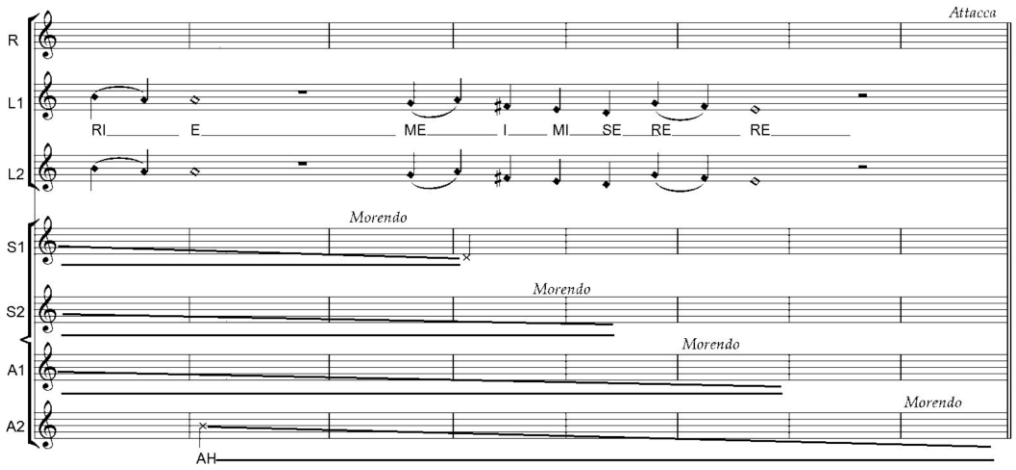
Example 8 *Ludus Paschalis*, opening of the seventh scene: the lament.

The seventh scene is structured on a parabolic trajectory, both rhythmically and sonically. The tempo gradually accelerates toward a climactic point and subsequently decelerates in a symmetrical manner. A similar motion is evident in the glissando produced by the children's choir: it begins with a continuous ascent and, in the final lines of the scene, turns into a descending motion. The dynamic level likewise intensifies progressively, reaching its peak in line 108, where a sense of ecstatic saturation is attained, followed by a gradual decrease in intensity, a prolonged diminuendo leading to an emptied and quiet conclusion.

This parabolic structure generates a sense of ecstatic intensification that culminates in a moment of ritualistic trance, at whose apex a symbolic or ceremonial murder is enacted. At the conclusion, as the sound fades and movement comes to an end, there is a sense of a return to reality; yet this return is accompanied by annihilation, the silencing of the children's choir, or perhaps the end of childhood itself. The work thus concludes not only with a staged death, but with a metaphorical death: a collective awakening from childlike innocence and from the illusion that one may find refuge behind playful sound.

In Example 9, taken from the final line of this scene, the staff for R, the Rabbi, is empty. The two soloists, L1 and L2, complete the declamation of the

Latin text "Rex aeternus, miserere mei" (Eternal king, have mercy on me), while the children's groups fade out in glissandi.



Example 9 *Ludus Paschalis*, scene 7, line 111: fading of the singing.

In the sixth scene, the intensity of childlike cruelty comes to the fore. Melodic music gives way to declamatory, fetishist sound; singing fades and falls silent; and, on the theatrical level, a child disguises himself as an adult and is then murdered. From a psychodynamic perspective, this may be understood as a symbolic Oedipal patricide that amounts, in effect, to self-castration. It constitutes a tragic reflection of Freud's theory of the "murder of the primal father" in *Totem and Taboo* (1913): the children commit an extreme act of killing the figure of authority, the symbolic father, in an attempt to appropriate his power and abolish repression.[16] Yet the actual act of killing does not bring liberation; on the contrary, it gives rise to destructive collective guilt. This guilt, rooted in ambivalence toward the murdered father, functions as an unavoidable inner punishment (the punishing superego) and becomes a death-bearing guilt, or an ultimate form of castration anxiety, leading to the complete annihilation of the children's group as a whole. In this way, the work demonstrates the impossibility of living outside the dominion of the internalized paternal law.

In summary, the children's choir and the adult choir in *Ludus Paschalis* undergo musical, textural, and textual transformations that arise from their mutual interaction. These changes reflect a process of transmutation in the

[16] Sigmund Freud's structural model of the psyche (1923) divides the mind into three agencies: the id, which represents primitive instinctual drives and needs operating according to the pleasure principle; the ego, which develops out of the id and operates according to the reality principle, functioning as a mediator between the demands of the id, the superego, and external reality; and the superego, which represents conscience and internalized social values and norms, functioning as a moral authority that judges the individual's behavior.

relationship between the two groups. The children's choir opens the work in the first scene, with children's songs based on religious texts, accompanied by imitative textures that convey playfulness and innocence. In the fourth scene, singing is replaced by calls and shouts, an expression of aggression, and a destabilization of the boundary between sacred and secular, while in the sixth scene the music moves toward declamatory rhythm and texts devoid of semantic meaning, signaling a disintegration of linguistic structure and collective identity. In the seventh scene, the children's choir disappears entirely, an absence that intensifies the sense of the eradication of the child's voice.

The adult choir likewise moves between intellectual rational expression and emotional spiritual expression. In the first scene, it performs Talmudic texts of practical–legal significance in a melody that imitates study within Jewish religious frameworks, set in a heterophonic texture. In the fourth scene, it turns to a psalm of religious and emotional import, presented in a three-voice imitative texture; in the sixth scene it disappears altogether; and only in the seventh scene does it reappear, performing a textless threnody in a three-voice texture.

The dynamics of the two choirs are inextricably intertwined throughout the work: the children's calls and shouts intensify against the backdrop of the adults' detachment, and the imitation of the adults' voices by the child-Rabbi emerges from an emotional tension of anger or contempt toward their alienation. The silencing of the children's choir reverberates against the adults' lament, creating a sense of tragic circularity, the child's voice absorbed and erased in view of the mourning voice of adult society. The process as a whole embodies a movement from protest and subversion to disappearance and bereavement, presenting the transformation of the sonic space as a metaphor for the charged relationship between generations: authority and innocence, voice and silence.

Ludus Paschalis engages with two distinct groups: adults who are Jews, and children who are antisemites. Contrary to the common view that regards children as embodiments of innocence and sweetness, Hajdu, much like psychoanalysts, addresses the darker aspects of childhood, associated with complexes, rigidity, and aggression.

At the award ceremony of the Prime Minister's Prize for Composers in 1994, Hajdu stated: "Everything I have presented in this country is connected to the European story, even though I distanced myself from it; to the Jewish story, even though it is difficult to isolate this element; and to my inexhaustible childhood, and perhaps also to something that is beginning to take shape here."[17]

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[17] André Hajdu, remarks delivered at the ceremony for the 1994 Prime Minister's Prize for Israeli Composers, with the Tel Aviv Symphony Orchestra, Tel Aviv, 1994.

What does Hajdu mean when he points to an "inexhaustible childhood"? Perhaps he is referring to the compulsion to repeatedly return and reenact different elements of childhood through music—to relive "lives not fully lived" through musical creation.[18] It is possible that *Ludus Paschalis* reenacts both his years of study in a Christian school and his early childhood in the Jewish ghetto. In addition, childhood is linked to the present time of the work's composition, "something that is beginning to take shape here," an aspect to which I will return at the end of the article.

André Hajdu's childhood unfolded in the shadow of the Holocaust. In the Jewish ghetto he lived with his mother in a small house together with many adults; he suffered from hunger and did not encounter children his own age. During his post-war adolescence, he studied at a non-Jewish secondary school, where he attended Catholic religious classes. "I preferred studying there to the old and somewhat senile rabbi who taught Jewish studies,"[19] Hajdu recounts in the book he wrote with the contralto singer Mira Zakai, *Where Do the Salmon Swim?* He later writes: "After a childhood that took place almost exclusively within petty bourgeois Jewish circles . . . I had only a superficial acquaintance with more 'rooted,' more ultra-Orthodox Jews . . ."[20]

Hajdu's acquaintance with Jewish religious tradition occurred at a relatively late stage in his life, after he began engaging in ethnomusicology under the influence of György Kurtág. After living in Paris between 1956 and 1959, Hajdu spent the years 1960–62 in Tunisia, where he encountered a Jewish community that he experienced as authentically rooted in tradition. In the summer of 1962, Hajdu traveled to Rome to compose music for a film. There, a friend introduced him for the first time to texts from the Mishnah. Later that year, back in Paris, Hajdu began attending an evening yeshiva and memorizing Mishnaic and Talmudic texts in French translation.

Studying Talmud had a profound impact on Hajdu: it led him to explore his roots, to undergo a religious return, and ultimately to immigrate to Israel. *Ludus Paschalis* may bring together Hajdu's childhood perception of Judaism, as an aged and moribund religion, with his mature perception of Judaism as a site of creativity and renewal. The representation of Jewish adults may recall the manner in which he encountered Judaism in his childhood, while the vibrant portrayal of Christian children may reflect the objects of his childhood envy. The Holocaust, however, reversed this image, revealing that what had been perceived as life-affirming was in fact murderous and saturated with cruelty.

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[18] Thomas H. Ogden, *Reclaiming Unlived Life: Experiences in Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 1–24.
[19] Mira Zakai and André Hajdu, *Where Do the Salmon Swim? A Dialogue* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999), 227 (in Hebrew). All translations from Hebrew are by the author.
[20] Ibid.

This reversal is embodied in the work when the children murder one of their own. It is the Jews who undergo a positive transformation, as their singing in the final scene becomes more cohesive—perhaps an allusion to the emergence of the State of Israel from the ruins of the Holocaust.

Another dimension of the relationship between childhood, cruelty, and murder may be found within psychoanalytic theory. Various explanations have been offered in the literature for the fact that children may exhibit extreme cruelty. Throughout the preceding analysis of the scenes, I have proposed Oedipal interpretations; these resonate with Hajdu's own testimony concerning his life.

In his conversations with Mira Zakai, recorded in their joint book *Where Do the Salmon Swim?* (1999), Hajdu describes his relationship with his mother as symbiotic. Among other things, he recounts:

> As a child, I was required to recite, before going to sleep, a kind of personal conversational prayer in my mother's presence, to ask for whatever I wished to ask, and also to confess things I had done that day which were not good. Putting my finger in my nose or playing with my urine were among these confessions, addressed ambiguously, perhaps to heaven, perhaps to my mother.[21]

Hajdu describes his father as being absent most of the time, both psychologically and practically. It was the mother who assumed responsibility for the "superego," and she did so, according to Hajdu's account, in a maladaptive manner. Later in the same paragraph he writes:

> This intrusion into a child's intimacy on such a scale was not the only one, and we each paid a heavy price for it later in our own way. I did so through a delay in affective development and through numerous psychoanalytic inquiries; she, through years of loneliness and suffering. If I search within myself for the sources of my musical expression, I find two forces more tragic than any others: the experience of the Holocaust and the relationship with my mother.[22]

In his conflictual relationship with his mother, Hajdu locates both the psychoanalytic treatments he underwent and the origins of his musical creativity.

Within a Freudian framework, the murder of the child who symbolizes the father may be interpreted, against the backdrop of a pathological symbiosis with the mother, as a continuation of the interpretation presented above, which views the murder as the removal of the father as an obstacle, and thus as an extreme and violent expression of a failure to resolve the Oedipus complex. At the same time, this act may also be understood as a form of self-castration: when the father is not internalized as a mediating symbolic authority but is instead

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[21] Ibid., 217–19.
[22] Ibid.

experienced as a threatening presence, aggression directed toward him as an external obstacle may simultaneously turn inward. In the absence of stable internal boundaries and differentiation between self and other, the destructive impulse is not contained, but rather operates both outwardly and inwardly. In this sense, the elimination of the father and the destruction of the child are not contradictory, but constitute two intertwined dimensions of the same unresolved psychic process.

The children, whose singing becomes ecstatic, are those who "kill" the "father," the "primal Jew" internalized within them, and in doing so bring about their own deaths and the silencing of all song.

Concerto for Ten Little Pianists

Eight years after the composition of *Ludus Paschalis*, Hajdu composed the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*. Here too, there are two distinct groups, children and adults. This time, however, alongside childlike emotions expressed in the concertini (Hajdu's own designation for the ten short concerto-like movements, each functioning as an independent musical character piece) performed by child soloists, a mature entity is present: an adult orchestra that listens attentively to the children's voices and responds to them. The *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* has been performed several times in Israel and abroad, including by the Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (1983), the Thelma Yellin High School of the Arts (1986), the Israel Chamber Orchestra (2004), the Israel Chamber Orchestra together with the piano class of the Stricker Conservatory in Tel Aviv (2004), and the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig (2011).

The work is characterized by a distinctive formal design. It opens with a fugue performed by the orchestra, during which the soloists, ten children, enter the stage; at the conclusion of the fugue, they take their seats at the pianos. The composition continues with ten miniature pieces, each lasting a few minutes, to which Hajdu assigned titles denoting different character traits, such as "The Innocent," "The Violent," and others. In each miniature, a different soloist performs. The work concludes with a rondo where quotations from all ten miniatures are woven together and performed by the ten pianists.

In program notes written for the 1978 performance, Hajdu explicitly directs the listener toward a dramatic interpretation of the work: "It is not merely a piece performed by children, but rather a kind of staging of opposing worlds. Opposite an orchestra that represents the world of adults stands not a professional soloist, but a boy or a girl . . ."[23]

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[23] André Hajdu, "Concerto for Ten Little Pianists," program notes for concert by the Israel Chamber Orchestra and the piano class of the Stricker Conservatory, Tel Aviv, 2024.

The term "staging" suggests that the musical work is also intended as drama. Indeed, dramatic elements permeate the composition, beginning with the exposition, which includes not only musical materials but also the "presentation" of the children, and extending to the finale, the concluding rondo, in which a dynamic interplay unfolds among the soloists themselves on stage. The assignment of character-based titles to the movements, such as "The Innocent" and "The Violent," further enhances the dramatic effect, as it points to the composer's intention to create symbolic characterizations of the soloists' roles, and consequently to shape the musical relationships between the solo and orchestral materials.

Moreover, the assertion that the orchestra "represents the world of adults" indicates that, for Hajdu, the orchestra is not merely composed of adult musicians but symbolizes the adult world as a whole. Correspondingly, the soloists represent the world of children, with each child standing alone before the adults and maintaining a unique relationship with them.

How, then, should the dramatic confrontation presented in the concerto be understood? Is it a social confrontation between the society of children and the society of adults? Or might it represent an intrapsychic dialogue between childlike and mature aspects within the individual?

In the continuation of the introduction to the work, Hajdu refers to the concertini and states: "They are not portraits, but inner sensations." In other words, the "characters" are sensations, internalized aspects of the self. Building on this statement, I will approach the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* as a work that enables the expression of multiple facets of the self, in relation to the concept coined by Donald Winnicott, the "potential space." This concept describes an intermediate area between inner and external reality, in which creative experience, play, and symbolization can occur as conditions for the development of the self. [24] It is a space that belongs neither exclusively to the subject nor to the external world, but rather exists between them, allowing for the holding of tension, ambivalence, and multiplicity of meanings. It develops from the mother–infant relationship as a safe environment in which internal experiences can be explored and suspended without losing contact with reality.
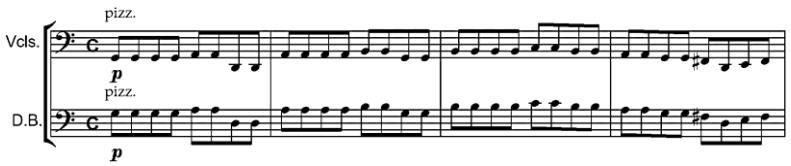
The *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* exemplifies such a playful space by allowing each child to appear as a distinct childlike persona, that is, to play with roles, to embody different mental states, and to express diverse and sometimes contradictory aspects of the self, with the implicit understanding that this is "only" play. Within this framework, a musical dialogue with the orchestra, which embodies the "responsible adult," becomes possible. In this way, an intermediate space is created on stage in which identities are not fixed but are

[24] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality.*

experienced, examined, and worked through creatively, in accordance with the principles of Winnicottian potential space.

The opening section is written as a fugue with a principal subject and a secondary subject, in 4/4 meter. The principal subject recurs five times, while the secondary subject is interwoven with it. Against the backdrop of the fugue's performance, ten children enter the stage one after another, in pairs, and stand beside their chairs. At the conclusion of the fugue, they take their seats. The children's silent, precisely timed, and carefully staged entrance stands in contrast to the fact that they will later be revealed as musically distinctive individuals, and this contrast may serve to arouse the listener's curiosity.
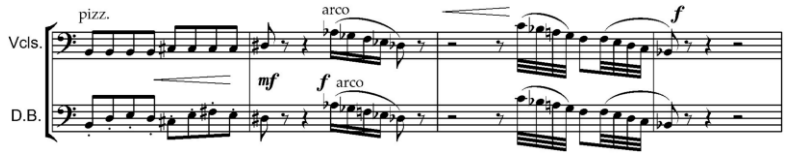
The fugue has two subjects. Subject A is rhythmically simple and circular in design, concluding on a leading tone that resolves to the tonic. In its first appearance, it is performed pizzicato in the cello and double bass (see Example 10); it is subsequently played a third higher in the clarinet, where the previously muted sonority becomes clearer. Thereafter, the subject appears alternately in all the instruments and in unexpected combinations; for example, its second appearance in m. 8 is performed simultaneously by the clarinet, horn, and cello.



Example 10 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, opening of the fugue.
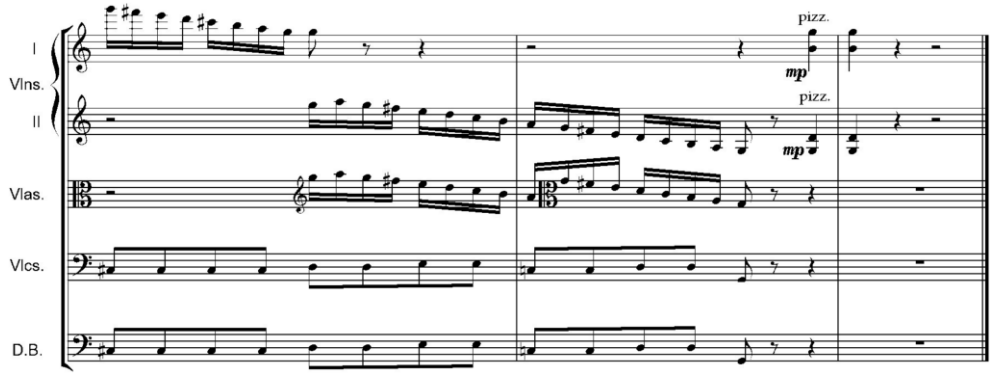
The entrance of the soloists onto the stage is synchronized with the appearances of the principal subject. With each statement of the subject, two pianists enter the stage and stand beside their chairs. The instructions for the pianists are written directly into the body of the score.

Subject B is brief, consisting of a single eighth note, subdivided into four thirty-second notes followed by one eighth note. It is written in a low register, at a strong dynamic level, and consists of descending intervals of seconds and minor thirds. The subject recurs in sequential repetitions (see Example 11).



Example 11 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, fugue, mm. 10–13: first appearance of the subject in the cello and double bass.

The opening concludes with a two-chord cadence, articulated pizzicato in the violins and played at a soft dynamic level, as if inviting the first child to begin playing and making space for him or her (see Example 12).



Example 12 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, fugue, mm. 22–24.

Hajdu's fugue is slow (Moderato) and relatively simple in structure, consisting of a principal subject and a brief secondary subject. The principal subject appears five times, accompanying the silent entrance of the concerto's soloists onto the stage. The secondary subject is short and continuous, performed legato.

The choice to open a concerto with an extended fugue in which the soloists remain silent is striking, and stands in contrast, for example, to Benjamin Britten's decision to conclude *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Op. 34 (1945), with a fugue that constitutes the musical climax of the work. In Britten's fugue, the various orchestral sections display the peak of their virtuosity, both performative and compositional, and their capacity for integration, combining the distinctive characteristics revealed in the preceding movements. In Hajdu's work, by contrast, the fugue serves as a backdrop for the silent presentation of the soloists, who will later present themselves musically against the orchestral texture. Britten's work is performed by adults and addressed to a child audience, whereas Hajdu's concerto is intended for performance by children and adults together and addresses a heterogeneous audience. The opening fugue is the only movement in which the adults perform alone.

According to an interpretation that views the concerto as a dramatic work, the fugue is situated prior to the onset of the dramatic action proper. It builds anticipation for what is to follow: what will the children play, what will they "say" to the orchestral "adults," and what kind of music will they create together? The silent presentation of the children further invites multiple

interpretations of their silence: are they silenced by the adults? Are the children dependent upon the adults? Or might the adults themselves become the objects of the children's play? Listeners familiar with *Ludus Paschalis* may find themselves asking whether the children will once again "murder" the adults, whether a reverse process, perhaps a form of revenge, will take place, or whether this time a form of social and psychic reconciliation between the different communities will emerge.

Next the ten children perform ten short concertini, each of which also stands independently as a self-contained piece. The concertini engage in various types of dialogue with the orchestra; several examples will be described below.
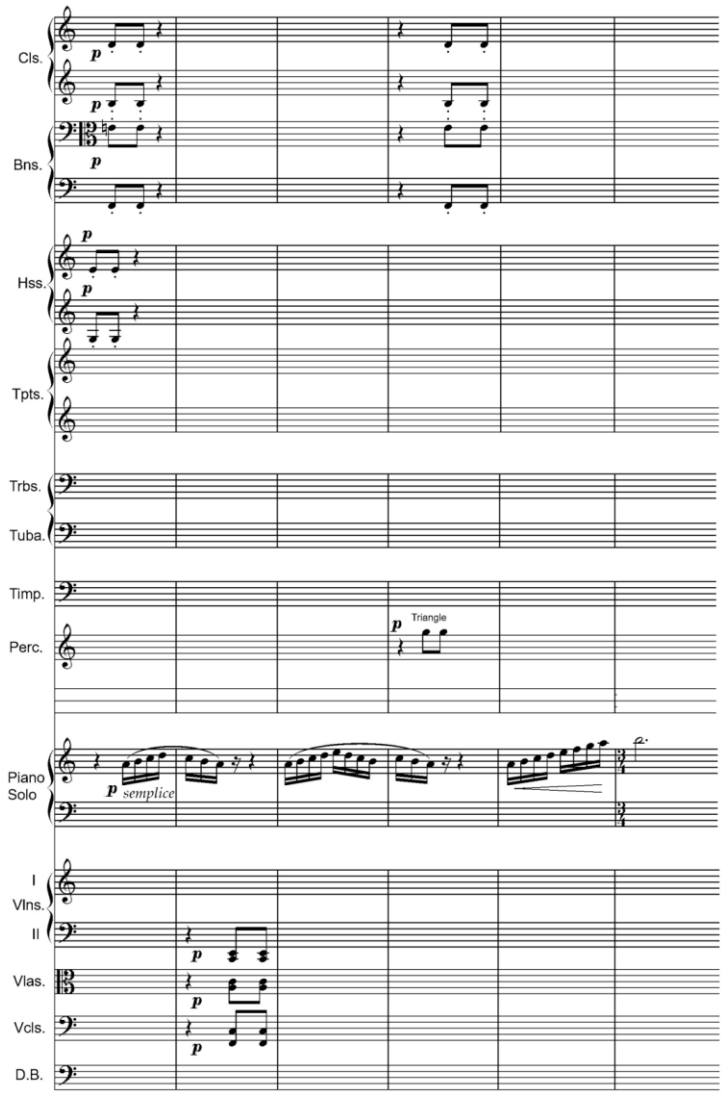
This first concertino lasts approximately one minute and 40 seconds. As in the classical concerto, the soloist enters against the backdrop of an orchestral opening. At the conclusion of the movement, the soloist performs an inversion of the opening orchestral melody, thereby creating a framing structure. The concertino contains a relatively large number of thematic ideas, as well as varied piano roles, as will be demonstrated below.

The movement is titled "The Innocent." In light of the interpretation that views the concerto as a dramatic musical representation of the relationship between child and adult, the interplay and responsiveness between the orchestral instruments and the soloist, including imitation, inversion, and thematic variation, may be interpreted as flexible relationships grounded in a positive, playful dynamic. The innocent child, open and sincere, awakens the hidden, playful child within the adults, while sincere adults evoke qualities of trust in the child. The relationship is thus "innocent," unburdened by manipulation.

When the relationship is "innocent," role reversals become possible, and an insight emerges that it is, ultimately, the childlike aspect that sets the adult's "agenda." This interpretation underscores the fact that the work is composed from the adult's perspective. At the same time, the music itself may give rise to additional associations, and the very act of assigning a title to an abstract, wordless composition inevitably constrains interpretive flexibility.

The soloist enters in m. 7 in response to the woodwind instruments, which perform two eighth notes articulated staccato. The soloist's "reply" to the woodwinds takes the form of a short melody, akin to a brief cadenza, comprising an ascending and descending motion in small steps set in sixteenth notes. This gesture is repeated three times, with the piano's "response" lengthening on each repetition, as though suggesting the soloist's growing boldness in asserting his or her voice. In the first two repetitions, the melody returns to the tonic, whereas in the third repetition the melody "opens out" and continues into a short melody with a fixed, buoyant rhythmic structure.
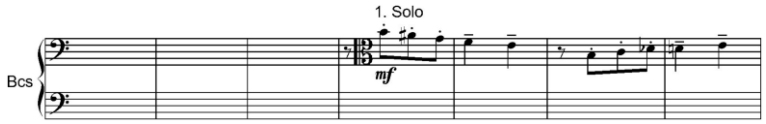
In m. 5 (Example 13) the piano is in dialogue with the clarinet and bassoon. It may be observed that the piano part is doubled by the percussion, a device that creates an intriguing sonority and invites reflection on the nature of the support offered by the orchestra to the child, whose playing appears to be "submerged" within the timpanist's sound.
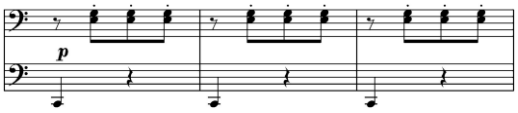


Example 13 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, concertino 1, mm. 7–12: dialogue between the piano and the clarinet and bassoon.

This question-and-answer structure recurs with a reversal of roles in m. 52, where the orchestration of the previously presented materials is switched: the woodwind instruments assume the piano's role, while the piano takes over theirs. This theme reappears in the concluding rondo, in m. 48, where it is performed by the piano.

Over the course of the movement, the role of the piano undergoes significant transformation. Thus, for example, in mm. 19–21 the piano sustains the harmonic framework, while the bassoon carries the melodic line (see Example 14).
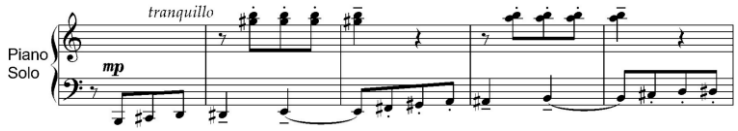


Example 14 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, concertino 1, mm. 18–24: bassoon melody.



Example 15 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, concertino 1, mm. 22–24: piano part.

In m. 47, the piano presents the bassoon's melody in inversion and modulation. This creates the impression that the piano has "learned" the role and now performs it in its own distinctive way, accompanying itself with chords, much like a toddler who internalizes the skills of their parents and reproduces them in a slightly altered form (see Examples 15 and 16).
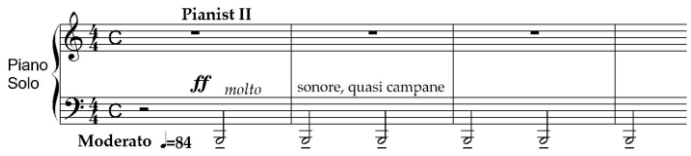


Example 16 Concerto for Ten Little Pianists, concertino 1, mm. 47–51: piano part.

In other passages of the movement, the piano performs in unison with orchestral instruments, as in m. 41, where the piano and tuba play the same pitches, G, E, C, E. Such exchanges of roles further suggest flexibility, and perhaps a lack of rigidity or judgment, alongside a willingness to accept diverse musical directions. The musical materials appear to be initiated by the piano, while the orchestra "imitates" them or joins in.

The piano parts are not virtuosic and might, at least ostensibly, be expected to be submerged within the orchestra's rich sonority. Nevertheless, the soloist remains clearly audible, as though the entire orchestra were "attentive" to the child performer. This sense of balance will be disrupted in the following concertino, in which the piano's role comes to "dominate" the orchestra.

The second concertino, "The Violent," opens with six repeated long low pitches in the piano (see Example 17). Four identical pitches are also heard at the conclusion of the movement, thereby creating a framing structure in which only a single voice "speaks."



Example 17 Concerto for Ten Little Pianists, concertino 2, mm. 1–3.
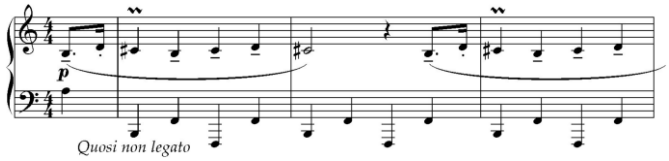
The repeated pitches also allude to folk idioms, which, according to Hajdu, constitute a kind of cradle of childhood within culture. Hajdu articulated this idea on several occasions in his writings and interviews, for example in a series of radio interviews conducted by Benny Hendel for the program *Hugah* (1986),[25] where he stated:

> When music became industrialized, ecological awareness began to emerge, and a need arose to return to one's roots. A child wishes to become an adult, and then the adult searches for the child within. The word *homeland* [*moledet*] links the idea of national identity with the idea of childhood [*yaldut*], *homeland* deriving from *childhood*.[26]

For most of the movement, the music is accompanied by an ostinato, a fixed pattern in a low register that recurs persistently, played by the pianist's left hand. The ostinato consists of a recurring four-note pattern, beginning with B and F, followed by a lower F and a return to F. The melodic subject is likewise measured and restrained, written largely in stepwise motion and ornamented with appoggiaturas. It is first presented by the piano and subsequently taken up by other instruments.

In mm. 6–9 the melodic subject appears in the treble clef, while the ostinato is notated in the bass clef (see Example 18).

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[25] André Hajdu, interview by Benny Hendel, "Hugah: Conversations with Creators, Travelers, and Scholars Integrating World Music—Nationalism," radio program, Kol Israel, 1986, National Library of Israel, NNL_MUSIC_AL997012290591005171.
[26] Ibid.



Example 18 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, concertino 2, mm. 6–9: melodic subject in the treble clef, and ostinato in the bass clef.

Subsequently, the melodic subject migrates and is played by the tuba (mm. 26–27) and by the horns (mm. 29–31).

In contrast to the restricted melody and the persistent ostinato, the orchestra introduces several surprising figurations, built primarily from major seconds and thirds. These gestures culminate in a sustained, dissonant chord shared among the participating instruments.

Toward the end of the movement, the glissando motif returns in descending sequences, performed at a very strong dynamic level. Simultaneously, the percussion instruments articulate dotted triplet figures that evoke associations with a military march. The combination generates a tense and compressed atmosphere, even producing an impression that is threatening and ominous.

Despite this menacing quality, the dialogue between piano and orchestra remains characterized by responsiveness and mutual engagement. Even when the piano assumes an ostensibly "violent" role, the orchestra appears to "join the game," thereby regulating and containing the aggression. The concertino comes to an end, and the child soloist returns to his or her seat; in the concluding rondo, this soloist will reappear, performing excerpts from the concertino. No act of retribution occurs, and certainly no symbolic "murder" or rejection of the concertino on account of its "violent," rigid and repetitive, character.

A further eight concertini follow, each likewise bearing titles denoting character traits: "The Tidy," "The Liar," "The Shy," "The Dreamer," "The Clever," "The Naughty," "The Lonely," "The Hero."

In conclusion, an analysis of the two concertini suggests that, from a psychodynamic perspective, the orchestra, which represents the "adults," functions as a "good enough mother" in the sense of Donald Winnicott (1971).[27] Similar to the function of holding, it provides a stable, continuous, and regulating framework within which the child soloists can move with relative freedom between different modes of expression without losing a sense of security or cohesion. The orchestra neither dominates the musical process nor negates the children's unique voices, yet it is not absent. Its sustained presence

[27] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 12.

enables the containment of creative tension, allowing impulses, conflicts, and contradictory qualities to be expressed without collapsing into chaos.

At the same time, the orchestra may also be understood as an instance of attunement in the sense described by Daniel Stern (1985):[28] it responds, adapts, and at times echoes or balances the soloists' expressions, thereby creating an intersubjective field in which the musical experience takes shape as a dialogue rather than a confrontation. Within this framework, the children are not left alone with their inner world, but encounter a musical response that enables them to process, regulate, and expand their expressions.

Thus, the orchestra does not merely represent an external authority, but fulfills a parental function that makes the very existence of the potential space possible: it sustains the conditions under which play can continue without collapsing into overly concrete reality or disintegrating, and enables movement between individual expression and integration within the whole.

The rondo that concludes the work is written for two pianists at two pianos and functions as a theatrical and musical synthesis of all the concerto's movements. Over the course of the movement, the pianists take their seats at the pianos in pairs and, together with the orchestra, perform secondary themes, short passages consisting of quotations from the preceding concertini. These secondary themes are not organized according to a chronological sequence; rather, they appear in what seems to be a free order. For example, after the first pianist presents an excerpt from "their" concertino, the third pianist enters with a quotation from their own movement, and so forth.

This order of appearance creates a strong sense of individuality and artistic "territoriality" among the child pianists. Each maintains a personal expressive space and presents himself or herself within a broader collective framework. In contrast to the opening fugue of the work, in which the children are present yet silent, here they act, give voice, and define themselves within the group. The non-linear presentation of the excerpts underscores the idea of pluralistic subjectivity, a multiplicity of voices that do not negate one another but coexist side by side, each preserving its own boundaries while nonetheless participating in a single, shared creation.
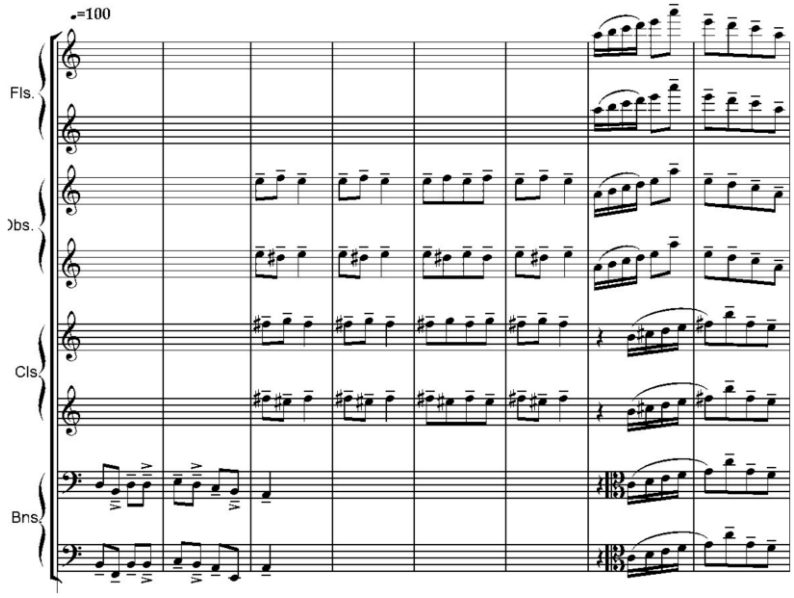
The recurring section, the ritornello, is written in 4/8 meter and comprises two thematic ideas. **Theme A** is a rhythmically driven melody that moves predominantly by small intervals, articulated in eighth notes, with accents placed on the weak beats, the second and fourth pulses of the measure. Although the pitches are marked with *tenuto* articulation, a legato slur is also indicated, seemingly delineating the musical phrases and separating them from one

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[28] Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 138–61.

another. The melody is first presented by the bassoon and subsequently transferred to other instruments.
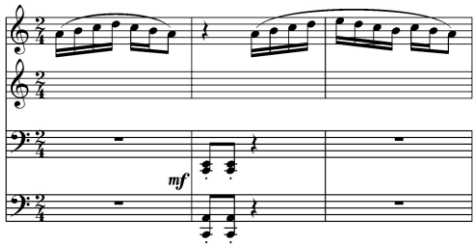
In parallel, a rhythmic ostinato is performed by the string section, likewise emphasizing the weak beats.

Theme B is written in a question-and-answer structure and shaped as a wave-like gesture. It consists of four ascending sixteenth notes moving stepwise in seconds and articulated legato, followed by two ascending eighth notes outlining a perfect fourth. These are succeeded by either two or four eighth notes and finally by a quarter note, forming a descending motion. The extensive use of *tenuto* articulation throughout the ritornello produces a musical flow in which each pitch is independently emphasized and fully sustained, resulting in a rich and festive sonority (see Example 19).



Example 19 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, rondo, mm. 18–25: *tenuto* articulation.

Within the ritornello, the secondary themes drawn from the individual concertini are interwoven as the children rise from their seats and perform their respective materials. Example 20 illustrates a quotation by the piano from the first concertino, in which the two pianos perform both the original piano part and the orchestral part from the earlier movement. The staccato chordal figures are doubled, and thereby reinforced, by the cello and double bass.



Example 20 *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, rondo, mm. 47–49: quotation from concertino 1.

The closing cadenza is of particular interest. The brass instruments perform a series of descending pitches moving by seconds, creating a sense of gradual dissolution. On the final pitch of this series, the entire orchestra joins in, and the concluding chord is sounded with a full and rich sonority, spanning a wide register and performed by the orchestra as a whole.

In the performance by the Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig under the direction of Aurélien Bello (2011), the ten child pianists can be seen standing around the piano and playing the final two pitches together in different octaves. These performance instructions are not specified in the score and may therefore have been introduced as a theatrical or staging choice by the performers themselves. Such a choice highlights the concertante idea of unity among the voices and frames the conclusion of the work as a collective act, reconciliatory or celebratory, shared by all participants.

The *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* was written for child pianists and an orchestra of adults. In addition to these groups, two further participants inhabit the performative space: the conductor and the audience. In numerical terms, the conductor is a single figure, the children form a group of ten, the orchestra is larger than the group of children, and larger still is the audience. Despite this, the presence of such a substantial group of children on stage may evoke questions and anxieties among both audience members and orchestral players alike: are the children "disciplined"? well trained? or are they "wild" and "primitive"?

In the introduction to the work, Hajdu writes:

> I composed the piece rapidly and with great enthusiasm, because I felt that I was touching upon matters that few composers had attempted to approach. That is my side of the story. From the children who participate in the work, however, it demands precisely the opposite: responsibility, discipline, and dedication of the kind required of an adult soloist. And yet I wanted them to play spontaneously and directly, like children! Did I ask for too much?[29]

[29] Hajdu, Concerto *for Ten Little Pianists and Orchestra*, introduction to the score.

The ironic question "Did I ask for too much?" reflects the composer's awareness of the paradox inherent in writing music that aspires to a childlike character and is to be performed by children. The very demand that the child adhere to a written score, entirely accompanied by adults, stands in tension with childlike spontaneity and playfulness, and constitutes a fundamentally educational and regulating act. At the same time, Hajdu testifies that the process of composing the work itself was "childlike," undertaken "rapidly and with great enthusiasm," and motivated by a sense of uniqueness and singularity. The question thus arises: does the "childlikeness" of the adult composer succeed in finding expression within the work itself and in its performance by children?

Childhood, according to this perspective, is presented as a dynamic, spontaneous, and elastic phase of life, an open space of play, curiosity, and creative vitality, in which free movement between different experiential states becomes possible. This stands in sharp contrast to the way childhood is represented in *Ludus Paschalis*, where it appears as a rigid, uniform, and even violent domain, governed by external rules and controlling, oppressive forces.

This distinction aligns with the way psychoanalysts from the object relations tradition have described normative infant and early childhood development. Central concepts such as "potential space" and the "good enough mother," formulated by Donald Winnicott, emphasize that healthy psychological development takes place within a relational context in which the adult provides a holding environment that is flexible and nonintrusive. Within such a framework, the child is able to play, imagine, and create, and through these processes to establish an authentic and integrative self, one that can contain multiple states, drives, and qualities without disintegration.

The adequacy of these relationships is not defined by the absence of aggression, but rather by the adult's capacity to withstand it without retaliating destructively or withdrawing. In musical terms, this can be observed in the movement "The Violent," where an eruption of aggressive energy does not lead to collapse, but remains contained within the orchestral framework. By contrast, in "The Innocent," a flexible and attentive dialogue emerges, enabling reciprocal movement between the voices of the child and the adult without erasing the distinctiveness of either.

Against this background, the decision to conclude the work with a rondo acquires symbolic significance. The rondo, as a form that returns and integrates diverse materials, creates a kind of musical "celebration" in which the different parts of the self are gathered and organized. Within the "parental" envelope of the orchestra, an integration becomes possible that does not erase differences but holds them together, thereby realizing an ideal of dynamic, living, and creative wholeness.

Whereas *Ludus Paschalis* confronts Hajdu's childhood in the shadow of the Holocaust, the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* may, in terms of the relationships among children, evoke a later developmental stage in Hajdu's life, early adolescence, when he began his studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music. Hajdu describes this period as follows:

> Thus I began my studies at the age of fifteen with Márta Sebő . . . under the supervision of the head of the department, Margit Gál. I was admitted as an exceptional case, too old relative to my level of piano playing, highly undisciplined and technically ungrounded, yet possessing imagination and personality. They did everything they could to compensate for what I lacked and to educate me in culture and a measure of discipline. They probably could not have acted otherwise, but they succeeded in destroying my desire to play the piano, and they bear a considerable responsibility for my gradual shift towards composition.[30]

This account suggests that Hajdu, who perceived himself as a somewhat rebellious and unruly adolescent, yet endowed with personal charisma, was nonetheless contained within a formal educational institution, "educated" there, and able to shape his artistic identity within its framework. A comparable atmosphere may be discerned in the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*: the piano parts, which represent childhood in its various guises, as reflected in the titles of the individual concertini, are contained and regulated by the mature orchestral framework.

The differences between the two works may be linked not only to aesthetic or conceptual considerations, but also to profound biographical processes that André Hajdu underwent during the years of their composition. Hajdu immigrated to Israel in 1966, married in 1969, and became a father for the first time in 1970. Over the following decade (1970–81), six sons were born to him. In later years, each of them chose a markedly different life path: one became a winemaker in France, another adopted an ultra-Orthodox lifestyle, while others pursued different directions.

In the film *The Rubik's Cube* (2013),[31] one of Hajdu's sons suggests that the profound differences among the brothers stem from the fact that each embodies a different aspect of the father's personality. Hajdu himself responds to this suggestion with a nod, thereby offering a form of implicit affirmation. At the same time, such a reading invites critical reservation. It risks effacing the role of the mother, Ruth Hajdu, a complex and inspiring figure who herself underwent processes of conversion and migration, and it overlooks additional psychological, familial, and social factors that may account for differences among siblings. Nevertheless, the very suggestion sheds light on a significant

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[30] Zakai and Hajdu, *Where Do the Salmon Swim?*, 22.

[31] Gilad Inbar, dir., *The Rubik's Cube: A Journey with André Hajdu*, documentary, 73 minutes (Shiba Communications Ltd., 2013).

dimension of the composer's development between *Ludus Paschalis* (1970) and the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* (1978).

During these years, Hajdu's home became a lively and dynamic environment, filled with real children rather than symbolic or abstract representations. This shift may help explain the transition from the rigid and uniform representation of childhood in *Ludus Paschalis*, where children appear as a closed and at times violent collective, to the differentiated, polyphonic, and individualized representation of childhood in the concerto.

It may be suggested that Hajdu's experience as an only child, who assumed multiple childlike roles in relation to his parents, led to a condensed and concentrated representation of childhood in the earlier work, one in which the multiplicity of child aspects coalesces into a single, closed, and threatening collective figure. By contrast, for Hajdu as a father of six sons, this inner multiplicity becomes externalized. The children themselves come to "carry" different aspects of childhood, each embodying a distinct quality. This differentiation finds a clear musical expression in the concerto, where each child soloist is associated with a particular character, such as "The Innocent" or "The Violent," and engages in a unique dialogue with the orchestra, which represents the adult world.

In this sense, the transition between the two works is not merely stylistic or formal, but reflects a psychological movement: from a closed, condensed structure, overly contained within the self, toward a differentiated space in which division, resonance, and recognition of otherness become possible, in relation both to the children and to the various parts of the self itself.

From *Ludus Paschalis* to the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*: Hajdu's Process of Adjustment in Israel

The contrast between the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* and *Ludus Paschalis* with regard to the relationship between children and adults is striking. Whereas *Ludus Paschalis* depicts an alienation that culminates in murder, the concerto presents a dialogue that leads to cooperation. Beyond the aspects related to Hajdu's psychic biography and childhood memories, the two works also tell us something about the composer's state at the time of their composition.

Hajdu himself linked the composition of *Ludus Paschalis* to the conflicts with the establishment that characterized his early years in Israel. In his conversations with Mira Zakai, he recounts:

> *I always sensed* behind the Ben-Gurionist enthusiasm for the Bible a kind of centralized, normative state ideology, and I soon encountered its representatives in musical life. Instead, I preferred a diversity of mutually contradictory traditions: Yiddish, Ladino . . . All this created the 'explosive material' of Ludus Paschalis.

> Indeed, already in my second year in Israel I became an enemy of the establishment and of the ideology of the melting pot . . .[32]

In a similar vein, Assaf Shelleg argues in *Theological Stains* that one of the reasons why Hajdu chose Talmudic texts to represent the "Jews" was his wish to challenge the cultural hegemony that regarded the Bible as the exclusive source of artistic inspiration.[33]

Against this background, the psychological position from which Hajdu created during this period may be understood as one characterized both by a sense of otherness and by a subversive need to make his unique voice heard. From this perspective, the background to the composition of *Ludus Paschalis*, a work concerned with conflict, aggression, and silencing, may also be better understood. Hajdu's feelings of otherness and subversion are transformed into another cultural sphere and find expression in the conflict between children and adults, and between Christians and Jews.

Against this background, Hajdu's period of adjustment in Israel did not last long. By 1975 he had joined the faculty of the Tel Aviv Academy of Music and Dance, later teaching in Jerusalem and at Bar-Ilan University, while his works gained increasing recognition in Israel and abroad. Although Hajdu continued to perceive himself as standing outside the establishment, his professional position in Israel had by then become firmly established, and he may have experienced a growing confidence that his unique voice could be heard within Israeli culture without relinquishing its distinctiveness.

From this perspective, *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, composed several years later, reflects a different stage in Hajdu's creative development. The rich dialogue between children and adults may be understood as an artistic transformation of this growing sense of confidence. Rather than confrontation, the work presents a secure and productive encounter between contrasting voices. From this perspective, the concluding rondo may be heard as a joyful dance celebrating the possibility of dialogue and the creativity that emerges from it.

Conclusion

This article has examined two central works by André Hajdu, *Ludus Paschalis* (1970) and the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists (1978), and explored* the ways in which the relationship between childhood and adulthood is shaped within them. In *Ludus Paschalis*, a collision unfolds between the children's choir and

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[32] Zakai and Hajdu, *Where Do the Salmon Swim?*, 72.

[33] Assaf Shelleg, *Theological Stains: Art Music and the Zionist Project* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 208.

the adults' choir, deriving from a conflict between innocence and instinctuality, between naïve playfulness and cruelty and aggression, and between the unregulated voice of the child and an absent adult authority, withdrawn into its own world. By contrast, the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists* constructs a different space, one grounded in listening, dialogue, and containment: the orchestra creates a supportive framework that allows the child's voice to be heard and to develop.

Beyond the musical analysis that reveals Hajdu's unique compositional language, the article has addressed two additional dimensions of depth in his work. The first is biographical. Hajdu's childhood unfolded in the shadow of the Holocaust, marked by displacement and by encounters with loss, anxiety, and estrangement. His separation from the Jewish community and his confrontation with a hostile Christian world are reflected in his music as a persistent engagement with questions of identity, childlike cruelty, adult detachment, inevitable death, and the need to find reparation and a new spiritual home, concerns that are articulated most forcefully in *Ludus Paschalis*. In the *Concerto for Ten Little Pianists*, by contrast, a reparative condition is presented, following the working-through of Holocaust trauma and the psychoanalytic processing of Hajdu's relationship with his mother, to which he himself testified.

The second prism is psychological. In his compositional practice, Hajdu turns his gaze toward the child within, and toward the regressive psychic life that accompanies the artist in the act of creation. The article relates these processes to psychoanalytic ideas articulated by Freud, Winnicott, Kohut, and others, which emphasize the centrality of the Oedipus complex and the destructive consequences that may ensue when it is not adequately resolved. Thus the destructive aggression enacted by the children in *Ludus Paschalis* is transformed in the concerto into a regulated and creative form of aggression, in which the child is not annihilated but rather responded to and contained. According to Hajdu's own testimony, psychoanalytic processes, as well as creative ones, assisted him in working through the traumas of childhood. As he recalled:

> At several periods I used psychoanalysis as a means of self-understanding, because I always felt that there was something irreducible within me, coming from a world I did not know, something that altered things and propelled me forward without my knowing where. My greatest challenge was to come to know this inner presence.[34]

The third prism concerns his biography at the time in which the works were composed, that is, Hajdu's position as a creator in Israel. In his early work,

[34] Zakai and Hajdu, *Where Do the Salmon Swim?*, 47.

written shortly after his immigration, an experience of alienation and rebellion toward the establishment is articulated, akin to the stance of a child rebelling against parental authority. In the later concerto, by contrast, a shift becomes apparent: Hajdu had by then found his place within the local artistic community, and his ability to construct a musical dialogue between generations and voices reflects a process of reconciliation and integration.

In addition, a hypothesis has been proposed according to which the differences in the representation of child–adult relations between the two works are linked to Hajdu's transition into fatherhood. During the years between their composition, five sons were born to him, and this shift, from being an only child and the father of a single child to becoming the father of multiple children, is reflected in his musical representations of childhood. What initially appears as a uniform, closed, and aggressive representation evolves into a rich and varied polyphonic texture, in which distinct voices, identities, and modes of expression can emerge.

Through a comparative reading of the two works, Hajdu's oeuvre may thus be understood as tracing a process of inner transformation, a movement from an alienated and persecuted childhood toward a mature stance characterized by listening and containment. Music functions for him as a field of psychic reparation, in which childhood is not erased but is granted a voice within a newly configured framework of artistic maturity and healing.

In his remarks on the work "Me'ein She'ol" as presented in a concert program in 1969, Hajdu describes the mythological underworld as a metaphor for a state of existential disconnection: a space in which each entity exists in isolation, without listening and without the possibility of connection with others. Reflecting on the compositional process, he states: "All the instruments are enclosed within their own language. That is why there is darkness, hell. . . Personally, this represents a stage in my life, and I felt that once I had written the work, I had moved beyond that stage."[35]As a music therapist, I find in Hajdu's words a compelling affirmation of the therapeutic potential of artistic creation. They underscore that creation is not merely an aesthetic object or a mode of expression, but also a psychological act with healing potential, a process that enables the individual to encounter complex early experiences, to work through them within a holding framework, and to move toward integration and connection.

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[35] André Hajdu, program notes for the concert in which his work "Me'ein She'ol" was performed, April 17, 1969.