

## Fictionalism about musical works

Anton Killin

School of Philosophy and Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, Australian National University, Acton, Australia

### ABSTRACT

The debate concerning the ontological status of musical works is perhaps the most animated debate in contemporary analytic philosophy of music. In my view, progress requires a piecemeal approach. So in this article I hone in on one particular musical work concept – that of the classical Western art musical work; that is, the work concept that regulates classical art-musical practice. I defend a fictionalist analysis – a strategy recently suggested by Andrew Kania as potentially fruitful – and I develop a version of such an analysis in line with a broad commitment to philosophical naturalism.

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### 1. Introduction: classical art music and ontological theorising

In this article I focus on the concept of the classical Western musical artwork.<sup>1</sup> I advocate and develop a version of *fictionalism* about the ontological category specified by that concept. The idea is not that certain concrete particulars like a musical performance (or a composer's manuscript, or the mental representation of a sound-event gleaned through reading a score-copy and imagining a performance, and so on) are thereby not salient *art objects* of some description, worthy of aesthetic evaluation and attention. But I suggest none of these things realise the elusive *musical work* concept. Sometimes we might speak of these concreta 'as if' they are musical works. But when competent wielders of the relevant concept seem to be speaking of some extra entity, 'the musical work so-and-so' – Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example – above and beyond particular performances, scores, imaginings, and so on, it is my contention that, strictly speaking, they fail to refer. Nonetheless I shall argue that, once

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**CONTACT** Anton Killin  [anton.killin@anu.edu.au](mailto:anton.killin@anu.edu.au)

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reconceptualised as a useful fiction, we need not revise our *concept* of classical Western musical artworks – just the broader discursive context, philosophically speaking.

There are a bewildering number of theories about the ontology of classical Western musical artworks. Philosophers have argued that musical works are such things as compliance classes, abstract objects of various stripes, acts of composition, perduring existents, enduring existents, historical individuals, and mental entities. There is little consensus regarding this matter and debate continues unabated (see e.g. Kivy 2002; Rohrbaugh 2005; Dodd 2007, 2008; Livingston 2011; Kania 2012b; Cray and Matheson 2017).

In my view, this debate reveals a tension between philosophical theorising and musical practice – how philosophers think we ought to conceive of musical works in order to acquiesce in a neat general theory, on the one hand, and how musical works are actually conceived within the Western art musical practice, on the other. This yields two broad philosophical methodologies for theorising about the work-concept at hand, loosely captured by the descriptive/normative metaphysics distinction (Strawson 1959; see also Kania 2008).

Briefly, as I will draw the distinction, inquiry into descriptive metaphysics is concerned with the actual concepts under scrutiny (with perhaps a few minor revisionary concessions reached through reflective equilibrium). Normative metaphysical inquiry is concerned with producing the metaphysically ‘best’ theory, largely irrespective of our actual concepts, often requiring (sometimes massive) conceptual revision of the target(s) of inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the notion of ‘best’ is elusive here; nonetheless, the two broad strategies reflect different underlying explanatory aims and commitments. Normative metaphysical theories are lauded by their authors for their theoretical virtues (e.g. neatness, simplicity, unification, generalisability), while coherent descriptive metaphysical theories are lauded by their authors for their success at cashing out a concept that is actually utilised by – and with any luck, *actually matters to* – the participants of the target practice or discourse.

This distinction is useful (descriptive metaphysics is about actual beliefs; normative metaphysics is about the beliefs one should have), but the distinction is not hard-and-fast and these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, in practice, metaphysical theories offered by most philosophers have descriptive and normative aspects, and few musical work theorists are of an exclusively descriptive or normative ilk (Kania 2008). In my view, we may conceive of this distinction along a continuum: if theoretic considerations are allowed a prominent role in the analysis, we shift to the normative side; if conformity to the users’ practice is weighted heavily, we shift to the descriptive side. I will suggest that the current (realist) ontological accounts of classical musical works that lay on the normative side do not address the work-concept at hand: they ascribe properties to musical works that are not only counter-intuitive but contrary to

how the concept is utilised in practice. That is not to say that therefore these theories do not describe *something at all*, but that the thing described (if it exists) is not what plays the role specified by the musical work concept under scrutiny. I will also suggest that the current (realist) ontological views on the side of descriptive metaphysics are *sui generis*, ad hoc, or metaphysically suspect – the categories specified have no place in a naturalistic ontological framework. So positing them is not independently motivated (assuming we are all good philosophical naturalists). Thus there is a stalemate. And it is not just that the jury is out. In my view, the development of an alternative theory is required. I examine the prospects for a *fictionalist* view of Western musical artworks (following a suggestion in Kania 2008) and I explicate fictionalist interpretations of the relevant musical work concept and discourse. The descriptive element of my view retains the musical work concept as utilised in the target practice/discourse; the normative element does away with ontological commitment, but not in a way that is damaging to the practice/discourse.<sup>3</sup>

Thus my approach leans towards the side of descriptive metaphysics.<sup>4</sup> I endorse David Davies's *pragmatic constraint* (Davies 2004). That is, the view that I end up advocating should cohere *at least conceptually* with the target musical tradition, practice, or discourse. Of course, what counts as cohering is difficult to specify. But at the very least, it should not be *hostage* to a philosopher's general metaphysical model. The account I develop will require some 'philosophical' revision, admittedly (this is the normative aspect), but this revision will do no damage to the conception of musical works at home in the Western art music tradition/practice/discourse. I will thus adopt the following concept-descriptivist position: 'We may discover, through conceptual analysis, that there are and can be no things corresponding to our concept of 'musical work,' but metaphysical inquiry cannot reveal that ... 'musical works' are different from how we ordinarily take them to be' (Davies 2017, 125).<sup>5</sup>

This article proceeds as follows. In Section 3 I advocate the Canberra Plan methodology for a descriptive metaphysics of musical works. I explicate this strategy, provide some examples, and apply it to the musical work concept. This leads me to fictionalism about musical works. Unlike the various realist theories that I round up in Section 4, fictionalism does not require positing unmotivated or metaphysically suspicious ontological categories, nor does it require *conceptual* revision (the revision required is of the wider conversational context, philosophically speaking; a small bullet to bite). In Section 5 I outline fictionalism, and in Section 6 I cash out my brand of fictionalism about musical works. Finally, I comment on two anticipated objections – the incredulous stare and Thomasson's challenge – in Section 7. But first I must say a little more about the work concept at hand.

## 2. The musical work concept

Lydia Goehr (2007) provides an historical narrative, supplemented by a wealth of historical data, of the emergence and influence of the work-concept throughout the classical musical period (c. 1750–1800), and its coming to fruition – as a regulative concept – around 1800.

The concept is regulative in the sense that it underwrites a social norm amongst classical musicians: in giving a serious performance, classical performers must ‘submit’ to the musical work; they must strive to be true to the work, strive to perfection in performing the work. The work is conceived as fixed; encoded in its score-copies (which, admittedly, can be more or less specific about various features), and exemplified in its performances (which, admittedly, can realise the performers’ score-copies more or less accurately). Despite the different aesthetically-relevant interpretations that performers and conductors bring to their musical performances, the musical work itself is conceived as *unchanging* and *the same* across these different performances.<sup>6</sup>

But what, according to this concept, are musical works identified as? Goehr’s answer, which I shall take as my benchmark, is:

[Musical works are conceived as] objectified expressions of composers that prior to compositional activity did not exist ... original, unique products of a special, creative activity ... symbolically represented by composers in scores. Once created, we treat works as existing after their creators have died, and whether or not they are performed or listened to at any given time. We treat them as artefacts existing in the public realm, accessible in principle to anyone who cares to listen to them. (Goehr 2007, 2)

Yet this analysis does not straightforwardly specify an ontological category. Distinguishing works from displays will help here: ‘a work’s display is a structure that results from the artist’s creativity and that we apprehend in order to grasp a work’s meaning and aesthetic qualities’ (Lopes 2010, 4). Score-copies, performances, playings, recordings – these are all kinds of displays.<sup>7</sup> A performance of Beethoven’s Fifth one night is a distinct display from a performance another night. Displays are straightforward concreta, easily accounted for in a naturalistic ontological theory. Musical works, however, are ‘ghostly apparitions’ (Kivy 2002, 206). There are a number of competing ontological accounts of musical works, as I shall soon explain. But first, in the next section, I suggest that a methodology hitherto unapplied within this debate will assist progress: the Canberra Plan.

## 3. The Canberra Plan

The Canberra Plan (see Jackson and Pettit 1995; Jackson 1998; Braddon-Mitchell and Nola 2009) is a helpful framework for unpacking the musical work concept. It follows a general scientific method: with it, one defines the concept under scrutiny and generates a hypothesis which researchers attempt to validate by

locating the target postulated in a plausible theory. If they can do so, metaphysical success! If not, failure (i.e. error theory).

The first step of the Canberra Plan is to collect the platitudes associated with the concept under scrutiny. A platitude, in this context, is a proposition about a concept that is understood by proficient representative users of that concept as uncontroversial. Relying on platitudes strikes me as particularly useful for determining the application conditions for a concept intertwined with a specific art practice/discourse and history, such as classical Western art music, setting the stage for questioning whether the explicated concept is satisfied in the world, and what its ontological status might be. Concepts acquire their application conditions via the constellation of concepts and terms with which they inter-relate in a given context or discourse. And in acquiring our concepts, we acquire sets of dispositions which interface between statements expressed in terms of some concept with statements of other things. These dispositions underwrite the platitudes about that concept. Take *belief* as an example. Following Papineau (2009), the belief platitudes might be 'beliefs are caused by perceptions', 'beliefs combine with desires to generate actions', 'beliefs have causally significant internal structure'.

The second step is to systematise those platitudes as an implicit definition of the concept in question. Again, take *belief* as an example. This might look something like:

A belief is 'some unique kind that is characteristically caused by perceptions, combines with desires to generate actions, and has causally significant internal structure.' (Papineau 2009, Section 2.3)

The third and final step: see if anything in the world plays the role specified by the concept. For belief, that means identifying the 'internal states that play the causal role associated with the concept of belief' (Papineau 2009, Section 2.3).

So far, so good. But sometimes the search might turn out empty-handed. In this case one option is to seek a *best-filler* (Jackson 1998). That is, perhaps nothing plays the role specified by the concept, but some other thing comes so close that it can, for all intents and purposes, be conceived as the target of the concept. For example, if Van Inwagen's (1990) compositional nihilism is right, then there are no tables and chairs, but rather simples arranged table-wise and simples arranged chair-wise. If that is the case, perhaps *simples-arranged-table-wise* is the best-filler for the concept *table*. It would probably make little or no difference, outside of the philosophy room at least, if we all were picking out *simples-arranged-table-wise* when utilising our table concept.

Alternatively, perhaps the concept under scrutiny is just an empty concept. A horse with a horn tied onto its head does not fill the role of *unicorn*: unicorns just do not exist – nothing comes close to playing the role specified by an implicit definition underwritten by the unicorn platitudes, something like 'horned horse-like quadruped, aggressive though elegant, white in colour, docile only to virgins'. And substituting anything else in would be irrelevant or

otherwise misguided. Of course, this is not to deny that unicorns appear within fictional stories – readers and listeners of these fictions have a shared concept of unicorns. But there are no such things as unicorns out in the world. Ideas or representations *are not* unicorns – ideas are not aggressive, horned quadrupeds docile only to virgins.

What about the musical work concept? I contend that competent wielders of the musical work concept representing the Western art music tradition/practice/discourse accept the following platitudes.<sup>8</sup>

Musical works are created by their composers.

Musical works are created at or around the time the composer completes his/her creative processes. (Considerations about this might include the composer having formed a judgement or disposition about it being complete, but the specifics are irrelevant here).

Musical works are exemplified in their (correct enough) performances and playings.

Musical works are encoded in their (correct enough) score-copies and recordings.

Musical works can be accessed by people through hearing performances/playings, or through reading a score-copy and imagining a performance. (In other words, you can listen to a musical work; you can glean it from a score-copy.)

Musical works are not the same as performances, score-copies, recordings, or playings, or auditory sensations or mental representations of those things.

Musical works can be ascribed distinct properties than those ascribed to particular performances, score-copies, recordings, and playings.

A musical work could have been different, if the composer's creative activity resulted in something different: a musical work could have ended with a major instead of a minor triad (a *tierce de Picardie*), say, had the composer desired it – in other words, musical works are *modally flexible*.

These platitudes reveal an implicit description of how the musical work concept is conceived and I take them to be consistent with Goehr's historical narrative and entrenched in the target tradition/practice/discourse. That is, that a musical work is conceptualised as an entity that is created by its composer, completed around the time of the composer's creative activity, encoded in its score-copies, exemplified in its performances, and so on. These platitudes thus describe the entities that an ontological theory must locate, in my view, if it is to locate musical works. I'll next turn to the theories currently on offer.

#### 4. Ontology of musical works: state of play

There are a bewildering number ontological accounts of musical works, and they have been extensively discussed and critiqued in the philosophy of music literature before (see e.g. Kivy 2002; Rohrbaugh 2005; Dodd 2007, 2008; Livingston

2011; Kania 2012b). So it is not my intention to be exhaustive or excessively detailed in covering well-trodden, familiar ground. For my purposes, it will suffice to round them up and make a few general comments.<sup>9</sup>

Philosophers have defended the following theories:

Musical works are sets (or compliance classes) that contain the accurate musical performances of score-copies. (Goodman 1976)

Musical works are perduring concrete entities: the mereological fusions of their performances (i.e. each performance is a temporal part of the musical work, which is the sum of these temporal parts). (Caplan and Matheson 2006)

Musical works are enduring concrete entities, wholly (rather than partially) located at any region occupied by a performance. (Tillman 2011)

Musical works are Platonic (eternal) abstract objects (i.e. Forms/types). Performances and playings are concrete tokens of that abstract Form/type. (e.g. Kivy 1983, 1987, 2002; Dodd 2000, 2002)

Musical works are Platonic (eternal) norm-kinds/norm-types. (Wolterstorff 1980; see also Dodd 2007)

Musical works are Aristotelian universals: abstract essences/norm-kinds instantiated in their performances. (Walton 1988; Davies 2003)

Musical works are initiated/indicated abstract objects: a 'structure-S-as-composed-by-C-at-t'. (Levinson 1980; Trivedi 2002)

Musical works are action-types: the composer's creative act type. (Currie 1989)

Musical works are action-tokens: the "performance" of the composer's creative act. (Davies 2004)

Musical works are historical individuals. (Rohrbaugh 2003, 2005)

Musical works are abstract artefacts, like laws of state, marriages, or contracts. (Thomasson 2006, 2015)

Musical works are mental entities (ideas or representations): mental objects or mental experiences. (Collingwood 1938; Sartre 1940; Cox 1986; Cray and Matheson 2017)

There are two general things to say about these accounts: these theories either (1) do not capture the target specified by the musical work concept – insofar as they describe anything at all, it is not what we are probing the world for, given our platitudes/implicit definition – or, (2) they point to a metaphysically dubious category. Debate continues about such categories (e.g. against musical works as abstract particulars, see Kania 2008; against musical works as historical individuals, see Dodd 2007; esp. chapter 6; against musical works as *sui generis* abstract object structure-S-as-composed-by-C-at-t – see Predelli 2001; Kivy 2002; Dodd 2002; Rohrbaugh 2003).

About the first point, consider that Goodman's view (for example) must reject the platitude that composers complete their musical works, since as a compliance class, any given musical work would be completed with its last ever performance, *by* those performers, and not with the completion of the composers' creative act (or her forming of a completion disposition, etc.). Scored but unperformed/unrealised compositions would all be identical – the same musical work – because their compliance classes are all empty, an unacceptable result. And the wrong note objection: at least as Goodman renders the account, it excludes imperfect (non-compliant) performances, no matter how minor the imperfection may be. But almost every performance will contain at least the slightest deviation from the score, and in practice these are still conceptualised as performances of the relevant musical work. More generally, the account is motivated by considerations of Goodman's extensionalist theory of symbols in a 'languages of art' framework. It is divorced from considerations of musical artistic practice. About the disconnection, Goodman pines 'one hardly expects chemical purity outside the laboratory' (1976, 186). Yet outside the 'laboratory' there is hardly a 'chemical' of the kind at all: the target of inquiry must be entirely reconceptualised.

Of course, while it may be useful to talk of (the physical counterparts of) musical works in the language of, say, compliance classes, perduring entities, or enduring entities for the purpose of philosophical theorising (which also it may not be; this remains to be demonstrated), this requires revision of the musical work concept. The ontological category specified by the musical work concept under scrutiny remains unaccounted for. And about the second point – the categories identified by some of these theories – frustratingly we can only speculate. Perhaps some of these theories capture *something*: perhaps the (Platonic) abstract *structures* of musical works, if such things exist, or their (Aristotelian) *essences*. Or perhaps some of these theories capture the generative act of musical works (Davies 2004), or the completed idea for a musical manifestation (Cray and Matheson 2017) – but to consider these things *as musical works* is to require unmotivated revision of the musical work concept under scrutiny.

Admittedly, some of the more revisionary theories introduce a new concept to 'pick up' what is usually captured by the ordinary musical work concept. For example, David Davies' works-as-action-tokens account (i.e. the musical work is the actual *act token* of the composer's creative/generative process) revises the target of inquiry from the creative output of the composer's labour to the actual labour token itself. On this account, people cannot experience a musical work by attending a concert (Kania 2005), contrary to our platitude. And familiarity with a musical work would be familiarity with the ins and outs of the relevant actions of the composer: you couldn't glean it from reading a score-copy. However, Davies introduces the concept of the *work-focus* to specify the output of composers' creative acts. Yet, even if we were to follow Davies' lead on this, the ontological status of the *work-focus* remains elusive, and after all, it is now *that* concept

that I am explicating here (in the context of Davies' framework/terminology) by explicating the target of the musical work platitudes.

So aside from specific objections to each account, discussed extensively in the philosophical literature, the theories on offer either necessitate unwarranted conceptual revision (indeed some of them change the target of analysis completely), or acquiesce in suspicious or unmotivated metaphysical commitments. Is there a theory that can account for *how musical works are conceived* – that is, plays the role specified by the musical work platitudes – without positing questionable ontological categories? Moreover, is there such a theory that is plainly compatible with a philosophically naturalistic perspective? A theory that does not conjecture into existence entities that cannot in principle be empirically confirmed? Kania (2008) puts one such account on the table: *fictionalism*.<sup>10</sup>

Interpreting the musical work concept in a fictionalistic light is one underexplored and underappreciated option.<sup>11</sup> On this view, talk of musical works should be, in David Davies' words, something like 'a useful fiction that allows us to talk about those ways of grouping performances that interest us' (Davies 2009, 745).<sup>12</sup> The idea is that although we all recognise the concept of musical works, and that we conceptualise musical works as being created by their composers, exemplified in their performances, and so on – and, moreover, that that's because there is a shared, intersubjective system of representations of musical works – we need not posit them into existence. Thus the musical work case, on my view, is like the unicorn case. We should think of musical works, as conceptualised within the target tradition/practice, as populating a useful 'fiction', so to say, so we need not drop our thought and talk about them.

## 5. Towards fictionalism about musical works

Fictionalism is a theory always applied to some subject matter, according to which thought and talk about that subject matter is, or should be considered as, a useful fiction. Philosophers have developed a number of fictionalist theories, such as fictionalism about fictional characters (Brock 2002, 2016), fictionalism about mathematical entities (Field 1980, 1989; Balaguer 2009), and fictionalism about possible worlds (Rosen 1990). Each case for fictionalism is to be assessed on its own merits. Here I develop fictionalism about musical works.<sup>13</sup>

Fictionalism resolves an ontological puzzle; it is a way out of the infamous Quinean trilemma, according to which there are just three ways to deal with statements that seem to commit speakers to the existence of an unwanted entity (see Quine 1960). First option: change one's linguistic expressions – paraphrase the apparent commitment away (for instance, instead of saying 'unicorns have horns', explicitly say 'according to the myths, unicorns have horns' or 'I think of unicorns as horned'). Second option: stop talking about those things completely. Third option: give up and accept the existence of the controversial entity. Sometimes none of these options appeal, and it is my contention that

sometimes this is the case for musical works. Fictionalism is a fourth option unidentified by Quine. It is a theory by which one can disclaim unwanted ontological commitments to suspicious or dubious entities, whilst reaping some of the benefits of those very commitments, not through paraphrase but by putting forward statements in a fictionalistic light. So as long as the fictionalist has a claim to the fiction's utility, fictionalism is having one's cake and eating it too.<sup>14</sup>

The advantages of a fictionalist rendering of the subject matter are thus considerable. Although the fictionalist is not committed to the existence of some controversial ontological category, the fictionalist can continue to reason with respect to it about salient empirical matters, can continue to generate predictions/generalisations, and can continue to make critical/evaluative claims. I begin my fictionalist proposal by suggesting that there is no good reason to posit the *existence* of musical works. In what follows, my strategy will be to develop and defend my view through a critical discussion of the surrounding philosophical research.

Now of course, people think and talk about musical works. That is, the logical status of musical works as (mere) *objects of intentionality* is not what is at stake – after all, we can straightforwardly think and talk about things that do not exist: our mental states and our utterances can be directed at the non-existent (see Crane 2014) – we can think and talk about phlogiston, unicorns, or miasmatic vapours yet these things are not real.<sup>15</sup> Kania (2008) asks whether thought and talk about musical works is along these lines. According to this proposal about musical works:

- (1) there are no such things, either outside the mind or in the concrete or abstract realms, or inside the mind, but that (2) there is a quite robust shared system of *representations* of such things. (Kania 2008, 439)

Kania's idea is that those of us who wield the musical work concept acquiesce in a fiction. It can be true that a person is thinking about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony even though, on this view, there is no such entity. It is an *error theory* of musical works. Kania (2008) leaves fictionalism about musical works underdeveloped – and Letts (2015) points out that Kania's account is found wanting. (Although Letts is critical of Kania's specific approach, he thinks that a 'material fictionalist' approach might be plausible. I take my account to be generally compatible with Letts' preferred variant – in ways that should become clear along the way – but I do not cash it out in his terms, and I will be unconcerned here with Letts' critique of Kania's specific contentions.)

I think that by developing a fictionalist account of musical works I can save the musical work concept platitudes. It makes no difference to ordinary discourse, nor to artistic practice, if there are no musical works, provided we all continue to act and talk in the same way, thinking and speaking *as if* there were such things. We do not have to revise our concept of musical works. A person newly-converted to my view can still apply the musical work concept in the same

manner and continue to speak in the same way (though in a ‘fictional spirit’), since doing so will satisfy all of her conversational aims.

To see my point, imagine that I want to talk to you about happiness, and I want to convey to you my observation that my friend (the man standing over there with a glass of clear liquid) is happy. So I say ‘The man holding a glass of water is happy’. When you retort that he is holding a glass that actually contains vodka, I will become impatient (Eklund 2005). It’s the man’s happiness I want to talk about; whether his glass contains water or vodka is beside the point. So likewise, I might say, for example, ‘Last night’s performance of Mozart’s *Jupiter* was beautiful’. I will become impatient when you reply that on my view there is no such thing as *The Jupiter*; that the way I spoke involves failed reference to some entity *The Jupiter*, by my own lights.<sup>16</sup> It was *that performance* or *that occurrence of music* that I wanted to talk about. And *that* exists. I just needed, somehow, to make it obvious to you which musical occurrence I was talking about. Saying it the way that I did is a convenience. The ontological commitments entailed by the proposition *semantically expressed* by my utterance are – for present purposes – beside the point.

So I do not think that the musical work concept needs to be revised. We just do not need to count musical works in our ontology, as we do not count unicorns. And although I suggest we need not count musical works in our ontology, I nevertheless suggest we can continue to speak of them by way of a kind of useful fiction.

## 6. Revolutionary fictionalism about musical works

In my view, musical works are fictional. More specifically: postulating them into existence seems to me unmotivated and unnecessary. This is based, in part, upon the state of play: accepting a realist theory either means positing a metaphysically suspicious category or a revisionary conception of the concept under scrutiny. As I have argued above, neither option in that stalemate appears to have much to recommend it.

Yet we think and talk as if musical works do exist. The plausibility of thinking that there are musical works is explained by the fact that there really are *displays*, and some of what we say or think about musical works is true, or approximately true, of displays. But not all. The remainder can be coherently covered by the fictionalist account that I develop herein. That is, some of the advantages that we would hope to get from talking or thinking about musical works do not genuinely depend on musical works being real things, or even on our believing that they are real things. They are convenient fictions. It is time now to unpack fictionalism.

There are two theses associated with fictionalism – a linguistic thesis, and an ontological thesis. The linguistic thesis maintains that ‘utterances of sentences of the discourse are best seen not as efforts to say what is literally true, but as

useful fictions of some sort' (Eklund 2011, Section 2.1). The ontological thesis is anti-realist, rejecting the existence of the entities associated with the concept at hand, or at least claiming there is no reason to positively posit them.

Following a distinction made by Burgess and Rosen (1997), philosophers distinguish hermeneutic fictionalism from revolutionary fictionalism. Hermeneutic fictionalism has been advocated about fictional characters. It is plausible that people are *already* fictionalists about fictional characters: they do not believe that Sherlock Holmes exists, but continue to say things like 'Sherlock Holmes lives on Baker Street'. Two proposals about such statements have been given: that people either engage in *make-believe* in fictional character discourse (*pretence* hermeneutic fictionalism – see Walton 1990) or *short-hand speak* which contains tacit constituents (*prefix* hermeneutic fictionalism – see Brock 2002).

On the other hand, revolutionary fictionalism prescribes a reform, not about the target concept, but the wider conversational context as analysed philosophically. Revolutionary fictionalism has been advanced with respect to moral theory (Joyce 2005) and mathematics (Field 1980). I do not think it plausible that people are already fictionalists about musical works so I will advance a revolutionary fictionalism.

Notice that revolutionary fictionalism is compatible with a descriptive-leaning metaphysics and the Canberra Plan methodology: the revolutionary fictionalist need not *revise* the musical work *concept*. The 'revolution' is purely one of ontological commitment and wider philosophical context, not in one's beliefs about the role played by the target, if it exists, of the concept.

Take Field's mathematical fictionalism. Despite philosophers like Quine and Putnam famously maintaining that mathematics is indispensable to science (for review, see Colyvan 2015), Field does not think that the entities postulated by mathematical theory, such as numbers, exist at all. But he agrees that the conventions and discourse of mathematics allow people to realise important information about things *that do exist*, so it is a valuable discipline. Field acknowledges mathematics, then, as a useful kind of fiction, but not as a domain of truth, strictly speaking, at least insofar as mathematical statements are interpreted at face-value. His fictionalism is revolutionary: a kind of error theory about numbers, but without abandoning the discourse. And notice that it does not require conceptual revision: our concept of number, for instance, is not modified in the process.

However, philosophical analysis of statements about the targets of a fictionalist account *is* somewhat modified in light of fictionalism, since an ordinary interpretation of those statements ignores the fictionalist's linguistic thesis. There is a typical tripartite distinction between such statement kinds (following Brock 2002). First, there are fictional statements *internal* to the relevant fiction. For example, a fictionalist about musical works might utter:

(IS) "The *Jupiter* was composed by Mozart, completed in 1788."

Second, there are fictional statements *external* to the relevant fiction, although analysed *in virtue* of a fictional context. These include critical and evaluative claims. For example, a fictionalist about musical works might utter:

(ES) "*The Jupiter* is more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain."

Third, there are non-fictional statements that express one's ontological commitments. For example, a fictionalist about musical works might utter:

(OS) "*The Jupiter* does not exist."

I'll consider the last of these first. As an ontological statement, (OS) can be straightforwardly interpreted, at face value, in line with the fictionalist's ontological commitments. We deal with these non-fictional statements as we deal with ordinary non-existence claims such as 'There are no unicorns' and 'phlogiston does not exist'. The fictionalist uttering (OS) does not intend their utterance to be, nor should it be analysed as, indexed to a fictional context; it is a statement put forward that is divorced from any relevant fiction. On the other hand, (IS) and (ES) statements require further analysis. I'll consider these next, in turn.

### 6.1. *Fictional statements internal to the musical works fiction*

Consider first internal statements, such as (IS), above. I think (IS), as uttered by the revolutionary fictionalist, is best conceived as a statement that purports to capture something about the content of *the Western classical art musical tradition/practice/discourse* – qua 'fiction' – *insofar as* it coheres with empirical facts about *the way the world is*. (That is, I shall advocate an *object-fictionalist* theory, but I shall return to this distinction later.) In other words, (IS) is a statement about the facts (pertaining to Mozart's creative activity around 1788) that 'conceptually intersect' with an intentional in-existent, within the context of the tradition/practice/discourse in which the concept is legitimised. That is to say, colloquially, musical works should be thought of as the fictional characters in the classical Western art music story.

Since according to that story (IS) is true, revolutionary fictionalists can utter (IS), albeit 'fictitiously', with a genuine sense of conviction. Balaguer (2009) would say that (IS) is 'fictionalistically correct'; Sainsbury (2010) would say that (IS) maintains 'fidelity' to the relevant 'fiction'. In contrast, consider statements like '*The Jupiter* was composed by Beethoven, completed in 1788', or '*The Jupiter* was composed by Mozart, completed in 1890'. Not only are these statements false at face value, they are false *according to* our story. So they are not 'fictionalistically correct'; they do not maintain 'fidelity'.<sup>17</sup> But what does putting a statement forward *fictionally* – that is, what does 'fictionalistic truth' discourse – really amount to? Answering this requires some unpacking.

As mentioned above, philosophers distinguish prefix fictionalism from pretence fictionalism. Pretence theorists, in a revolutionary fictionalism context, argue that sentences like (IS) should not be *asserted*, but put forward through

some other speech act, such as pretence or make-believe, removing the assertive force of these sentences. Prefix theorists, on the other hand, suggest that the sentences be asserted, but understood as containing a tacit-constituent – a prefix such as ‘According to the relevant story; or whatever – thus putting the sentences forward as short-hand talk for longer sentences beginning with a context-operator. The full, compound sentence might be true, in spite of the falsity of the embedded sentence taken simply at face-value.

So there are two broad models – two *façons de parler* – that the revolutionary fictionalist could recommend for revising future discourse. Either, or some mix of both, is ultimately consistent with my basic line. Yet I should (briefly) pause to explain why I lean towards the prefix model.<sup>18</sup> Kania (2012a) leans the other way: ‘What would in the past have been assertions about musical works, for instance, ought really, according to the fictionalist, to be put forward as make-believe’ (Kania 2012a, 215). This is one place where I depart from his view. The revolutionary pretence theorist claims that utterances of (IS) (1) should not be truth-normed, but have some other virtue; (2) should be taken at face value; (3) are truth-apt, yet never true; (4) should not be put forward as *assertions*; (5) should not be believed but merely accepted/pretended/make-believed.<sup>19</sup>

The revolutionary prefix theorist, on the other hand, claims that although utterances of (IS) taken at face value are false, strictly speaking, they really can be *true according to* a specific context, story, theory, or practice, and should be put forward in this manner. So the prefix theorist suggests that utterances of (IS), when put forward seriously/genuinely, be (1) truth-normed and (2) short for an extended sentence beginning with a contextual operator. In long form, those sentences (3) are truth-apt, (4) believed by the speaker, and (5) asserted.

I am hesitant to prefer pretence over prefix revolutionary fictionalism in the context of musical works for several reasons. Again, I will be brief on this matter. Firstly, some legitimate participants of the practice/discourse might not be able to pretend or make-believe in this way (some autistic individuals, for instance; see Stanley 2001). Secondly, in light of recent semantic-descent models and models of nonconscious assumptions of ordinary agents, ascribing pretence or make-believe in a context like this may well be implausible (see Howell 2015), and presuming that’s the case, prescribing pretence may also be problematic at least in practice. Thirdly, implying that serious research going on in, say, music departments ought to be under a guise of pretence or make-believe, rather than simply involving fictional entities, might be uncharitable and demeaning to good research done, stunting progress. While pretence fictionalism is intuitively a good description of the way in which adults interact and engage with young children, say, in the context of the Santa Claus mythology, it would not be a good fit for the musical work discourse.

So, on my view (that is, a revolutionary, prefix-oriented fictionalism about musical works), internal fictional statements can still be true as long as we analyse them as elliptical for statements with a context-operator. Consider talk

of fictional characters. We can, for example, coherently assert that 'Sherlock Holmes does not exist', and then that 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective living on Baker Street', if the latter is asserted in a fictionalistic light. It is short-hand for something like 'According to the Sherlock Holmes stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective living on Baker Street'. Thus the shorter sentence 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective living on Baker Street' is, fictionalistically (i.e. prefixedly), true. In my view, the Western art musical tradition/practice/discourse plays the role of the relevant fiction, about which there are many empirical truths, while the musical works play the role of fictional characters embedded in that 'fiction'.

A quick point of clarification might be useful, about the exact nature of my intended musical work context-operator. Yablo (2001) distinguishes *meta-fictionalist* operators ('according to the fiction/the fiction is such that, *S*') from *object-fictionalist* operators ('according to the world/the world is such that, *S*'). The 'according to the Sherlock Holmes stories' operator, discussed above, is meta-fictionalist: when a prefix-fictionalist about fictional characters asserts 'Sherlock Holmes is a detective living on Baker Street', she is merely concerned with the *content* of a fiction (Brock 2016). The object-fictionalist operator, on the other hand, is concerned with how the world is, with respect to the content of the relevant 'fiction'. So in uttering *S*, the object-fictionalist is asserting that the world is such (e.g. that all the necessary and sufficient conditions are in place for it to be true) that *according to the relevant fiction, S*. Take fictionalism about mathematical entities as an example. When the object-fictionalist declares that 'the number of Martian moons is two', she appeals to the worldly facts that there is a Martian moon, *x*, called 'Phobos' and a Martian moon, *y*, called 'Deimos', and that *x* and *y* are different from each other, and that nothing else is a Martian moon, in order to make her statement *true according to* the number fiction. She does not merely appeal to the content of standard mathematics.

Given the distinction, then, which way should my context-operator be intended? In my view, object-fictionalism of musical works is to be preferred here. First, the Western art music tradition, although widely discussed, catalogued in many books, and so on, is not articulated and orally preserved, or written down and published, in the same sense as a myth or Sherlock Holmes story. Rather, from the Western art music tradition *a community-based fiction* (Currie 1990) has emerged. And there are many truth-apt things to be said about that tradition/community. The idea: the world contains a tradition, and this tradition tells us there is an intentional object *The Jupiter* and as such we can think and talk about that intentional object, meaningfully and coherently, without strictly speaking referring. We just need not include it in our ontology.

Second, although according to the Western art music tradition *The Jupiter* was composed by Mozart and completed in 1788, it could be that Mozart *actually* did what he did in 1786, and that we just *have it wrong*. This would be an empirical matter, turning on the timing of the creative acts of Mozart. Thus we

should not think that the *truth* of our long-form statements turns simply on the 'content' of the 'fiction', but the way that the world really is.

Third, meta-fictionalism cannot seem to get at the heart of some of the things that people really care about. When a fictionalist about mathematical entities laments that the numbers of an endangered species are diminishing, she is not concerned about some fact about the content of a fiction. She is concerned about the plight of real entities in danger of extinction. Similarly, the musical work discourse is useful for discussing things that many people care about: Western art music as well as various material aspects of that musical community/tradition.

## 6.2. *Fictional statements external to the musical works fiction*

External statements require a different analysis to internal statements. Consider a revolutionary fictionalist's utterance of (ES), '*The Jupiter* is more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain'. I shall specify that on this occasion of use, the claim is critical/evaluative, external to any such internal fictional content. Aesthetic evaluation is a matter for critical debate, not straightforwardly specified by the existence of the Western art musical tradition/community. Yet, at first glance, in order to take this statement seriously it seems as though a real relation must be posited, *more beautiful than*, that holds between (real) relata! In external statements, unlike internal statements, it appears that the musical works themselves are the things that are represented. Is there an elegant, fictionalist answer for such a challenge?

I think so. My answer has two parts. First, sometimes external statements are put forward in a nominalist light. This is a descriptive, empirical claim. A statement like 'I really enjoyed *The Jupiter*' could have been – either upon reflection, or off-the-cuff – put forward by the speaker about a particular musical performance, perhaps last night's. Here the speaker intends to convey to her interlocutors something like 'I really enjoyed the performance of music last night called "*The Jupiter*". This is the sort of eliminativist paraphrase advocated by Rudner (1950). When this is actually the case, the statement is already put forward in a way that is consistent with fictionalism's ontological commitments, so no additional explanation is required. And one does not need to be a fictionalist to accept this. Here the apparent commitment to a problematic entity is 'paraphrased away', one of Quine's three strategies.

However, these scenarios are not always the case. For example, sometimes external statements are intended by speakers to be about something that is 'in addition' to the various reductions (score-copies, performances, and so on). Rudner's example ...

'Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is good but this is a bad rendition of it' could be taken as an ellipsis for 'there is a musical rendition *called* Beethoven's Fifth Symphony

which is pleasing aesthetically but this musical rendition, while similar to it in important respects, is aesthetically displeasing'. (Rudner 1950, 385)

... is hardly convincing. In much musical critical discourse, speakers put forward statements that ought to be interpreted as *aiming* at a given musical work – that is, put forward with the musical work concept in mind – not 'really' about some particular performance. Suppose that a musical work has only been given one performance, and suppose further that it was poorly performed. In this case, there is no particular rendition to which the speaker could attempt to refer when she says 'It is a good piece, but that was a poor performance of it'.

My recommendation is to revise, at least in *philosophical* discourse, *external* talk of musical works. When at all possible, critical/evaluative talk should be about *displays*. In my view, we would all speak much more clearly if we said that (for example) 'that performance called "The Jupiter" was more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain', or that 'competent *The Jupiter* performances are more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain', or that 'my imagined *The Jupiter* rendition (from reading a score-copy) is more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain' and so on. After all, these are the things that have aesthetic properties *that we are able to experience*, enabling our aesthetic evaluations, so critical/evaluative talk of musical works is, strictly speaking, dispensable given fine-grained enough talk about concreta. However, this kind of talk is incredibly cumbersome for general usage. So my recommendation is to treat occurrences of the name 'The Jupiter' (etc.) as having syncategorematic status (following Quine 1939). Syncategorematic terms are meaningful terms that do not designate anything.<sup>20</sup> This strategy allows us to talk of inexistents – in this case, musical works – as a useful fiction. (And just as we can easily and uncontroversially distinguish *other* inexistents – we can distinguish talk of phlogiston from talk of miasmatic vapours, Vulcan, Santa Claus and so on – we can straightforwardly distinguish talk of *The Jupiter* from that of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.) The plausibility of thinking that *The Jupiter* is somehow more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain is explained by one's thought that the relevant displays are so, or at least typically so. On this analysis, the syncategorematic yet contextually meaningful expression 'The Jupiter' *names nothing*; it merely '*purports* to designate some one specific entity' (Quine 1939, 701). That is, 'the word is not a *name* of any *entity* in its own right ... it is a noun at all only because of a regrettable strain of realism which pervades our own particular language ... The mere capacity to turn up in a sentence does not make a string of marks a name' (Quine 1939, 704). So we need not forego the convenience of external statements like (ES).

Mark Balaguer (2009) calls this kind of strategy 'theft-over-honest-toil' fictionalism (though not in Bertrand Russell's famously pejorative sense of that phrase, since it does not *posit* any suspicious entities). Advocating this form of fictionalism about mathematical entities over the Platonist alternative, Balaguer writes that a given statement involving apparent quantification over mathematical entities (e.g. 'There are fewer Martian moons than Neptunian moons' or 'There

are at least two numbers') can still be put forward as true (that is, it is 'fictionalistically' true), 'iff it would have been true if there had actually existed abstract mathematical objects of the kinds that platonists have in mind, i.e. the kinds that our mathematical theories purport to be about' (Balaguer 2009, 138). Stuart Brock (2002, 2016) thinks of this 'parasitic' strategy as 'according to the realist's hypothesis' fictionalism. A statement such as 'Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any living detective' can be put forward as elliptical for 'According to the realist's hypothesis about fictional characters, Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any living detective'. Of course, there are a plurality of realist hypotheses. Brock recommends a hybrid approach: the fictionalist may help herself to whichever hypothesis is most compatible/consistent with the context at hand.

Imagine a straightforwardly-descriptivist musical work realist that simply posits a *sui generis* category of entities that realise the platitudes systematised by the Canberra Plan method. Call this realist a 'brute-realist'.<sup>21</sup> I contend that any proposal that the brute-realist can give for the truth of an external statement can be stolen by the revolutionary fictionalist – in the name of the revolution! – and used in an argument for that very statement's 'fictionalistic' truth, or truth according to some tacit context-operator. Then, 'The *Jupiter* is more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain' can simply be elliptical for 'According to the brute-realist's hypothesis about musical works, *The Jupiter* is more beautiful than a snow-capped mountain'. Moreover, my fictionalist theory retains an advantage over the brute-realist's theory: I do not posit any suspicious or dubious entities, and yet anything the brute-realist says to her merit, I can simply commandeer as fictionalistically true. The musical work platitudes come out fictionalistically true, so no conceptual revision is necessitated. Statements identifying musical works (e.g. '*The Jupiter* is a musical work') come out false when taken at face value, but prefixedly true (that is, fictionalistically true), identifying something about the world (that the Western art music tradition qua fiction contains a fictional character, *The Jupiter*). And in my view, prefixed-truth leading to real truths is better than no truth at all, or massive revision, or metaphysically dubious or unmotivated commitments. When those are the other options, I think my brand of fictionalism wins the stalemate.

## 7. The incredulous stare and Thomasson's challenge

Time to take stock. My proposal is as follows. Explicit ontological statements concerning musical works are to be treated literally, at face value. Internal statements concerning musical works should be put forward as fictional statements that purport to cohere with how the world is, given that it contains the Western art music tradition, and that from this tradition a kind of community-based 'fiction' has emerged, according to which it can be said that thus-and-so. External statements concerning musical works should be about displays, whenever possible, but when this strategy reaches its limit – when statements are not put

forward in a plausibly nominalist rendering, or eliminated for the purposes of clearer critical/evaluative talk of concreta – they should be put forward *as if* musical works existed: that is, put forward according to the brute-realist's hypothesis; they should be treated as fictional statements about the musical-work posits of the brute-realist.

Of course, as with any philosophical theory, there is going to be dissent about my revolutionary fictionalism. I will comment on two possible responses to my view. First, according to John Burgess, revolutionary fictionalism is laughable – '*comically immodest*' (Burgess 2004, 30).<sup>22</sup> Burgess's incredulous stare was originally directed at mathematical fictionalism, but it can be seen how it might be applied to the case of musical works.

The objection, then, is that the professional participants of the Western art music practice are the experts when it comes to musical works (just as mathematicians are in the case of mathematics), so why is a philosopher trying to butt in and tell them that, 'technically speaking', some of their sentences are face-value wrong and their utterances are best put forward in a fictional spirit?

This worry can be easily mitigated. My fictionalist revolution is artistically/creatively (and perhaps even *musicologically*) uninteresting and unimportant. It matters not for the participants of the practice if musical works are the fictional characters of the Western art music fiction. It is not something that participants in the practice think or care about (except *philosophically* – it is not relevant, musically, to the practice), and the philosophical merits of fictionalism (or any other ontological theories about musical works for that matter) is something that philosophers are the experts in, not the participants of the practice (except insofar as they don their philosopher's hats). To be sure, the point that the revolutionary fictionalist is making 'is a paradigmatically *philosophical* point' (Balaguer 2009, 154). As Mary Leng notes, 'Revolutionary fictionalism need not advocate a revolution in practice, only in our understanding of that practice' (Leng 2005, 278).

Second, on Amie Thomasson's deflationary minimalist realist view (2013, 2015), since the classical Western art music tradition to which I refer exists, so, *ipso facto*, would musical works.<sup>23</sup> On her view, they are abstract artefacts – abstract cultural creations. The idea: an existence claim like '*The Jupiter exists*' is *trivially true as a consequence* of the truth of other sentences (that we ordinarily accept); that is all it takes for *there to be* such an abstract artefact, *The Jupiter*. Her challenge to the fictionalist is thus to 'articulate *what more it would take* for the serious existence claim to be true. What more are you supposing it would really take for there to be fictional characters (say) than for authors to write stories that use names in certain ways?' (2015, 269). The challenge is intended for theorists advocating varieties of hermeneutic fictionalism, not revolutionary fictionalism, but it can be construed as a general task for any anti-realist theory of fictional characters, musical works, and so on.

Replying to Thomasson's challenge and her branch of simple realism about musical works decisively will not be possible in the remaining space, however I aim in the following to push back a bit. There seems to be a crucial disanalogy between the paradigm examples of 'abstract artefacts' that Thomasson has in mind (laws of state, marriages, contracts) and musical works. Consider: 'We normally accept that ... if the legislature and president act in the proper sorts of ways, a law is created: nothing more is required; that is *all it is* to create a law' (Thomasson 2015, 259). Similarly, 'provided the truth of apparently non-committal sentences like 'two qualified citizens sincerely undertook the following vows and paperwork,' we can infer 'A marriage came into existence' (2015, 260). Let's consider talk of marriages. After the vows and paperwork, indeed we say that a marriage has come into existence; that is, we say that two people are now married – we can now call their relationship/union one of 'marriage' – and they are jointly afforded a different legal status than before. But this is loose talk: it is not that some *new thing* has come into existence. To say 'a marriage now exists' sincerely, it seems to me, is to adopt the adjectival thesis about marriages. Same goes for positive existence claims about contracts and laws of state. Consider an example a little closer to our subject matter. I endorse the adjectival thesis about antiques – that is, 'antique' is a modifier, not a kind sortal (Curtis and Baines 2016; Killin 2017). That any particular antique exists is grounded in the fact that a particular object (a particular desk,<sup>24</sup> say) exists that meets the requirements for antique status, whatever they may be. When the desk comes to meet those requirements (having not met them until now), we might say that an antique has come into existence. But no *new thing* has come into existence: the desk was there before it met the requirements for antique status. Same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for marriage (contracts, laws, etc.): that any particular marriage exists is grounded in the fact that particular people, having done what it takes to meet the legal requirements for married status, exist. They existed before their union; their union is not some distinct entity (as Quine reminds us, turning up in a sentence as a noun does not guarantee that the word in question refers to some entity in its own right). And notice that the musical work concept does not easily accommodate this adjectival thesis scenario: 'musical work' is a kind sortal, not a modifier. So, to answer Thomasson's challenge, what would it take for a musical work, qua abstracta, to be real, on my view? It would be for it to have independent existence from that which already existed before the creation/completion of the work: some distinct entity would have to come to exist. And yet, *contra* Thomasson's simple realism, such abstracta would not be worth positing, says the philosophical naturalist, if they are already superfluous to our explanatory aims. I have argued herein that this is plausibly the case. Indeed Kania (2008) suggests that Thomasson simply *fails to refer* when she speaks of a musical work.

I conclude we should be fictionalists about musical works. This does not require revising artistic practice, or the musical work concept. It hardly requires

revision of musical discourse at all; just the wider conversational context, philosophically speaking. And this is a small concession to make for an otherwise conceptually descriptive, naturalistically compatible, and ontologically *au courant* theory.

## Notes

1. Participants in the debate about the ontology of musical works often focus exclusively on works from the Western art music tradition and this is usually explicitly noted. For example, Levinson states 'At the outset, however, I should make clear that I am confining my inquiry to that paradigm of a musical work, the fully notated 'classical' composition of Western culture, for example, Beethoven's Quintet for piano and winds in E-flat, Opus 16. So when I speak of 'musical work' in this paper it should be understood that I am speaking only of these' (Levinson 1980, 6). I will follow suit. The ontology of other musics is usually discussed separately. For instance, see Kania (2006) and Gracyk (1996) on rock music.
2. Strawson characterised the distinction as follows: 'Descriptive metaphysics is content to describe the actual structure of our thought about the world, revisionary metaphysics is concerned to produce a better structure' (Strawson 1959, 9).
3. I do not generalise from the case of classical Western musical artworks to other musical works. For example, perhaps rock songs are best identified as 'tracks' encoded on copies of recordings (that have a causal connection to the original master recording) – see Kania (2006) and Gracyk (1996). In any event, I contend that the methodology I defend in the classical Western art music context will help philosophers, case by case, elucidate the ontological status of 'works' of music across the board. In short: a piecemeal approach is the way to go – divide, integrate, and conquer!
4. Consider the following support for the descriptive side: '[Musical works] are what they are in virtue of our creating them and the practices that have evolved concerning them. The nature of these objects can only be found in our intentions and practices regarding them' (Stecker 2009, 382); 'Ontologies of art are beholden to our artistic practices – the ways we talk, think, and act in relation to art or at least some rational reconstruction of these – and the critical debates are part of the practices to be captured' (Rohrbaugh 2003, 179).
5. In the quoted passage Davies is discussing Amie Thomasson's views.
6. This situation already distinguishes the relevant work-concept from others. Performers of jazz standards might have no such inclination to 'submit', diverging widely in their renditions of standards and standard-based improvisations. And folk songs from oral music traditions diffuse and evolve over time.
7. By 'performance' I mean a live, real-time occurrence of music produced by performers; by 'playing' I mean the playback of a recording; by 'recording' I mean the medium for stored information – on vinyl, CD, mp3, and the like – of the captured performance, or simulation of a performance.
8. Various platitudes have been rejected by philosophers before – for instance Peter Kivy denies that musical works are created by their composers – but this is because of his theoretic commitments to a particular view (i.e. Platonism about musical works), not because that is how he thinks musical works are conceptualised in the target tradition/practice. Similarly, Julian Dodd would reject that musical works are created by their composers, for example; again, his rejection of the platitude

is due to his theoretical view, not because that is how he thinks musical works are conceived within the tradition/practice.

9. An anonymous referee points out that Carnap could well be right: it could be that ontological positions are merely ways of talking about empirical evidence and all ways of talking that are compatible with the evidence and consistent are just as good as each other. This would regard my fictionalism as one more ontology of musical works that is consistent and compatible with the empirical evidence. Addressing this decisively is not possible within the scope of this article. Suffice to say that my article can be read as an attempt to *privilege* my account over the others: my fictionalism does not posit into existence extra entities that cannot be confirmed empirically, yet coheres conceptually with the target tradition/practice/discourse. The other accounts, it seems to me, satisfy at most only one of these two theoretical desiderata.
10. Martin (1993) proposes that talk of musical works *could* be construed as a fiction that gives way to a more convenient discourse. (Ultimately he opts for a realist, type/token view.) Kania (2008) does not endorse fictionalism either, but explores it as a viable option. Kania (2012a) revisits the idea more explicitly, arguing that fictionalism is preferable to Platonism about musical works, although he still falls short of a full endorsement. Goehr could be interpreted as a fictionalist: she thinks of musical works as having 'projected' or 'fictional' existence (Goehr 2007, 106). But she does not elucidate this aspect of her view; her project is to explicate, primarily historically, the musical work *concept*.
11. Anti-realism about musical works has hardly been discussed in the philosophical literature, truly dwarfed by the prominence of realist theories. Dodd's (2008) recent literature review does not even mention anti-realism as a possible position. Stephen Davies (2001) quickly rejects fictionalism about musical works (pp. 39–40), however the version of fictionalism he rejects treats statements about musical works as statements about performances. I defend a more developed fictionalist account herein, which is not subject to Davies' criticisms.
12. See also Davies (2011, 44–47).
13. Given the preoccupation with the ontology of musical works amongst philosophers of music (and the debate's prevalence in the philosophy of music literature), it is worth developing a plausible fictionalist position somewhat independently of explicit debate about realism/anti-realism about musical works. Without it, theorists might be tempted to dismiss 'straw man' fictionalist positions (see, e.g. note 11), potentially neglecting a useful linguistic and conceptual framework worth entertaining.
14. That is, it is to turn Quine's denunciation of 'the philosophical double talk, which would repudiate an ontology while simultaneously enjoying its benefits' (1960, 242) on its head. See Yablo (2001).
15. The mere fact that we can talk in certain ways doesn't guarantee a thing's existence. That we can think and talk about a (mere) intentional object doesn't either: mere 'intentional existence' is not real existence at all.
16. As an anonymous referee points out.
17. Consider, as Field (1989) does, the difference between 'Oliver Twist grew up in London' and 'Oliver Twist grew up in L.A.' The former is true *according to the story*, the latter is not. Yet both are false *simpliciter* for the fictionalist about fictional characters who believes that there is no Oliver Twist.
18. I am brief since the pretence/prefix distinction matters more in hermeneutic fictionalism contexts. That's because whether pretence or prefix discourse *actually occurs* matters for the hermeneutic theory to be *descriptively* plausible. In

revolutionary cases, the difference is largely pragmatic: the theorist recommends the one (or blend of both) that they think best suits the ongoing discourse once philosophically reconceived as fictionalistic.

19. However, perhaps a distinct 'real content', to be distinguished from the 'face value content', might be true, asserted (indirectly, perhaps) and should be believed: perhaps the content of the prefix-fictionalist's full sentence.
20. Typical examples of syncategorematic terms include 'some', 'if', 'whereas', 'up'. On Quine's view, the nominalist that denies (say) the existence of appendicitis, construed as an abstract property, will 'maintain that the word 'appendicitis' figures syncategorematically ... like 'is' or 'pend,' and that there is no designated object 'appendicitis'" (Quine 1939, 705); 'Abstract terms [e.g. 'appendicitis', 'unicorn', 'Pegasus'] will retain the status of syncategorematic expressions, designating nothing' (p. 708).
21. Bertrand Russell cautions against brute realism, i.e. 'The method of 'postulating' what we want' (Russell 1919, 71) without adequate independent metaphysical defence.
22. This kind of objection was put to anti-realist theories more generally by Lewis (1986). Burgess also claims that revolutionary fictionalism commits an error against Carnap. But evaluating Carnap's philosophy and its consequences will take me too far afield and is not central to my concerns here. See note 9.
23. As an anonymous referee points out.
24. Or simples-arranged-desk-wise, if you like.

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## Notes on contributor

*Anton Killin* is a postdoctoral research fellow in the School of Philosophy and the Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language at the Australian National University. Anton's research interests include philosophy of the arts and philosophy of the sciences, evolution of the arts, and connections between evolution of music and language.

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