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## The Most Sublime Effects: Associative Orchestration in Wagner

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## The Most Sublime Effects: Associative Orchestration in Wagner

Imagine Darth Vader's Imperial March played by flutes instead of brass instruments. How might that change how we understand Vader's role in *Star Wars*?

The association of certain instruments and their combinations with characters or ideas stems from orchestral music for opera. This technique used in film and videogame music draws especially on the expressive orchestration of the nineteenth-century composer, Richard Wagner. My research explores this role of orchestration in Wagner's operas. In addition to writing the text and music for his infamously-long operas and designing an opera house specifically for their performances, Wagner also theorized about how all the aspects of the drama—story, staging, and music—work together in the Total Artwork. My work demonstrates that orchestration is not merely an ornamental part of the Total Artwork but is a significant means of expression: integral to our emotional and intellectual experience of opera and, ultimately, of music.