



The image in musical performance: an analysis from the perspective of *ethos* and musical gesture

A imagem na performance musical: análise sob a perspectiva do *ethos* e do gesto musical

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ABSTRACT: We propose, in this article, a comparison between the different “self-images” conveyed by solo violinists in performances of the same concerto, drawing mainly on the theories of *ethos*, scenography, and musical gesture. We consider the notion of musical performance as understood by Daniel Kohut (1992) and Simon Frith (1998); the theory of *ethos* and scenography as developed primarily by Dominique Maingueneau (2008, 2018, 2020) and Patrick Charaudeau (2008, 2020); and the concept of musical gesture as presented by Bruno Madeira (2017). We analyze performances of Felix Mendelssohn’s *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in E Minor, interpreted by Joshua Bell (1967–), Julia Fischer (1983–), Isaac Stern (1920–2001), and Leonidas Kavakos (1967–) as soloists. We conclude that variations in the images projected may stem from historical, social, and contextual factors, as well as from the personal characteristics that the violinist—and/or the media surrounding them—seeks to imprint as a distinctive trait. We also identify, as one of the likely causes, the effort to make concert music less formal and more accessible to the public, altering stereotypes commonly associated with the genre, especially among younger violinists. Aspects such as stage entrances and exits, musical gestures in selected passages of the work, and the *ethos* previously conveyed by the soloists will be examined. In this way, we analyze not only the musicians’ performances but also newspaper articles and the artists’ own websites, when available. We observed several projected self-images, including friendliness, informality, formality, gratitude (toward the audience and/or the orchestra), “traditionalism,” sobriety, restraint, sensitivity, and empathy. We hope to contribute both to the field of Discourse Analysis and to the field of Musical Performance, and, above all, to Introduction demonstrate how Discourse Analysis can aid in understanding and shaping Musical Performance.

KEYWORDS: Musical Performance. Discourse Analysis. Musical Gesture. *Ethos*. Maingueneau.

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RESUMO: Propomos, neste artigo, uma comparação entre as distintas “imagens de si” transmitidas por violinistas solistas em performances de um mesmo concerto, com apoio, principalmente, das teorias do *ethos*, da cenografia e do gesto musical. Consideramos a ideia de performance musical como a entendida por Daniel Kohut (1992) e Simon Frith (1998); a teoria do *ethos* e da cenografia, como entendidas principalmente por Dominique Maingueneau (2008, 2018, 2020) e Patrick Charaudeau (2008, 2020); e a ideia de gesto musical, como entendida por Bruno Madeira (2017). Analisamos as apresentações do Concerto para Violino e Orquestra em Mi Menor de Felix Mendelssohn com as interpretações, como solistas, de Joshua Bell (1967 -), Julia Fischer (1983 -), Isaac Stern (1920 – 2001) e Leonidas Kavakos (1967 -). Concluimos que as variações de imagens podem ser causadas tanto por causas históricas, sociais e de contextos específicos, como pela própria personalidade que a/o violinista ou a mídia a ele ou a ela ligada busca imprimir como uma característica própria. Percebemos também como uma das prováveis causas, a busca por tornar a música de concerto menos formal e mais acessível ao público, alterando estereótipos comumente associados a esse gênero, principalmente entre os violinistas mais jovens. Aspectos como a entrada e saída de palco, os gestos musicais em trechos selecionados da obra e os *ethos* prévios transmitidos pelos solistas serão analisados. Dessa maneira, analisamos não somente a performance dos músicos, como também matérias de jornais e os sites dos próprios artistas, quando disponíveis. Percebemos como algumas imagens de si transmitidas: simpatia, informalidade, formalidade, gratidão (para com o público e/ou para com a orquestra), “tradicionalismo”, sobriedade, contenção, sensibilidade e empatia. Esperamos contribuir tanto para a área da Análise do Discurso quanto para a área de Performance Musical e, principalmente, como a Análise do Discurso pode contribuir para o entendimento e para a construção de Performance Musical.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Performance Musical. Análise do Discurso. Gesto Musical. *Ethos*. Maingueneau.

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1 Introduction

In this article, we propose a comparison between the various self-images conveyed by solo violinists in their performances, supported primarily by the theory of *ethos*. Our objective is to examine the ways in which distinct performers, interpreting the same work, may seek to communicate different images to the audience, thereby confirming or refuting the stereotypes linked to so-called "classical music" and their own prior *ethos*. For our analysis, we specifically consider the concept of performance as understood by Kohut (1992) and Frith (1999), the theory of *ethos* and scenography as developed mainly by Maingueneau (2008, 2018, 2020) and Charaudeau (2020), and the concept of musical gesture as understood by Madeira (2017).

It is essential to state from the outset that we define musical performance as the live presentation of an artist. For Kohut (1992, p. 109), musical performance is the "act of producing aesthetically organized sound and silence within time and space. It involves the reproduction of musical ideas or concepts (mental images) that are conceived within the interpreter's musical mind"¹. Furthermore, Frith (1998) emphasizes that performance involves a social and communicative process that requires an audience and is fundamentally dependent on interpretation. According to Frith:

(...) performance art is a form of rhetoric, a rhetoric of gestures in which, by and large, bodily movements and signs (including the use of voice) dominate other forms of communicative signs, such as language and iconography. And such a use of the body (which is obviously central to what's meant here by performance art) depends on the audience's ability to understand it both as an object (an erotic object, an attractive object, a repulsive object, a social object) and as subject, that is, as a willed or shaped object, an object with meaning (Frith, 1998, p. 205).

Thus, we consider that in musical performance, the body and gesture, in addition to sound itself, may be regarded as essential parts of performance. Furthermore, the audience must also be able to understand the message being conveyed—although it is worth reflecting that the message the performer seeks to communicate will not always be the same as the one interpreted by the audience.

In this way, considering the notion of the "performer's musical mind"² (Kohut) and the association between the use of the body and interpretation (Frith), different musicians may have different interpretations of the same work, just as each audience

¹ "ato de produzir som e silêncio esteticamente organizados dentro do tempo e espaço. Envolve a reprodução de ideias ou conceitos musicais (imagens mentais) que são concebidos dentro da mente musical do intérprete". Authors' translation.

² "mente musical do intérprete"

member—or different audiences—may interpret the same work and the same performance differently.

Historical and social aspects affect how this interpretation may occur: one expects a popular music singer to behave in a certain way on stage in a given historical period and social context, and a classical harpist in another way within that same period and society. Irene López (2014), for example, mentions that silence during the performance of instrumental music, which we call “classical,” only became common from the nineteenth century onward:

Within the previously outlined 19th-century paradigm, the practice of the public concert, among other things, became established. While concerts were already taking place in the 18th century, and long before opera had transcended aristocratic salons to become a public spectacle, what was new was the expected attitude of concertgoers: silent listening in a theater where the music, the movements, and the gestures of the conductor or virtuoso performer became a spectacle in themselves. Today, this behavior is naturalized and accepted, but later in the 19th century, conductors prohibited attendees from talking, eating, entering, or leaving the auditorium while the performance was taking place—practices that were apparently quite common until then. Therefore, this attitude in listeners is also part of a slow and lengthy process that was initially imposed and then self-imposed by individuals as the correct way to behave at a concert; in other words, it became a convention (López, 2014, p. 19)³.

Personality issues also dictate the *ethos* a musician seeks to transmit, a phenomenon clearly visible in rock music. Guitarists like Jimmy Page, Slash, and

³ ‘Dentro del paradigma decimonónico antes esbozado se consolida entre otras, la práctica del concierto público. Si bien éstos ya se realizaban en el siglo XVIII, y mucho antes de la ópera había trascendido los salones aristocráticos para convertirse en un espectáculo público, lo que sí será nuevo es la actitud que se espera de los asistentes al concierto: una audición silenciosa en un teatro en que la música, los movimientos y gestos del director de orquesta o del intérprete virtuoso se transforman en un espectáculo por sí mismo. Hoy ese comportamiento está naturalizado y aceptado pero avanzado el siglo XIX los directores de orquesta prohibían a los asistentes que hablaran, comieran, entraran o salieran del recinto mientras se realizaba la ejecución de las obras, prácticas que al parecer eran muy comunes hasta ese momento. Por lo tanto, esa actitud en los oyentes también forma parte de un lento y largo proceso que en principio fue impuesto y luego auto-impuesto por los sujetos como forma correcta de comportarse en un concierto, es decir se transformó en una convención’. Authors’ translation.

Santana play the same instrument but project entirely different images, much as drummers Ringo Starr and Keith Moon exhibit nearly antithetical stage behaviors. As we demonstrate, this also occurs with violinists, even when performing traditional concertos. This also occurs, as we seek to demonstrate here, with violinists, even when performing traditional concertos, especially when in different periods, both because of what is expected from a soloist in those periods and because of the violinist's own personality and the image they seek to convey to the audience.

Evidently, technical issues may limit the variations of movements and gestures violinists can make while playing the instrument (although these are not rigid, as we show in this article), but from the moment the musician enters the stage, a performance and an image are already being conveyed—and, as we perceive here, even before that.

Whereas some may wish to convey a more formal image, others may desire a more relaxed image and, thus, one closer to a certain type of audience. This is particularly valid if we consider the score as a mere script, as suggested by Cook:

Thinking of a Mozart string quartet as a "text" is to construct it as a half-sonic, half-ideal object that is reproduced in performance. On the other hand, thinking of it as a "script" is to see it as a choreography of a series of real-time social interactions between the instrumentalists: a series of mutual gestures of listening and communion that enact a particular vision of human society (Cook, 2006, p. 12)⁴.

2 Theoretical-Methodological Framework

Dominique Maingueneau (2020) relates the notion of *ethos* to persuasion and to the ways in which the “recipient attributes to a speaker inscribed in the world, outside of their enunciation, traits that are in reality intradiscursive, since they are associated

⁴ “Pensar em um quarteto de cordas de Mozart enquanto um ‘texto’ é construí-lo como um objeto meio-sônico, meio-ideal, que é reproduzido na performance. Por outro lado, pensá-lo como um “script” é vê-lo como uma coreografia de uma série de interações 3sociais em tempo real entre os instrumentistas: uma série de gestos mútuos de audição e de comunhão que encenam uma visão particular da sociedade humana, cuja comunicação à plateia é uma das características da música de câmara.” Authors’ translation.

with the way in which they are speaking”⁵ (Maingueneau, 2020, p. 13). For Patrick Charaudeau (2020), *ethos* is related to the form an utterance takes to become “credible,” as well as to the construction of a self-image associated with what:

emerges from our behavior, from the relationship we have with others and with ourselves, and which we offer to the perception of the other, all the things that relate to the subjectivity of the speaker, to its psychological characteristics, to its body as an expression of an inner being. Of course, the ideas that come out of that body are not strangers to it, they contribute to shape its image (Charaudeau, 2020, p. 72)⁶.

Maingueneau posits that *ethos* emanates from the “shown” - the legitimacy of the utterance arises from the evidence of a corporeality that occurs within “the very movement of reading”⁷ (Maingueneau, 2008, p. 53). The author (2018) starts from Aristotle’s theory, for whom *ethos* consists of seeking a good impression through the way discourse is constructed, creating a good image for oneself in order to gain the public’s trust – this would be achieved through three qualities: *phronesis* (prudence), *arete* (virtue), and *eunoia* (benevolence). This credibility would come from speech, tone, clothing, and gestures.

The speaker also seeks to control the possible interpretations the audience may have (Maingueneau, 2018). In this sense, it is important to point out that:

the *ethos* of a discourse results from the interaction of several factors: pre-discursive *ethos*, discursive *ethos* (shown *ethos*), and fragments of the text in which the enunciator evokes their own enunciation (said *ethos*), directly (“it is a friend that talks to you” or indirectly, through metaphors our allusions to other scenes of speech. The distinction

⁵ “destinatário atribui a um locutor inscrito no mundo, fora de sua enunciação, traços que são, na realidade, intradiscursivos, pois associados à maneira com que ele está falando”. Auhors’ translation.

⁶ “sobressai de nosso comportamento, da relação que temos com os outros e conosco mesmos, e que oferecemos à percepção do outro, todas as coisas que remetem à subjetividade do sujeito falante, às suas características psicológicas, ao seu corpo como expressão de um ser interior. É claro que as ideias que saem desse corpo não são estranhas a ele, elas contribuem para modelar sua imagem” (Charaudeau, 2020, p. 72). Author’s translation.

⁷ “no próprio movimento de leitura”.

between said *ethos* and shown *ethos* is inscribed in the extremities of a continuum line, because it is impossible to define a clear division between the “said” suggested and the “shown”. The effective *ethos* is that which is built by a certain recipient, it results from the interaction of all these many instances, which respective weight varies according to the genres of speech (Maingueneau, 2018, p. 270)⁸.

For Maingueneau, although *ethos* is linked to the act of enunciation, “the audience also constructs representations of the enunciator’s *ethos* even before they speak” and, furthermore, “the simple fact that a text belongs to a discourse genre or to a certain ideological positioning induces expectations concerning *ethos*” (Maingueneau, 2008, p. 60). That is the previous *ethos*, the one that the audience assigns even before, in our case of study, the presentation itself, before the performance takes place.

Further reinforcing the historical and social character of *ethos*, Maingueneau states that the recipient identifies and interprets *ethos* according to a set of social representations and stereotypes, “which the enunciation contributes to reinforcing or transforming” (Maingueneau, 2008, p. 65). The enunciation – in our case, the performance – can, therefore, seek to confirm or modify the stereotypes that support the interpretation of *ethos*. Therefore, as we will see, a more informal and unpretentious presentation can seek to distance itself from the stereotype of seriousness that commonly accompanies the idea of a concert.

Associated with the notion of *ethos* is that of scenography, which is the way the text first reaches the reader, being linked to the space and time of enunciation. *Ethos* works together with scenography (Maingueneau, 2018), which is “both a condition and

⁸ “O *ethos* de um discurso resulta de uma interação de diversos fatores: o *ethos* pré-discursivo, o *ethos* discursivo (*ethos* mostrado), mas também os fragmentos do texto em que o enunciador evoca sua própria enunciação (*ethos* dito), diretamente (“é um amigo que vos fala”) ou indiretamente, por meio de metáforas ou alusões de outras cenas de fala. A distinção entre *ethos* dito e *ethos* mostrado se inscreve nas extremidades de uma linha contínua, pois é impossível definir uma fronteira nítida entre o “dito” sugerido e o “mostrado”. O *ethos* efetivo, aquele que é construído por um dado destinatário, resulta da interação dessas diversas instâncias, cujo peso respectivo varia de acordo com os gêneros do discurso” (Maingueneau, 2018, p. 270). *Authors’ translation*.

a product of the work, which at the same time is 'in the work' and constitutes it, where the statuses of the enunciator and the co-enunciator are validated, but also the space (topography) and time (chronography) from which the enunciation develops"⁹ (Maingueneau, 2018, p. 252). In fewer words the scenography gives the tone to the enunciation, which can be friendly, professorial, meditative, familiar, epistolary, among other forms.

We can also associate the idea of ethos and scenography with the idea of staging, according to Charaudeau (2008):

"To communicate" is to proceed with a staging. Just as, in theatrical staging, the theater director uses the stage space, the sets, the lighting, the sound, the comedians, the text, to produce effects of meaning aimed at an audience imagined by him, the speaker – whether speaking or writing – uses components of the communication device according to the effects he intends to produce in his interlocutor (Charaudeau, 2008, p. 68)¹⁰.

This may be a more familiar idea to musicians when entering the stage, especially if they have already worked with other arts such as acting. Thus, from the moment a musician plans their entrance onto the stage, they are already planning their "staging." We can consider that the orchestra's arrangement itself seeks not only a sonic effect, but also a visual effect on the audience. The rituals associated with the performance, as we demonstrated from the quote by López (2014), have been developed over the years, seeking to generate an atmosphere of formality and even a demand for a certain behavior from the audience. For example, musicians are required

⁹ "tanto condição como produto da obra, que ao mesmo tempo está 'na obra' e a constitui, que são validadas os estatutos do enunciador e do coenunciador, mas também o espaço (topografia) e o tempo (cronografia) a partir dos quais a enunciação se desenvolve" (Maingueneau, 2018, pp. 252). Authors' translation.

¹⁰ "comunicar' é proceder a uma encenação. Assim como, na encenação teatral, o diretor de teatro utiliza o espaço cênico, os cenários, a luz, a sonorização, os comediantes, o texto, para produzir efeitos de sentido visando um público imaginado por ele, o locutor – seja ao falar ou ao escrever – utiliza componentes do dispositivo da comunicação em função dos efeitos que pretende produzir em seu interlocutor (Charaudeau, 2008, p. 68)". *Author's translation.*

to sit in a certain way in their seats, wear certain clothes, and enter in a certain order. The audience is expected to applaud the musicians' entrance, remain silent during the performance, and applaud again at the end.

In a performance, musicians may elaborate the transmission of musical content through resources other than sound itself, such as the Physical Gesture which reinforces an idea. In this regard, Madeira (2017, p. 14) defines “bodily gesture as any bodily movement, performed consciously or unconsciously, that carries meaning attributed by the transmitter or receiver”¹¹. He completes:

It is important to highlight that a given movement may be considered meaningless to an individual on one occasion, but the same movement may have meaning for the same individual on a second occasion. For its characterization, the gesture requires that at least one individual, in a given situation, recognizes the movement as carrying meaning (Madeira, 2017, p. 14)¹².

Madeira (2017) proposes reflections on these types of gestures as a reference. Thus, the category of "gestures of excitement" proposed by the researcher will refer to the movements of the right hand:

whose main function is to transmit energy from the instrumentalist to the instrument. The selection of the strings to be set in vibration plays a secondary role in this type of gesture. This set of movements involves preparation (pre-action), contact with the strings (excitation – instantaneous) and the continuity of the movement (post-action), with the aim of obtaining a sound result with specific parameters while

¹¹ “o gesto corporal como qualquer movimento corporal, realizado consciente ou inconscientemente, que porta significado, atribuído pelo transmissor ou receptor.” Authors’ translation.

¹² “É importante destacar que um dado movimento pode ser considerado como sem significado para um indivíduo em uma ocasião, mas o mesmo movimento pode ter significado para o mesmo indivíduo em uma segunda ocasião. Para sua caracterização, o gesto exige que pelo menos um indivíduo, em uma determinada situação, reconheça o movimento como portador de significado” (Madeira, 2017, p. 14). Authors’ translation.

providing visual information that aids in the perception of the sound by the spectator (Madeira, 2017, p. 58)¹³.

In this case, movements related to the bow can be observed, including finger tension, preparation, and right arm movements. The category "selection gestures" refers to the left hand, when there is little or no energy transferred from the instrumentalist to the instrument. That is, even when little energy is transmitted, visual information can be observed as an aid to interpretation by the audience.

The third category proposed by Madeira, that of "accompanying gesture", lists movements unrelated to the excitation of strings or sound parameters, but solely to musical content – it can be understood, according to Madeira's analysis, as facial expressions, movements not linked to sound production, postural changes, head movements, etc.

3 Analyses

For analysis, we selected four interpretations of Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E minor: those of Joshua Bell, Julia Fischer, Isaac Stern, and Leonidas Kavakos¹⁴.

It can be said that the stage design of traditional concerts, such as those presented here, would be the same (a theater, with a stage where the orchestra is located, with instruments in predetermined positions, as well as their attire, and an audience seated in front of them). However, there are some elements that we could highlight in the stage design of each one (some items will be repeated in the analysis

¹³ "cuja função principal é transmitir energia do instrumentista para o instrumento. A seleção das cordas a serem postas em vibração tem um papel secundário nesse tipo de gesto. Esse conjunto de movimentos envolve a preparação (pré-ação), o contato com as cordas (excitação – instantânea) e a continuidade do movimento (pós-ação), com o objetivo de obter um resultado sonoro de parâmetros específicos ao mesmo tempo em que fornece informações visuais que auxiliam na percepção do som pelo espectador" (Madeira, 2017, p. 58). Authors' translation.

¹⁴ We chose Mendelssohn's concerto because it is one of the most popular and iconic in violin literature. We chose these three performers because they are leading figures from different generations.

of the ethos of the stage entrance, but we include them here because we consider that they contribute not only to the *ethos*, but also to the establishment of the stage design):

- The stage of Joshua Bell's concert is adorned with flowers, which helps to give color to the orchestra, which traditionally dresses formally, in black and white. The stage is illuminated, but not excessively (remembering that filming can affect how the light is perceived in the recording). The friendly tone is reinforced by the attitude of the conductor, himself smiling and applauding Bell as he enters behind him.

- In Julia Fischer's concerto, the orchestra tunes before her entrance (which was probably cut from Bell's video). There is no ornamentation on the stage, which perhaps conveys greater formality compared to Bell's concerto (or simply fewer resources or interest in stage props). The lighting seems a little brighter and less yellow than in Bell's recording. Here too, the soloist enters together with the conductor, who is behind her and already applauding from the beginning, showing less formality than in general, but greater formality compared to Bell's concerto, due to the conductor's own more formal posture. The theater, due to its architecture, seems larger and more modern than Bell's.

- In Stern's concerto, the theater appears older and smaller. There are also flowers on the stage, which contribute to adding color to the scene. The stage seems well lit (despite the recording being older), with light also spilling into the first rows of the audience, which apparently does not occur in previous recordings. This is interesting because it allows the musicians on stage to also see the audience. The conductor also enters along with the soloist, behind him, without applauding, but smiling.

- Kavakos' concerto may have the smallest stage, but it does not appear to be as old as Stern's or Bell's. There is little audience, who are wearing masks (as it was recorded during the years of the Covid-19 pandemic), and relatively close to the stage, evidence that it is a small theater. The lighting is also dimmer, reminiscent of that used in Bell's performance. In this concerto, Kavakos himself applauds the orchestra, perhaps because of a performance of some piece before, or because they were willing to play a

concerto during the pandemic. The conductor enters from behind, smiling, but does not applaud. The fact that Kavakos greets the concertmaster and the concertmaster with an elbow bump enhances the friendly and informal tone of the concert.

Next, we will analyze the stage entrance, the first few bars of the soloist (of melodic and "energetic" parts), and the stage exit of each soloist.

Joshua Bell¹⁵

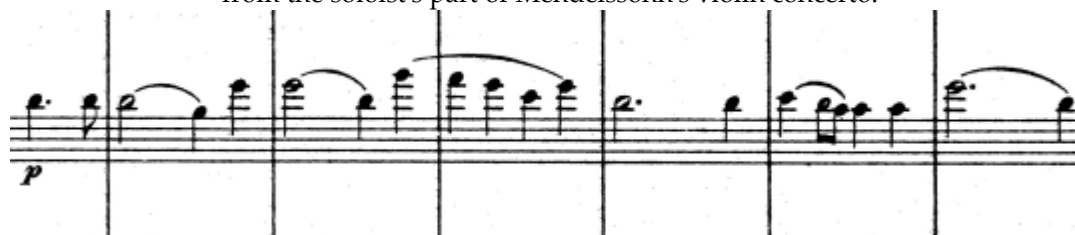
Bell, upon entering the stage, looks at the orchestra with a broad smile. He smiles at the concertmaster and greets him. He offers a smaller smile to the audience, bowing his torso to show his gratitude for the warm welcome with a resounding round of applause. He immediately demonstrates that he is ready to begin, without checking the tuning. Bell is not dressed in formal attire (such as a suit, tie, etc.), only a black shirt and waistcoat, which lends a certain informality.

This is a tour in the East, perhaps with the aim of promoting the orchestra to a less traditional consumer audience (compared to the European audience), featuring an important soloist and with a "youthful" appeal, also marking the conductor's debut with the orchestra.

As a standard for this study, we will analyze the accompanying gestures exemplified (in part) in the excerpts below, the first being what we consider part of the more "melodic" moment and the second what we consider the more "agitated" moment in the soloist's part:

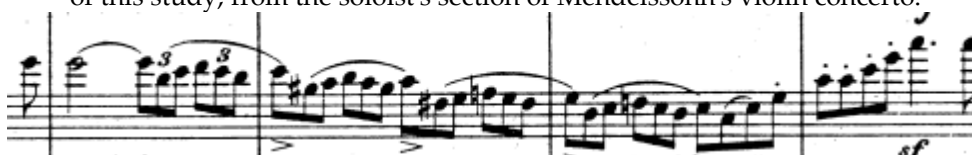
¹⁵ Joshua Bell, violin, Daniel Harding, conductor. Orchestre de Paris. NHK Hall Tokyo Daniel Harding's inaugural tour as the Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris (2016). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V7aA41hpEk>. Accessed June 26, 2025.

Figure 1 – Part of the initial sections that we classify as more "melodic," for the purposes of this study, from the soloist's part of Mendelssohn's violin concerto.



Source: [https://ks15.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/7/78/IMSLP761698-PMLP4931-MEND_VnConcOp64\(Breitkopf\)_FS\(PM\)-ForIMSLP.pdf](https://ks15.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/7/78/IMSLP761698-PMLP4931-MEND_VnConcOp64(Breitkopf)_FS(PM)-ForIMSLP.pdf), p. 1.

Figure 2 – This is part of the opening sections that we classify as the most "energetic," for the purposes of this study, from the soloist's section of Mendelssohn's violin concerto.



Source: [https://ks15.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/7/78/IMSLP761698-PMLP4931-MEND_VnConcOp64\(Breitkopf\)_FS\(PM\)-ForIMSLP.pdf](https://ks15.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/7/78/IMSLP761698-PMLP4931-MEND_VnConcOp64(Breitkopf)_FS(PM)-ForIMSLP.pdf), p. 3.

Bell's movements in the opening bars follow the melody of the music, with accompanying body and leg movements and vigorous head movements during the more "agitated" moments, also displaying facial expressions throughout almost the entire piece.

At the end of the concert, Bell smiles in a restrained manner, greets the conductor and concertmaster, and finally, the audience. He turns around, thanks the orchestra by joining his hands, bowing, and leaving the stage. The recording ends without showing whether or not he returns to the stage to the applause.

Considering the issue of *ethos* and scenography, we realize that Bell and the conductor seek to convey a less formal aspect to this performance. The soloist's entrance on stage with the conductor, with both smiling at the orchestra and the audience, and with the initial applause from the conductor, seems to want to convey great sympathy, a certain unpretentiousness and informality.

Regarding the previous *ethos*, Bell was already a soloist at a very young age, and his image attracted attention even then, as evidenced by the report in "Concerto" magazine: "It is tempting to imagine that this Dorian Gray of the violin made a kind of

Faustian pact that assured him, in addition to eternal youth, a transcendental mastery of the instrument"¹⁶. In a report from July 30, 2013, the newspaper "O Globo" publicizes the artist as a "pop star of the violin":

The American, a prodigy since childhood, became a violin star not only for his undeniable virtuosity and incredible charisma, but also for proving himself an unprejudiced musician, capable of venturing, with the same dedication, into repertoires other than just classical. Elected a pop star of the violin, he appeared countless times on TV shows (...)¹⁷

On the artist's own website¹⁸, most of the photos (both promotional and album covers) show him in informal or even casual clothing. Thus, it can be argued that the *ethos* Bell seeks to convey in the analyzed concert, with charisma, modernity, and friendliness, corroborates the prior *ethos* that may have been constructed by the audience before the performance, by those who knew him. On the other hand, the fact that a concert has a series of stereotypes associated with it (formality, seriousness, etc.) may mean that, for those unfamiliar with Joshua Bell's image, the prior *ethos* did not exactly coincide with the *ethos* shown in the performance.

Julia Fischer¹⁹

Julia Fischer's concert is a formal concert, with established protocols, with a traditional orchestra in its concert hall in Germany. The social weight of this concert

¹⁶ PERPETUO, I. Joshua Bell e um domínio transcendental do violino. In: **Revista Concerto**. Nov. 18, 2024. Available at: <https://concerto.com.br/textos/critica/joshua-bell-e-um-dominio-transcendental-do-violino>. Accessed June 22, 2025. "É tentador imaginar que este Dorian Gray do violino teria feito uma espécie de pacto fáustico que lhe assegurou, além da eterna juventude, um domínio transcendental do instrumento". Authors' translation.

¹⁷ "O americano, prodígio desde criança, transformou-se em uma estrela do violino não só pelo seu inegável virtuosismo e incrível carisma, mas por se revelar um músico sem preconceitos, capaz de enveredar, com a mesma dedicação, por outros repertórios que não só o clássico. Eleito popstar do violino, ele apareceu um sem-número de vezes em programas na TV (...)". Authors' translation

¹⁸ Available at: <https://joshuabell.com/>. Accessed June 22, 2025.

¹⁹ Julia Fischer, violin; Michael Sanderling, conductor. Dresdner Philharmonie Festkonzert zur Eröffnung des Kulturpalasts Dresden – 2020. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hEhdZBYinY>. Accessed June 21 2025.

seems greater than that of Joshua Bell. Fischer smiles and wears a blue dress, also not excessively formal. She enters smiling, in front of the conductor (who also applauds her), greets the concertmaster of the orchestra and then greets the audience.

In the first few bars, her movements are more restrained than Bell's, although she also moves her body, increasing the accompanying movements as the concert progresses, also having facial expressions, which are more restrained and at more specific moments. The head movements are smaller than Bell's.

At the end, Fischer smiles, greets the conductor with a hug and kisses on the cheek, greets the concertmaster, the head of the second violin section and, finally, the audience, bowing sharply. Then, she turns to the orchestra and raises her hands in applause, bowing to the orchestra in gratitude while continuing to applaud. The orchestra rises, the soloist again thanks the audience, hand in hand with the conductor, and leaves the stage. She returns to thank them, smiling, receives flowers, and thanks them again. She walks through the orchestra to give the flowers to one of the flautists. She thanks the audience again and leaves the stage, returning once more to thank them, with continued applause. She turns to the orchestra, applauding them. The conductor returns and, once again, they both thank, holding hands, and he applauds her. The *ethos* conveyed, therefore, is one of great sympathy, generosity, and gratitude on Fischer's part.

Regarding her possible prior *ethos*, Julia Fischer's official website²⁰ defines her, in addition to being a soloist and chamber musician, as a "devoted teacher"²¹. Her reference as a teacher is also highlighted in other reports and descriptions. As in a report from "Prazer da Música," on Rádio Cultura, published on the UOL website: "One of the leading violinists of today, Julia Fischer is a versatile musician, also known for her extraordinary skills as a concert pianist, chamber musician, and violin

²⁰ Available at: <https://www.juliafischer.com/>. Accessed June 22, 2025.

²¹ Available at: <https://www.juliafischer.com/page/Teaching>

teacher²²." However, she cannot be considered a "pop star" like Bell, as her popularity is lower, which is evidenced by the fact that we only found one report on Google in Portuguese about her in the "news" tab (that of the UOL website itself).

The article in the traditional magazine *The Strad*²³ also draws attention to her pedagogical activities: "The 'Pro Meritis Scientiae et Litterarum' award was given to the 40-year-old musician and pedagogue at a ceremony on 14 July".

In the article, Minister Markus Blume, who presents her with the award, describes her as a person with great charisma and a strong presence: "With your great charisma, your strong presence and your radiant sound, you make each of your performances a very special experience".

We can affirm that, just as in Bell's concerto, the image conveyed by Fischer's *ethos* during the concert seems to coincide with the prior *ethos* of those who knew her, with her accompanying movements also coinciding with a more restrained self-image (which does not necessarily mean a more restrained musical side) than Bell's. Particularly upon leaving the stage, perhaps due to the end of the tension before a concert, Fischer reveals a strongly charismatic side, showing appreciation to the audience and the orchestra, which may have contradicted the prior *ethos* of those in the audience who might have associated the concert's image with an excessively formal *ethos*.

²² "Uma das principais violinistas da atualidade, Julia Fischer é uma musicista versátil, também conhecida por suas extraordinárias habilidades como pianista concertista, musicista de câmara e professora de violino". Authors' translation. Cultura FM. A carreira meteórica da violinista Julia Fischer. 25 de junho de 2021. Disponível. Available at:

https://cultura.uol.com.br/radio/programas/o-prazer-da-musica/2021/06/25/46_julia-fischer.html.

Accessed June 22, 2025.

²³ Violinist Julia Fischer receives award from Bavarian arts ministry. 2023.07.24. Available at: <https://www.thestrads.com/news/violinist-julia-fischer-receives-award-from-bavarian-arts-ministry/16773.article>.

Isaac Stern²⁴

In this concert, the soloist, conductor, and orchestra are dressed formally. Stern has a focused expression and a slight smile. He enters decisively and thanks the audience with a slight bow, appearing to say "thank you" twice while acknowledging the initial applause, but he does not greet the concertmaster. He confirms the tuning before the concert begins.

In the first few bars, he shows little pendulum movement, and there is no head movement either. His facial expression conveys a certain concentration.

At the end, he is greeted by the conductor, greets the concertmaster and the audience, bowing. The video cuts to the audience and shows the soloist returning to the stage with the conductor, who asks the orchestra to stand, and they both greet the audience holding hands. With the applause, Stern returns to the stage again to thank the audience.

Isaac Stern is certainly one of the most famous violinists and perhaps the best known of those analyzed here, also being the oldest of those we have examined. His connection with Israel is long-standing, as stated in the news article commemorating his death (in 2001) on the OperaMundi website, which describes him as "one of the great violin virtuosos of the 20th century"²⁵: "Stern maintained close ties with Israel. He began performing in the country as early as 1949. In 1973, he played for wounded Israeli soldiers during the Yom Kippur War"²⁶. We recall that the concert analyzed here is precisely with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra.

²⁴ Isaac Stern and the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, IBA play Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, Op. 64. Conductor: Gary Bertini Consecration of the Henry Crown Auditorium (1986). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSbfsJJUEpk>. Accessed June 21, 2025.

²⁵ "um dos grandes virtuosos do violino do século 20". Authors' translation.

²⁶ "Stern manteve vínculos estreitos com Israel. Começou a apresentar-se no país ainda em 1949. Em 1973, tocou para soldados israelenses feridos durante a Guerra do Yom Kipur". Authros' translation. ALTMAN, M. Hoje na História: 2001 - Morre Isaac Stern, um dos principais violinistas do século XX. *In*: OperaMundi. 22 de setembro de 2014. Available at: <https://operamundi.uol.com.br/historia/hoje-na-historia-2001-morre-isaac-stern-um-dos-principais-violinistas-do-seculo-xx/>. Accessed June 21, 2025.

Stern's high recognition is also evidenced on the ViolinChannel²⁷ website: "Stern earned widespread recognition for his accomplishments, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, six GRAMMY Awards, and induction into the French Legion of Honour. The Isaac Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall is named in his honor, a testament to his efforts to save the venue from being demolished in the 1960s." The website also places the violinist as "universally considered to be one of the greatest musicians of all time."

The formality of the concert, therefore, in this case, also coincides with the pre-existing *ethos* built by the audience, both those who knew and those who did not know Stern. The very fact that the violinist was born in 1920 and belongs to an "older generation" of so-called "classical" music may contribute to his formality in the concert in question, and he would also not need to "gather an audience," given his great popularity. We do not want to claim here, of course, that simply by belonging to an "older generation," the violinist would fit into the stereotypes commonly associated with classical music or would lack greater charisma, but it cannot be denied that he would be closer to the very construction of this stereotype, as evidenced in López's quote earlier in this article.

The very fact that there is, more recently, a concern with this stereotype and with making instrumental music less elitist can also be linked to the fact that concert performers and conductors seek to bring the public closer to orchestras with more charisma and communication.

We can affirm, on the other hand, that Stern's career was built at a time when classical music was not yet, entirely, a market object as it is today, nor did it receive as much media attention. Thus, his image may have been constructed in a different way, in which the "physical" image itself (clothes, face, charisma, for example) would not be

²⁷ Violinist Isaac Stern Died in 2001, Aged 81. The Violin Channel. September 2, 2024. Available at: <https://theviolinchannel.com/violinist-isaac-stern-died-on-this-day-2001/>.

as important as the musical performance itself on stage, even more so because it is a man, who is less required, in terms of image, than a woman²⁸.

Leonidas Kavakos²⁹

This is a concert during the COVID-19 pandemic. The audience members wear face masks and are separated by a distance that would be considered safe.

Kavakos smiles at the orchestra, clapping as he enters the stage, sharing the warm applause with the orchestra, that is, the orchestra being recognized by the soloist at a moment that is usually dedicated to the soloist.

He greets both the concertmaster and the concertino, not with a handshake, but with an elbow bump, as has become customary during the pandemic. He shows little facial expression and a certain pendulum-like body movement in the first few bars. There is head movement in some sections, accompanying the section that we consider "agitated".

At the end of the concert, Kavakos displays a slight smile, greets the conductor with an elbow bump, and the concertmaster and the concertino, makes a clapping motion towards the orchestra and greets the audience by bowing slightly several times. The conductor applauds him and both make a motion for the orchestra to stand up. The soloist and the conductor thank the audience once again, and the orchestra's violinists make a clapping motion as they swing their bows. The video ends without showing whether there was a re-entry onto the stage.

Leonidas Kavakos's website³⁰ explores his Greek origin, writing the musician's name also in the modern Greek alphabet and describing him as "violinist and artist of

²⁸ We won't delve into gender issues, but for us, it's clear that there's a greater social expectation regarding the image of a female concert musician than a male one (because, for a man, simply wearing a suit is considered appropriate attire, while for women there are considerations of dress types, hairstyles, accessories, makeup, etc.).

²⁹ Leonidas Kavakos, violin Stanislav Kochanovsky, conductor. Russian National Symphony Orchestra 2021. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4GvK41Z9zs>.

³⁰ Available at: <https://www.leonidaskavakos.com/>.

rare quality, acclaimed for his matchless technique, his captivating artistry and his superb musicianship, and the integrity of his playing". The site has few photos and a black background, creating an ethos of simplicity and sobriety, with the featured photo in the musician's left hand. The Paganini Prize website³¹ highlights Kavakos as an award-winning violinist since his adolescence: "The extent of his talent was recognized while Kavakos was still in his teens, winning first the Sibelius competition in 1985 and then the Paganini competition in 1988", which certainly contributed to the formation of a pre-existing ethos of great virtuosity. The awards are also highlighted on the Verbier Festival website³², which notes that "this led to him making the first ever recording of the original Sibelius Violin Concerto, which won the Gramophone Concerto of the Year Award in 1991". The attention given to his awards contributes to the formation of an ethos of a violinist of great technical ability, above other violinists who possess such quality.

4 Final Considerations

In this article, we seek to compare the pursuit of ethos transmission by different soloists when interpreting the same work, also considering the scenography of the symphonic concert along with that built individually for each performance. We start from the idea that musical performance goes beyond sound production, also involving the pursuit of constructing a unique image and interpretation that includes an interactive process between the performer and the audience, in which rhetoric, through ethos, also plays an important role.

We seek to demonstrate how this importance of ethos as an image that the performer (and other actors, such as the conductor) demonstrates in the way the violinists act, present themselves, and behave on stage, as well as how musical gestures also end up helping to construct this image. To deepen our analysis, we

³¹ Available at: <https://www.premiopaganini.it/history/leonidas-kavakos>

³² Available at: <https://www.verbierfestival.com/en/musician/kavakos-leonidas/>.

include the notion of prior ethos, the image constructed by the audience even before the performance, using, in our case, reputation (present in reports and reviews) and images transmitted by the artists' official websites. The set design, for its part, helps to "set the tone" of the performance, contributing to a somewhat more relaxed or formal atmosphere.

We conclude that even in an environment where formality and script tend to dominate, as in symphonic concerts, *ethos* can contribute to the construction of differentiated images of each soloist, generally corroborating with the previous *ethos* of each one, and contradicting, on the other hand, the image of excessive formality that a symphonic concert can have, except perhaps in the case of the concert performed by Isaac Stern:

- Joshua Bell's performance can be linked to a more informal and charismatic *ethos*, connected to his previous ethos of friendliness and, using Perpétuo's words, "pop star of the violin." His entrance and exit from the stage and his gestures in the analyzed excerpts help to corroborate this image.

- Julia Fischer's performance was, mainly initially, more restrained in its accompanying movements. However, she presented a charismatic side and recognition to the audience and the orchestra, especially at the moment of her exit from the stage, with reciprocity on the part of the latter. Her previous *ethos*, linked to educational activities, was confirmed by the seriousness and formality, not devoid of affection on stage, which was complemented by friendliness and demonstrations of gratitude, which, on the other hand, corroborates her charismatic *ethos*.

- Isaac Stern's performance evoked a more formal and focused *ethos*, perhaps because Stern belonged to an "older" generation of violinists, as well as already being established at the time of the concerto's recording, both technically and artistically. Perhaps, we also imagine, the lack of effort to evoke a more charismatic *ethos* is due to the construction of his career at a time when image and marketing were not so central to the "classical" music industry. His movements during the musical performance are

equally restrained. Here, again, the *ethos* shown during the performance coincides with the previous *ethos*.

- Leonidas Kavakos' performance conveyed an *ethos* of a certain informality, and the fact that he greeted the musicians with his elbow reflects the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as providing a friendly and empathetic tone, also confirmed by the fact that he applauded the orchestra during his entrance. His gestures during the music are restrained, although present. The *ethos* therefore confirms his sober, sensitive image and technical excellence.

We therefore realize that the fact that the *ethos* of violinists varied in the performance of the same work is due to reasons both related to the personality that the violinist seeks to build for themselves and to social and historical reasons (the context in which the violinist built their career, including behavioral issues, for example).

Finally, we realize that scenography and *ethos*, as discussed by Charaudeau (2008, 2020) and Maingueneau (2008, 2018, 2020), as well as gesture, as discussed by Madeira (2017), contribute to the production of meaning in musical performance, and can both reinforce and transform previous *ethos* and stereotypes on which *ethos* is based. Performance, therefore, constitutes a discursive act that includes the body, gestures, expressions, and actions of the performers both before, during, and after the musical performance itself. *Ethos*, on the other hand, is dynamic, formed both by actions on stage and by the different prior expectations of the audience and, equally, by the expectations and actions of the other artists on stage.

We hope that this article will contribute somewhat to understanding and to other studies that include *ethos*, scenography, musical gestures, and instrumental performance within the fields of Musical Performance and Discourse Analysis.

Translated into English by the authors.

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