

Musical Motifs in Vikram Seth's 'An Equal Music': A Study

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Vikram Seth, the acclaimed author and poet is known for his intricate and lyrical writing style. He has written several award-winning novels including 'A Suitable Boy', 'The Golden Gate', 'Two Lives' and 'An Equal Music'. In addition to his novels, Seth has published several volumes of poetry as well. His works have been translated into several languages and have won numerous literary awards, including the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the Sahitya Akademi Award. 'An Equal Music' is a book that celebrates classical music and is similar to Great Expectations. It has won the EMMA Award in 2001.

'An Equal Music' has been widely acclaimed for its artistry, and is considered one of Seth's finest works. The Guardian applauds it as "deeply evocative and hugely emotional" whereas The Christian Science Monitor eulogizes it as "A gift for any reader and a must-read for music lovers and musicians"(16). The book's polished and accessible writing style bears evidence of Vikram Seth's extensive knowledge of European culture and music.

Writing this book was not easy for Vikram Seth. In the author's note to this novel, he wrote: "Music to me is dearer even than speech. When I realized that I would be writing about it I was gripped with anxiety." He had to learn a lot about music and musical instruments, and even took lip-reading lessons to understand his deaf character better. Although Seth is humble about his musical abilities, his commission to write a libretto for the English National Opera in 1994 suggests he is a skilled musician. In the book, Vikram Seth does a great job of using words to make the readers feel like they are listening to the music in the story.

'An Equal Music' is a beautiful exploration of the relationship between music and human emotions. The Baltimore Sun praises it as "a beautifully written novel of music, romance, and the endless search for transcendent passion....A joy to read." The novel delves deep into the world of classical music and highlights the way in which music can have a transformative effect on our lives. One of the notable features of the novel is the use of musical motifs, which are recurring musical ideas that help to establish a sense of unity and coherence within the text. The present paper aims to examine the use of musical motifs in 'An Equal Music' and analyse the way in which they contribute to the novel's themes and overall impact.

By exploring the significance of these motifs, this paper seeks to enhance our understanding of how music functions as a literary device, and how it can be used to create a powerful and evocative narrative. The paper also considers the historical and cultural context of the music referenced in the

novel and the way in which it reflects the author's own experiences and interests. Overall, this study seeks to shed light on the intricate relationship between music and literature, and the profound impact that music can have on our emotions, memories, and sense of identity.

Victor Hugo once said that music can express things that words cannot. This is shown in the book 'An Equal Music' by Vikram Seth. It explores the themes of love, music, and personal growth. The novel follows the story of Michael, a musician who is searching for love and success in his music career. The story is told in a way that is like the rhythm of music, sometimes smooth and sometimes sudden. Along the way, he meets Julia, a pianist, and the two form a relationship that is bonded by their shared love of European classical music.

'An Equal Music' is a book that talks about classical music and human relationships. In this novel Seth delineates "with Canaletto-like skill, the shimmering air and light of Venice at dawn, even as he neatly reproduces the loving tensions of the Maggiore [Quartet]" (Washington Post).

The protagonist of the novel Michael is deeply devoted to music and shares this passion with Seth, the author. The novel is set against the backdrop of the magical world of Beethoven and Bach, and Seth weaves a tale of heartache, longing, and the power of music. Music is an integral part of Michael's life, and it gives him solace during difficult times.

Set against the backdrop of the English class system, the novel delves into the struggles and conflicts that Michael faces as he tries to rise in the realm of chamber music, combating the norms of high society against the odds of his humble and inferior background. Seth's writing is masterful in the way it captures the beauty and complexity of classical music, while also exploring the intricacies of human relationships.

'An Equal Music' is about a musician named Michael Holme and his emotional journey towards self-discovery. The story takes place in London, Vienna, and Venice, and revolves around classical music, which is considered a significant cultural achievement in Western Europe. The novel explores the themes of loss, longing, and the power of music, and is a touching tale about the excitement and challenges of life.

The book is about the pain that violinists go through, and how music is an addiction that is noble. Michael and Julia, two gifted musicians, are the central characters of the story. Their relationship is influenced by their music group, 'Quartet Maggiore'. Though they hail from different social classes, they bond together over their love of European Classical music. As Michael works on a Beethoven piece for the Maggiore Quartet, he recalls his student days in Vienna where he met Julia. When the two meet again by chance in London, their relationship is rekindled. The novel is unique in the way it conveys music through language.

'An Equal Music' is a powerful and emotional story about love, loss, and second chances. Hariharan calls it "A lovely tale of music but not quite a musical story of love". It tells the story of two lovers who were separated by circumstances and how fate brings them back together. The book is filled with beautiful and passionate writing that captures the magic and power of love. The characters in the

book are connected by their love for music, and the story is woven around the melodies of Mozart, Bach, and Schubert. This book is a treat for everyone, whether you are a lover of music or not. It is a story that will touch your heart and stay with you long after you have finished reading it.

The two lovers, Michael and Julia, are deeply passionate about music and their relationship. The author, Vikram Seth, has a wonderful way of describing musical pieces and blending them with the theme of the story. The book is full of beautiful dialogues and confrontations between the two lovers, which are a joy to read. For example, when Julia tells Michael that she is married, but doesn't wear a wedding ring because it distracts her when she plays the piano, it shows how deeply connected they are to music and each other. Both of them inspire each other and music is incomplete without the other. This is a perfect example of love at its best.

In Vikram Seth's novel, 'An Equal Music', music plays a significant role in bringing the story and characters together. The author shares his passion for classical music and introduces the readers to works of great composers like Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, and Hayden. The book offers a unique glimpse into the world of chamber music and the interpersonal dynamics of the Quartet that influence their performance and rehearsals. The novel also portrays the coexistence of music and love and the protagonist's dilemma in choosing between the two. The book beautifully conveys the loneliness of a music composer and the elaborate process of music-making. As Seth says, "Music is the strongest element in this book". He regards it as glue that holds everything together.

literature is a field of study that can explore and connect with many other subjects, and it has covered various themes throughout history. Music, on the other hand, has also been significant for the soul, but the relationship between literature and music has not been explored in depth. Vikram Seth, being a trained classical musician, delves into this relationship in his book 'An Equal Music'. Noted critic Stephen Benson is of the view that there is a newfound interest in the relationship between music and literature in both fields of study as "musicology is newly attentive to literature and literary studies are newly cognizant of musicology" (4).

In the novel 'An Equal Music', the character Michael has an easier time obtaining a rare Beethoven Quintet compared to his previous search for a Mozart Divertimento. After acquiring it, he reflects on the power of music and how it is a gift in itself: "Music, such music, is a sufficient gift" (380). This quote suggests that music is a source of fulfilment in life, and even though it may bring moments of sadness, it is enough to simply experience the beauty of music in small doses.

In 'An Equal Music' the theme of music and love are intricately woven together. The novel explores how making music and making love can become one, and how they influence each other. Michael and Julia's love story follows the traditional structure of meetings, heartbreaks, promises, and betrayals. However, their love is uniquely intertwined with their passion for music. After making love, they try to make music together, but their first attempt fails due to nervousness: "One morning, after making love, we tried making music together. It did not go well; we were both too nervous" (80). However, when they try again later in the week, they are amazed at how naturally and responsively they

play together, both to each other and to the music. This scene highlights the powerful connection between music and love, and how they can complement and enhance each other.

The process of music-making is crucial to achieve the perfect state of music that is soothing to the ear. According to Seth, music is the result of a combined effort, involving the senses and musculature of the musician, the musician and the audience, and two musicians playing together. 'An Equal Music' delves into the technical aspects of music-making, providing a detailed insight into its non-glamorous side. Michael describes it as the result of years of training, long hours of pathetic pay and being no good for anything else.

Seth's novel, 'An Equal Music', is an ambitious and clear attempt to capture the enigmatic and distressing experiences of those in the music industry through prose. Christopher Nicholas is of the view that "when it comes to people -- to the specific personal and professional interrelationships within the quartet -- the novel falters. In tone and content, the musicians' many conversations veer between the mundane and the hyperbolic".

The novel delves into the impact of Western classical music on the lives of its European characters, including their hopes, fears, and ultimate, desperate decisions. Seth portrays music as a noble addiction, but also highlights the challenges faced by professional musicians, such as the high cost of instruments, irregular income, creative tensions within musical groups, and the unlikelihood that anyone from a less affluent background will have the opportunity to train as a musician due to the associated expenses. In addition, the novel explores the emotions of the characters, including their experiences with love and heartbreak. Michael's intense love for Julia ultimately leads to his loneliness when they are forced to part ways, as he reflects, "Life settles into bearable aloneness" (56).

Each member of the group must play an instrument that matches their temperament. As an example, Piers, with his abrasive and demanding nature, is well-suited as the group's first violinist. Helen, who often acts as a mediator, is a perfect fit for the supportive role of the viola. Billy, with his kind and talented personality, is the group's cellist, described as "light and profound; the base of our harmony, the rock on which we rest" (10).

Seth's masterful use of language captures every detail of the art of music, overshadowing the love story. While Julia's reunion with Michael at Wigmore Hall is moving, it pales in comparison to the sublimity of the music that precedes it, especially the striking encore - the first contrapuntist of Bach's 'Art of Fugue'. Music and love intertwine as natural companions throughout the novel, drawing together characters from English, Viennese, Venetian, French and American backgrounds who share a common passion for music. The world of music, as portrayed in the novel, is all-encompassing, and serves as a potent unifying force, bringing people together in the pursuit of a global, harmonious life.

The novel blends the passions of music and romance in a complex way. The author explores how music can bring people together not just physically but also spiritually. The Washington Post calls it not just an ordinary love story, but "a novel about music, about the consolations it may bring, the pleasures it affords, the transcendence it hints at".

Michael teaches music to Virginia but does not feel the same connection with her as he does with Julia, with whom he shares a passionate relationship. The story revolves around Michael's love for his music, especially his attachment to his two Carlo Tononi Violins. The presence of music is felt in every line of the novel, and it unites Julia and Michael, making their romance more musical.

To sum up, the use of musical motifs in Vikram Seth's 'An Equal Music' enhances the novel's themes and adds depth to its characters. Through the use of music, Seth explores the complex relationships between the characters, their pasts, and their emotions. The novel's musical motifs serve not only to enrich the narrative but also to offer a unique insight into the human experience. By intertwining the worlds of music and literature, Seth creates a masterpiece that will continue to resonate with readers and music lovers alike. Indeed, it is a testament to the power of music and its ability to inspire and transform human lives.

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