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The Phenomenon of Silence in the Digital Age: Sacred, Music-Cultural and Creative Media Forms of Expressing the Unsaid

Tetiana Kaplun^{1,*}, Oksana Andriianova², Halyna Shpak³, Liudmyla Zyma² and Merbol Kuspanov⁴

¹Department of Musical Art and Sound Engineering, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Arts, International Humanitarian University, Odesa, Ukraine

²Department of Chamber Ensemble, A.V. Nezhdanova Odesa National Academy of Music, Odesa, Ukraine

³Department of Choral Conducting, A.V. Nezhdanova Odesa National Academy of Music, Odesa, Ukraine

⁴Professional and Creative Faculty, Aktobe Regional University named after Kudaibergen Zhubanov, Aktobe, Kazakhstan

Corresponding authors: Tetiana Kaplun (e-mail: kapluntatiana17@gmail.com).

Abstract It explores contemporary silence as a form of sacred, musical, and creative media through which meanings that cannot be fully articulated are made sense of. The research was carried out in 2025–2026 as a qualitative empirical study based on 60 publicly available digital artifacts selected from an initial pool of 94 items. The corpus was organized into four thematic blocks of equal size: sacred and meditative music; digital sound-art and contemporary music artifacts; online mourning and remembrance materials; and quiet digital practices, which include meditation videos, autonomous sensory meridian response content, and low-intensity listening formats. The analysis demonstrates that silence is not simply the absence of sound or speech. It must be considered as an active cultural mechanism that organizes attention, memory, affect, and modes of reception. Five main types of silence were identified: contemplative, conceptual, collective-resistant, memorial, and affective-regulatory silence. Silence has been a prime structural element in sacred and meditative music, directing the mind inward and helping to sustain spiritual focus. In sound-art and contemporary music, it functioned otherwise: it simply halted habitual expectations of performance, audibility, and listening. In online remembrance, silence remained present through broken comments, symbolic gestures, visual stillness, and kinds of memory that defied complete verbalization. The role of silence can be felt in meditation and low-intensity audio-visual practices as a means contributing to emotional calming, bodily awareness, and intimacy mediated through sound. This implies that digital platforms do not silence kill but reconfigure the cultural modes of silence through archives, interfaces, video channels, comment sections, and personalized listening environments. Silence is, therefore, proposed here as a mode of condensed communication where the unsaid gains cultural visibility within media spaces that are digitally saturated in the absence of the said.

Index Terms musical art, Jung's theory of archetypes, spiritual choral music, program music, style, genre

I. Introduction

The digital has changed the ways of human communication as well as the terms of human presence in communicative space. Never-ending text streams, visual and sound overloads, interaction within an algorithmically organized culture have made silence not just as the absence of speech, but a specific form of participation and a way of listening to one's own emotional state, and a means of expressing what cannot be put into words. Thus, in the digital, silence does not mean an exit from communication. A person can watch, be present without being visible, take a deliberate pause, refrain from reacting, or distance himself from the noise of interaction.

Recent studies of digital communication increasingly focus on forms of participation that are invisible, delayed, or less easily measurable. For example, S. Ala-Kortesmaa [1] looked

at silent listening in digital spaces as an active practice of understanding, not the absence of response. In a related line of inquiry, H. Sakariassen and I. Costera Meijer [2] studied user inhibition in digital public spaces and found that silence can be due to social, psychological, and communicative constraints. Their approach is crucial in that it shifts the discussion from a simple view of silence as communicative emptiness.

Besides, digital silence should not be understood only as a dimension of sounds expressed on the Web. In sound and music studies, it is considered as part of the auditory experience, aesthetic tension, and cultural meaning-making. D. R. Ford [3] stressed the relevance of postdigital soundscapes, where technologies, listening practices, and bodily perception collaboratively bring about new regimes of auditory experience. In a music-philosophical perspective, M. Gallope [4]

connected music with the problem of the ineffable, i.e. meanings that cannot be fully verbalized but can be felt through sound, repetition, pause, or intonational tension.

Another line of research deals with the religious dimension of silence. In one piece on the music of A. Pärt, silence and pause were treated as a means for spiritual concentration, contemplation, and the expression of sacred presence [5]. It is not the silence as the absence of sound but a silence that becomes a meaningful form that structures religious, aesthetic, and inner-emotional experience. Therefore, the study of silence in the digital era can only be realized through an interdisciplinary approach that combines digital communication studies with musicology, sacred studies, and media culture theory.

There are studies related to digital listening, postdigital soundscapes, sacred music, the philosophy of the ineffable, but the degree of relationship between these areas has not been clarified enough. More often than not, silence has been looked at as socio-communicative behavior in the digital space or as an aesthetic element of a musical work, or as sacred practice. But there is no integrated approach where silence is considered as a media-cultural form of expressing the unsaid that operates simultaneously in the sacred, music-cultural, and digital environments.

The goal of the paper was to determine how silence functions in the digital age as a sacred, music-cultural, and creative media form of the expression of the unsaid. The research problem posed was whether, under conditions of digital oversaturation, silence could function not passively but actively in the process of making meaning. To accomplish this, the author set the following tasks: theoretical approaches to the understanding of silence in studies of the digital and sound; sacred and music-cultural forms of its manifestation; and creative media practices in which silence was a way of representing the unsaid; and the scholarly gap between studies of digital communication, sacred sound, and musical phenomenology.

II. Literature Review

Scholarly discussion of silence in the digital age has, in part, developed within what were, until recently, separate and distinct fields: studies of digital communication, sound studies, musicology, media aesthetics, the psychology of mediated intimacy, and digital religion. Productive, but methodologically uneven due to its fragmentary nature, it has been considered non-participation, attentive listening, aesthetic pause, sacred concentration, postdigital sound experience, and digitally mediated intimacy. Rarely have all these been brought together within a single framework of explanation that would show how silence operates as a cultural form for the expression of what is not said.

Most often, within digital communication studies, silence has been framed through invisible participation, restrained interaction, and delayed response. Adjin-Tetty and Garman [6] recently defined lurking in social media as a form of listening and established a typology of motivations among users who observe, read, and interpret content without making any visible reaction to it. This is a most welcome addition since it

makes us question the common assumption that silence in the digital environment means a lack of interest. But their analysis is more communicative and behavioural than anything else. The aesthetic, sacred, or affective dimensions of silence do not become central to their inquiry. This is a limitation that the present study has to deal with since digital silence cannot be reduced to either user passivity or platform behavior; it must also be understood as a media-cultural form laden with emotional, symbolic, and contemplative meanings.

Further developments of the correlation between sound, silence, and listening can be placed within sound studies. Cox [7] sees sound as a dynamic and processual concept, which reorients attention away from fixed musical objects to sonic flows, intensities, and modes of perception. This, therefore, allows for a more productive understanding of silence not as an empty interval but as part and parcel of a broader sonic ontology. Such a metaphysical approach, however, has its limitation in that it risks detaching sound from concrete digital and cultural practices. As Kane [8] put it in his critique of the ontological turn in sound studies, sound cannot be separated from auditory culture. Critique of studies of silence is especially pertinent because silence is meaningful only within certain listening regimes, media conditions, and cultural codes. Together, Cox [7] and Kane [8] yield a productive theoretical tension between sound as process and sound as culturally mediated experience.

Newer studies on postdigital sound have made this even more complex. According to Lamb [9], postdigital sound is a situation in which analog, digital, corporeal, and technological cannot be separated. Riikonen [10] underlines listening in a multisensory perspective and argues that digital anthropology has made the analysis of sound richer than the purely auditory. Discussing musical instruments from a socio-technological perspective, Magnusson [11] illustrates the migration of musical instruments and how musical practice changes with technological infrastructures. These studies are helpful in placing sound within technological environments rather than treating it as an autonomous aesthetic object, but direct engagement with silence remains limited to them. Silence is mostly implied as part of listening, mediation, or sonic organization, but rarely analyzed as an independent form of meaning in its own right.

Musicology has endowed us with new words for silence: pause, tension, suspension, and expression through restraint. In his philosophical and psychological analysis of pause as a musical expressive device, Kozhuhar [12] has shown that it can be not only a structural element but also a carrier of emotional charge. This is also relevant to this study since musical pause can be seen as a form of the unknown that interrupts verbal or sonic continuity while simultaneously heightening perception. But Kozhuhar's analysis stays mostly within the domain of musical expression. It does not fully open up how the logic of pause changes as music and sound move through digital media environments. The same problem can be found within contemporary sound art. Freiburger et al. have charted the reliance of new music and sound art on

platform visibility, hashtags, sharing, and online mediation. This perspective raises another issue: how do musical and sound practices enter the ecology of social media, and how does silence operate in these mediated forms of creativity?

ASMR research has emphasized cultural, bodily, and intimate aspects of mediated sound. Poerio et al. [13] demonstrated that ASMR can enhance measurable affective and physiological responses, so that low-intensity sound, whispers, and near-inaudible auditory stimuli can be considered embodied experiences, not superficial online trends. Smith and Snyder [14] argue for a broader view of ASMR as a form of affective and digitally mediated speed. Their research demonstrates that low-intensity sound and near-complete silence can create emotional belonging in the digital environment. However, their primary interest is not silence as a cultural form in itself. Silence is primarily considered in terms of affect and intimacy; its functions as sacred, memorial, and musical-cultural are poorly understood.

The interest in research on the sacred and religious dimensions of digital mediation has increased. For example, Mannerfelt [15] has studied religious digital creativity in preaching. He argued that digital religious communication does not simply transfer offline religious practice to the online space but creates forms of participation, power, and mediated presence. This claim is relevant to our research because the sacred silence of the digital age cannot be considered only through traditional ritual or liturgical frameworks; it is also mediated in forms of attention, restraint, and contemplative perception. However, research on digital religion ultimately encompasses preaching, participation, power, and creativity much more than religious silence as a specific sacred environment.

The relationship between music, speechlessness, memory, and mourning is one of the issues that has been discussed in the literature on digital remembrance. In a study of comments on YouTube music videos as digital expressions of grief and mourning, Mattfeldt [16] shows how practices of remembrance and personal identity come into being at the juncture of music, language, and speechlessness. This contribution is particularly important because it shows that digital media provide spaces for the unsaid to be present, although not absent. It is expressed through fragmented language, silence, affective attachment, and musical association. The paper does not provide a broader typology of silence across sacred, music-cultural, and creative media forms, however, as it remains closely tied to mourning practices.

Recent sound art studies have added to the political and cultural interpretation of silence. Noise has been considered by some as a signifier of intimate silence, showing that silence may be produced not just by the absence of sound but also by framing noise, proximity, and affective intensity. In his analysis of Raven Chacon's soundscape of nothing, Mindel [17] interpreted silence as a critical response to settler colonialism. These works are important because they move silence beyond private introspection and place it within political, spatial, and historical contexts. Yet they also reveal a methodological

difficulty: in the cultural frame where it appears, silence may signify intimacy, resistance, memory, or sacred withdrawal. It cannot, therefore, be treated as a stable or universal category.

The literature reviewed above has dealt with silence as digital listening, a sonic process, musical pause, mediated intimacy, religious creativity, grief, and political sound art. However, these approaches remain relatively fragmented. While studies of digital communication explain reasons for which users may remain silent, they do not often consider the sacred and musical depth of silence. Studies conceptualize listening and sonic mediation but do not specify how silence gives form to the unsaid. Works of a musicological nature exemplify the function of the pause but mostly within the confines of musical form. ASMR and digital mourning research bring to light the affective and embodied dimensions of a quiet media experience yet do not provide an integrated model of silence as a cross-media cultural form. The main gap lies in the absence of a framework that brings together sacred, music-cultural, and creative media expressions of silence in the digital age. The gap is addressed in this situation by interpreting silence not as the absence of communication but as an active form of making meanings through which the unsaid becomes perceptible in cultures that are digital and postdigital.

III. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in 2025–2026 as a qualitative empirical investigation on the representation of silence in digital cultural environments. It focused on digital artefacts available to the public in which silence, pause, quiet sound, hushed speech, visual stillness, or non-verbal expression played a role in meaningful communication. As there was no direct interaction with human participants, no interviews, no questionnaires, no psychological tests, and no experimental interventions were applied. The study was limited to open-access materials available on public digital platforms at the time of forming the corpus.

The empirical corpus was 60 digital artefacts sourced from YouTube, Vimeo, official websites of composers and sound artists, online archives of contemporary music projects, and public pages of meditation-oriented digital platforms. All materials analyzed were recorded in a corpus matrix and split into four thematic blocks. The first thematic block contained 15 recordings or video performances of sacred and meditative music—works related to A. Pärt and contemporary Ukrainian meditative music. The second thematic block included 15 digital sound-art or contemporary music artefacts where silence, noise, pause, or a minimum sound played a major role as an expression. The third thematic block contained 15 media artefacts related to digital mourning, online remembrance, and grief in comments on music videos. The fourth thematic block contained 15 examples of silent digital media practices: materials from meditation apps, ASMR videos, and low-intensity forms of listening.

The sample was purposive and non-random since the research needed materials in which silence was not an accidental absence of sound but an identifiable cultural, affective, or

communicative form. Artefacts will be included if they meet three criteria: (a) public availability without password access, (b) explicit or clearly observable use of silence, pause, low-volume sound, visual stillness, moderated speech, or written speechlessness and (c) relevance to at least one thematic field of the article, namely sacred experience, music-cultural expression, digital communication, or creative media practice. Excluded are materials that are cultural-void commercial advertisements, duplicate uploads, low-quality copies, links that cannot be accessed, entirely statistical webpages, and materials from Russian and Belarusian platforms and sources. The 60 artefacts were then selected as meeting the inclusion criteria after the preliminary screening of 94 items to form the final corpus.

The empirical analysis was organized at three consecutive levels. First, each artifact was described according to platform, format, duration, dominant sound structure, visual organization, and communicative context. Second, the materials were coded according to five parameters: form of silence, medium of manifestation, relation to the unsaid, emotional function, and cultural mode of expression. Third, the coded materials were compared across the four corpus groups in order to identify how silence functions in sacred, music-cultural, memorial, affective, and creative-media contexts.

Manual coding was performed on an Excel spreadsheet matrix. To minimize the subjectivity of interpretation, I used repeated viewing and listening: each artefact was examined at least twice, first to get an overall impression and then to note specific silent, low-sound, or speechless fragments. No mathematical formulas or inferential statistical tests were applied because the study is meant to identify qualitative patterns rather than correlations based on frequency. Reliability of interpretation was further enhanced through stable criteria for coding, comparison between groups of texts, repeated viewing of each artefact, and omitting cases where the materials did not quite create silence or non-verbal utterance.

IV. Results

Findings from the analysis of 60 digital artefacts prove that silence in digital cultural environments cannot be conceived as the mere absence of sound, speech, or visual action. In the corpus, silence appeared as an organised expressive means through which sacred presence, musical meaning, grief, intimacy, and creative attention were mediated. This finding simply confirmed what had been assumed a priori for this study: in the digital age, silence does not work as a passive gap in communication but rather as an active form in media culture through which what is not said becomes perceptible.

The four corpus blocks unveiled different, though closely related, modes of silence. In sacred and meditative music, silence most often stood for contemplation, spiritual concentration, suspended temporality, and restrained affect. In digital sound-art and contemporary music artefacts, it was an event that reorganized the listener's attention and unsettled the boundary between sound, noise, and non-sound. In digital mourning and online remembrance practices, this was written

speechlessness through brief comments, memorial images, pauses, and restrained affective gestures. In quiet digital media practices, including meditation videos, ASMR materials, and low-intensity listening formats, silence was a tool of affective regulation, bodily relaxation, and mediated intimacy.

The first stage of analysis involved a description of each artefact according to platform, format, duration, dominant sound structure, visual organisation, and communicative context. In the second stage, five coding parameters were introduced: form of silence, medium of manifestation, relation to the unsaid, emotional function, and cultural mode of expression. In the third stage, the four corpus blocks were compared to be able to identify the recurrent patterns.

In the corpus block I, silence was characterized as a type of sacred meditative attention. The recordings and video presentations explored indicate that sacred silence never comes as stillness; most often, it is with slow tempo, reduced dynamics, long resonance, visual concentration, and no excessive performative gesture. These characteristics establish an environment in which the listener is not pushed into immediate meaning but is instead slowed down as focus and attention is shifted from the object of interpretation to the inner experience. That pattern was made particularly readily visible and audible in the concert video Arvo Pärt: *Adam's Lament*. In a way, in this artefact silence was not to be taken as the absence of sound; rather, it was set within the musical texture through the restrained movement of the choral voice, the resonance of the strings, and extended periods of suspension in expectation. The coding suggested that what mattered was not just what sounded but also how the sound was permitted to fade or pause, or stay unresolved. This effect was further augmented by the visual organisation of the performance: the relative stillness of the performers and the lack of rapid visual changes placed the listener in a contemplative state. Silence, then, acted as a sacred threshold between sound and the concentration we associate with prayer.

Silent Songs of V. Silvestrov [18] shares a similar, if not identical, tendency. Here silence had something to do not with a grand sacred presence but rather the aesthetics of proximity, delicacy, and memory. The slurred-over tones in the voice, the thinness of the piano and slow pace of the musical turns gave an impression of speech that was on the verge of disappearing. The quality of the work as 'silent' could not be reduced to volume. It derived from a distance between the poetic text and musical restraint. In this case the unsaid appears in the under-articulation: the voice bears the mark of the speech but does not allow further rhetorical expansion. Three main indicators emerged across sacred and meditative music block. First, silence was identified as a type of temporal slow down. Musical moments had their moment, waiting to happen, and still space for reflection. Second, silence was tied to constraint, as vocal, instrumental, and visual expression avoided theatricality. Third, silence was a meditative relationship with the unsaid. It did not so much articulate sacred or emotional meaning as render it experiential, experientially significant. According this block, silence in this

sense became a form of interiorization. The second corpus block made it clear that silence served a different function. And the prayer-like contemplation was less common in digital sound-art and contemporary music. In most cases, silence was linked with conceptual reorientation. It did more than enrich musical expression, it raised issues of what could be defined as music, performance, sound or collective presence. The most overt example of silence as a made musical event was J. Cage's 4'33". The score didn't accidentally frame silence as sound absence but arranged it temporally as well as through performance framing [19]. The coding of this artifact revealed that silence was mediated simultaneously by multiple factors: duration as indicated, expectancy of performance, the institutional context of musical presentation, and the listener's sense of the surrounding sound. The unsaid wasn't buried under the surface of the work; it was brought about through the work's refusal to offer conventional musical material. Silence, in this sense, revealed ambient sound, audience behavior, and the cultural expectations that music must include intentional sonic production.

R. Chacon's Silent Choir (Standing Rock) changed silent protest from an aesthetic reorientation to articulation of resistance. The artefact brought together visual and sonic documentation of a silent confrontation related to Indigenous protest and environmental justice [20]. In this case, it was not private, meditative, or simply conceptual silence; it was silence embodied. The coding identifies it as collective silent presence: silence would be made meaningful as it was carried by many bodies in a politically charged situation. In Cage's work, silence displaced expectation. In Chacon's artefact, it would be a form of witnessing and refusal. The unsaid was not an absence of message but a concentrated non-verbal resistance.

Comparisons within the second block indicated that digital sound-art would often use silence in its attempts to disrupt the habits of listening. Some artefacts framed silence through noise, making quietness only apparent against mechanical, environmental, or digital sound. Others used very little sonic material to direct attention to spatial resonance, repetition, or the physical presence of the listener. Most importantly, silence in this block did not have one stable meaning. It could function as critique, refusal, conceptual experiment, or political concentration. Its meaning depended on the relation between the structure of sound, visual framing, and institutional context.

The third corpus block disclosed silence as a form of memory and grief. In digital mourning artifacts, silence was not always acoustic; it most often occurred as written speechlessness, as little language, as the same memorial utterances, still pictures, candles, tribute pages, pauses in video, and brief comments which did not tell much about loss. This block was especially significant for the research problem because it indicated how what is left unspoken becomes socially visible in digital environments.

The Sound of Love revealed that online comments under songs may turn into an archive of intimate memory, loss, and longing, as well as emotional residue. The artefact reorganised

platform comments into a web project where fragments of personal feeling were detached from their original context and presented as a collective emotional soundscape. The coding showed that silence here was not the absence of language; it came from incomplete language. Many comments in such digital environments do not fully explain the remembered event, the lost person, or the emotional wound; they leave gaps, and these gaps become the main space of the unsaid.

Online tribute features offered a more structured representation of digital remembrance. The functions provided through photos, candles, thoughts, stories, music, video, tribute gardens, and private diaries. In the corpus, this type of artefact showed how symbolic actions formalised by digital systems. Lighting a virtual candle, leaving a short message, adding a song, or preserving a photograph turns grief into a sequence of minimal acts. The result is not a complete narrative of loss but a controlled environment for what cannot be fully articulated.

Analysis of this block will identify four features of memorial silence. First, silence as fragmentary speech. Messages were often short, formulaic, hesitant, or emotionally compressed. Second, silence as visual stillness. Portraits, candles, backgrounds, and static tribute layouts helped create a quiet digital space. Third, silence as deferred address. Many memorial texts were written to a person who could no longer answer. Fourth, silence as collective accumulation. Individual fragments formed an affective archive, but this archive did not eliminate the unsaid. It preserved it.

Digital mourning thus demonstrated that the sound of silence is not chatter and can let the grief be shared while drawing lines around what is kept closed personally. This finding matters, because it expands the understanding of silence from that of sound and music. In memorial media, silence operates through interface, text, image, and ritualised digital action.

The fourth corpus block was made up of materials from meditation apps, ASMR videos, and low-intensity listening formats. In these artefacts, silence was primarily a tool of affective regulation. It did not work in the same way as in sacred music where silence sets out a contemplative or spiritual horizon or in sound art where silence poses questions about the nature of sound. In quiet digital media practices, silence worked directly upon attention [21]. It helped manage perception, calm the body, and create a sense of safe mediated proximity.

The guided digital stillness was represented by videos of meditations on Headspace [22]. These include basic practices designed very simply, calmly instructed, and with pauses. In this context, silence was not left to chance - it was pedagogically organized. It was not mystical in the strict sense. It was practical and regulatory: silence marked the moment in which the user was expected to experience rather than receive information. The coding showed that silence was pedagogically organized - not left open, but inserted between verbal instructions and visual cues to help the user shift attention toward breathing, bodily awareness, or mental observation.

Gentle Whispering ASMR [23] stood for another form of quiet digital practice. In this case, silence was closely related

to whispering, slow speech, soft sounds, proximity effects, and low-intensity audiovisual presence. ASMR videos did not create silence by being completely quiet. They rather built a near-silent environment in which tiny sounds became affectively significant. Micro-sounds, pauses, breath-like rhythms, and controlled vocal softness activated the listener's attentiveness. Here, the unspoken stood for intimacy without direct interpersonal contact.

Three findings were of particular interest in this block. First, silence was commodified and formatted by digital platforms into repeatable content structures such as guided sessions, whisper videos, sleep aids, relaxation sequences, and low-intensity listening formats. Second, silence became personalised: users could access it individually and at the very moment they chose, through their headphones, screens, and mobile devices. Third, silence became affectively functional, directed toward calming, focusing, comforting, or reducing overstimulation. That did not make it less meaningful; rather, it showed that in the digital age, silence has become a mediated practice of self-regulation. The comparison of all four corpus blocks enabled the construction of a qualitative typology of silence in digital cultural environments. Silence was not classified only by volume level in this typology but rather based on the five coding parameters proposed in this study: form of silence, medium of manifestation, relation to the unsaid, emotional function, and cultural mode of expression. Typology of silence identified in the empirical corpus is given in Table 1.

The typology showed that silence in digital culture is not uniform or homogeneous: it can be contemplative, conceptual, resistant, memorial, or affective-regulatory. Modes of silence overlap in some artefacts. Sacred music and meditation videos, for example, both depend on quietness and slow temporality; their cultural functions are different. Silence in sacred music creates an open space for transcendence and inward listening; in the case of meditation videos, though, it's more likely structured as a sensible device for attention-management and emotion-control. Sound-art and digital mourning do this work on some level too to accommodate absence, in different ways. Absence in sound-art interrogates perception and the boundaries of musical form; in mourning, it preserves the presence of loss. The strongest and most consistent results across studies relate to the active role played by silence. It turned out that with none of the four blocks, silence arose as a neutral void but organized perception, focused attention, boosted affect and established limits of verbal expression; the form of this, too, shifted with the media environment: in music, it was linked to duration, resonance and performance; in digital memorial platforms, it emerged through interface, text, symbolic gestures; in ASMR and meditation formats, it relied on headphones, voice, breath and personalized listening; and in sound-art, it was connected to institutional framing, conceptual expectation and spatial or political context. Another pivotal finding concerns the relation of silence to the unsaid.

The corpus on the other hand reveals that the unsaid was not

consistent in every context. In sacred and meditative music, it was associated with transcendence, prayer or interiority. In contemporary sound-art, it was something that was not limitable within conventional musical utterance. In digital mourning, it was an articulation of grief, loss and memory that could not be expressed directly. In quiet digital media practices, it had to do with affective states that were felt in body, rather than explainable by words. Silence thus constituted a malleable medium between experience and verbal expression. This analysis also indicated the point that digital mediation is not the death of silence; it multiplies its forms. These platforms, interfaces, streaming archives, comment sections, online tribute pages, the video channels do not just produce silent content or quiet-sounding content; they reorganise the conditions under which silence is experienced. A silent musical score becomes a physical object in an online museum. One concert performance serves as a mediatheque video. A collective act of silent resistance gets recorded in a museum-linked digital archive. Comments by song are turned into a web project. Tribute gestures serve as platform functions. Meditation and autonomous sensory meridian response are formatted as repeatable practices of low-intensity attention through sensory rehearsal. In this way, silence in the digital age is not outside media. It is made, framed, and spread via media. This helps us build an affirmative response towards the research question through empirical results. Under the circumstances of digital saturation, silence becomes an active semantization. It helps with: The organization of sacred attention, musical perception, memorial expression, political witnessing, and affective regulation.

The corpus confirms that silence isn't the absence of communication. It rather stands out as one of the most compressed forms of this concept. In other words, it renders what is not said visible, audible, or experientially available without necessarily making it explicit speech.

V. Discussion

According to the results, in the digital cultural environment, silence is no longer the absence of communication; it is a dynamic approach to meaning. Silence coordinated attention, enhanced the emotional experience by making that which was not spoken visible, audible or experientially present in the corpus. This finding is highly relevant because it moves the understanding of silence from being a silent void to an active media-cultural artefact. Such a mechanism does its work in sacred music, sound-art, online mourning, meditation and low-intensity digital listening. At least partly, the sacred and meditative music block buttresses Shenton's [24] reading of silence within A. Pärt's music as a key aspect of sacred music experience. The current study shows that this kind of silence is made manifest as a slow tempo, resonance, restrained performance, and visual stillness. At the same time, digital mediation alters a reception's circumstances. Sacred silence is no longer confined to a church or concert or the space of a ceremony – it travels also through video archives, streaming platforms and personal listening devices. On this

Table 1: Typology of Silence Identified in the Empirical Corpus

Type of silence	Main empirical indicators	Medium of manifestation	Relation to the unsaid	Examples from the corpus
Contemplative silence	Slow tempo, resonance, visual stillness, restrained performance	Sacred and meditative music	The unsaid appears as spiritual concentration, inward attention, and contemplative presence	Adam's Lament; Silent Songs
Conceptual silence	Framed absence, structured duration, interruption of musical expectation	Experimental music and sound-art	The unsaid appears as a challenge to conventional meaning, audibility, and listening	4'33"
Collective-resistant silence	Group stillness, non-verbal confrontation, silent witnessing	Political sound installation and visual documentation	The unsaid appears as embodied refusal, collective presence, and political intensity	Silent Choir (Standing Rock)
Memorial silence	Fragmented comments, tribute pages, virtual candles, static images, minimal messages	Digital mourning and online remembrance	The unsaid appears as grief, loss, and memory that cannot be fully narrated	The Sound of Love; MuchLoved tribute features
Affective-regulatory silence	Guided pauses, whispering, low-volume sound, slow rhythm, bodily orientation	Meditation videos and autonomous sensory meridian response formats	The unsaid appears as bodily calming, mediated intimacy, and self-regulation	Headspace meditation videos; Gentle Whispering ASMR

Note. The typology is based on qualitative comparison of 60 digital artefacts and should not be read as a statistical hierarchy. Source: compiled by the author on the basis of manual coding of the empirical corpus.

note, the results are compatible with those of Schlag et al. [25], who found that digital religious practices alter presence, participation and authority.

The results on contemporary Ukrainian meditative music also agreed with Serhaniuk et al. [26] in associating meditativeness with restrained musical expression and inward concentration. Yet, this paper also goes further to show that meditative silence is not confined only to a musical composition. It appears as videos, platform interfaces, soft vocal delivery, visual stillness, low-intensity listening, and the list goes on. Meditativeness thus comes to represent a transmedia quality that traverses composition, interface, voice, image, and listening practice. Affective-regulatory silence was particularly prominent in ASMR content as well meditation-oriented digital material. This finding is additional evidence of Smith and Snider's [14] analysis of ASMR as a category of affective and digitally mediated intimacy. The corpus showed that whispering, pauses and a gentle sound slow rhythm produce a feeling of intimacy, particularly when someone does not come in direct proximity to another human being. But this closeness is not unplanned or entirely personal. It is technologically organized through platform formats, repeatable video genres, headphone listening and tailored modes of access.

Such a comparison also helps steer clear of an overly optimistic reading of digital silence. For example, in their study, Thomas and Manalil [27] found digital silence to be associated with invisibility, exclusion, and psychological pressure. This study does not disprove that view; rather, it clarifies that silence has different meanings in the contexts where it appears. It could be then enforced and thus injurious but also voluntary, contemplative, memorial, intimate, or resistant.

The findings are also close to what Voegelin [28] would like to call sound and listening as politically and culturally charged practices. The analysed artefacts show that silence may express not only interiority but also collective refusal, grief, memory, and resistance. Therefore, silence in the digital age should not be treated as a stable acoustic state. Better

to understand it as a flexible cultural form that may emerge through sound, pause, interface, comment, image, ritual gesture, or bodily attention.

The study therefore shows that the unsaid has not vanished in a culture saturated with technology. Rather, it has changed the media through which it becomes perceptible. Silence now operates across sacred, music-cultural, memorial, affective, and creative digital practices. This makes it an important object for further research in musicology, media studies, sound studies, and digital religion.

VI. Conclusions

The study found that silence in the digital age should not be understood as the passive absence of speech or sound, but rather as an active media-cultural form, through which the unsaid becomes perceptible. The qualitative empirical analysis of 60 publicly accessible digital artefacts, selected from an initial pool of 94 items, made it possible to identify how silence operates in sacred, music-cultural, memorial, affective, and creative-media contexts. Meaning was gained when silence was organized through pause, low-volume sound, restrained speech, visual stillness, written speechlessness, slow rhythm, or non-verbal presence.

The cultural functions of silence were differently articulated across media contexts. In sacred and meditative music, silence was the space for attention, concentration, and listening inward toward the spirit. In digital sound-art and contemporary music, it was a conceptual, and sometimes resistant, device against the habits of expectation relating to sound and performance. However, in mourning on and remembrance through the Internet, silence turned into one more mode of speechless memory, through which the articulation of grief received its expression by short comments, symbolic gestures, pictures, music, and practices of digital tributes. In 'quiet' digital media practices such as meditation materials and ASMR videos, silence was instrumental to affective regulation, bodily calming, and mediated intimacy.

The study presents the main qualitative result of the five-part typology of silence: contemplative silence, conceptual silence, collective-resistant silence, memorial silence, and affective-regulatory silence. This typology demonstrates that what is not said in digital culture does not disappear when approached through technological mediation—rather, in its wake, it gains new modalities of visibility, audibility, and experiential presence. Digital platforms, archives, video channels, comment sections, and tribute interfaces are not only the platforms that transmit silent artefacts, but they also actively frame how silence may be perceived, framed, and interpreted. The study is contextually relevant by its potential of facilitating the analysis of digital music archives, online memorial platforms, sound-art projects, meditation media, and low-intensity audio-visual practices. Potential users range from cultural researchers, musicologists, media theorists, and scholars of digital religion interested in the study of non-verbal, affective, and contemplative communicative forms. There are some limitations the study has. The corpus is purposive and non-random, so these results cannot be statistically generalized. The analysis was all focused on publicly accessible digital artifacts and did not involve interviews with creators, performers, platform designers, or audiences. This has opened up possibilities for future research such as expanding the corpus, comparing different cultural and religious traditions, and combining artefact analysis with audience reception studies. That would help us understand how users are emotionally, spiritually, and aesthetically experiencing silence in digitally saturated environments.

Ethics Statement

This study did not involve human participants, animals, or the collection or processing of personal or sensitive data. The research was based exclusively on publicly available digital artifacts. Therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

Consent for Publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Data Availability

The data analyzed in this study consist of 60 publicly available digital artifacts selected from an initial pool of 94 items. The materials were obtained from publicly accessible digital sources. No proprietary, confidential, or restricted datasets were used. The analyzed corpus and relevant source information are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

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