

## ABSTRACT

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### ***RECORD KEEPER: THE USE OF SYMBOLISM IN CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION***

(xi + 49 pages; 9 figures; 1 table)

This research looks at 20th and 21st-century contemporary compositions to study the practical application of symbolism in conveying philosophical narratives. Various works by George Crumb, Olivier Messiaen, Krzysztof Penderecki, György Ligeti, and Leyland Kirby are studied to identify how symbolism is used to express themes such as transcendence, death, memory, and the unconscious. The research considers how music can function symbolically outside of literal language by drawing from Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory and psychoanalytical perspectives by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. These composers use symbolism in diverse ways which manifest in the musical material to construct narratives. Insights from this analysis are implemented in the creation of *Record Keeper*, an original composition which seeks to represent dreams as messages from the unconscious. The piece incorporates personal recordings and arranges them in various textures to depict the disjointed nature of memory and the vastness of the unconscious. This study provides both a theoretical and practical framework for composers interested in integrating symbolism into their philosophical programs and contributes to the broader understanding of music as a tool for introspective expression.

**Keywords:** symbolism, music composition, semiotics, dreams, unconscious, 20th-century music, philosophical concepts

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