

Sonic Pictures

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In *Antithetical Arts*, Peter Kivy explains how absolute music—“an art of purely abstract but perhaps expressive sound”—poses a distinctive problem for the philosophy of art:

All of the *other* fine arts are, for the most part, arts *with* literary or representational content. And that content plays a major role in accounting for what it is in these arts that gives us such deep and abiding satisfaction. But absolute music does not possess such content. So it is a puzzle as to what it is in or about absolute music that gives what *appears*, at least, to be the same *kind* of deep satisfaction that the other arts, the arts with content, give. That, in brief, is the “problem” of absolute music. (2011, 119)

One obvious solution to the problem, “popular both in philosophical and music-theoretical circles,” is to contest appearances and “to deny that absolute music does indeed want for literary [or representational] content” (2011, 119). Following arch-formalist Eduard Hanslick, Kivy thinks such views are hopeless (2011, chaps. 3–7). Instead, he insists that a fully satisfactory account of the artistic and aesthetic satisfactions of “music alone” *must*—and *can*—be given without appeal to any sort of literary or representational content (1990, 2011, chaps. 8–11). In this respect, literature and absolute music are indeed “antithetical arts.”¹ However, the same cannot be said of music in general. Despite his formalism, Kivy is deeply sensitive to the representational potential of music, which he explores at length in *Sound and Semblance* (1984) and *Osmin’s Rage* (1988). Focusing primarily on program music and opera, Kivy argues that there are many cases in which full appreciation of a work or performance requires attention to the music’s representational features. But more controversially, against Roger Scruton (1976), Jenefer Robinson (1987), and Stephen Davies (1993), Kivy claims that, in rare cases, music, like painting, can actually provide *pictorial* experience. This is my topic here.

However, my concern is not the *possibility* of musical picturing; I believe that Kivy’s

¹That said, Kivy rejects Hanslick’s “extreme formalism,” according to which “[t]he content of music is tonally moving forms, empty of any other content, emotive content in particular” (2011, 64; quoting Hanslick [1854] 1986, 28–29). According to Kivy, Hanslick’s mistake was to fail to grasp the possibility of an “enhanced formalism,” “a formalism that recognizes emotive properties of music as perceptual, phenomenological properties, not semantic or representational ones” ((2011), pp. 60, 74; but cf. pp. 64–5).

arguments—including his replies to Scruton, Robinson, and Davies—conclusively establish it (see Kivy 2012, secs. 8.3–8.5).² Instead, my goal is twofold. First, while Kivy’s discussion of musical pictures focuses exclusively on classical music, I will extend his approach to other genres and argue that musical picturing is both more common and more aesthetically significant than he allows. Second, I will build on Kivy’s discussion to develop a conception of musical pictures—or, more generally, “sonic pictures” (Kivy 2012, 152)—that is sensitive to recent developments in philosophy of perception. As it turns out, Kivy’s approach embeds a commitment to a metaphysics of sounds and hearing that significantly restricts the scope of what can be sonically pictured, and recent work in philosophy of perception suggests that we have good reason to question this commitment and the restriction it entails. In its place, I’ll recommend a view of sounds and hearing that yields a much more powerful conception of sonic picturing—one whose consequences extend well beyond the domain of music.

This article has six parts: §1 presents Kivy’s approach to sonic pictures; §2 extends it to other musical genres; §3 exposes its metaphysical basis; §4 introduces five contemporary views of sounds and hearing that reject this basis and argues briefly in favor of my preferred view; §5 introduces the view of sonic picturing entailed by my view, focusing on differences with Kivy’s approach and revisiting the musical cases discussed in §2; finally, §6 concludes by setting the stage for future work. If I am right, sonic pictures are ubiquitous in modern life, and there remains a great deal more to be said about them.

1. Kivy on Musical Pictures

In exploring the representational capacities of music, Kivy distinguishes “pictorial” from “structural” representations (2002, 183).³ In the latter, a “structural element in the music corresponds with something” extra-musical, such as a feature of the accompanying text, “that the structure, so to say, analogizes” (Kivy 2002, 190). For example, according to Kivy, the resolution to D major at the end of Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* structurally represents “the resolving of differences among the couples” (2002, 190). But while the informed listener may appreciate this representational function, there is, Kivy notes, “no question” of simply *hearing* conjugal harmony in the music:

There is nothing to ‘hear in’ the music, because the music, in these instances, does not represent sound, or sound events, but abstract concepts and things

²To the best of my knowledge, Kivy never discusses Michael Martin’s more recent attack on the possibility of sonic pictures, which itself never addresses Kivy’s view—or, for that matter, any of the literature on representation in music (Martin 2012; see also NuDDS 2018). Doing justice to Martin’s attack is beyond the scope of this article, but see §4 for discussion of the controversial metaphysics that undergirds it.

³The structural/pictorial distinction updates Kivy’s earlier distinction between representations and pictures (1984, chap. 2), which, from the perspective of Kivy (2002), runs together the structural/pictorial distinction with the aided/unaided distinction (discussed below).

seen but not heard. One hears the musical structure, understands the text, and perceives, cognizes, the structural analogy. (2002, 190)

On the other hand, in an explicit extension of Richard Wollheim’s idea that “a representational picture is a picture that requires, or calls for, seeing-in” (Wollheim 2003, 5), Kivy treats an auditory representation as pictorial just in case it requires, or calls for, hearing the object of representation *in* the representation itself (2002, 183, 2012, sec. 8.3). In a late essay entitled “Sound in Sound,” Kivy extracts four necessary conditions for pictorial representation from Wollheim’s work and applies them directly to music, “adjustment, of course, having been made for the change in sense modality from sight to hearing” (2012, 152). Here they are, so adjusted:

First, the representation must enable the hearer to hear-in the representation the object of representation.

Second, one hears-in the pictorial representation correctly when one hears-in it what the composer intended to be heard in it.

Third, hearing-in, in pictorial representation, is twofold. One simultaneously hears-in the musical representation and is perceptually aware of the medium in which the object is pictorially represented.

Fourth, and finally, the pictorial representation must be of something that can be heard, since it involves hearing-in, and you cannot hear-in a picture what cannot in reality be heard. (2012, 152)⁴

I take these conditions for granted in what follows—with one qualification. While Kivy focuses on musical pictures, he means for his account to apply generally to “sonic pictures,” and I take it in this spirit (2012, sec. 8.3). But moving beyond music—indeed, moving beyond the classical tradition—requires revision to the second condition: the intentions that fix the representational content of a sonic picture may not be those of a “composer”—at least not in the traditional sense. Otherwise, so far, so good. I turn to examples in a moment. But first, I need to introduce two more of Kivy’s ideas about sonic pictures.

The first idea concerns what sonic pictures represent. It finds expression in Kivy’s unpacking of the fourth condition above. He writes:

[V]isual pictorial representations represent what is *seen*: we *see* the woman *in*

⁴Two points. First, as Kivy presents it, the concept of hearing-in is neither a metaphorical extension of, nor derivative from, the concept of seeing-in. Instead, hearing-in and seeing-in share a common structure—one that might, in principle, be found in any sense modality whatsoever. This may be at odds with Wollheim’s own views on the matter. Either way, I follow Kivy here. Second, Bence Nanay argues that we have twofold yet non-pictorial musical experience when “we simultaneously attend to both the features of the performed musical work and the features of the token performance we are listening to” (2012a, 607). This is entirely compatible with Kivy’s view. Indeed, twofold yet non-pictorial experience is presumably also possible when attending to how a piece of music represents structurally.

the *Mona Lisa*. Likewise, pictorial representations in music, if indeed there are any, represent what is *heard*: we *hear* in the music whatever it pictorially represents. So it seems clear that pictorial representations, if any, in music, must be representations of *sounds*. This does not mean music cannot represent other things besides sounds, or paintings things other than sights. But they can't represent them pictorially. (2002, 184).

There is nothing about music that would generate this restriction; so, if it applies, it applies to sonic pictures tout court. Call the resulting view—that sonic pictures (musical or otherwise) must be pictures of sounds—*Kivy's Restriction*. Kivy's Restriction is grounded in a view of sounds and hearing that Kivy infrequently articulates and (to my knowledge) never defends. It is view with rich philosophical pedigree, and it is shared by Kivy's main opponent on issues of musical representation, Roger Scruton.⁵ Beginning in §3, the bulk of this article aims to expose, criticize, and replace the metaphysics that sustains Kivy's Restriction, and then to exhibit the dramatic consequences for sonic picturing.⁶

The second idea concerns the way in which we generally experience musical pictures. Kivy writes:

[There is a] distinction. . . between pictorial representations where what is 'seen in' the picture can be seen in without the aid of words and can be seen in only if we have a hint from some accompanying text or title. Anyone can see the woman's face in the *Mona Lisa* without being told that it is a portrait of a lady. But there is a beautiful painting by the British artist J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) in which we can see a sunset in the painting only if we know the title: *Sunset over Lake*. . . . Without the words there would be no 'seeing in': only the impression of a non-representational color composition. For obvious reasons, then, I shall distinguish between what I call 'aided' and 'unaided' pictorial representations: those that require words for 'seeing in' and those that do not. (2002, 184)⁷

⁵On issues of musical representation, Kivy and Scruton disagree across the board. Scruton denies that pure music has *any* representational powers (1976). Against Scruton, Kivy argues that, while musical picturing is uncommon, it can occur, and structural representations in music are commonplace (1984, 1988, 2002, 2012).

⁶The passage articulating Kivy's Restriction is drawn from his *Introduction to a Philosophy of Music* (2002), which, an anonymous referee notes, is a text written with less precision than his other works. So, is there independent evidence that the Restriction is, in fact, his official view? Yes—though nowhere else does it find such direct expression. This is not surprising: an introductory text *should* make explicit things you might leave implicit for more sophisticated audiences, *especially* if you think those things are philosophically obvious. Anyway, Kivy's adherence to the Restriction is generally implicit in his work. For example, consider the title of his late essay on sonic pictures: "Sound in Sound"—viz., to experience a sonic picture is to hear sound in sound. Later in the same piece he writes of the "musical practice of *sound* representation" (2012, 159, my emphasis). The Restriction also finds expression in his analyses of particular cases. For example, he writes that Schubert "picture[s] in sound *the sound* of a spinning wheel" (2012, 156, my emphasis).

⁷As mentioned in note three above, the aided/unaided distinction is part of Kivy's improvement on his

As Kivy is well aware, whether a picture counts as unaided is an audience-relative matter (1984, 22). No picture is unaided simpliciter; “unaided” is always unaided *for someone*. Consider Figure 1.



Figure 1: Blob or Belgium?

In what looks to most Americans like an abstract blob, any Belgian will immediately, without aid, see Belgium.⁸ Whether we count this picture as aided or unaided will depend on its *intended* audience. Produced for use in Belgium, it counts as an unaided pictorial representation, regardless of how Americans will experience it. On this understanding, pictorial representations in visual art are, as a rule, unaided; but Kivy thinks that, in music, the opposite is true. In fact, he suggests that “that *is* the real difference between ‘seeing in’ and ‘hearing in.’ ‘Seeing in’ is usually unaided. ‘Hearing in’ probably never is” (2002, 189). So, while aided musical pictures “abound,” “it is very hard to come up with any real, incontestable examples” of the unaided type—though, in the Western classical tradition, representations of bird calls in compositions such as Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony are among the best candidates (2002, 185, 184). In the end, then, he thinks “it is probably best to give up the point and admit that unaided pictorial representation in music is, if possible at all, too rare a phenomenon to be counted as belonging to music’s repertoire of aesthetic possibilities” (2002, 185). Call the view that unaided musical picturing does not deserve “to be counted as belonging to music’s repertoire of aesthetic possibilities” *Kivy’s Exclusion*. I think it is understandable that Kivy would arrive at this view given his focus on classical music. However, I argue in the next section that attention to other musical genres reveals that unaided musical picturing is both more common and more artistically and aesthetically significant than Kivy admits. If I am right, then the task of the rest of this article—to contest Kivy’s Restriction and develop a better understanding of the possible objects of sonic picturing—becomes that much more important.⁹

earlier distinction between representations and pictures (1984, chap. 2).

⁸Thanks to Hans Maes for this example and for very helpful discussion of the aided/unaided distinction.

⁹As with Kivy’s Restriction above, you might worry that the key passage for attributing Kivy’s Exclusion is drawn from Kivy’s introductory text, and so, might not express his official view (2002). Again, though, we have independent evidence from his own philosophical practice: all of the cases of musical picturing that he analyzes at length are obviously aided (1984, 2002, 2012).

2. Unaided Musical Pictures of Music

For the purpose of this section, I leave Kivy’s Restriction in place—that is, I assume with Kivy that sonic pictures are pictures of sounds, and so, that sounds are what we hear in sonic pictures. Later, in §6, I briefly revisit the cases discussed here in light of my rejection of the Restriction.

When it comes to musical pictures, Kivy’s main interest is musical pictures of *music*, and he analyzes several examples at length, including the Lutheran hymn from the opening scene of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (2002, 186–7) and the Dead March from Handel’s *Saul* (2012, sec. 8.5). It seems clear that, without the context their libretti provide, we would be unable to hear these pieces as Wagner and Handel intend, because we would have no reason to treat them as calling for hearing-in. They are *aided* musical pictures of music. By contrast, my goal in this section is to exhibit cases of *unaided* musical pictures of music.

First, however, a caveat. Contemporary music-making, -distribution, and -listening practices introduce difficult questions concerning the relationships between items such as performances, recordings, and tracks—none of which I can address here (but see, for instance, Kania and Gracyk (2011)). Since these differences make no difference to my main argument, I write freely of listening to and hearing performances, recordings, and/or tracks, etc., as seems appropriate to the case.

Exhibit one: beatboxing. Beatboxing is, in its original form, “a vocal percussion practice in hip-hop music,” so-called because it developed “from the desire to imitate beatboxes, the first generation of the drum machine” (Bell 2019, 1967). In one of the earliest recorded examples, beatbox pioneer Doug E. Fresh (“The Human Beatbox”) provides a full beatbox accompaniment to Slick Rick’s rapped vocals in “La Di Da Di.” Since then, beatboxing has developed into an internationally popular, self-standing musical genre in which artists imitate a wide variety of musical sounds in improvised performances. The key point for present purposes is that, without any accompanying text, beatbox performances readily provoke hearing-in. For example, in “La Di Da Di,” it’s nigh impossible not to hear drumming sounds and various electronic effects in Doug E. Fresh’s beatboxing. The artistry of the beatboxer is precisely to induce vivid and surprising experiences of hearing-in without having to tell the audience what to expect.

You might challenge this claim by arguing that beatboxers aim not to *picture* musical sounds, but to *reproduce* them. On this view, successful beatboxing does not induce hearing-in, but creates an illusion—a form of *trompe l’oreille*.¹⁰ Yet while I agree that beatboxers aim at *compelling* representations of the sounds that they target, most beatboxing—even very, very good beatboxing—neither fools the ear nor aims to. Beatboxing in rap music

¹⁰Thanks to Bence Nanay for pressing me on this point.

generally aims to present itself auditorily *as* beatboxing; that is, it does not function simply as a proxy for a drum machine or turntable. This is especially clear on tracks that include both drum machines *and* beatboxing, such as “The Show,” another Doug E. Fresh–Slick Rick collaboration. And consider cases when a stand-alone beatboxer “covers” or “quotes” a canonical track. For example, when virtuoso beatboxer Tom Thum concludes a performance with a section from Michael Jackson’s “Billie Jean,” there is, auditorily, no question of an illusion of Jackson’s original track.¹¹ Yet we do hear it *in* Thum’s voice—which brings me to my second exhibit.

Exhibit two: cover songs. In “Judging Covers,” Magnus et al. offer the following sufficient condition for being a cover: “A version of a song is a cover when it is recorded or performed by an artist or a group who did not write and compose the song themselves and where there is a prior recording which is accepted as canonical or paradigmatic” (2013, 362). I propose that, in many cases, we can—and are *meant to*—hear the canonical track in the cover, and this constitutes a good bit of our aesthetic interest in it, even if the cover is also independently musically interesting. Call such covers *pictorial covers*. Probably most pictorial covers are intended for audiences sufficiently familiar with the relevant canonical tracks that they can hear them in the covers without aid. Call these *unaided pictorial covers*.

Pictorial covers are distinct from what Magnus et al. call “mimic covers” (2013, sec. II).¹² Mimic covers aim to reproduce the sounds of their canonical tracks with perfect fidelity; so, mimic covers aim at illusion, not hearing-in; thus, mimic covers are not pictorial covers. Still, a pictorial cover may be very similar to its canonical track. Consider *Danzig Sings Elvis*, a 2020 album of Elvis covers by the heavy metal band Danzig. Apart from the pervasive reverb and heavier guitar, Danzig’s tracks are very similar to Elvis’s originals. Still, listeners familiar with Elvis will be in no danger of mistaking the two, and they also won’t need any help to hear Elvis’s tracks in Danzig’s. At the other extreme, unaided pictorial covers may be very different from the tracks they represent. Consider Stevie Ray Vaughan’s instrumental cover of Jimi Hendrix’s “Little Wing.” The canonical Hendrix track is roughly two-and-a-half minutes long and includes vocals; Vaughan’s nearly seven-minute cover is purely instrumental. No matter: anyone familiar with the Hendrix will hear both its guitar and vocals in the Vaughan; and much of the pleasure we take in listening to the latter lies in appreciating how it allows us to hear the former in what is a very different piece of music. Of course, differences are relative: Vaughan’s cover is, like Hendrix’s original, a piece of blues-rock; but unaided pictorial covers can cross genres in radical ways.

¹¹As of this writing, you can see Thum’s performance in his TEDxSydney talk, available on TED.com.

¹²Magnus et al. divide covers into four categories (2013, 368). Pictorial covers can occur in all but that of the mimic cover. In fact, each of the three examples I discuss below belongs to a different one of their categories: the Danzig is a rendition cover; the Vaughan is a transformative cover; and the Vicious—which they discuss on p. 368—is a referential cover.

In a music video recorded for the 1980 mockumentary, *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, Sid Vicious performs a scathing parodic cover of Sinatra's "My Way." Vicious sings the first verse and chorus over strings in derisive faux-crooner style before the guitars and drums kick in and the song goes punk. But even then, no one familiar with the canonical Sinatra track could fail to hear it in the Vicious performance—and that, I think, is part of its point.¹³

In general, fully appreciating a pictorial cover requires the sort of familiarity with the canonical track that allows you to hear it in the cover. Just *knowing* that it's a cover is not enough. If you can't hear the canonical track in the cover, then all you hear are the cover's surface features, and you are auditorily and aesthetically missing out on something essential about the work.

There is, of course, more to say about beatboxing and cover songs, and, more generally, about musical pictures in contemporary music. (Consider, for instance, sampling in hip hop and quotation in jazz, much of which seems clearly pictorial, not to mention musical pictures of non-musical sounds such as gunshots.) But, for present purposes, the takeaway is that we should reject Kivy's Exclusion: unaided musical pictures play an important role in contemporary music and deserve "to be counted as belonging to music's repertoire of aesthetic possibilities." Onward, then, to Kivy's Restriction.

3. The Metaphysical Basis of Kivy's Restriction

Kivy's Restriction holds that sonic pictures (musical or otherwise) must be pictures of sounds. I claim that this embeds non-trivial metaphysical commitments. This section unpacks those commitments; the next criticizes them.

In general, pictures represent what they do, in part, by presenting perceptual appearances shared by their objects. What makes a Rembrandt self-portrait a picture of Rembrandt is, in part, that the portrait shares (enough of) Rembrandt's visual appearance. This, above all, is what enables us to see Rembrandt in the picture. Any satisfactory theory of depiction must offer an account of exactly how—and in what sense—pictures capture the perceptual appearances of the objects they depict.¹⁴ But the point here is that only things that perceptually appear—that is, things that have perceptual appearances—can be pictured at all (Hopkins 1998, 28–30). At the same time, it seems that *whatever* perceptually appears is something that can in principle be pictured. In sum, then: for sense modality M, an object O might be perceived in an M-type pictorial representation if and only if O has M-type perceptual appearances. For example, many ordinary objects

¹³Thanks to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to the Vicious cover (even if we disagree on its analysis). And thanks to Hans Maes for sending me the original music video—available on YouTube as of this writing.

¹⁴See Hopkins (1998) and Kulvicki (2006) for two very different approaches to this task.

and events (cabbages, cats, clouds) have visual appearances; thus, they might be seen in visual pictorial representations—that is, they might be visually pictured. Similarly, anything with auditory appearances will be a candidate for sonic picturing—for being heard in sonic pictures. Consequently, Kivy’s Restriction—that sonic pictures *must be* pictures of sounds—holds if and only if auditory appearances belong *only* to sounds.

The view that auditory appearances belong only to sounds is a piece of our collective empiricist inheritance. As such, it easily masquerades as philosophical common sense. Consider the following exchange, which occurs early in the first of Berkeley’s *Three Dialogues*:

PHILONOUS. This point then is agreed between us, that sensible things are those only which are immediately perceived by sense. You will farther inform me, whether we immediately perceive by sight any thing beside light, and colours, and figures: or by hearing, any thing but sounds: by the palate, any thing beside tastes: by the smell, beside odours: or by the touch, more than tangible qualities.

HYLAS. We do not. ([1713] 1992, 138)

In short, we immediately or directly perceive only sensible qualities, which, Philonous goes on to argue, exist only insofar as they are perceived. Such a view receives little support from contemporary philosophers. It is widely agreed that what we immediately perceive are not mind-dependent qualities, but mind-independent objects. In particular, what we immediately see and touch are supposed to be ordinary objects such as cats and cabbages. This is not to deny that we see colors and shapes; it is to deny that we see cats by or in virtue of seeing their colors and shapes. Our visual experience of a cat is not “mediated” by the experience of its sensible properties. Similar considerations hold for touch.

Yet the priority accorded to ordinary objects in visual and tactile perception is typically not extended to the other sense-modalities. In the case of hearing, this manifests itself in two ways. First, philosophers typically follow Berkeley in taking the only direct or immediate objects of hearing to be sounds (for instance, O’Callaghan 2007, 13, 2008, 318, 2009a, 609). On this view, when you witness a musical performance, you directly see the performers, but you directly hear only the sounds they make. Second, even if most philosophers reject the Berkeleyan view that sounds are mind-dependent qualities, there is still a tendency to think of sounds as independent of their material causes, as somehow hovering above or alongside the world of everyday material objects and events (Strawson 1959, chap. 2; Scruton 1997, chap. 1, 2009; Nudds 2001, 2010, 2014; Martin 2012). Taking these two ideas together suggests that sounds constitute a sort of auditory veil between mind and world, and so, that the only items that *can* show up in auditory consciousness—and so, bear auditory appearances—are sounds (cf. Nudds 2014). Thus, we may say that, in listening

to the musical performance, you “indirectly” hear the performers, their instruments, and their playing, but the only things that *genuinely* populate your auditory consciousness are the sounds that they make. In this case, no musician, instrument, or act of playing has ever *auditorily appeared* to anyone.

As we’ll see in a moment, the trend in the philosophy of perception is to reject such a conservative view of auditory appearances, and this in turn opens the door to a more powerful conception of sonic picturing (among other things). First, however, a key point: if sounds are the sole bearers of auditory appearances, then sounds must be *individuals* rather than *sensible properties*.¹⁵ Here’s why. In general, bearers of a particular sensible property have a corresponding sensory appearance in virtue of bearing that property. For example, all red things have a visual appearance—a certain look—in virtue of being red. So, if sounds are audible properties, then their bearers have corresponding auditory appearances. Furthermore, if sounds are audible properties, they are presumably borne by *non-sounds*—whether objects (Pasnau 1999; Kulvicki 2008, 2014), events (Leddington 2014, 2019), or spatio-temporal regions (Nanay 2013, 58ff.; Cohen 2010, 306). Thus, if sounds are audible properties, then some non-sounds have auditory appearances. Conversely, if *no* non-sounds have auditory appearances—that is, if *only* sounds have auditory appearances—then sounds cannot be properties; they must be individuals.

In sum, we have:

- a. Kivy’s Restriction is true if and only if *only* sounds have auditory appearances.
- b. If only sounds have auditory appearances, then sounds are individuals.

To resist Kivy’s Restriction we must above all resist the idea that only sounds have auditory appearances. There are two ways to do this. First, we might accept that sounds are individuals but insist that some non-sounds nevertheless have auditory appearances. Second, we might reject the view that sounds are individuals in favor of a view of sounds as sensible properties. In §4, I consider both of these strategies and offer independent reasons in favor of the latter.

4. Resisting Kivy’s Restriction

To resist Kivy’s Restriction, an individualist about sounds must allow that some non-sounds have auditory appearances. Here four contemporary views seem promising.

First, according to *Parthood*, sounds are events—disturbings of media—that are proper parts of their medium-involving event sources (O’Callaghan 2007, 2009b, 2010, 2011). For example, when a baseball collides with a bat, the sound (the disturbing of the air) is a

¹⁵I’m assuming that these exhaust the options. Supposing that the world consists of individuals with properties, then, given that sounds are perceivable, they must either be individuals with sensible properties *or* sensible properties.

proper part of its source (the ball-bat-collision-in-air). Given that sounds have audible features, Parthood entails that some non-sounds—namely, sound sources—have “parts with audible features,” and so, auditory appearances (O’Callaghan 2011, 396). According to O’Callaghan, this allows us to explain an important phenomenological datum: namely, that we can hear sound sources *along with* their sounds in such a way that “the audible source and the audible sound are not simply phenomenologically unified—they share an audible appearance” (O’Callaghan 2011, 397–8). Thus, Parthood seems to permit some non-sounds to appear auditorily.

Second, *Identity* holds that sounds are identical with their event sources (Casati and Dokic 1994; Casati, Di Bona, and Dokic 2013). When the ball collides with the bat, the collision *is* the sound, and so, a bearer of audible features such as pitch and loudness. This means that ordinary noisy events such as collisions have auditory appearances. Strictly speaking, this view is compatible with Kivy’s Restriction, since the Identity theorist can hold that all and only sounds have auditory appearances. At the same time, by identifying sounds with their ordinary event sources, Identity locates auditory appearances in a manner at odds with the spirit of Kivy’s Restriction. Contra Kivy, Identity holds that any noisy event has auditory appearances, and so, is a possible object of musical picturing. In this respect, the Identity theorist can officially embrace Kivy’s Restriction even while massively extending the scope of what might be auditorily—and so, musically—pictured.

Third, according to *Abstracta*, sounds are repeatable, or *abstract*, individuals (Nudds 2001, 221–2; Martin 2012, 345–6). On this view, sounds resemble properties (or universals) in virtue the fact that they can be spatially and temporally “multiply located” (Martin 2012, 345). But, unlike properties, whose instances are bound to their bearers, individual sounds are in various ways separable from their material sources (Nudds 2001, 2010; Martin 2012). As discussed in §3, the idea that sounds are separable from, or “float off” their material sources readily suggests that auditory appearances belong to sounds alone (Martin 2012, 334, 344). Nevertheless, Matthew Nudds has recently argued that, even someone who endorses Abstracta can—and *should*—accept that sometimes “material events... themselves are apparent to us in auditory experience” (Nudds 2014, 482). If his argument is successful, then even Abstracta might provide the means with which to resist Kivy’s Restriction.

Finally, according to *Plurality*, audible qualities such as pitch and loudness can be borne both by noisy everyday events (collisions, etc.) and by sounds as Abstracta conceives of them—namely, as “pure audibilia,” audible individuals somehow independent of material objects and events (Soteriou 2018). By denying that sounds alone bear audible qualities—and so, auditory appearances—Plurality is straightforwardly incompatible with Kivy’s Restriction.

All four of these views insist that sounds are individuals. To this extent, they remain compatible with Kivy’s Restriction; but inasmuch as they more widely distribute auditory appearances, they provide means to resist it. Even among philosophers who treat sounds as individuals, there is a growing consensus that, in one way or another, ordinary noisy events such as collisions can genuinely appear in auditory consciousness. In this respect, the trend is to say that what we hear, strictly speaking, are not just sounds, but their sources—the ordinary noisy events that populate our surroundings. This suggests a more direct route to resisting Kivy’s Restriction.

The *Event-Property View of Sounds* (EPV) holds that sounds are audible properties of their event sources (Leddington 2019, 2014). Noisy events such as collisions and vibrations can be described as bearing audible qualities such as pitch, timbre, and loudness (Casati, Di Bona, and Dokic 2013; Soteriou 2018). According to EPV, those audible qualities *constitute* the sound of the event; in other words, *sounds are event-borne audible-quality complexes*. This keeps with philosophical tradition by classing sounds alongside colors among the sensible qualities. However, tradition also treats sounds—like canonical colors—as properties of *objects* (Locke [1690] 1975, bk. II, ch. viii, sec. 14; Pasnau 1999; Kulvicki 2008, 2014).¹⁶ So, by taking sounds for properties of *events*, EPV breaks with tradition—and for good reason: the view that sounds are properties of objects is *prima facie* implausible. For instance, most sounds have temporal profiles that differ substantially from those of everyday objects and their properties. The bell that you ring both predates and outlasts the sound of its ringing; the bell does not, however, predate or outlast its color, shape, or size. This is a reflection of the fact that sounds are event-like, not object-like. Arguably, then, if sounds are sensible properties, they are sensible properties of events, not of objects.¹⁷ In any case, because an object’s perceptible qualities do not mediate our perceptual contact with it, EPV has the following critical consequence: just as we see objects *in* (but not *by* or *in virtue of*) seeing their colors, so we hear the event sources of sounds *in* (but not *by* or *in virtue of*) hearing their sounds.¹⁸ And just as the primary objects of vision are not colors *per se*, but color-bearing objects, the primary objects of hearing are not sounds *per se*, but sound-bearing events. In other words, according to EPV, we never hear mere noise, only noisy *events*, and the primary bearers of auditory appearances are not sounds, but

¹⁶Why *canonical* colors? Because some events—such as explosions, flashes, and flames—have colors, too. Indeed, according to EPV, if we’re to think of sounds by analogy with colors, we should of them by analogy with the colors of events, so that the sound of an explosion is the auditory analog of its color (Leddington 2019, 625).

¹⁷Though I cannot defend the claim here, EPV is immune to all of the main objections that have been leveled at object-based variants of the property view of sounds. (For some of those objections, see O’Callaghan (2020) and Casati, Dokic, and Di Bona (2020).) Also, recall that, as mentioned in §3, Nanay (2013, 58ff.) defends a third version of the property view: that sounds are sensible properties of spatio-temporal regions (cf. Cohen 2010, 306). This avoids some of the problems with object-based views, but faces an objection: what makes a particular spatio-temporal region noisy is *what happens within it*; why, then, not simply treat the sound as a property of the event source?

¹⁸On these uses of the phrases ‘in’, ‘by’, and ‘in virtue of’, see Leddington (2014), p. 323–5.

their event sources.

I have presented five contemporary theories of sounds and hearing that, despite significant differences, all allow that some non-sounds can appear auditorily, and so, that non-sounds can in principle be objects of sonic picturing. Thus, if our current best perceptual theories are any guide, we should reject Kivy's Restriction. Still, which theory should we prefer? I have argued elsewhere that considerations of theoretical simplicity—both ontological and syntactic—give us reason to prefer EPV to both Parthood and Identity (Leddington 2019). I think similar considerations tell against Plurality and Abstracta. Like EPV, Plurality recognizes that the primary objects of hearing include ordinary events bearing auditory qualities such as pitch, timbre, and loudness. But while EPV stops there, Plurality also insists on the existence of Abstracta's "pure audibilia"—objects of audition that literally float free of material sources. These, they say, are "sounds." Though I cannot fully address the issue here, I see no reason to recognize the existence of such things. In particular, that we may *experience* sounds as if they are free-floating individuals—in what Scruton calls "acousmatic experience" (1997, chap. 1)—hardly shows that they *are* free-floating individuals. As Kivy notes in *Music Alone* (1990, 4), we can with sufficient effort have similarly abstract experiences of color; but this hardly shows that colors can divest themselves of their bearers. Other things being equal, we should prefer a view that dispenses with pure audibilia. In sum, then, we should prefer EPV. Supposing so, what are the consequences for sonic picturing?

5. Sonic Pictures Reconceived

EPV doesn't just resist Kivy's Restriction; it turns it on its head. According to EPV, just as colors are properties borne by objects (and sometimes events; see note 16), sounds are audible-quality complexes borne by ordinary noisy events such as collisions. Moreover, just as color-bearers, but not colors, are the primary objects of vision, so sound-bearing events, but not sounds, are the primary objects of hearing. In this case, it will typically be just as inappropriate to say that sonic pictures are pictures of sounds as it is to say that visual pictures are pictures of colors. Instead, just as visual pictures are canonically pictures of objects, so sonic pictures will be pictures of events. Of course, visual pictures of objects also depict visible properties—most obviously, shape and color—but those properties are represented *as properties of the represented objects*. In this respect, the representation of the visible properties is secondary or derivative. For example, Jan Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* depicts a woman in a green dress. Does it therefore depict a particular shade of green? Yes, but only secondarily: as the color of a particular dress. Similarly, if EPV is correct, then sonic pictures will necessarily depict the sounds of the events that they represent, but those sounds will be represented only secondarily: *as properties of their source events*. So, consider the birdsong cadenza in the second movement

of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony. What does it depict? EPV suggests that the primary object of depiction—what a properly informed listener hears in the music—is not mere bird sounds, but a noisy everyday event: *birds singing*. Does the music *also* depict bird sounds? Sure, but only secondarily: as the sound of birds singing. And note that this account arguably matches Beethoven's intention in giving the movement the programmatic title, "Szene am Bach," or "Scene by the Brook," rather than "Geräusche einer Szene am Bach," or "Sounds of a Scene by the Brook."

Kivy's late paper on musical picturing is entitled "Sound in Sound." As discussed in §1, this is how he thinks sonic pictures work: we hear sounds in sounds. The view I recommend differs doubly. When we encounter a sonic picture, what we auditorily encounter is not mere sound, but a noisy everyday event—for example, the playing of a flute. That we hear this event pictorially means that we hear in it another event—for example, the singing of a nightingale. So, it's not "sound in sound," but "event in event." This is a significant shift. Recall Honegger's *Pacific 231*. For Kivy, it consists of sounds that represent "the sound of the engine starting up, barreling along at top speed, slowing down, and finally coming to rest" (2002, 185). Instead, we should say that what does the picturing is not an assembly of sounds, but a *performance*, which pictures not just the sounds of the locomotive, but *the activity itself*: "the engine starting up, barreling along at top speed, slowing down, and finally coming to rest." In other words, we hear in one event (the performance) another event (the activity of the locomotive). (We also, of course, hear in it the sounds of the locomotive, but again: only secondarily.) Similar emendations apply to Kivy's other cases. For instance, Kivy says that "the Dead March [in Handel's *Saul* is]... a musical picture of musical sound" (2012, 157). Instead, we should say that one event—the performance of the Dead March in Handel's *Saul*—pictorially represents another: the performance of an Old Testament funeral march. What about beatboxing and cover songs? On Kivy's approach, the beatboxer makes music by making sounds that picture musical sounds. Instead: the beatboxer's *performance* is an event in which we hear the *making* of musical sounds—for instance, the playing of a drum machine or the scratching of a record. As for covers, when you listen to Danzig's cover of Elvis's "Fever," you don't hear Elvis-sounds in Danzig-sounds, you hear one event—say, the playback of an Elvis track—in another—the playback of a Danzig track; or, if you see Danzig live, you may hear an Elvis performance in Danzig's own.

It can be easy to miss the importance of this shift in how we think about sonic pictures. In this case, a visual analog might help. Suppose you believe that visual pictures cannot depict objects such as cats and cabbages, but only the colors and shapes *associated* with such objects. Later, you (rightly) change your view: you come to believe that some visual pictures *do* in fact depict cats and cabbages. Might this change how you *talk* about those pictures? How you *value* them? Perhaps even how you *experience* them? Certainly it

would have consequences for your *aesthetic appreciation* of them inasmuch as this involves attention to the relationship between their surface features and the items that they depict (Nanay 2016, ch. 3). Consider, then, what it might mean to think differently about sonic pictures—to treat them as representations not of mere sounds, but of concrete activities: the singing of birds, the making of music, the operation of a machine, a collision, a conversation. After all, these, not mere sounds, are the things that really matter to us. So much the better, and so much the richer, if we can hear them in sonic pictures.

6. Conclusion

If successful, this article updates Kivy’s approach to sonic pictures and establishes the importance of musical pictures—especially unaided musical pictures—in contemporary music. As mentioned in §2, there is a great deal more to say about the latter, especially once EPV is in the picture. But EPV also has striking consequences for other issues in aesthetics. Here are three that deserve extended treatment—and, of course, actual argument. First, EPV entails that audio recordings of live events are sonic pictures of those events; they are true sonographs. Second, EPV entails that vision and audition can share perceptual objects: we can often see the very events that we hear. This allows EPV to explain a wide variety of cross-modal phenomena and predicts, for instance, that our experiences of musical performances will be richly multimodal (cf. Nanay 2012b). Third, taking the first two consequences together, EPV yields a enriched conception of audiovisual recordings and streams: they are not just moving visual pictures with sound; they are integrated and irreducibly multimodal *audiovisual pictures*.

Finally, while this article targets two of Kivy’s claims about sonic pictures, my approach to the topic retains Kivy’s basic framework, and so, remains essentially Kivyesque. In particular, as discussed in §3, Kivy’s Restriction issues from an idea that has long posed as a piece of philosophical common sense: that sounds alone bear audible appearances. Only in the last few years, as part of an explosion of work on non-visual perception, have philosophers emphatically turned against this idea. So, I like to think that Kivy would be amenable to the view I have articulated here, which I intend as a “friendly amendment” to his groundbreaking work on sonic pictures.¹⁹

¹⁹I received very valuable feedback on an earlier version of this article from two anonymous referees and the work-in-progress group at the Centre for Philosophical Psychology at the University of Antwerp. Bence Nanay gave me several helpful suggestions and Hans Maes provided detailed comments and discussed the issues with me at length. I am very grateful for these contributions; the article is much better for them. Lastly, of course, I am indebted to Peter Kivy. Sadly, we never met, but we corresponded briefly when he sent me a note following the publication of my Fisher Prize article, “The Experience of Magic” (2016). He was very kind, and he wrote with the same infectious excitement about philosophy that makes his published work such a pleasure to read. So, thanks again, Peter. There’s more to come. (This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 795393.)

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