

Humanities - Arts and Humanities in Progress 7

Rūta Stanevičiūtė
Nick Zangwill
Rima Povilionienė *Editors*

Of Essence and Context

Between Music and Philosophy

 Springer

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Volume 7

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Preface

The chapters in this volume, by music scholars and philosophers, examine the ideas of the essence and context as they apply to music. In philosophy, the notion of essence has seen a renaissance in the last twenty years, while in many disciplines of the humanities the notion is still viewed with suspicion. A common worry with thinking of music in terms of essence is about the plurality of music. The many kinds of music seem too diverse to be the manifestation of one essence. There is also the worry that thinking in terms of essence is an overly conservative way of imposing fixity on something that evolves. The appeal to essence in the cultural sphere is supposed to be fraught with the danger of imposing a normative straightjacket over divergent and dynamic phenomena. Many musicologists think that we must appeal to the varying historical and cultural contexts of music, and the idea of an essence of music is therefore misguided. But if we despair of finding something in common in the many kinds of music, are we really left with a chaos of completely different phenomena with nothing at all in common? Why then speak of ‘music’ in all the cases that we do across many different historical and cultural contexts? Perhaps, we can be more careful about the kind of essences we affirm—ones that lack the normative consequences that some fear. Furthermore, anti-essentialism may also have its own dangers. The urge to understand music politically can lead to its own kind of rigid fixity, whereby music forms are tied to political categories. Apparently, anti-essentialist contextualism can in fact turn into a kind of reductive musical essentialism, whereby sonic forms are thought of as coded politically in terms of ethnicity, gender and so on.

Or can we transcend the opposition of essence and context? Is there really a tension between the context of music and it having some essence? Perhaps, one is part of the explanation of the other. Given the current interest in the notion of essence in philosophy, and given that exhaustively contextual approaches to music are now less dominant than they used to be in both musicology and philosophy, this is a good time to reconsider these notions and the relations between them as they bear on music and musical phenomena.

The disciplines of musicology and philosophy have recently been reaching out to each other in an attempt to overcome the specific interests and intellectual styles of the respective disciplines. The Royal Musical Association Music and Philosophy Study Group founded in 2010 (of which one of the editors of this volume was a founder member) has played an important role in this—providing a forum at the London conferences where each discipline can learn from the other and at the same time a place where differences can be frankly aired and learned from. The Vilnius conference in 2016, from which the chapters in this volume derive, proceeded in the same spirit. Sometimes, there may be a glorious synthesis between disciplines. But interdisciplinary engagement should never be too glib and easy. If it seems so, something has probably gone wrong. Heat should sometimes be generated. And heat often generates light.

The conference, *Essence and Context: A Conference Between Music and Philosophy*, took place in the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre (Vilnius), from the 31 August to 3 September 2016. The idea to organize a scholarly gathering in Vilnius arose at a lunch meeting of musicologist Rūta Stanevičiūtė and philosopher Nick Zangwill in Vilnius. Programmed in collaboration with a large network of scholars from Europe, North and South America, the conference was the first conference at the interface between music and philosophy featuring scholars from the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe.

Keynote speakers included: Paul Boghossian (New York University), Vytautas Landsbergis (Lithuania), Jerrold Levinson (University of Maryland), Tamara Levitz (UCLA, Los Angeles) and Richard Taruskin (University of California, Berkeley). Plenary panellists were: John Deathridge (King's College London), Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman (University of Arts in Belgrade), Mario Videira (University of São Paulo) and Nick Zangwill (University of Hull). The Programme Committee consisted of: John Deathridge (King's College London); Michael Gallope (University of Minnesota); Rūta Stanevičiūtė (Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre); Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman (University of Arts in Belgrade); Mario Videira (University of São Paulo); Nick Zangwill (University of Hull); and Audronė Žukauskaitė (Lithuanian Philosophical Association).

Financial support was gratefully received from: Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre, Musicological Section of Lithuanian Composers' Union, Research Council of Lithuania and the Lithuanian Council for Culture. The conference was organized in partnership with the Lithuanian Philosophical Association and the American Musicological Society's Music and Philosophy Study Group (in particular, thanks to Michael Gallope).

The revised and extended keynote lectures and papers selected for the inclusion in this volume are structured into four parts, each containing chapters ranging from theory to practice in various music cultures. The book reflects a diversity of issues and approaches addressing music concepts and practices negotiating between essentialist and contextualist traditions. The first part "Interrogating Essence" begins with an exchange between Richard Taruskin and Nick Zangwill confronting essentialist and contextualist positions that represent key motifs of both the conference and the volume. The discussion is continued in the chapters of this part by

Jonas Lundblad, John MacAuslan, Kamilė Rupeikaitė, Mei-Yen Lee, moving from romantic philosophy of art to aesthetic and ethical issues of traditional Hebrew and Chinese musical culture. The part “Genesis and Structure” encompasses a broad interdisciplinary trajectory combining philosophical approaches with bioethics and biology in the chapters by Audronė Žukauskaitė and Piotr Podlipniak, relating linguistics and communication theory, in the chapters by Svetlana Savenko and Diana Baigina, tackling phenomenology and cognitive science, in the chapter by Tijana Popović Mladjenović, and rethinking music’s relationship to mathematics and orally transmitted music tradition in the chapters by Rima Povilionienė and Nicolas Royer-Artuso. The part “Musical Work and Performance” opens with Jerrold Levinson’s chapter refining the notion of authentic, or historically informed, performance and giving a nuance defence of its practice. Per Dahl rethinks concepts of musical work and performance from ontological and epistemological perspectives. In this part, the authors continue the discussion of issues of performing practices featuring performer’s and listener’s perception, in the chapter by Anna Chęcka, improvisation, in the chapter by Roberto Zanetti, and aesthetic experience in the chapter by Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska. Temina Cadi Sulumuna and Sheryl Man-ying Chow tackle case studies in Western and Chinese music cultures. Twentieth-century musical concepts and practices in relation to essence and context are examined in the part “Musical Aesthetics of Modernity”. The part is framed by the chapters of Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman and Helmut Loos analysing the politically and culturally conditioned shifts in the reception of the musical avant-garde and the canon of German musicology after 1970. Hyun Höchsmann and Vita Gruodytė explore key philosophical concepts with special attention to temporality in the works by Theodor W. Adorno and Vladimir Jankélévitch. Rediscovery of little-known aesthetics writing on Russian music is contextualized in the chapters by Maria Karachevskaya and Anna Fortunova. Malcolm Miller explores the ways in which modern arrangements of classical music generate musical and social meanings.

The editors feel deeply indebted to all the contributors to this volume. We also express our appreciation to the International Semiotics Institute at the Kaunas Technology University for inclusion of this volume into *Numanities* series published by Springer-Verlag. Partial financial sponsorship of this publication was gratefully received from the Lithuanian Council for Culture.

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Part I

Interrogating Essence

Chapter 1

Essence *or* Context?



Richard Taruskin

Abstract Cast in the form of a gloss on the passage on Hanslick from *The Oxford History of Western Music*, this essay considers such topics as musical beauty (versus the musical sublime), the relationship of musical form and content, the status of music as an artifact of culture rather than phenomenon of nature, the function of metaphor in the perception and description of music, and the ontological status of musical structure—in all cases framing its formulations as responses to the writing of Nick Zangwill (whose reply will be found in this volume).

1.1 Introduction

Never have I been happier to receive an invitation to a conference than I was last year when, having established contact with Nick Zangwill, I found myself proposed as a keynoter for this one. My primary reason for rejoicing had nothing to do with the conference theme. It had to do with ancestral roots. My father's parents were born and grew up in these parts. My grandmother was born around 1884 in what was then known as Wilkomierz or Vilkomir, now Ukmergė, about 80 km from where we are now gathered. My grandfather was born, probably in the same year, in Dvinsk, now Daugavpils, not much further away from us now, even though it is across the border in Latvia. It was in Dvinsk that my grandparents were married, and it was from there that they came to America in 1907 and 1908—first he, then she, after he had worked for a year and earned passage for the rest of the family, which by then included my father's older sister. Of course, in my grandparents' time the border between today's Baltic republics was just a border between guberniyas, or administrative districts within the Russian empire. If you asked my grandparents where they were from, they would have just said "Russia", as I did when I knew them. If they were speaking their native Yiddish, they might have said they were Litvaks, as speakers of the northern Yiddish dialects were often called. When I was an exchange student at the Moscow Conservatory in the early 1970s, I was unable to visit Daugavpils, in what

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was then the Latvian SSR, since like most of the territory of the Soviet Union, it was off-limits to foreigners. So of course I leapt at the chance to come here—you might even say in spite of the conference theme.

For ordinarily it might have been a deterrent. I alluded jokingly to the reason in the very act of leaping when I wrote to the organizers. “All right, I’ll take context and the rest of you can have essence.” I’m sure nobody was surprised to hear me say that; for, as you are surely aware, relations between musicologists and philosophers who study music have not always been a model of harmony. It’s been a rather dissonant counterpoint, in fact, when there has been polyphony at all rather than a case of simultaneous monodies, and the stated theme of our conference, though it uses the conjunction “and”, names a binary more often cast in opposition. Not only that, but the mutual disaffection between the musicologists and the philosophers takes the form among musicologists of an impression that the difference between the two disciplines is that musicologists read the work of philosophers but philosophers don’t read the work of musicologists. The bibliographies of many of the books I’ve read bear this out, as does a lot of anecdotal evidence, such as the story of how I first heard the name of Nick Zangwill—who, by the way, has an ancestry quite similar to mine. His great-uncle Israel was a very well-known British writer, whose father (Nick’s great grandfather) also came from what is now Latvia, albeit half a century or so before my family emigrated. I first became aware of Nick in a live tweet sent out from a meeting of the Royal Musical Association’s Music and Philosophy Study Group, by a musicologist named Paul Harper-Scott who was incensed at Nick’s apparent lack of interest in the musicological literature, or in history, or in anything that smacked of “context”, and especially at the nonchalance with which he asserted his lack of interest.

Meanwhile, we musicologists do try to keep abreast of current philosophical work, even if we have the annoying habit of contextualizing it historically. We do this precisely because we believe that situating anything in intellectual history effectively neutralizes its claim of universality, a claim that philosophers love to make, but which we regard as fatuously self-aggrandizing. It neither surprises nor deters us that the response from philosophers often amounts to euphemistic paraphrases of the title of an article by the literary scholar Rita Felski that I often used to assign to my pupils: “Context Stinks!” (Felski 2011). Whatever they think of our take on their work, we regard the work of contemporary philosophers—indeed, contemporary scholars of all stripes, insofar as their work intersects with ours—as contributions to reception and interpretation, and therefore part of the history of our shared subject, which for us makes it something worth studying historically.

There are four contemporary philosophers of music with whose work I have engaged in what I regard as significant ways. In descending order, so to speak, of closeness of engagement, they are Lydia Goehr, Peter Kivy, and two who are in the room with us as I speak: Jerrold Levinson and Nick Zangwill, the man with whom I am sharing the stage at the moment, and who, as I’ve learned, is noted for his impatience with music historians.

With Lydia the engagement has been somewhat different from the rest. I don’t know whether her fellow philosophers would agree, but to me her work often seems

more like intellectual history than like philosophy as such. Her first and best known book, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, performs the sort of operation we like, historicizing the musical “work concept”, as one tends to call it now (following her lead), and thus delimiting its applicability. Obviously, I think that is a salutary achievement. Indeed, so loudly have I touted her book that the publisher asked me for a foreword when it was reissued in a revised edition (Goehr 2007). As to Peter Kivy, I have reviewed two of his books (the first two), although I did so in musicological journals that philosophers do not usually read (Taruskin 1982, 1985). After the first review appeared, we became friends. The second review temporarily ended our friendship.

With Jerry Levinson and Nick Zangwill, contact had been only in writing until we met here in Vilnius. Jerry may or may not remember it, but he noticed my review of some Beethoven recordings in the long-defunct *Opus* magazine back in 1987, was surprised to find references in it to names like Roman Ingarden and Nelson Goodman, and sent me a lovely garland of offprints (Taruskin 1987, 1995a: 202–234). I made my usual surly response, and that was that for a while; but a decade later I read his *Music in the Moment* with huge interest and wrote about it—or, to be more specific, about its formulation and reception, and that of the concatenationism it espouses—in the last volume of my *Oxford History of Western Music*, which I have taken to calling *The Ox* (Taruskin 2005).¹ Although, like so many works of its kind, the book sought (or presumed) to make points of general applicability, it looked to me, rather, like a particularly pertinent and noteworthy sign of its time. That stance was then called postmodernism—a term that sounds as antiquated now as “New Musicology”—and like Lydia’s work, I thought, it deserved historical contextualization in its own right. So that may count as another indication of the difference between philosophical and music-historical approaches, or reactions, to artistic and intellectual manifestations.

As to Nick, imagine my surprise when only a few months after learning from Paul Harper-Scott’s tweets that he was a particularly obnoxious specimen of insular music philosopher, who had not read anything I had written (apparently Paul had asked him), I received, out of the blue, an e-mail from him telling me that he had read—and not only read, but even *liked*—the two pages in *The Ox* devoted to the man Nick called “my hero Hanslick”. I had surprised him, he wrote, because, as he put it, “it is rare for him [that is, Hanslick—R.T.] not to be summarily dismissed by musicologists”. (I surprised him further by saying that that assumption surprised me.) He also wrote, most endearingly that “anyone who dumps on Adorno is a friend of mine”. Our mutual surprise was mutually gratifying. It led to an interesting correspondence and, I suppose, it led to my being here today. Especially cheering was Nick’s assurance that my treatment of Hanslick was “careful” and “fair”. I hope that means that he thought it was accurate, because I believe we owe it to one another to represent each other’s viewpoints accurately whether or not we sympathize with them. There are many—far too many—who hold this most basic requirement to be impossible (and do so, in my opinion, only to give themselves an alibi). So I’d like to structure the serious part of my presentation here as a gloss on the short passage from

¹See Taruskin (2005: 511–513) (Chapter V ‘Music in the Late Twentieth Century’).

my History that, so to speak, built the bridge between at least one musicologist and one philosopher or aesthete of music. It seems an appropriate text on which to base my sermon here, because it bears directly on our theme, and because the position it sympathetically describes—that is, Hanslick’s—is actually one with which I do not agree.

1.2 Pleasure and Pain

Just to contextualize it (since context is my bag): the passage on Hanslick comes at the very end of what I consider to be the crucial chapter of Volume III, the nineteenth-century volume of *The Ox*. It comes right in the middle, and it is actually called “Midcentury”. Its main subject is the *neudeutsche Schule* or “New German School”, its aesthetics, its Hegel-derived philosophy of history, and its universalism, with most of the musical illustrations drawn from the works of Liszt, especially the symphonic poems and the program symphonies. Immediately before the concluding section, on Hanslick, there are some acerbic quotations from Russian composers lampooning the German music of the day. And then this, under a subheading that introduces the catchphrase “Art for Art’s Sake”:

As all these Russian quotes suggest, much of the opposition to the New German School came from outside the German-speaking lands, many foreign musicians suspecting nationalistic designs behind the School’s universalist pretensions. And yet the opposition’s most famous single salvo came from the Austrian critic and music historian Eduard Hanslick (1825–1904), who in 1854 authored a tract called “On the Musically Beautiful” (*Vom musikalisch-Schönen*) that went through many editions (ten within the author’s lifetime) and is still in print. It is difficult today to appreciate the polemical force of the title; but at the time, for a German critic to insist on beauty looked to many like virtual treason.²

So here is the first gloss. It seems that not only musicians but even aestheticians have forgotten this. In fact, it seems that Nick may have forgotten this. In the course of the correspondence through which he and I established friendly relations, he sent me for comment the first draft of the introduction to his recent book, *Music and Aesthetic Reality: Formalism and the Limits of Description* (Zangwill 2015), of which the working title then was *Elusive Music* (a phrase that continues to echo in the book’s final sentence). That introduction contains a discussion—under the heading “Beauty and Sublimity?”—of what Wagner called the *Schreckensfanfaren* at the beginning of the last movement in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, the excruciatingly loud and dissonant bursts that precede the recitatives of the cellos and basses, and later the baritone, the first singer to enter. Nick takes sharp issue with the discussion of them I published in 1989 in an article called “Resisting the Ninth”. With apologies for quoting from the superseded draft, Nick’s objections were as follows. Following Wagner (he thought), I had made the mistake of:

²See Taruskin (2005: 441) (Chapter III ‘Music in the Nineteenth Century’).

[...] assigning some of the Ninth to the sublime rather than the beautiful. Hence Taruskin accepts the standard dichotomy³ whereby the beautiful and the sublime exclude each other. What is his reason? Surprisingly, Taruskin denies that pleasure is generated by listening to the discordant passages [...] of the Ninth Symphony. He says that many of the musical events “offend the ear”, and “However much they move and thrill, they cannot be said to please the listener”. This is implausible. [I’ll let that go by for now—R.T.] These passages in fact give great pleasure, a kind of intense pleasure, a pleasure in “dissonance” and “shattering” sounds. It is just a different kind of pleasure from the pleasure we take in the Levinsonian [that is, Burkean] beauty of much Mozart. [...] But it is still pleasure. Would Taruskin deny that heavy metal fans feel pleasure when listening to AC/DC’s “Ace of Spades”? This is implausible. They love it—as they swing their heads up and down. [...] I am sure that Taruskin does not need reminding that some bodily pleasures can also be intense and overwhelming without ceasing to be pleasures. [Who, me?—R.T.] Taruskin seems to have an over-simple view of the pleasures that we may take in musical beauty. Only that explains his severing beauty from the sublime. (Zangwill 2015 [unpublished])

All I can say in response to that is that if I am simplistic then so are Burke and Kant, who committed the same severance, as did almost all nineteenth century thinkers about aesthetics—all but Hanslick, in fact. Burke wrote, as explicitly as you please, that:

[The sublime and the beautiful] are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure. (Burke 1981: 71)

If everyone in Hanslick’s time had disagreed with that, and agreed instead with Nick about the sublime and the beautiful, and about pleasure and pain as embodied and conveyed by art, then Hanslick would not have had to write his book, and it would not have been at all controversial in its own day or subsequently. That is why even Hanslick must be contextualized, say I—and even Nick Zangwill needs to be contextualized, whether or not it gives him pleasure. I wrote back to Nick after reading his introduction and raised these points. “I think it wrong to equate beauty with pleasure”, I told him, “and then define pleasure so broadly that it includes the sublime. I take seriously Burke’s distinction between beauty based on pleasure and sublimity based on pain, and so did Beethoven in the Ninth, when he has his baritone (words here by Beethoven, not Schiller) ask for something *angenehmerer* [more pleasant]. The beautiful for Beethoven and Burke (and Kant) is what is *angenehm*. Your more strenuous pleasures they would not have called pleasant”.

There are so many other voices I might have quoted. There is Schumann:

People say, ‘It pleased’, or ‘It did not please’; as if there were nothing higher than to please people! (Schumann 2007: 307)

There is Berlioz, weeping at a concert, who said to a neighbor who asked him why he did not leave:

Madame, do you think I am here to enjoy myself?⁴

³First enunciated by Edmund Burke one hundred years before Hanslick: Edmund Burke. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. London, 1757.

⁴Quoted in Taruskin (1997: 253).

The bland equation of beauty and pleasure, and the assimilation of the sublime to the beautiful as just another form of pleasure is thus at least anachronistic or acontextual—which is fine if you think it’s fine to decontextualize. I don’t. I think the act of decontextualization entails a significant loss. When you deliberately adopt an ahistorical, essentialist viewpoint, it becomes impossible to make what seem to me necessary distinctions—as Nick himself demonstrated when revising his introduction.

In fact, he did me the honor of taking on board my points regarding Burke, whom he had not mentioned in the original version, and also regarding Beethoven’s use of the word *angenehm*. Here is what he wrote in the published version of the book, somewhat condensed:

We could frame a conception of sublimity, following Edmund Burke, where pleasure in the sublime is a mix of pleasure and pain [not in fact what he said], and this may fit *some* examples of sublimity in nature, for example, when we enjoy perceiving a powerful wave or a huge precipice. But [...] [t]he question is: why think that anything threatening is in question when we listen to (literally) harmless music? The pleasure we take in discordant music, such as in passages of the 9th, [...] is just pleasure with no pain mixed into it. (Zangwill 2015: 6)

To which I can only reply: “Speak for yourself, sir.” Burke would surely find Nick’s blithe dismissal unacceptable, as do I.⁵ If you are in fact doing that, i.e. speaking for yourself, then you are merely taking yourself as the measure of all things. I will concede that Kant might have accepted your argument, but as you may recall from the passages on music from the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*), Kant was incapable of hearing in music anything beyond a pretty tinkling.⁶ Not somebody, he, whose musical judgments we should follow. Beethoven would have found your lack of receptivity to his message utterly incomprehensible, as we know from his text. But here is how you accounted for that:

In the last movement of the 9th Symphony, Beethoven has his tenor [*sic*] ask for something ‘angenehmerer’, which might indeed be supposed to contrast with what went before. He is

⁵In his answer to me elsewhere in this volume, Nick reverts to his trademark nonchalance, rejecting the whole idea of the sublime as a musical category and adding: “I do not care if a number of famous dead people have said the opposite.” Does he expect me—or you, the reader—to be convinced by a show of bravado? I think it better to seek a formulation on which he and I and the dead people can agree. How about this: Just as he insists that the “musically-beautiful”, hyphen fastidiously in place, is something particular and distinct from other manifestations of the beautiful, why not admit that there is such a thing as the “musically-sublime”, as exemplified pre-eminently by Beethoven’s *Schreckensfanfaren*? That way one can regard the horror-fanfare as contrasting to, say, the scene by the brook in the Pastoral Symphony, rather than along a spectrum with it. That would seem to accord better with Beethoven’s intent. If the hyphenated term gets by the Zangwill censor, I won’t mind using it, even though I would never insist on it.

⁶According to Immanuel Kant:

If [...] we estimate the worth of the fine arts by the culture they supply to the mind, and adopt for our standard the expansion of the faculties whose confluence, in judgement, is necessary for cognition, music, then, since it plays merely with sensations, has the lowest place among the fine arts—just as it has perhaps the highest among those valued at the same time for their agreeableness. (Kant 2007: 158).

presumably asking for some Levinsonian [well, Burkean] beauty. But the implied contrast *might* not be with pleasure mixed with pain, as in a scary fairground ride, but with a less sweet kind of pleasure. (Zangwill 2015: 6; italics added—R.T.)

Or again, it might not. Here I am tempted to get gruff like John Maynard Keynes, who when accused of inconstancy is popularly reported to have said:

When my information changes, I alter my conclusions. What do you do, sir?⁷

I always tell my pupils that sentences containing words like “may” or “might” are not legitimate arguments, because they cannot be falsified. What do you tell your pupils, sir? But let me quote the conclusion you draw from the discussion in question:

The issue about the sublime is not: what is our conception of it? But: which conception of the sublime do we need? [...] We certainly do not need to be bound by Burke’s pleasure/pain conception of the sublime.

And this enables you to finish this section of your introduction the way you had finished it previously, by concluding that:

We may take beauty to be the central aesthetic value in thinking about music, even in the case of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony. (Zangwill 2015: 6)

I would therefore interpret your talk of what we “need” in a conception of the sublime—that is, your definition of the purpose your conception of the sublime is meant to serve—in terms of that conclusion. The conception we need is the one that will lead us to the conclusion that we want. But is that not the very definition of a circular path of reasoning?

Another thing I used to remind my pupils of is that when rules get too easy games become dull. Giving due weight to counterexamples is an important rule, and it is one that I have often seen philosophers flout. I said I’d come back to Peter Kivy. Peter likes to take polls of imaginary listeners to confirm his postulates about musical meaning, implying that such questions might be decided by an imagined majority vote. That’s a difference from musicological practice right there. When we want to find out whether people actually agree with us, we ask actual people. And the reason is that actual people, as opposed to imaginary ones, will often surprise us. Polls of imaginary listeners, like North Korean elections, always come out the way they are supposed to. Here is how they work. Twice in *The Corded Shell*, his first book, Peter Kivy cites the opening bars of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40 in G minor, as a self-evident paradigm of sad music, for all that it is marked *Molto allegro*, which of course literally means “very happy”. After taking one of his hypothetical polls, Kivy was able to report that:

No one has ever been tempted to characterize [those opening bars] as ‘spritely’ and ‘good humored’. (Kivy 1980: 16)

⁷It may have been the later economist Paul Samuelson, who, purportedly quoting Keynes, actually said it first. See Samuelson (1986: 275).

In my review of the book I cited two actual dissenters. One was Schumann, refuting the characterization of G minor in Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (1806). Schumann wrote:

In G minor he finds discontent, discomfort, worried anxiety over an unsuccessful plan, ill-tempered chewing of the lips. Now compare this idea with Mozart's Symphony in G minor, full of Hellenic grace! (Schumann 1969: 60)

The other counterexample was the one I really thought dispositive. It came from Sigmund Spaeth's *Great Symphonies: How to Recognize and Remember Them*, a music appreciation primer in which symphonic themes were fitted out, for the benefit of novice listeners, with mnemonic texts. The opening of the G minor, Spaeth assures us, is "a very happy tune, [...] full of laughter and fun" (Spaeth 1936: 39). And here are the words:

With a laugh and a smile like a sunbeam,
And a face that is glad, with a fun-beam,
We can start on our way very gaily,
Singing tunes from a symphony daily.

Proof positive, this (or so I thought), that musical affect was not immanent but attributed. I was therefore quite astonished to find, in Peter's subsequent book, *Sound Sentiment* (actually a reissue of *The Corded Shell* with some extra chapters to answer his critics), Spaeth quite casually dismissed as a "merely subjective" outlier and the principle of (imaginary) consensus upheld without a qualm. That was truly enviable mental insulation, I thought. Nick Zangwill never retreats that far into complacency,⁸ even if he also tends to rely a bit too much for my taste on introspection (which is to say, on the assumption of an immutable human nature that he reliably exemplifies). But Kivy is in the dock at the moment. Here is how he justifies his dismissal of Spaeth's characterization of Mozart's theme:

What we [...] do when confronted with an expressive characterization of a piece of music, is to go back to the music itself [and that is an expression we, too, will have to come back to] with that interpretation in mind, to see if we, too, can hear what the interpreter claims to hear. And if no consensus develops, surely we are arguing to the best explanation here, as in the case of [...] aberrant judgment[s] about wine, when we argue that that characterization is 'merely subjective'. What else, for example, could we say, or need we say, to Sigmund Spaeth? (Kivy 1989: 204)

1.3 Sound and Sense and Value

Kivy's locution "the music itself" is one that we have probably all used. Nick Zangwill certainly does, along with tautological variants like "music as music".⁹ I have

⁸Until his reply to me in this volume, that is, where he dismisses counterexamples to his claims about beauty with a truly Kivian nonchalance: "Who cares about a few avant-garde outliers?".

⁹E.g. Zangwill (2015: 1, 11 ("music itself"), 155 ("music as music")).

tried hard to wean myself from using such phrases, and I hope I have made my pupils self-conscious enough to avoid them, because they reek of hidden assumptions about the very thing we are met here to investigate, namely the nature or essence of music—assuming that there is such a thing. I’ve even written about the term “the music itself” and reasons for avoiding it.¹⁰ But in order to reframe the issue let me resume the discussion of Hanslick from *The Ox* (Taruskin 2005), which I interrupted after its first paragraph for what turned out to be a rather lengthy gloss:

Unsurprisingly, Hanslick located the beautiful in music not in its freight of meaning, but in its sheer patterning (“arabesques”) of sound. The object of derisive caricature from the beginning, his views are often misunderstood. Contrary to what his critics have alleged, he did not deny the emotional effects of music, nor did he deny its power to embody and convey poetic subject matter. What he did deny was the essentially musical nature of such a task (that is, its relevance to the true aims and tasks of music as an art), and hence the ultimate musical value of those effects and that embodiment.

“The Representation of Feeling”, reads the title of the crucial second chapter, “Is Not the Content of Music”. Needless to say, everything hinges on how the word “content” is defined, and on whether it is to be distinguished from “form” (another protean concept). The New German position [that is, the position of the *neudeutsche Schule*] cast feeling and form in opposition; the Hanslickian stance melded them. Hanslick’s very definition of musical content (which became a famous and notoriously untranslatable slogan) was *tönend bewegte Form*—something like “form put in motion by sound” or “sounding form in motion”. (Taruskin 2005: 441)

I can easily see why Nick Zangwill approved of my description of Hanslick and his theory, because in these two paragraphs I summarized, and did not attempt to refute, the formalist postulates from which Nick developed his own theory of what he calls aesthetic realism, including the famous metaphorical definition of music that gave rise to Nick’s own original theory of Essential Metaphor. There is a winning passage in the preface to his recent book in which he describes his first reading of Hanslick.

I devoured the book in a frenzy, walking around the centre of [Los Angeles], punching the air, muttering ‘Yes!’, ‘You are right!’, ‘Thank God someone is saying this!’, ‘You hit the nail on the head!’ (Zangwill 2015: xi)

I had a similar experience when I first read Mr. H. as a college undergraduate. He had been assigned to us by the professor in a class on nineteenth-century music, which was not considered canonical in those days (the early 1960s), but was taught as an elective supplement to the required music history sequence. And what our professor told us when assigning the book was: “You will be amazed at how much of Hanslick you will agree with.” It was a disguised Svengali-like command. We were told to agree, and so we did. It was only much later that I came to question these positions. So it was not at all the case in those days that musicologists tended to dismiss Hanslick. I don’t even think they (that is, we) do that even now, as a matter of consensus. But I will get to the reasons for that later. For now let us concentrate on the matter of musical content as Hanslick defines it, and the consequences that Nick

¹⁰See Taruskin (1995b).

Zangwill—and of course not only he, to judge by the title of this conference—has drawn from it. The starting point for him is Hanslick’s assertion that the beauty of music, hence its value, “consists simply and solely of tones and their artistic combination” (Hanslick 1986: 28)¹¹

Minus the “simply and solely”, who would disagree? When I used to teach introductory music courses to the great unwashed, first at Columbia and then at Berkeley, my first lecture was unabashedly Hanslickian. All the examples were drawn from speech rather than song, starting with my own lecturing voice, proceeding through poems of increasingly obvious “musicality”—culminating in Andrei Voznesensky’s stentorian recording of *Goya*, perhaps the most alliterative and assonant poem ever written (which came through even to students who knew no Russian and who therefore heard it as music by default—or so I told them) (see Table 1.1).

And a sublimely hokey rendition, recorded in 1915 by an actor named Taylor Holmes, of Kipling’s *Boots (Infantry Columns)*, which manipulated musical parameters, rhythm and dynamics in particular, in an obvious way to achieve an emotional payoff (which could nevertheless easily be detached from the applied musical technique):

WE'RE foot—slog—slog—slog—sloggin' over Africa!
 Foot—foot—foot—foot—sloggin' over Africa—
 (Boots—boots—boots—boots—movin' up and down again!)
 There's no discharge in the war! (etc.)

And—finally—Ernst Toch’s *Fuge aus der Geographie* (you know, *Rrrratibor!*, or, in English, *Trrrrinidad!*), which by then the students had no trouble seeing as having nothing to do with Trinidad the island, or the river Mississippi, or the lake Titicaca, but “simply and solely”, as Hanslick would have said, about the sound of words. It was music, not poetry, and Ernst Toch, who made it, was a composer not a poet. My closing maxim was a virtual paraphrase of the line that Nick Zangwill pried out of Hanslick to serve as his motto: Whatever else it may be, I used to tell my students, music consists first of sounds that are manipulated artistically to produce patterns to which our minds (I didn’t call them “organs of pure contemplation”,¹² but I might have at that stage) respond with pleasure of sometimes amazing intensity. And I’d say, “but of course you know that already”, and hope that the final bell would ring on cue.

But what did they know? That those patterns were what made music valuable to them? They certainly did not know that, and I never tried to persuade them of that,

¹¹Quoted frequently in Zangwill (2015: 10). In his answer to me elsewhere in this volume, he says that “when citing Hanslick” he prefers this “pristine and clean” quote to “the musicologist’s favorite ‘tonally moving forms’, because he latter includes a crucial metaphor, of motion, and in the interpretation of that metaphor lie all the controversial issues”. But that metaphor is in my view the essential insight that makes Hanslick valuable, and it seems rather absent-minded not to notice that the phrase “artistic combination”, without which the definition is just a truism (is that what he means by “pristine and clean”?), harbors any number of controversial issues. What Nick seems to be revealing here is that his reading of Hanslick is in fact selective, and to that extent untrustworthy.

¹²As translated by Gustav Cohen in 1891, see Hanslick (1957: 11).

Table 1.1 Andrei Voznesensky's "Goya" as verbal music (in Russian) and as sense (in English)

Ya—Goya! Glaznitsy voronok mne vykleval vorog sletaya na polye nagoye Ya—gorye, Ya—golos, Voyny, gorodov golovni na snegu sorok pervogo goda. Ya—golod. Ya—gorlo Poveshannoy baby, ch'yo telo, kak kolokol bilo nad ploshchad'yu golovoy... Ya—Goya! O grozdi vozmezdiya! Vzvil zalpom na Zapad— ya pepel' nezvannogo gostya! I v memorial'noye nebo vbil krepkiye zvyozdy— kak gvozdy! Ya—Goya!	I am Goya! Of the bare field, by the enemy's beak gouged till the craters of my eyes gape I am grief! I am the tongue of war, the embers of cities on the snows of the year 1941. I am hunger. I am the gullet of a woman hanged whose body like a bell toll'd over a blank square. I am Goya! O grapes of wrath! I have hurled westward— the ashes of the uninvited guest! And hammered stars into the unforgetting sky— Like nails! I am Goya!
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Андрей Вознесенский, *Гойя*, 1959

Я—Гойя!

Глазницы воронок мне выклевал ворог,
слетая на поле нагое.

Я—горе.

Я—голос

Войны, городов головыни

на снегу сорок первого года.

Я—голод.

Я—горло

Повешенной бабы, чье тело, как колокол,

было над площадью головой...

Я—Гойя!

О грозди Возмездия!

Взвил залпом на Запад—

я пепел незваного гостя!

И в мемориальное небо вбил крепкие звезды—

как гвозди.

Я—Гойя.

because I did not believe that. Do you? "Tones and their artistic combination" was merely the default definition of music, at best a *sine qua non*, or a ground zero, but hardly the essence of "music qua music" or "music as music", or whatever other tautological phrase one might summon up, as every philosopher of music seems to need to do—and many musicologists as well, notably Joseph Kerman, my late friend and colleague, whose book *Contemplating Music* sought and failed to redefine the field of musicology precisely, in my opinion, because it continued to rely, and to founder, on the old tautologies (Kerman 1985: 32, 55, 163, 165, etc.). To identify the aesthetic properties of music as "consist[ing] simply and solely of tones and

their artistic combination” seems to me tantamount to asserting that writing has grammar before it has subject matter and so when we discuss a poem or a novel we should talk only about grammar. Rather than pure I would call that approach limited. In a bad mood I’d call it impoverished. I suspect everyone here would agree with me in the case of literature; I know that Nick does. So why not music?

I wrote some of this back to Nick when he showed me his draft introduction, but unlike the points about the beautiful and the sublime, my objections on this score had no effect on the object of my critique, and I suspect that Nick (and perhaps the rest of you) are regarding my views the way Peter Kivy regarded my review of his second book: as coming from someone untrained in philosophy and therefore impossible to reply to within the terms of the discipline. But that would again amount to mental insulation and would again cause me to wonder whether philosophers actually seek isolation and promote it by way of pedagogy, whereas I have been at pains to discourage my pupils from seeking refuge from outsiders in professional discourse.

1.4 Reaching the Essence (of the Dispute)

It would be a pity if we were to maintain mutual isolation, because I am not asking rhetorical questions when I question such things as the identification of musical essences. I really want an answer, because my difficulties with the term go further down, perhaps to the very bottom. I have a problem not only with the identification of this or that as the essence of music, but with the whole idea of essence as applied to music or to any other product of culture. Realizing that in order to question the use of the word intelligently, or even intelligibly, I needed to know how it is defined by those who use it, I scoured Nick’s recent book for a definition. “Essence”, alas, has no entry in the book’s index, but of course “Essential Metaphor Thesis” has a whole chapter, so I went there. And I learned that the Hanslick-derived (or at least Hanslick-compatible) aesthetic properties of music that constitute its value, and which can only be described using metaphors, are nevertheless real, located “out there” (or perhaps I should say “in there”), and are therefore to be regarded as “mind-independent”.

That was another term whose definition I needed to learn, so I pursued it in the index. And on its first occurrence Nick wrote:

These aesthetic properties are thought of as ‘mind independent’, in some suitable sense—an issue that I will not explore in this book. (Zangwill 2015: 15)

That’s the sort of thing that makes you want to kill an author, but the murderous impulse found a peaceable outlet in a note that referred the reader to Nick’s earlier book, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*. In the first flush of our bromance I had purchased that book, so I could follow the lead. The book had nearly a whole chapter on mind-independence, so I was back in business. And this is what I read:

By mind-independence I shall mean that whether something possesses a property does not depend on whether we think it does. (Zangwill 2001: 177)

The definition hardly surprised me. It was just what I might have guessed the term meant. But professional discourse is always full of pitfalls for the unwary, and I had to be sure. But now that I have a concrete formulation to test against my own intuitions, you must forgive the little boy in the crowd for saying bluntly what is on his mind.

Is it not paradoxical, in the most literal sense of the word, to describe a product of our minds (in this case music) as having mind-independent properties? Music owes its very existence to our minds. Nor is this the only time in Nick's work, where what I regard as a categorical distinction between nature and culture is blithely disregarded.¹³ I don't mean to single Nick or any single author out in this regard. As you all know better than I, this blurring of categories is altogether commonplace and ordinary in works of analytical philosophy. And well might it be. That fundamental category confusion is all but mandated by the resolutely ahistorical methods that philosophers insist upon when dealing with what to me are inescapably historical manifestations, defined by the historical circumstances in which they arise. An excellent case in point is Hanslick's very treatise, which, I believe (and showed, I think, in the Ox), could only have been written when in fact it *was* written, namely the 1850s, because it took the environment in which Hanslick was then living (an environment disagreeably dominated by Wagner) to provoke it.

There was a footnote in Nick's draft introduction that anticipated this very objection:

Sometimes, I suspect that a concept/object confusion is being made by writers who step from a claim about the historical context for the idea of absolute music [that is, music whose aesthetic properties are not compromised by the admixture of words] to a claim about absolute music itself. The emergence of the concepts of evolution or the big bang was historically specific but they apply to things far beyond those historically restricted limits; in fact they refer to events before human beings evolved. (unpublished draft)

So even if Hanslick was historical, this meant, the truths he uncovered were not. I went ahead and made the anticipated objection anyway in my correspondence with Nick, questioning the propriety of putting Hanslick in the company of biologists and cosmologists. To say that the values Hanslick identified were timeless values despite the fact that their identification had to await Hanslick is not very convincing, I thought. Evolutionary and cosmological theorists deal with God's creations, which existed before us and will outlast us. (And that is why I have no problem regarding the ontological status of mountains and galaxies as mind-independent.) We discover whatever it is that we know about them. But music is the creation of God's creatures: us. We are its makers, not its discoverers. It did not and could not exist before human beings evolved, and it will not outlast us. We assert rather than discover its values.

Not only that, but it flouts the history of musical thought and practice to say that formal properties are anterior to representational ones, or that the propositional content of music is necessarily secondary to its aesthetic properties, however these

¹³Here I should have written "category distinction" rather than "categorical", which suggest that there is no overlap or compatibility. Nick is therefore right to question the word in his reply and I gladly modify it.

are defined. Until the end of the eighteenth century there was not a person on earth who would have agreed with Hanslick or with Zangwill (or with me when I am in the mood) in valuing instrumental music above vocal. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were many people who did. The changing preference depended on changes in historically contingent cultural attitudes, not on the discovery or the correct identification of the nature of music. So I would call out the linking of Hanslick with Darwin or the Big Banger, whoever he was, as another category error.

Nick took that footnote out of the published text, but the published book continues to lump nature and culture in a way that continues to perplex me, and to cloud the issue, and I would like to know how widespread is the habit among philosophers to devalue or minimize that fundamental distinction.¹⁴ A particularly vivid example of its potential for doing harm comes in the chapter of Nick's book in which he meets head-on the claims of "New Musicology" from the formalist perspective. Inevitably, Susan McClary's writings on Beethoven's Ninth are Exhibit A. To his great credit Nick does not quote her most inflammatory comment, namely that the recapitulation in the first movement embodies "the throttling, murderous rage of a rapist incapable of attaining release", which appeared only in a newsletter of very limited circulation and was already toned down for publication in her first book of essays (McClary 1987: 7, 1991: 128). He then loses credit by telling us about it in a footnote:

I discuss these passages not her infamous reference to rape in an earlier version. (Zangwill 2015: 134)

But what remains—ascriptions to the music of violence, explosive rage, and "the contradictory impulses that have organized patriarchal culture since the Enlightenment"—suffices to provide the necessary grist for ridicule.

At first sight, this seems like a ludicrous delusion, like finding expressions of patriarchal values in clouds or rock formations. Perhaps the cumulonimbus cloud is masculine or male or violent whereas the cirrus cloud is feminine or female or peaceful? Or perhaps thinking that is sexist and we should really think the opposite? Why is saying something similar about patterns of sounds any less ridiculous? Nevertheless, McClary has found sympathetic ears among musicologists. Why is this? Partly, no doubt, because of fashions in the humanities and wider political trends. (Ibid. 129)

Having just quoted an author out of context in his presence, and having done so at a conference that is actually devoted (or half-devoted) to context, I hasten to adduce the next sentences in mitigation:

¹⁴At least one philosopher, Roger Scruton, insists on the distinction at least as adamantly as I do, writing recently that philosophy "should be intent on distinguishing the human world from the order of nature, and the concepts through which we understand appearances from those used in explaining them", adding that "for this reason [...] I believe aesthetics to be central to philosophy, being the branch of philosophy that deals directly with our most studied attempts to create and discern what is truly meaningful" (Roger Scruton & Timothy Williamson. *But Is It Science?* *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 November 2017: 16). To boil down the rest of Scruton's long argument in terms relevant to the present discussion, natural science looks for essence, humanities (i.e., the study of human artifacts) looks for meaning.

And yet, I confess that I find that there is a residual remainder that is somewhat compelling in her descriptions. [...] I urge the reader to listen to the passage with McClary in hand. There is something right about her descriptions of the music itself. (Ibid.)

Now, if you know Nick's work, or that of other aesthetic realists, you know that the solution to the problem is to be sought in metaphor. The rapist's rage is not inherent in the music, according to the theory, but citing it gives us a way of describing our reaction and justifying our evaluation. The violence and rage exist not in the music itself but only in McClary's persuasive description of it. Such things can only exist in descriptions, not in the thing itself; and yet it is an important part of Nick's theory that it must be where it is, for metaphor is the only way in which music can be evaluatively described. And this is because (quoting now a very important thesis statement) "the essence of music and of our musical experience lies in the aesthetic properties of sound and does not lie in emotion or meaning" (so far this is boilerplate Hanslick), but to this Zangwill adds that:

[This view of music itself] is accompanied by a view of linguistic descriptions of music, which denies literal sense to the bulk of our linguistic descriptions of music. (Ibid. 16)

"Paradigm aesthetic properties"—those properties, that is, that are actually inherent and real, are only two: "beauty and ugliness". Other properties are admitted to "the music itself" in a secondary capacity, as designating ways of being beautiful or ugly. One list of them includes "elegance, plaintiveness, forcefulness, [and] delicacy" (Ibid. 15). So descriptions of rage and violence are admissible into a discussion of Beethoven's Ninth so long as we take it as read that we are not really talking about rage and violence but about loud and dissonant sounds. To put it in terms of our conference propaedeutic (and again quoting directly from the book):

The aesthetic description of music is *essentially* nonliteral. (Ibid. 20; italics in original—R.T.)

So it would appear that masculine rage does potentially have a place in a description of Beethoven's Ninth—and that it might even have a place in a description of a cumulonimbus cloud, so long as the description is suitably metaphorical and offered as such. And that is because both clouds, which God makes, and musical patterns, which we make, have a mind-independent essence that supports metaphorical descriptions. The category error that I persist in diagnosing in the aesthetic realist position would seem to remain in place. Meteorology has room for a McClary after all. Moreover, the way the thesis is framed in the sentence I have quoted—to wit, "the aesthetic description of music is *essentially* nonliteral"—makes its truth depend on the definition of "aesthetic", for there are other ways of describing music, including some other ones—non-aesthetic and literal ones—that are legitimate with respect to the aesthetic realist theory (for example, description in terms of composing technique, as in music analysis). Is "essence" actually being ascribed to a definition? Is that allowed? Really?¹⁵

¹⁵And this, of course, is the nub and ... well, essence of the difficulty between me and Nick on the matter of essence. In his answer to me elsewhere in this volume, Nick adduces biological organs as things that have mind-independent essence in the same way that music does. But I dispute that on

1.5 Time and Space

And there is one more problem that I've been having with this theory, which I learn from Nick is an "ineffabilist" position. It involves the definition of metaphor, which is fraught with inconsistencies. I was very surprised to find "plaintiveness" among the secondary aesthetic properties, when the word simply means "sadness", something I regard as quite effable. How is that to be squared with the assertion that "the essence of music and of our musical experience lies in the aesthetic properties of sound and does not lie in emotion or meaning"? But that is the less important or damaging horn of the dilemma, as I see it. Nick lists all kinds of concepts and attributes that might be carelessly regarded as literal when applied to music but which are properly to be viewed as metaphors, and yet his definition of aesthetic realism, explicitly provided for uninitiated readers like me, and one of the most important passages in the book, reads as follows (I will give the whole paragraph, so as to provide sufficient context):

"Realism" is a word familiar to philosophers, but others may not be familiar with it. By "realism" about musical experience, I mean a view that foregrounds the *aesthetic properties* of music and our experience of these properties: musical experience is an awareness of an array of sounds and of the aesthetic properties that they determine. Our experience is directed onto the sound structure and its aesthetic properties. This is the *content* of musical experience. Anything else, such as other mental states caused by such musical experience, is not part of the *intrinsic nature* of musical experience. They are a distraction from *the music itself*. Our basic or primary musical experience is of the music—of the sounds and their aesthetic properties. (Ibid. 14; italics added—R.T.)

I take it that there are no metaphors in this passage. Here we are talking, as realists, about the real thing. And yet a metaphor lurks withal, demanding justification in this context. Did you notice it? I wouldn't be at all surprised if Prof. Levinson noticed it, but I did not give it any emphasis when reading it just now, trying to do as I see Nick doing and smuggle it in.

The word is "structure", which properly refers to complex entities, that is, wholes consisting of parts that define the whole in their mutual relations. I maintain that it is,

grounds that I have learned from Nick himself. A heart has, as its purpose, the pumping of blood, and it had that purpose even before the purpose was discovered (that is, observed) by science. So its purpose is indeed mind-independent, and if you want to call that purpose its essence, you will get no argument from me. But the artistic combination of tones did not exist before we knew about it, for there was no music until we humans invented it. Hence, no mind-independence, and no essence. To smuggle essence into the description of music or other human artifacts and activities, moreover, by attaching it to other words (as in "essential function" or "essential motives") fails so long as the words to which it is attached already suffice to describe or define. As far as I am concerned (that is, as far as my descriptive or explanatory needs require), the word "essential" adds nothing to the discussion of musical functions or human motives; it is just a placeholder, like "compositional" when describing what composers do, or "sincere" when describing one's beliefs. As an experiment, the reader can bracket the word "essential" in Nick's rebuttal and test whether the meaning is really affected by its removal. If the removal does not change anything substantive, then I believe "essence" to be shown, in effect, inessential to a discussion of music. But its superfluity does not therefore render it innocuous. Essentialist views are normative views. They not only delineate the way things are, but also define the way things must be. We have had quite enough of that in musical writings, whether on musical ontology, on performance practice, or on questions of value.

and can only be, a metaphor when applied to temporal unfoldings, and the dictionary supports me. My trusty desk dictionary, the 1950 edition of the *American College Dictionary*, which has been on my desk for a very long time, gives these meanings:

1. A mode of building, construction, or organization; arrangement of parts, elements, or constituents.
2. Something built or constructed: a building, bridge, dam, framework, etc.
3. A complex system considered from the point of view of the whole rather than of any single part: *the structure of modern science*.
4. Anything composed of parts arranged together in some way; an organization.
5. *Biol.* mode of organization; construction and arrangement of tissues, parts, or organs.
6. *Geol.*
 - (a) the attitude of a bed or stratum, or of beds or strata of sedimentary rocks, as indicated by the dip and strike.
 - (b) coarser features of rocks as contrasted with their texture.
7. The manner in which atoms in a molecule are joined to each other, especially in organic chemistry where it is represented by a diagram of the molecular arrangement.¹⁶

Particularly telling is the seventh definition, because as we all know—all us musicologists, at any rate—what is called the structure of a musical composition is often—usually, in fact—represented for purposes of discussion by abstracted diagrams, i.e. visually, which is to say atemporally. So if the word is to function as a musical descriptor at all, it must be in a metaphorical sense that puts space in place of time. The reason why I assume—or expect, or hope—that Prof. Levinson will have recognized this covert appeal to metaphor is that he has written a whole book whose very purpose is its exposure. It is the book I have already mentioned, *Music in the Moment*, which endeavors to debunk “the notion”, as the author puts it on the first page of the Preface:

often only implicit in the writing of many music commentators and theoreticians, that keeping music’s form—in particular, large-scale *structural* relationships, or spatialized representations of a musical composition’s shape—before the mind is somehow central to, even *essential* for, basic musical understanding. (Levinson 1997: ix; italics added—R.T.)

In fact, Prof. Levinson defines musical understanding entirely in terms of the perception and cognition of immediate short-range connections between consecutive musical events without any need for metaphorical visual aids.

As you can guess, I am sympathetic to Prof. Levinson’s revision of Prof. Zangwill’s aesthetic realism, even if I think he, too, overstates his thesis. For one thing, trained musicians do in fact consciously learn to listen over longer spans than Prof. Levinson deems natural, and I believe that nonprofessionals can also profitably learn to extend the compass of their hearing. But we can leave that point moot, because I think I can

¹⁶Barnhart 1950.

show that we all do hear long-range relationships when the composer wants us to, as our listening experience (and my “our” here is meant to include Prof. Levinson) will confirm.

There is a half-hearted chapter later in *Music in the Moment* in which the author somewhat grudgingly allows that thematic recalls between movements are available to alert nonprofessional listeners’ perception, and that they might even enhance aesthetic pleasure. As an example, he cites the brief and understated reminiscence, near the end of the second movement in Schumann’s Piano Concerto, of the first movement’s main theme. He had previously called attention to vague thematic resemblances or allusions among the various movements of Brahms’ Third Symphony, Ravel’s String Quartet, and pieces by Bach and Haydn. He tries hard to minimize the significance of such relationships to the listener.

When conscious recognition of connection between a current bit and some earlier component of the piece saliently occurs”, what exactly is the content of such a recognition?

The answer, I think, is that such content is of an almost completely nonspecific sort. That is, the content is on the order of: “This bit, or something like it, occurred earlier.” [...] Not only is it the rule for such recognition in even experienced listeners to be in this sense nonspecific, rather than specific, but they need be no more than that in order to heighten a listener’s sense of a piece’s unity, or to provide the ancillary pleasure of detecting construction. (Ibid. 64–65)

But I think he is underestimating both the listener’s imaginative engagement and the composer’s ability, when he wishes, to enlist it. Think of another Schumann piece, the Piano Quintet in E-flat major, Op. 44, in which the opening theme from the first movement comes back as an unanticipated countersubject to provide the blazing climax to the big fugue in the finale. It is no subtle allusion, but a calculated emotional thrill, and it enlists another metaphor: the metaphor of return, which puts the Quintet in a line of artworks that includes the Odyssey, the parable of the Prodigal Son, and the End Times. Is it possible to miss the return and still enjoy the moment? Of course it is, but I still think we are meant to notice it and that most of us do, and that when we do our enjoyment is greatly enhanced. And there is an even more vivid example from Schubert, to whose First Piano Trio Prof. Levinson makes a very pertinent reference (Ibid. 27), but whose Second Piano Trio contains an even more spectacular, because twofold and very impressively sustained, full quotation of the slow movement’s main dead-march theme at the climax of the finale. I feel quite sure that that thrilling moment is the reason why, of the two Trios, the Second was the one that was published (as Opus 100) during Schubert’s lifetime.

I’ll bet that you’ve heard it, Prof. Levinson, and that it gave you goose bumps. Goose bumps surely beat the “ancillary”, and rather smug, “pleasure of detecting construction”, no? But I won’t dwell on these overstatements or oversimplifications, because I think Prof. Levinson is entirely correct to place the musical emphasis where it belongs, on the temporal unfolding and its real-time effect on the listener. To place the emphasis on the temporal is to emphasize the actual performance over the idealized work, and the actual performance is what actual listeners to music actually attend to. Hanslick knew that. That’s what the *Bewegung in tönend bewegte Formen* is all about. In the second chapter of his treatise, he wrote that:

The concept of motion has up to now been conspicuously neglected in investigations of the nature and effects of music, [but] it seems to us the most important and fruitful concept. (Hanslick 1986: 11)

And he knew that it was a metaphor. Honoring Christ over John the Baptist, I prefer Hanslick's version, which chooses motion-in-time as the primary metaphor, to Zangwill's, which chooses atemporal structure. But even Hanslick, I think, was too intent on locating the essence of music in the work rather than the performance, which is to substitute a less appropriate for a more appropriate metaphor.

1.6 Conclusions

So although I am gratified—and grateful—that Nick Zangwill credits me with fairness to his hero, for me he is not “the great Hanslick”. I think he has been too readily followed and believed. I do not see that he has been rejected, the way Nick has claimed. For a very long time he was one of musicology's gurus, and although there have been noisy and occasionally exaggerated defections, he is still a powerful presence on our scene. So let me resume and conclude my little passage from the Ox, which I have now twice interrupted for lengthy glosses. Earlier in the chapter I had referred to a pronouncement by the Russian composer and critic Alexander Serov, who despite his nationality was a major spokesman of the *neudeutsche Schule*. Writing in 1859 in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, which under the editorship of Franz Brendel had become the *Schule's* official organ, Serov poached some terminology from economics so that he could grandly proclaim that *Das Criterium des musikalischen Gesetzes liegt nicht in den Ohren des Consumenten, es liegt in der Kunstidee des Producenten*.

(The basis of musical law lies not in the ear of the consumer but in the artistic inspiration [literally, the ‘art-idea’—R.T.] of the producer.) (Stasov 1859/1952: 40)

That was, in the first place, a defense of Wagner and *das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, and of course Hanslick wasn't buying:

Although his antagonists tried to brand him a reactionary, and while he himself (like any contender in a war of ideas) tried to portray his ideas as age-old verities [and we have heard a lot of age-old verities at this conference—R.T.], Hanslick's ideas were in fact new. By asserting that there were timeless musical values that took precedence over the *Kunstidee des Producenten* and the *Ohren des Consumenten* alike, Hanslick and his followers introduced a new faction to what was fast becoming a struggle over the right to inherit and define the elite literate tradition of European music. To the extreme romantic view that privileged the producer, and the old aristocratic view that privileged the consumer, was now added a “Classical” or classicizing view that privileged Art itself and its so-called inviolable laws [or what some of us call its “essence”] over the designs or wishes of its ephemeral practitioners and patrons. The real privilege, of course, was enjoyed by whoever could successfully claim the right to assert the law. These were the true stakes of the game. It is arguable that Hanslick,

one of whose biographers proclaimed him the “Dalai Lama of music”,¹⁷ emerged the big winner.

And that is because more than any other nineteenth-century academic, Hanslick was a fore-runner of today’s musicology. [I wrote that around 1998 or so, and stand by it still; and it has been corroborated by recent research.¹⁸—R.T.] His side, in other words, was the one that got to tell the story of nineteenth-century music in the twentieth century. Indeed, a more revealing and less tendentious name for his tendency would be *academic* rather than “classical”, since the academy has been its main home and breeding ground. It is the very opposite of an accident that Hanslick, its chief early formulator, was hired two years after the publication of his famous treatise by the University of Vienna as an adjunct lecturer, later as a full-time professor.

He spent forty years at the university, lecturing on what we would now call music appreciation. He was the first musician ever to occupy a German university chair; hence he was the first academic musicologist in the modern sense of the word. His formalist esthetic is the one that has underwritten the concept of classical music ever since his time. His neo-Kantian “art for art’s sake” views have been the (sometimes tacit) mainstay not only of music appreciation but of practically all university music study until at least the middle of the twentieth century. [And if it has lost its dominance at the cutting edge of the discipline, it is only since the 1980s.—R.T.]

By presuming to draw a hard and fast distinction between what was “musical” and what was not in the work of his contemporaries; by insisting that the musical must be identified with the beautiful (rather than the spiritual or the expressive or the sublime or the true); and by so effectively propagating his views in the teeth of formidable opposition, Hanslick set the terms of an unsettleable (perhaps misconceived) debate that continues into our own time. Its terms would probably have been altogether unintelligible to musicians of the early nineteenth century and before; so in this sense, too, the middle of the nineteenth century marks the beginning of the musical world we have inherited and inhabit today.

Hanslick, then, has my nomination as the great musical essentializer. But I reject essentialism in this as in all humanistic domains. My vote is for the ephemeral practitioner as I put it in the Ox (although within the confines of the Ox I was not voting). So my hero is not the great Hanslick but the great Meyer—that is, Leonard B. Meyer (1918–2007), whom Prof. Levinson frequently invokes, but whom Nick Zangwill ignores in both of the books of his that I have read. Meyer’s most famous book was his first, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, which proposed a behaviorist model for musical expression that relied entirely on tracking response to the temporal unfolding. Meyer was way in advance of, say, Carolyn Abbate and all the others, including me, who have tried to put the emphasis back on music as a performance rather than a text—which of course means music as a practice rather than a thing. The fashionable jargon for this now is “musicking”, after a book by Christopher Small

¹⁷This was a careless error. Actually it was Hanslick who called his own teacher, Václav Tomášek (1774–1850), by this name. I was misremembering this sentence from Eric Sams’ article on Hanslick in the first (1980) edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*:

His own phrase for Tomášek in Prague, “the dalai lama of music” might well describe his own eminence not only in Vienna but throughout the German-speaking world, and beyond.

¹⁸See Karnes 2008, esp. Part I ‘Eduard Hanslick and the Challenge of *Musikwissenschaft*’.

that claimed to be original and revolutionary but was really just a tepid rehash of Meyer.¹⁹

Meyer's last major essay, which appeared in 1998, the same year as Small's book, when Meyer was 80 years old, was called "A Universe of Universals". He wrote, in what for him was a typically and deceptively disarming gambit:

My premise is simple, one cannot comprehend and explain the variability of human cultures unless one has some sense of the constancies involved in their shaping. (Meyer 1998: 3)

So it seemed this was to be yet another essay in musical essentialism. But surprise: The real thesis statement came a little later:

To explain why human beings in some actual cultural-historical context think, respond, and choose as they do, it is necessary to distinguish those facets of human behavior that are learned and variable from those that are innate and universal. But it is a mistake—albeit a common one—to conceptualize the problem as a search for "musical" universals. *There are none*. There are only the acoustical universals of the physical world and the bio-psychological universals of the human world. Acoustical stimuli affect the perception, cognition, and hence practice of music only through the constraining action of the bio-psychological ones. (Ibid. 5–6; italics original—R.T.)

The particulars are not especially pertinent to this discussion, though it may be of interest that the last so-called universal practice to bite the dust in comparative (or ethno-) musicology was octave-equivalency. (I was a witness to the dramatic swerve from universalism to particularism in musicology that Meyer's work stimulated and reflects.) What matters to us is the place where Meyer looked for his universals—not the nature of music, but the nature of sound and the nature of human cognition. In short, he looked for nature in nature rather than in culture, where he looked for culture. Makes sense to me.

It was this swerve—the practical turn, you might call it—that threatened (and I would say doomed) Hanslick's ascendancy among musicologists, although the process is far from complete. Many students of musical aesthetics, who might once have been essentialists like Hanslick or Zangwill, have been converted to a behaviorist model. An excellent example would be Karol Berger, a musicologist who has branched out into general aesthetics, and who uses Hanslick's chief antagonist—the dread mage of Bayreuth himself—to explain the nature of musical expression in terms of stimulus and response, which of course presupposes terms of temporal unfolding. It also presupposes that beauty is no longer regarded as the essence of music, and the reasons for that are much older than Hanslick. They go back to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, another name that is absent from Nick Zangwill's indices, for reasons I can well understand, but also from Prof. Levinson's, who could have

¹⁹See Small 1998; cf. Abbate 2004.

used him. As a temporal art, on Lessing's view, music is dynamic rather than static, and beauty is to be equated with stasis.²⁰ Dynamic unfoldings have tendencies that kindle expectations, which is to say, desires. So, Karol Berger writes:

What I actually experience when I experience the tonal tendency of a sound is the dynamics of my own desire, its arousal, its satisfaction, its frustration. It is my own desire for the leading tone to move up, the satisfaction of my own desire when it so moves, the frustration thereof when it refuses to budge or when it moves elsewhere, that I feel. [...] Thus, the precondition of my being able to hear an imaginary pattern of lines of directed motion in a tonal work is that I first experience the desires, satisfactions, and frustrations of this sort. In tonal music, the direct experience of the dynamics of my own desire precedes any recognition of the represented object, of lines of directed motion, and is the necessary precondition of such a recognition. I must first experience the desire that the leading tone move up, before I can recognize the representation of an imaginary ascending line when it so moves.

And therefore, Berger concludes:

It follows that tonal music, like a visual medium, may represent an imaginary object different from myself, an imaginary world, albeit a highly abstract one, consisting of lines of directed motion. But, unlike a visual medium, tonal music also makes me experience directly the dynamics of my own desiring, my own inner world, and it is this latter experience that is the more primordial one, since any representation depends on it. While visual media allow us to grasp, represent, and explore an outer, visual world, music makes it possible for me to grasp, experience, and explore an inner world of desiring. While visual media show us objects we might want without making us aware of what it would feel like to want anything, music makes us aware of how it feels to want something without showing us the objects we want. In a brief formula, visual media are the instruments of knowing the object of desire but not the desire itself, tonal music is the instrument of knowing the desire but not its object. (Berger 1999: 33–34)

So like Hanslick and Zangwill, Berger sees (or hears) music as acting on a deeper plane than that of representation. Like Hanslick but unlike Zangwill, he sees music as being always in motion. Unlike both Hanslick and Zangwill, but like Meyer, he sees the motion as directed in a fashion that enlists emotion through desire. And he locates the aesthetic essence, if we continue to insist upon identifying one, not in the stimulus but in the response, not in the intentional object but in the attending subject. Although the perceptions that Berger describes here are local, moment-to-moment perceptions, his theory, unlike Levinson's, does not rule out longer-range awareness and responses.

To me this is a superior model. It seems to correspond to terrestrial music, that is, to music as we practice it here on earth—at least terrestrial classical music, the only kind to which I've given thought that I would dare present at a meeting like this. I don't see any reason why, in the absence of musical universals, a philosophy of music needs to pretend to universal relevance. A well specified context will do, and must do.

²⁰See Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon—oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, 1765.

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Richard Taruskin (b. 1945), Ph.D. in historical musicology from Columbia University in 1976. On the faculty of Columbia University until 1986, he moved to California as a professor of musicology at the University of California, Berkeley, where he held the Class of 1955 Chair.

His activities in music cover a surprising gamut: music critic, gambist and conductor of early music ensembles, teacher, and eminent musicologist. He has written about the theory of performance, Russian music, 15th century music, 20th century music, nationalism, music historiography, the relationship of music and politics, the theory of modernism, and analysis.

Over recent decades, Taruskin has been one of the most powerful voices in contemporary musicology. His writings are copious and have been extremely influential, re-shaping fields like performance practice research, research on Russian music, and the study of nationalism in music. Taruskin has produced an impressive oeuvre, which is both highly insightful from an academic perspective and accessible to non-specialized readers. The challenging insights he developed in works like *Mussorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (1993), *Text and Act* (1995), *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works through Mavra* (1996), and *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (1997) also profoundly informed his *magnum opus*, the six-volume *Oxford History of Western Music* (2005). In addition to his writings about music, he has recorded and edited numerous Renaissance musical works. He has also written extensively for lay readers, including numerous articles in *The New York Times* and the *New Republic*, many of which have been collected in *Text and Act* (in which he is an influential critic of the premises of the “historically informed performance” movement in classical music), *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (2008), and *On Russian Music* (2008).

He has received various awards, including the Noah Greenberg Prize (1978) and the Kinkeldey Prize (1997, 2006) from the American Musicological Society, the Alfred Einstein Award (1980), the Dent Medal (1987), the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award (1988, 2005) and the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy (2017). He is a member of American Philosophical Society.

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Chapter 2

Music, Essence and Context



Nick Zangwill

Abstract I defend the application of the notion of essence to music. I appeal to the essences of events rather than objects, and I focus on functional events, such as handshakes, which have historical essences. Musical essences are like that. This allows us to clear up a number of worries about essences in music. I then celebrate and defend Hanslick's appeal to musical-beauty, and make some interpretative points. I defend the appeal to pleasure in the musically-beautiful against Taruskin's appeal to the sublime. Next, I turn to the notion of absolute music and characterize it in a certain way. I show how Hanslick can and does allow much non-absolute music. Nevertheless, absolute music retains a certain explanatory priority with respect to the other things that music does for us. Political criticisms of formalism about music are navigated in passing. Lastly, I diagnose Taruskin's worry that talking about essence gets something wrong about the cultural dimensions of human life. In reply I show how essence is essential for understanding human action, and thus also for understanding cultural human action.

I defend the idea that music has an essence, along the lines of Eduard Hanslick's appeal to the musically-beautiful. In so doing, I respond to some points in Richard Taruskin's essay "Essence *or* Context", in this volume.

2.1 Introduction. Essence and Context

In the *Meno*, Plato seems to say that if we are to know whether virtue is teachable, we must know what virtue is (Plato 1997a). The idea seems to be that we must know what a thing is—what its essence is—if we are to understand its relations. Perhaps such a general principle would be an exaggeration: one can know that a dog bit a cat without knowing the essences of dogs and cats. But perhaps if we want to understand why a relation holds, or explain it, then we need to know the essences of the things

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that are related. We cannot explain or understand a thing's relations without knowing what the things related are.

This is a plausible view of the relationship between music's essence and its context. Many musicologists love the context of music and dislike the idea that it has an essence. This is a mistake, in my view. There are contextual relations in which music stands, but it stands in those relations *because* of its essence. Or, to weaken the claim, because quite a lot enters into relations apart from essence: the fact that music stands in the relations it does depends on music having its essence—whatever it is. So, it could not stand in all the relations to context that musicologists explore unless it had an essence that is separate from its context. There is music; there is its context; and the essence of music is necessary (but not sufficient) for explaining its relation to its context. Compare tigers: that something is a tiger not only explains its stripes but also in part how it behaviorally interacts with its environment (Devitt 2010).

The idea of essence often goes along with the idea of *objects*, as opposed to events or processes or facts. And the idea of the essence of objects seems to invoke the Aristotelian idea of substance. Is this not the common-sense metaphysics of the Neolithic era, which may have served us well in a pre-historic phase of human cultural evolution, but which has no place in a modern scientific world-view?

My physicist friends tell me that there are no objects, or at least no persisting objects of the sort found in Neolithic or Aristotelian metaphysics. There *seem* to be persisting objects, such as rocks, tables, atoms and planets; but, in fact, the world is subject to perpetual change. There are events, not objects. Or rather, an object is a really, really boring event. In one sense, a party or a battle is a *object*. But really it is a kind of stable event. At the sub-atomic level, the world is more like a party or battle rather than Democritus' "atoms and the void". There are more or less stable conjunctions of events in which the appearance of objects emerges (often due to dynamic attractors). Really, 'all is flux', as the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus said: the world is unremittingly dynamic, and we humans call the relatively stable parts of that dynamic world 'objects' and 'substances'. But there is some falsification of the world in speaking in that way (see Nietzsche 1965).

Should we banish essences and substances as Neolithic thinking? Perhaps, if essences go with objects. But there are also events. There is no denying that things happen. There are parties, battles, star explosions and firework displays. And there are musical performances. Why cannot events have essences? Events may not have sharp boundaries. When exactly did the party end? When exactly did the battle start? The answers may be somewhat indeterminate. But events continue; they persist. Like a cloud or city, a party or battle, may have indeterminate boundaries. Nevertheless, they are real. And I do not see why they cannot have essences—perhaps the rough places and times at which they occur, for example.

2.2 Artifacts and Functions

It is the category of events, rather than objects, that is most appropriate to the kind of temporal art that music is. (So, I am not unsympathetic to musicologists who follow Christopher Small in talking of ‘musicking’; see Small 1998.) And if events can have essences, suspicion of substances and objects should not lead us to doubt that musical events have essences.

If musical events have essences, they must be essences of a particular kind—since music is a human creation, an artifact. Because of this, musical essences must be functional essences. Functions divide, roughly, into biological functions and artifactual functions: eyes and eye-glasses are examples of each of these. (We could speak of “purposes” rather than “functions”, but it would make no difference.)

What about events with functions? The beating of the human heart is one example of an event with a biological function. Hearts have the function of pumping blood around the body. The heart may also make certain regular sounds, perhaps ‘musical’ sounds, in a sense; but that is not why it exists, and it is not what its beating is *for*. The sounds are a by-product of its function of pumping blood, which is why the heart exists and also what it is. The heart is essentially something with that function. Note that it can have that function even if it is congenitally defective and cannot pump blood; functions are not dispositions (Millikan 1993).

Some deliberate human actions, such as handshakes, are also events with functions. As with hearts, human events with functions may do other things apart from fulfilling their functions. But that is not why they exist, and it is not what they are for and it is not what they are. This is how we should think of musical events—as human actions that have distinctive artifactual functions.

I have just appealed to musical events with artifactual functions; but in some musical traditions, there are musical works, which look more like objects than events. But I would argue that these objects should be seen as depending, in some way, on events with musical functions. The point of the work-object lies in its realization in a performance-event. Their being and point is derivative. (Eduard Hanslick sees this; he is decidedly not score-centric, as is sometimes said. Other so-called ‘formalists’ may fetishize the score; not Hanslick.)

Our interest, then, is in a certain kind of human kind, not natural kinds—handshakes, coronations and firework displays rather than star explosions, particle spin and melting ice. Music is an artifact—a deliberate human creation, and this affects the kind of essence it has.

This is a suitable point, I believe, to begin to respond to some points that Richard Taruskin makes in his paper “Essence *or* Context” in this volume (and let me say that I am very grateful, even honored, that my writings on music have been the object of critical attention from someone who’s writing on music I respect so highly). Firstly, and most importantly, we can see that there is no route to anti-essentialism about music from the fact that we are in the realm of human culture rather than nature. (Taruskin writes: “I reject essentialism in [music] as in all humanistic domains.” (Taruskin 2019: 22).) Coffee-makers are human cultural products with functional

essences: having been made in order to make coffee. A coffee-maker may not work, it may be broken, but that is still its function, and that function is its essence, whether or not it can perform its function. The same goes for artifactual events such as handshakes. The handshake is a cultural artifact that has culturally evolved (no one decided what a handshake will mean) and it is a joint action, an event with a certain commonly understood meaning; and that is its essential function, rather in the way that animal mating dances have essential biological functions. It is essential to handshakes to have their meaning-function (Millikan 2005). It goes without saying, or perhaps it should go without saying, that *all* functional essences are historically given. The essence of biological things and events is given by their evolutionary history, while the essence of human artifacts is given by the intentional history of the production of those artifacts. There is no sense in which having a history somehow excludes having an essence, whether we are dealing with biological nature or human artifacts. So, I would suggest to Taruskin that to say that music has an essence is not to deny history but to embrace it, even though it is to embrace a certain kind of history, one that includes the purposes and intentions with which it was made. History is part of the essence of all artifactual things and events—including music. (See also Searle 1995.)

Secondly, mind-independence. Taruskin thinks that it is paradoxical to say that products of the human mind have mind-independent properties. (Taruskin writes: “Is it not paradoxical [...] to describe a product of our minds (in this case music) as having mind-independent properties?” (Taruskin 2019: 15).) Well, let us distinguish. There is *a* sense of “mind-independence” in which artifacts are mind-independent. Consider economic booms and busts. We create them. Even so, they make us “playthings of alien forces”, in Karl Marx’s memorable phrase. Such economic facts may be studied by economists, using quantitative methods, even though *what* they study is a matter of fact about human creations. These creations are for the most part independent, not of human beings, but of the people who study them. So, in *that* sense, they are mind-independent. (It is in this sense that I think that Hanslick tells us about music, just as the disciplines of evolutionary biology and cosmology tell us about their subject matter.) The social sciences are disciplines that study facts that are made by human beings; but the social scientists themselves do not create the facts that they wish to understand and explain. Only theorists with postmodern megalomania think that the facts they study are a product of the minds of *theorists* like themselves; but then for such pathologies, all interest in facts has disappeared. Another point about mind-independence is this. In general, that some artifact has the function of doing something does not mean that doing that thing is somehow a product of the mind. For example, a filter on a car exhaust has the function of reducing pollution. That a thing has the function of reducing pollution is mind-dependent, because of its essential historical origin in certain intentions: someone made it with the intention that it will reduce pollution. But the reduction of pollution is not mind-dependent; it is a physical fact. That something is a functional thing is mind-dependent, but in many cases, what it does when it executes that function is not. This is not paradoxical; it is a commonplace. What about music? Now, in *some* cases, a thing’s function might concern human beings. For example, eyeglasses have the function of having

an effect on eyesight. Unlike exhaust filters, they are designed to affect the minds of human beings. There is considerable plausibility in the idea that music is similar: it has a purpose that concerns its consumption by human beings. As we will see, this is what Hanslick thinks. If so, musical-beauty is like eyeglasses, and unlike car exhaust filters. All are human creations, but musical-beauty is meant to be appreciated by human beings as a human creation. I guess that Taruskin would agree with this. At any rate, in some senses, musical-beauty is mind-dependent and in some it is not. (We analytic philosophers like to make distinctions.)

A third point concerns Taruskin's claim that because music is a temporal art (essentially so?), we cannot literally speak of the "structure" of music (Taruskin 2018: 34–38). Structure in music is temporal structure, not unlike that in literature. Homer's works, for example, contain many passages that have a ring structure, such as ABCDCBA. Is that metaphor? I don't know. What matters is that what we need for such structure is elements and their recurrence in a temporal sequence. I cannot see that structure, in this sense, needs to be restricted to spatial arrangements. (For an exploration of temporal parts, see Sider 2001.) There is of course more to literary quality or musical-beauty than such structure, but it is often part of it. Such a notion of structure coincides with one notion of 'form', one that is central in the theory of logic (MacFarlane 2002; Susanne Langer notes the parallels between 'form' in logic and 'form' in music, where 'form' has the sense of recurring elements, in Langer 1937). I take it that machines, such as coffee makers, have a structure. But it is both a spatial and a temporal structure. That is what a mechanism is. It has physical parts, of course, but also, it executes operations in a certain order: first, this should happen, and then that.

2.3 Musical-Beauty?

Now, once we allow musical functional essences, the next question is: what exactly are the distinctive functional essences of musical events? Which functions are musical functions? It is not too controversial, surely, to appeal to sounds, since music is primarily something to which we listen, although there is more to be said about these sounds and what it is about them that we are interested in when we listen to music. I do not deny relevance to other senses. I remember feeling the road vibrate to the base of the dub reggae at the Notting Hill Carnival. Nevertheless, what we hear has primacy in our experience of music, just as what we see has primacy in architectural experience (Mitrovic 2013).

In *a* sense, there may be music in nature. That is, there are sounds in nature that exhibit something like rhythm, melody and harmony. Perhaps the dripping of water in a cave could exhibit these qualities, and we could listen with pleasure to their apparent musical qualities. And the rotating crystal spheres that some philosophers think constitute the world may make a pleasing sound as they move in *harmonia* (see Plato's *Timaeus*: Plato 1997b). But then much depends on whether there is a World Soul causing them to rotate in order to make sounds with audible qualities. If so,

that would make them ‘music’ in the human sense—in the sense of an artifact with a certain sonic purpose.

Now, what is it about these sounds that interests us? Hanslick’s view was that generating audible musical-beauty is the essential function of music of a wide variety of kinds (Hanslick 1986: Chaps. 1 and 3). On this conception, it is essential to music, or at least most music (and who cares about a few avant-garde outliers?), to have the function of sustaining beauty either as its sole function, or as a significant function. (Hanslick appeals to “the essence and character of music” at 1986: 23, footnote.)

Hanslick says, to the surprise of some of his readers, that what is musically-beautiful today may not be so in 50 years (Hanslick 1986: 35). He thinks that that musical-beauty is not eternal. But this is precisely because music is an artifact, not something found in nature—it is something produced by us. The beauty of music is the beauty of an artifact, considered as such. That is why it is not timeless. It is a sonic artifact, and it must be appreciated as a human achievement. It is not merely sonic beauty but musical-beauty, with the important hyphen, which tends to get lost in English translation. Hanslick distances himself from the idea of timeless musical-beauty, something that was embraced by his mentor Robert Zimmerman (see further Landerer and Zangwill 2016). (I confess that I am not sure who I side with here.)

Perhaps it is worth mentioning at this point why it is that when citing Hanslick, I prefer to cite his phrase “tones and their artistic combination” (Hanslick 1986: 28) rather than the musicologist’s favorite “tonally moving forms” (Ibid. 29). This is because the latter includes a crucial metaphor of motion, and in the interpretation of that metaphor lie all the controversial issues (Zuckerandl 1956; Scruton 1997). By contrast, the former passage is relatively pristine and clean. Note also that the former concerns the *constitution* of musical-beauty while the latter concerns its *content*, which is a difficult idea.

If we are foregrounding beauty, or musical-beauty, we may say that the function of much music consists in sustaining musical-beauty, or we may say that its function extends to our experiences and pleasures in musical-beauty. There are a variety of possible views here.

But why appeal to beauty at all? What might usefully be meant by “beauty” or “musical-beauty” at this point? Taruskin objects: musical-beauty is not the purpose of much music, indeed of much great music. For example, he thinks that we feel a mixture of pleasure as well as pain when listening to the more intense of Bach’s Sacred Cantatas or the rougher passages of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony (Taruskin 1995: essays 9 and 14). Hence, these works are sublime, not beautiful (Taruskin 2018: 26–31).

Of course, there is a temptation to introspect, and to generalize from one’s own case. I do not feel Taruskin’s pain, in these cases. Be that as it may, the main difficulty I have in accepting Taruskin’s self-reports, and their generalization to the average audiences of these works, is a psychological difficulty. It is a platitude of common-sense folk psychology that pleasure is something we desire, and pain is something we dislike. If so, then what are all these people doing in churches and concert halls electing to sit and listen to the heavier of Bach’s cantatas or Beethoven symphonies? Why are they sitting there attentively listening to the heavy music if it causes them

pain? They should be heading for the exits in crowds. What is wrong with them? Instead, I believe a much simpler psychological explanation, which is that they are enjoying listening to the music; they get a certain kind of pleasure, a particularly intense and profound pleasure, which contains no admixture of pain, unless their chairs are uncomfortable. I do not deny the role of pain in the appreciation of some sublimity; but I am skeptical about its presence in music. Deploying the notion of the sublime is just a bad way to describe musical intensity or weight (and I do not care if a number of famous dead people have said the opposite). Pleasure attracts; pain repels. People are not repelled by heavy music, but attracted to it. Therefore, they take pleasure in it, not pain. Pleasure and pain come in different sorts, of course; but except in the complicated and unusual case of sadomasochism, pain repels. I do not believe that the many enthusiastic audiences of performances of the heavier compositions of Bach, Beethoven and others are savoring perverse sadomasochistic pleasures. I think that they are pleasure-lovers, without pain being perversely mixed with their pleasure.

There is more to say here about cases where music and text fit together, where there is literal pain that is referred to in the content of the text. But I believe that these combinations can also be understood without invoking musical sadomasochism.

2.4 Non-absolute Music

In order to appreciate the power of Hanslick's view, we need to see that Hanslick can take on board contextual matters. Let us recall a trope in musicology: there used to be, at least in the musicologist's imagination, a Homeric battle between those who believe in 'pure' or 'absolute' music (Hanslick is supposed to sit on that uncomfortable chair) and the contextualism of 1990s 'new-musicology'. (For a representative of this kind of approach, see Williams 2001.) It is surely now clear that this opposition was over-simplistic, and it is somewhat of a convenient fairytale for those on the contextualist side. The fact that music has the function Hanslick identifies, of sustaining musical-beauty, is quite compatible with allowing that music has many *other* effects and functions. Music can have religious, political, military, sporting or whatever functions. Hanslick may even allow that the musical function is not the dominant function, so long as it is nevertheless *an* important function (see further Zangwill 2015).

Appealing to the essence of music is compatible with great diversity in music. Indeed, that is the very point! Essences explain, and what they explain is diverse (Kripke 1980; Gelman 2003). Water is one thing: H₂O. But water takes many forms: ice, steam, liquid, depending on its temperature and context. The essence explains the variety of forms that the water can take. In a similar way, the Hanslickian essence of music is needed precisely to explain the variety of other things that music does, because if it did not do the Hanslickian thing, then it would not do the other things. A rousing national anthem had better also work as Hanslickian music-beauty.

Not only does the idea that *a* function of music is to generate musical-beauty, as embodied in certain sounds, allow for other functions of music, it also allows that the musically-beautiful can combine with other functions of music to yield values that are a non-decomposable synthesis.

A mea culpa: Like others, I have in the past used the phrase “The music itself”. I plead guilty to this sin, and meekly accept Taruskin’s stern reprimand: it does not help and begs questions about what is included in music. I hereby repent. Nevertheless, we can separate the musical-beauty function of music from its other functions. The word “music” is ambiguous in English between the sense in which song is one kind of music and the sense in which in a song we distinguish between the words and the music. This is a harmless ambiguity. We could refer to the latter as “the music itself” without begging questions by so doing. But it is true that the phrase is probably best avoided.

We might define ‘absolute’ music to be music that *only* has the musical-beauty function. Some music is like that; but much is not. Such a notion of ‘absolute music’ would be evaluatively neutral, which is what we need the notion to be if there is to be a useful debate about its value. Hanslick can say that much non-absolute music is better than much absolute music. No one is saying that all music is absolute or that all absolute music is superior. Hanslick does not say either of these things. (Interpreting Hanslick as making such claims sets up an unfair stereotype, or straw man, dishonestly peddled by some contextualists, who at some level of consciousness probably know how implausible their view is.)

A case study of Hanslick allowing for non-absolute music is his excellent review of Wagner’s *Parsifal* (see Hanslick 1950). With painful precision, Hanslick takes the music and text apart (as Wagner said you cannot) and then puts them back together, in the face of Wagner’s attempt to drown the musically-beautiful in the literary ambitions of the work (Wagner 2014). *Parsifal* fails to be a ‘total work of art’, if that means that dissection is not possible. As Hanslick grants, *Parsifal* has some virtues; but as Hanslick details, with somewhat cruel but perfect accuracy, it has flaws as text, and also as music, that are not redeemed in a music/text synthetic combination.

Thus, a Hanslickian can and should recognize the variety of things that music does apart from aiming at musical-beauty, even though Hanslick did think that musical-beauty was in some sense its central goal. Hanslick did not deny music’s other goals. Moreover, there is more than one way to think of the non-musical purposes of music. Different musical works or phenomena need to be interpreted in different ways. These differing ways should be carefully described without disregarding the central or basic function of music—its musical-beauty function.

2.5 Formalism and Politics

Is Hanslick’s view ‘formalist’? Music is a human artifact that (typically) has among its functions, the function of generating musical-beauty—a beauty that in part depends on, or arises from, structures of sounds, and that consists “simply and solely of

tones and their artistic combination” (Hanslick 1986: 28). That excludes most of the socio-political contextual factors that many musicologists are interested in, which suffices to make Hanslick ‘formalist’ on most understandings of that term, since such contextual matters are something over and above sounds or tones artistically combined. On the other hand, since music is an artifact, and its musical-beauty is the beauty of sonic events considered as artifacts, it is not formally beautiful in the sense of beauty that is dependent solely on sounds or tones. That is why it has musical-beauty. Music and musical-beauty are human creations.

Formalism in the arts—in the visual arts, as well as in musicology—often faces political criticism. There is said to be something exclusionary about formalism, privileging a certain kind of listener or culture. Is it somehow parochial? What about so-called ‘non-Western’ music? However, it is in fact a major advantage of formalism, if we conceive it as the idea that musical-beauty has explanatory priority over other functions of music, that the analysis is not restricted to Western classical music or the music of any other period (I do not understand musicologists who assert the opposite; for instance, Chua 1991). Lots and lots of non-western instrumental music has pure musical-beauty as its primary function, or at least, as a significant function. A great deal of music is just for listening or primarily for listening. Note that Musical formalism was alive and well as a theoretical option in 3rd Century China. Ji Kang has an interesting and robust defense of something close to what we might call musical formalism (Hsi 1983). This should be required reading for historicizing contextualists.

The tables should be turned on those who attack formalism on political grounds. In the visual arts Sally Price rightly complained about the tendency to over-emphasize the differences between African art and Western visual art (Price 2001). Many claimed that, unlike Western art, African artworks are not separable from religious and social rituals, and that they are viewed as collective products without anything like our (allegedly Western) idea of individual talent or genius. But, as Price shows, this is a common Western myth about African art, and may even have racist underpinnings, despite the avowed ‘progressive’ intentions of those who claim this. Similarly, there is something dubious about the idea that pure listening is something we in the West do, while those in other cultures (savages?) only listen as part of rituals or in religious contexts, in a non-individualistic fashion. The idea of instrumental music as a distinctively local Western phenomenon is politically disturbing. (Recall that Hanslick claims that his thesis is general not parochial; see Hanslick 1986: 38.)

2.6 Nature/Culture?

Lastly, I want to comment on some large claims about the humanities that Taruskin touches on several times in his paper. He claims that there is a significant distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ that I fail to make. (For example, Taruskin writes: “[The] categorical distinction between nature and culture is blithely disregarded.” (Taruskin 2019: 15).) He also claims that many in so-called ‘analytic philosophy’

fail to make this distinction, which is wildly inaccurate, like quite a few of Taruskin's generalizations about academic philosophy; but this is of little importance.

What does Taruskin mean by the distinction between “nature” and “culture”? It seems to have to do with a distinction between human psychology and the rest of non-human nature. Taken in one way, this threatens to catapult human beings altogether out of the realm of nature. But that would seem unwelcome. The relation between mind and body has been a vexed issue at least from Descartes to the present day. Many, but not all, philosophers in the English-speaking world want to insist on stronger or weaker metaphysical links between mind and body (for very different views, see Smart 1959; Davidson 1980: essays 9–11). They deny an absolute mind-body divorce. At the same time, many of these same thinkers also say that the *methodologies* or *epistemologies* of the two are very different. In order to obtain knowledge of other minds, including the acts and objects that constitute culture, we require interpretation—sometimes also called “hermeneutic understanding”, or “*verstehen*”—and this is unlike anything in the ‘hard’ or non-human sciences. Why? Because in the human sciences we deal with what Brentano called “intentionality”: our mental states have ‘content’ or ‘aboutness’. This means that we need to make sense of what people think and the things that they strive for; we must understand how they seem worthwhile or reasonable from their point of view. This, roughly, is why the quantitative methodology of the hard sciences is not appropriate for knowing contentful states of mind. Interpretation is a different way of knowing (although I have only hinted at the difference). Now this looks like a ‘nature/culture’ distinction of a sort. It is an epistemological not a metaphysical difference. My best guess is that Taruskin means something like this by his ‘nature/culture’ distinction. Understanding nature (non-human nature), and understanding human thought and culture are radically different in this way. This is probably the majority position in English-speaking philosophy, and my philosophy of music is predicated on this distinction, since I prioritize making sense of musical activities.

Before we see how this works, note that this kind of interpretive (hermeneutic) understanding has nothing to do with eschewing essence. Indeed, the very opposite: it requires essence. This is because of what an action is. An action essentially has the motives it does; its essence lies in the motives from which it was done. An action done from other motives would not be that very action, even if the bodily movements were the same. That is why the rational explanation of intentional action is one that deploys essence. If so, Taruskin could not be more wrong to take out essences from our understanding of human beings; if you do that, there is no culture left, since culture consists of deliberate human actions. I am impressed by Harold Bloom's description of the way writers relate to their predecessors, not by being subject to a passive influence, but by active appropriation and even antagonism to their forebears (see Bloom 1973). Human actions are defined by their essential motives. Furthermore, these motives are historical causes (so we have an instance of Kripkean essential origins; Kripke 1980). There is nothing ahistorical about such an essentialist understanding. Understanding actions, and our contentful mental life, including our cultural activities, means seeing how our actions make sense, or seem reasonable,

to the participants—the ones performing the actions. That also goes for our cultural actions.

Of course, we also have our irrational and non-rational sides. There is well-documented research in psychology on this matter (Kahneman et al. 1982; Nisbett and Ross 1980). And there are more speculative Freudian, Marxist, and feminist attempts to explain actions non-rationally. Nevertheless, the bulk of our mental life is such that the point of what we do is transparent to us—it seems to make sense to us. If a theorist of culture cannot capture that appearance, they have gone wrong (perhaps some of our dreams seem to make sense when they do not, but our waking life cannot be like this, in large measure).

This is where I believe Hanslick's approach is especially strong—precisely on the side of culture, not nature. The appeal to musical-beauty allows us to vindicate the activities of musical creation and listening, unlike so many of the contextual attempts to explain musical culture, which alienate us from our first-person perspective as we engage in music making or experience. Suppose it turns out that people like certain music primarily because of social class, because of feelings about their mothers, because of gender codes, etc. etc. These accounts do not capture what it is like to enjoy listening to music, that is, how it seems from the participant's perspective. Instead, that perspective is denigrated as an illusion. By contrast, a Hanslickian account may appeal to pleasure; and the pursuit of pleasure is widely acknowledged to make sense. Furthermore, it is pleasure *in* a value—at least that is how the aesthetic experience of music (some music) presents itself to us. So, it is pleasure of a particularly valuable sort, a pleasure in a value—not just pushpin, but musical poetry. That makes sense of our concern with music—something that contextualists have difficulty doing. Music, or at least most music, is an artifact designed at least partly in order to embody the value of musical-beauty in a temporal unfolding sequence of tones, onto which our listening attention is directed. This attention rewards us with pleasure in that value. You need that essential function to begin to explain the wider cultural role of music in our lives.

Taruskin chooses the title “Essence *or* Context”. But why the disjunction? Why not both? Essence, thinks Taruskin, belongs to science, while context belongs to the humanities. Both claims are questionable. Geology and evolutionary biology give history a preeminent role. And I have tried to sketch the way that the humanities rely on essence. Understanding culture means understanding human actions; but human actions have historical essences. So without essence, no context and no culture.

2.7 Coda

I finish by pulling some themes together. Sonic beauty may be there in nature, but musical-beauty depends on human purposes. We may say that absolute music is music the only, or main, function of which is to have musical-beauty. Formalism needs not be the implausible view that all music is absolute, but can be the view that makes musical-beauty central, and aims to explain other values and functions

of music, not completely in terms of musical-beauty, but where the goal of musical-beauty is an essential and ineliminable part. That essence is necessary for explaining whatever else music does. A Hanslickian will say that the musical-beauty function is sometimes the only function of music, but also that many musical events have both musical-beauty functions as well as other functions. These other functions may even be more important than the musical-beauty function. Many are the ways that musical-beauty can combine with other functions of music. But in most cases, it does so partly in virtue of sustaining musical-beauty. If you throw out Hanslick, little is left.

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Appendix

In footnotes 5, 8, 11, 13, and 15 (Chap. 1) of his paper in this volume, Taruskin added some responses after seeing this paper. He kindly invited me to respond to his responses, so I add an appendix here for those who enjoy the pleasures of iteration.

Footnote 5 of Chap. 1 is about the sublime. My response: (a) There are lots of dead people in the history of thought, and they speak with diverse and discordant voices. There is no cozy historical consensus over the sublime, and certainly not over the sublime in music, nor should we yearn for historical consensus. If we want to know what to think about the sublime, we will have to make up our own minds. (b) I very sympathetic to the proposal that Taruskin makes in this footnote, which is to identify the musical sublime by paradigm cases. This is an excellent helpful suggestion. Unfortunately, it provides precisely zero in the way of support for the pain/masochistic theory of the sublime that Taruskin favors. (c) I note that Taruskin completely ignores my argument against the pain/masochism theory. Partly because there is no intellectual security in appeals to appeal to intellectual authorities, I try to give a self-standing argument, which was my appeal to the psychological implausibility of the pain/masochism theory. I gave an argument; Taruskin ignores that argument; he does not venture an alternative argument; and he relies on the authority of (some of) the dead. (I leave it to others to apportion the epithets “blithe”, “nonchalant” and “bravado”). (d) In my book, I wrote “AC/DC” rather than “Motorhead”, which I am embarrassed about; and the press would not allow me to correct the mistake in the 2017 paperback edition.

In footnote 8 of Chap. 1, Taruskin criticizes a throwaway dismissive bracketed comment that I made about the avant-garde. I note that I have a book-length criticism of the tendency in 20th century aesthetics to make the avant-garde pivotal in general theorizing about art (Zangwill 2007).

Footnote 11 of Chap. 1 concerns Hanslick interpretation. All I will say is that neither musicologists nor philosophers have sufficiently probed this text. Hanslick’s book (which I like to refer to as ‘The Bible’) is quite fluid and is actually a patchwork

containing some previously published essays, with multiple and changing influences. The proper analytic close-reading of the text is just beginning (see for example Christoph Landerer's contribution (Part II 'On Hanslick and Essence') to Landerer and Zangwill 2016).

Footnotes 13 and 15 (Chap. 1) are about Nature and Culture. In footnote 13 of Chap. 1, Taruskin makes a concession: he should have said "categorial" rather than "categorical". He magnanimously agrees to change a word. But this does not address the simple but (I think) powerful argument that I put, which is this: culture is constituted by cultural actions; actions have essential origins in intentions; therefore, culture and essence cannot be divorced. I would respectfully suggest that separating culture and essence is an error in Taruskin's thinking. On this matter, we differ. What is clear, however, is that my argument cannot be met so lightly.

In footnote 15 of Chap. 1, Taruskin writes: "[...] the artistic combination of tones did not exist before we knew about it, for there was no music until we humans invented it. Hence no mind-independence, and no essence". But this argument forgets the ubiquitousness of mind-dependent essences of human artifacts, such as coffee-makers and handshakes. So, although music is not mind-independent (in one sense), that does not mean that it has no essence. Taruskin's inference is what philosophers call a 'non-sequitur'.

Taruskin also complains that talk of essences illegitimately smuggles in normative judgments. Maybe so. Perhaps I may be allowed an *ad hominem* point here, which is I find this complaint surprising given what I have read of Taruskin's oeuvre (for instance the essays in Taruskin 1995): Taruskin is not shy of the normative—and that is no bad thing. In the humanities, normativity is all around us, and it is best to acknowledge that honestly rather than pretend to be value-free. This is a common scenario across the humanities. I would have thought Taruskin would agree with this. So why object to invoking essences on the grounds of normativity?

Taruskin's strongest point is this. He concedes biological functional essences but not musical essences. Since essences are supposed to be explanatory, whether in the physical natural world, in human psychology or in cultural activity, Taruskin's challenge is a fair one. Essences must earn their keep. But do they? Taruskin is skeptical. Perhaps the word "essence" is a redundant 'placeholder', adding emphasis, but no content. Now, where there are essences, there is an explanatory difference between the essential and the non-essential properties of a thing. We can use a coffee-maker as a paper-weight, but if we do, it is not doing what it was supposed to do. By contrast, when we use a coffee-maker to make coffee, what it does is explained by its essence. It makes coffee because it is a coffee-maker. It is true to itself, as it were. Music is similar. There is a difference between the effects of music that it was designed for and effects that are incidental. Music may also wake the neighbors, which it was not designed for. But sometimes music does what it was designed for, and if so, it has its effects in virtue of its essence—what it was designed to do. Some of what music does is due to its design essence, and some is not. Now add that being designed for musical-beauty is at least part of the essence of much music. In many cases, that musical essence will be part of a rational explanation of our musical activities—experiencing music, creating it, preserving it, and so on. The

essential aspect of music is often in play in its uptake by human beings as well as their creating and preserving it, and it is that essence that (in part) makes them reasonable, sensible and rational to engage in these activities. The Hanslickian essence of music, therefore, does work in rendering human beings intelligible.

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Chapter 3

Essence Facilitating Plurality: Theorizing Art with Schelling



Jonas Lundblad

Abstract This paper reads the *Philosophy of Art* by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling as a conception of essence in art that fruitfully theorizes topical questions even in contemporary debates. Whereas idealism and essentialism are often associated with static and unduly mentalist definitions of art, Schelling offers a complex framework which can accommodate for plurality and development. The synthetic power of the imagination to constitute the unity of the artwork is highlighted, but a theory of reciprocity between ideality and reality simultaneously accentuate art's historicity, as well as its social significance.

3.1 Introduction

Can 'essentialism' possibly be a fertile and credible trajectory of aesthetic thought for the 21st century? The suggestion might sound awkwardly untimely in light of recent intellectual history. For more than half a century, critique against the misdirected narrowness of quests for essential definitions has become a conventional gesture, and that for a number of commendable reasons. Scholarship across various disciplines has established how selections of a number of traits as essential typically entail forgetfulness of the broader and manifold reality of their objects of study. Essentialism has not least been revealed to imply politically perilous processes in which minorities have been silenced into forlorn oblivion, while deconstructionist philosophies have set about dismantling notions of essence as expressions of a fallacious logocentric metaphysics.

Despite this, the philosophy of art has seen notable recent attempts to explore further the viability of essences, even when the need for attention to art's historical plurality and dependency upon social contexts is taken into account. This paper suggests that a particularly fruitful contribution to the debate can be gleaned from rereading the early 19th century *Philosophy of Art* by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Its aim is threefold:

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- (1) To present a philosophical conception of essence that facilitates, rather than precludes, plurality;
- (2) To highlight the interdependency between human imagination and the empirical reality of art works as a central topic within aesthetics;
- (3) To widen the second concern into a wider theory, if not necessarily so much of a definition, of art's significance in society.

Before engaging with Schelling's considerations on these matters, a sketchy historiography of some influential positions towards essentialism in 20th century aesthetics will indicate why his thought can be of greater contemporary significance than its merely marginal impact (in analytic aesthetics) might suggest.

3.2 Disappearance and Persistence of Essence

Schelling's legacy and reception is full of ironies. In Anglophone philosophy, he is typically acknowledged as a classic German idealist, but the implications of his brand of idealism often remains eclipsed by the more familiar titans Kant and Hegel. While it would be an exaggeration to say that he is read extensively in so-called continental thought, his writings are undergoing something of a contemporary surge, not least among thinkers occupied with revising traditional images of German philosophy:

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that twentieth-century European thought is motivated by a struggle to escape from this notion of a unitary philosophical system imposed largely by German thought in the previous century; consequently, it comes as no surprise that Schelling's thought allies itself with so many different—and mutually incompatible—strands in the contemporary. We see traces of Schelling in both twentieth-century idealism and materialism, in existentialism, Marxism, psychoanalysis and even deconstruction. (Norman and Welchman 2004: 2)

Among the schools in this enumeration, it is the mentioning of “both twentieth-century idealism and materialism” that is most noteworthy in the present context. The idealism of the early 20th century is historically significant, because the rise of aesthetics within Anglophone philosophy took place by way of a dissociation from contemporary idealist aesthetics. In a succinct overview of analytic aesthetics, Richard Shusterman has suggested that a thorough-going “anti-essentialism about art and the quest for clarity” is “perhaps the most common and distinctive features of analytic aesthetics” (Shusterman 1989: 6). Such an ethos was established during the 1940s and 1950s in a number of influential texts that were to have ramifications for how the legacy of idealism often was portrayed in later analytic aesthetics.

Against the impact of authors such as Clive Bell, Benedetto Croce, and Robin George Collingwood. John Passmore, in his famous essay *The dreariness of aesthetics*, lamented the woolliness of attempts:

To impose a spurious unity on things, the spuriousness being reflected in the emptiness of the formulae in which that unity is inscribed. (Passmore 1951: 325)

He dismissed murky and metaphysical generality in aesthetics, and did rather, in an aspiration typical of his age, call for reflection on aesthetic properties—as described in concrete criticism—in order to recognize particularity among the art forms and individual works. Morris Weitz partly concurred and pointed to the problem of how aesthetic theories (uncritically) tended to advance a unitary theory as a yardstick for a supposedly common nature of art. He also highlighted an even more fundamental problem in essential theories of art, i.e. whether the nature of art is at all compatible with the static logic that seems to be implied in essential definitions:

Art, as the logic of the concept shows, has no set of necessary and sufficient properties, hence a theory of it is logically impossible and not merely factually difficult. Aesthetic theory tries to define what cannot be defined in its requisite sense. (Weitz 1956: 28)

An important point here is that art must be understood as an “open” concept whose properties cannot be conclusively defined, because of the circumstance that both limits and functions of art are undergoing constant transformation. As a consequence, Weitz goes on to re-conceptualize the claims and function of theories of art: While it is a vain enterprise to stipulate a set of properties with the aim to subsume objects within the category of art, such definitions can be valuable as tentative suggestions that stimulate debate and a heightened attention to significant features of art works.¹

In yet another influential mid-century essay, Walter Bryce Gallie discarded an “essential fallacy” among idealist theories of art, resting upon a common “metaphysical, monistic and mentalist” presupposition that “*Esse is, essentially percipi or intelligi*” (Gallie 1948: 302, 305). In his readings, he noted an idealist tendency to circumvent the troublesome road towards a coherent definition of art’s empirical reality, based on (unverifiable) assertions that a common mental activity delimits the scope of art. Although careful not to fall into an opposite thoroughgoing naturalism, Gallie’s essay remains exemplary of an age in which a turn toward the more grounded observational categories of art criticism seemed to promise an enhancement of aesthetic philosophy which would simultaneously free it from the speculative framework of idealism.

The epistemic modesty of the outlined anti-essentialist trajectory has continued to moderate the claims of later analytic aesthetics. Nevertheless, even a summary glance at influential authors such as Arthur Danto, George Dickie and Jerrold Levinson indicates an abiding propensity towards essential definitions. Whereas both Danto and Dickie have been quite explicit about the possibility to stipulate necessary and sufficient conditions of art, Dickie has challenged “Platonic” essences, and tied the actual recognition of art to his institutional theory (Dickie 1974, 1984). Danto has famously adopted a Hegelian conception of a historical progression in the understanding of art’s essence that can incorporate even the “death of art” (Danto 1992). Levinson has

¹In regard to the Bell-Fry formula of visual art as “significant form”, Weitz suggests that:

The role of theory is not to define anything but to use the definitional form, almost epigrammatically, to pin-point a crucial recommendation to turn our attention once again to the plastic elements in painting. (Weitz 1956: 35)

in a number of essays refined his quest for a “minimal essence” of art throughout history, while at the same time outlining an “essential historicity” that influences how things come to be regarded as art (Levinson 1996, 1990).

The outlined objections of mid-20th century anti-essentialism articulate valid general points that can be employed as critical questions in the following reading of Schelling. It can thus be asked whether his essentialism can accommodate historical evolution and plurality among the arts, and if the empirical reality of art is sufficiently taken into account. Furthermore, later developments indicate that a trustworthy conception of essence today needs to be complex enough to incorporate historical and social contingency. Schelling does in fact address all these areas, in a theoretically astute—albeit somewhat idiosyncratic—fashion.

3.3 From Historical Aesthetics to a Philosophy of Art

Schelling’s *Philosophy of Art* stems from a number of lecture series presented during the years 1799–1805. As part of his preparation for lectures at Jena in 1802–1803, Schelling corresponded with August Wilhelm Schlegel in Berlin on the matter how to bring historical and philosophical studies of art into a unified system. Whereas Schlegel sought a middle ground in criticism, Schelling went in an opposite direction, which, at least on first sight, entails a sharp dissociation of philosophy from historical studies of art.² This move provokes statements which might make Schelling appear an epitome of the monolithic posture that provoked the 20th century rejections of idealism. He urges a novel philosophical science of art to break free from material dimensions and rather study “*art in and for itself*, of which empirical art is merely this [sic] appearance in the phenomenal world” (Schelling 1989: xxvii). An introduction to the lectures contains related and controversial claims such as:

The philosopher possesses better vision within the essence of art than does the artist himself. [...] that person is still lagging behind for whom art has not yet appeared just as unified, organic, and in all its parts necessary as whole as nature. (Schelling 1989: 6, 9)

It belongs to the argumentative context of Schelling’s lectures that he feels the need to assert, in forceful manners, the unitary nature and the common essence of art. He claims to launch the very first properly philosophical doctrine of art, promising a radical departure from previous paradigms such as theories on the origins and evolution of art, French and English enlightenment empiricism, Baumgarten’s aesthetics, and Kantian formalism (Ibid. 11–12). His understanding of art rests upon a perceived need to move beyond empirical and historical dimensions, to provide conceptual space for “philosophy” rather than “aesthetics” or “theory”—notions that in Schelling’s usage relate only to particular art works. While the historical and practical sciences of art are deemed valuable to enhance criticism and technical

²Prange (2004) contains an ambitious discussion of Schelling’s dissociation between philosophy and empirical studies of art.

skills, their ineluctable particularity is seen to preclude philosophy's knowledge of art's essence. In this respect at least, Schelling's conception of art appears strongly to travel in the opposite direction to the 20th century movement towards particularity, concrete criticism and epistemic modesty.

A central conviction is that only philosophy can disclose the essence of art. A characteristic feature of Schelling among theories of art is however his method of conceptualizing the notion of essence, and the specific function it attains thereby. The *Philosophy of Art* poses the question as to whether it is a trustworthy enterprise to claim insight into a unitary essence of art, in light of constant dissension on opposite principles for the evaluation of art, and because of the rule-breaking creativity normally associated with artistic geniality. Already from the outset, it is necessary to bear in mind that Schelling's quest for a unitary and transhistorical concept of art is situated on another level of argument than Weitz's concern with historical manifoldness and change. In Schelling, the positing of essence can never be a matter of stipulating a number of empirical or aesthetic properties as necessary or sufficient to define the realm or art. Although the demarcation of art from the merely sensual, pleasant or entertaining is a paramount concern for him, the principal function of studying art's essence is not to delineate empirical boundaries between art and "non-art".

Schelling's distinct brand of idealism can in fact indicate an alternative path that facilitates a novel employment of essentialism, and thereby eschews the lacking historicity that Weitz criticized. Gallie's portrayal of unitary mental essentialism might to some extent be found more apposite to Schelling, but at the same time, the arguably most characteristic feature of his *Philosophy of Art* is how it conceptualizes a dynamic interplay between mental and empirical realms. However, whereas both these 20th century authors discussed art as a specific regional subject matter in philosophy, Schelling's understanding of art is programmatically inseparable from the most fundamental questions in philosophy. To interpret his distinct determination of essence, and its ramifications for art, it is therefore necessary to study the basic principles that shape his distinct path within modern philosophy.

3.4 Construction of Essence as Relation

As indicated already, a typical impetus for contemporary interest in Schelling is a desire to overcome the static and unitary understanding of human culture that is seen to stem from the legacy of German idealism. It belongs to the ironies of reception that his thought has been employed as a viable foundation for both traditional Catholic and liberal Protestant theology, as well as a vital source of inspiration in existentialism and contemporary posthumanism. The circumstance does in itself indicate that his philosophy is complex, underwent thorough-going transformations, and not only allows for but almost seems to encourage divergent and indeed contradictory interpretations. Although a protean thinker, he did nevertheless consistently grapple with fundamental problems at the heart of modern philosophy, which is to say the task

of establishing the foundations for both knowledge and society in a culture that was in the act of renouncing the self-evident legitimacy of previous theological sources. The challenge, and its wide ramifications even into contemporary philosophy, can be traced back to concerns that follow in the wake of the Kantian divide between intelligible freedom and empirical nature. Of overarching interest for Schelling's philosophy of art is the problem of priorities in the interplay between ideality and reality, consciousness and unconsciousness, thought and language. He is certainly no less a unitary and systematic thinker than other idealists of his age, but there is a characteristic reciprocity in the manner in which he theorizes epistemological, moral, aesthetic and political problems from these "first principles of philosophy" (Ibid. 23).

The stakes behind these subject matters were obviously high in an age that was moving away from the firm conviction that God is a first and absolute principle in which thought and being coincide. When belief in God as the source and guarantee for this correlation is made uncertain (by Kant), it is not merely the epistemological identity between objects and their conceptual representations that is endangered but equally such assumptions as those pertaining to the order and coherence of nature, the justice of human moral obligations and the validity of legislation. The development of Schelling's philosophy can in a sense be viewed as a series of attempts to face the uncertain consequences of such epistemological and moral "nihilism", and its ramifications for modern society. One of his most read texts is the 1809 *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (Schelling 2006), a novel and influential treatment of the predicaments of human freedom, as considered from the possible absence of a final harmonious reconciliation between freedom and being. The challenge posed by the *Freiheitsschrift* is a confrontation with human existence as disjunct from a higher unity of freedom, justice and nature, and therefore amounts to an acknowledgment of both prospects and imperilments of a human freedom without any pre-established correlative in nature and morality.³

Schelling's approach to art is however not built upon radical skepticism, or on the deconstruction of metaphysical claims in the style of much 20th-century philosophy. Both with respect to freedom and art, it is his view that the stipulating of essences needs to hark back to this fundamental antithesis between thought and being. The *Philosophy of Art* is very explicit in its portrayal of philosophy as the only discipline that can shed light on distinct subject matters from this viewpoint, and that it is the unique calling of philosophy is to achieve knowledge of the interplay between reality and (conceptual) ideality.

Art is real and objective, philosophy ideal and subjective. We might thus define in advance the task of philosophy of art as *the presentation in the ideal medium of the real element inherent in art*. Of course, the question is then precisely what it means to present *something real in the ideal*, before we know this, we have not yet sufficiently clarified our concept of the philosophy of art. (Schelling 1989: 13)

³The existential philosophy outlined in this work is an early treatment of radical irrationality, i.e., the complete absence of a rational (and beneficial) pre-given order. The impact of such ideas upon notions of Dionysian music in 19th century German musical culture is discussed in Bowie (2007: 172–193).

The main task of a philosophy of art is an understanding of the reality of art, but attempts to fulfill this brief need to rest upon prior reflection on philosophy's relation to the reality it seeks to investigate. The methodology he prescribes for the task is designated philosophical *construction*, and already its definition implies an inherent specific ontology. The procedure is indeed founded upon the premise that philosophy is a decisively non-mimetic enterprise, in which the human subject plays an active role in the accomplishment of knowledge. In negative terms, the method comes with a conviction that strictly objective representations of reality in conceptual definitions, e.g. of art, is logically impossible. Schelling's way of thinking is here indebted to a previous and common German Romanticism thesis of non-identity. Often presented as an elucidation of the proposition $A = A$, the point is to assert the ineluctable difference between an object and its putatively accurate description: In order to define a state of identity or unity (as e.g. of art), it is necessary to divide what is to be established, and to represent the coherence in the twin structure of a concept and its separate determination. In contrast to Hegel, Schelling remained convinced of the final impossibility for human thinking to overcome this difference. It is for him ultimately a vain enterprise to erect some higher-order speculative structure in which comparisons between objects and their descriptions might be resolved into uncontested knowledge of their congruity.⁴ Another way to say this is that neither reality nor language (alone) can provide a gateway to a stable point where we can ascertain that we have (absolute) knowledge of the reality we interact with.⁵

No less than other idealists, Schelling sets out to reconceive much of the terminology and constructions of traditional metaphysics. He employs central neo-Platonic and neo-Spinozean thought patterns and thereby introduces a number of concepts that might have a disquieting whiff of metaphysical obscurity: "the Absolute", "the One" or "the All". Schelling points out himself that these concepts are problematic, and is in fact adamant not to fall back into metaphysical dogmatism, monistic cosmology nor the sublime mist often associated with Romanticism. Quite to the contrary, he attempts a bold reappraisal where notions of essence and the Absolute can be transformed from static traditional conceptions into productive philosophical instruments:

For most people see in the essence of the Absolute nothing but pure night and cannot recognize (*erkennen*) anything in it; it shrinks before them into a mere negation of difference (*Verschiedenheit*), whence they cleverly make it into the end of their philosophy. [...] I want to show here how that night of the Absolute can be turned into day for knowledge. (Excerpt from Schelling's *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie*, citation after Bowie 1993: 55)

In his endeavor to turn this mist of the Absolute into a productive means of attaining knowledge, Schelling concurs with the traditional understanding that the

⁴The problem continues to haunt correspondence theories of truth even today, at least when it is recognized that an identification of a proper correspondence between description and object requires a common theoretical framework in which the comparison can be evaluated (Bowie 1993: 49–50).

⁵:[N]either the real nor the ideal world in and for itself can attain a level higher than that of *indifference*, and can never attain absolute identity itself." (Schelling 1989: 27).

interrelation between ideality and reality needs to be traced back to a single furthest point of their non-difference. In other words, he sets out on a quest for that infinite viewpoint, outside the scope of particular finite relations between intellectual and material dimensions, which he in the first place, in a seemingly conclusively manner, discarded as unattainable. When the *Philosophy of Art* explicates the notion of essence, it might appear as a surrender to the language and procedure of traditional metaphysics:

There is actually and essentially only *one* essence, *one* absolute reality, and this essence, as absolute, is indivisible such that it cannot change over into other essences by means of division or separation. (Schelling 1989: 14)

A crucial point to note here is how Schelling's methodology of construction reconceives of such absolute reality as a purely logical or relational principle, rather than trying to denote substance (as in the monism of his neo-Platonic and Spinozean sources of inspiration). A beneficial way to untangle some of the implied presuppositions is to note a conceptual polarity that is difficult to transmit in translation. Schelling's original *Wesen* does of course resound with a strong and prevalent metaphysical legacy built upon translations of the Greek *ousia* and the Latin *essentia*. It might therefore only be natural to assume that essence here is conceived in the manner of an abstract universal. An essential definition of art would in such a conception categorize specific objects as art in accordance with a predetermined general definition of what it amounts to that something is recognized as art. Weitz's concern with static or closed conceptions of essence, which precludes the inclusion of novel modes of expression, would then have been a pertinent criticism also of Schelling. In line with the metaphysical tradition, it would only have been natural to expect that the notion of essence here would be distinguished from, and be conceived as prior to, existence. Essence would then typically designate an atemporal dimension inherent in things that in their existence are exposed to historically changing conditions. Such a usage might indeed be assumed when Schelling seeks to accomplish a "complete disconnection from time", or to show that historical reality and "longevity cannot be attributed to the *essence* of things" (Ibid. 25).

Recent translators of Schelling have, however, argued that he uses the notion of *Wesen* in such a novel way that its proper understanding might be distorted when rendered as "essence". As Jason Wirth suggests:

For Schelling, das *Wesen* names the tension between present being (existence) and the simultaneous intimation of that which is as no longer being (the past) and that which is as not yet being (the future). (Schelling 2000: xxxi)

Wirth proposes that the notion of "being" might be a more apposite representation of the dynamic nature of Schelling's *Wesen*, but such a terminological change does not in itself represent the relation, or concurrence, of ideality and reality that lies at the heart of Schelling's thought (see also Schelling 2006: xxxiii–xxxv). As succinctly argued by Charlotte Alderwick, his use of the term essence does not imply that essence is prior to, and therefore determinant of, concrete existence. The dimensions of essence and being are rather coextensive and coeval, interdependent elements in a dynamic process of existence which cannot be elevated to a final higher unity:

Schelling's claim is that essence and its consequents can only be understood as coextensive; there is no sense in which essence could pre-exist concrete existence as the idea of an essence existing as separate from its instantiation in concrete beings is simply nonsensical. [...] we therefore cannot think of essence as prior to existence as essence itself is part of the dynamic process which constitutes existence. (Alderwick 2015: 117)

When Schelling understands essence to denote an unchanging condition, this does therefore not imply that essence precedes the coming into being of a thing (such as a work of art) in a temporal sense. An atemporal conception of essence is rather taken to denote indivisibility in the uncompromising way that its perfect finite manifestation would imply a change of conditions in which the essence inevitably would be lost. This might however still not entail that the essence is forever doomed to remain in some abstract and purely ideal condition. With ramifications for both epistemology, human freedom and aesthetics, Schelling instead explores the relation between essence and being (or form) as two parallel realms that are necessarily related and dependent upon each other. Nature is for him not an aggregation of matter per se, but matter is rather conceptualized as a form (or *accidens*) in which a life-giving or organizing principle (essence) always is present. The ideal realm is, in an analogous way, consistently theorized as realized and determined by empirical existence. It consists both of knowledge, which entails a preponderance of inner subjectivity in its interplay with reality, and free action, which rather entails a preponderance of external objectivity. When Schelling has previously been seen to speak of both a single essence and an absolute reality, these statements are dependent on a triadic structure where the two separate realms also unite in a third dimension. Without saying that their difference would be superseded at a given stable point, philosophical construction still implies the possibility to see a way in which they to mirror each other, to perceive reality and ideality in a relation where they do reach a state of indifference:

[...] the absolute is precisely that with regards to which no antithesis obtains between the idea and the concrete. (Schelling 1989: 25)

The final part of this article will devote itself to explicating a few of the consequences of this relational framework for the understanding of art.

3.5 Theorizing the Reality and Significance of Art

To speak of art as a resolution of human freedom and empirical nature is a common trope of art philosophies in the wake of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. It is therefore not surprising to see that Schelling portrays art as a manifestation of non-difference between the ideal and the real, representing a form of (ideal) knowledge in (real) creative action. His reconsideration of essence as a general and relational concept entails that there is no separate essence of art, but that art is a medium that reveals the dynamic non-difference between mind and empirical being that itself is the one essence. In line with his general methodology, the initial step of his elucidation

of that interplay in art gives preference to the ideal aspect of human imagination, in contrast to theories of art that describe art as given empirical objects, in abstraction from human minds.

The splendid German word “imagination” (*Einbildungskraft*) actually means the power of mutual informing into unity (*Ineinsbildung*) upon which all creation really is based. It is the power whereby something ideal is simultaneously something real, the soul simultaneously the body, the power of individuation that is the real creative power. (Ibid. 32)

With this suggested etymology of the term *Einbildungskraft*, Schelling emphasizes the synthetic potential of the human mind in his understanding of art. The very act where a thing becomes constituted as an art work, either by its creator or in appreciation or performance, is conceived as being dependent solely on productive human imagination, and on its ability to perceive unity in difference.

The imagination is, then, not simply one faculty among others; it is instead for Schelling the capacity which underlies everything in its being, the very dynamic of the absolute itself as the identity conditioning all opposition. Viewed in this sense, imagination is the creative force of identity, the identifying of identity. In the work of art as a product of imagination, then, identification is concretely at work in displaying the original determination of things as what they actually are. (Summerell 2004: 89)

Schelling might here be seen to corroborate Passmore’s analysis of “empty formulas”. Because the essence, manifested in art, merely concerns a specific non-difference between ideality and reality, the possibility for any object or performance to be perceived as art by the imagination is in principle unreservedly open. The empirical vacuousness of Schelling’s conception can thus be acknowledged to induce a far-reaching relativity or flexibility on the levels of particularity and historicity where boundaries of art inevitably are undergoing constant renegotiations. The creative freedom of imagination in his conception of essence does in this sense facilitate an enlarged scope of art, rather than a static ahistoricism, and can even in a kind of prophetic mode seem to precurse even much later conceptual, performance or sound art. Schelling does in this respect offer a reconception of the work’s empirical reality in his attention to the constructive role of the imagination. The material aspect of e.g. sound, color or stonework does here become significant as the carrier and manifestation of a life-giving aesthetic idea.

Because of the strict reciprocity between reality and ideality that lies at the core of Schelling’s elucidation of imagination, its freedom can however never entail a state of ungrounded or free-floating abstraction. The empirical form of the work is by no means to be denigrated, quite to the contrary, because the material reality is conceived to the mirror its ideal dimension. Schelling’s approach suggests vistas to discuss the status of the work that might eschew complications in modern controversies, not least as regards to the connection between the work concept and the notion of absolute music. While a paradigmatic figure like Eduard Hanslick in principle rejected speculative idealism, Schelling belonged to the thinkers whose legacy came to influence central ideas of his, both of a perfected interplay between form and content, and the contribution of the human mind to elevate mere matter (sound) into the content (i.e. tones) of music (Bonds 2014: 195–196). Hanslick’s work is

much too complex to discuss here, but standard readings have taken his famous definition of music's essence as *tönend bewegte Formen*⁶ to stand for an objective aesthetics where the (absolute) integrity of form entails a demarcation of music's essence from its ("extra-musical") effects, and other dimensions of human life. As a contrast to discussions of absolute music, Schelling's move to make essence into a speculative concept that is not contained within the parameters of the work entails that distinctions between inner-musical essence and extra-musical qualities ceases to be of primary importance. The imagination's freedom to synthesize empirical elements into a unified work also implies that priorities between the notated scores, improvisation or performance in the ontology of the work are likewise of lesser philosophical significance.

Even such a brief encounter with questions central to the philosophy of music might warrant a verdict that Schelling circumvents many topics central to both practices and definitions within the arts. In line with a suggested methodological polarity outlined by Stephen Davies, Schelling might indeed be found wanting if the criterion for positing art's essence is to provide a *definition* of art that in some way is "exhaustive and exclusive" (Davies 2003: 9–10). Schelling's conception, and arguably many idealist frameworks, might however gain new significance if their claims are taken more as pieces of *theorizing*. In light of the consistent elevation of essence above the empirical level of history, it might appear counterintuitive to suggest that Schelling offers what Davies calls a theory "that seeks a historical essence for art" (Ibid. 12). However, the underlying metaphysics of his determination of essence implies that his sought-after absolute non-difference can only be constructed as thoroughly historicized. Schelling's conviction to have formulated the first proper philosophy of art does in fact rest upon dual assertions: That he has managed to construct art in such a general way that it will be applicable to art throughout every stage of history,⁷ and that his suggested connection between art and the absolute reveals the consistent significance of art in the evolution of human culture.

The basis for these wider claims lies in Schelling's suggested parallelism between the appreciation of art and the methodology of philosophy. Philosophical construction is here seen as a means to extract essence, i.e. to perceive the non-difference

⁶Mark Evan Bonds suggests the unusual but apposite translation of "tonally animated forms" (Bonds 2014: 147). In this context, it is interesting to read his somewhat indiscriminate elucidation of essentialism:

As a mode of thought, essentialism privileges autonomy at the expense of interaction, stasis at the expense of change. Hanslick treats music as an object, not a practice, and the primary goal of *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* is to define what music is, not how it works. (Ibid. 176)

⁷Schelling writes:

The system of the philosophy of art that I intend to present here will thus differentiate itself fundamentally from the previous systems, and will do so as regards both form and content; I will retrace even the principles themselves further back than has hitherto been the case. (Schelling 1989: 12)

between ideality and reality in a conceptual and predominantly ideal manner, out of the sensible and particular. The imagination does in both the creation and appreciation of art mirror this achievement in that it has the power to in-form essence as predominantly real, when it contributes the mental synthesis that makes the empirical artwork into a manifestation of unity. Through this activity, the artwork attains a status of a microcosm, in which the most general parallelism between reality and ideality becomes represented. The imagination's appreciation of art is therefore not merely a demarcated philosophical problem, but it is turned into the most definite presentation possible of the most fundamental challenges that philosophy thematizes, or *constructs*, as the basis of all its regional studies.⁸

While these claims might seem somewhat obscure in themselves, Schelling provides a retrospect of antique and Christian art that effectively substantiates his claim that art consistently manifests how human cultures conceive the absolute concurrence of ideality and reality. The absolute point of indifference that lies at the heart of his philosophy is clearly a modern reminiscence of religion, and he provides a prolonged discussion of ancient Greek mythology and literature in order to depict how the artistic representation of the pantheon of gods, foremost in tragedy, was this particular culture's way to conceive of a harmonious highest unity of the ideal and the real. When he continues to follow the intertwined development of world-views and art within Western Christianity until the beginning of modernity, this comparison with antiquity is finally turned into a diagnosis of the state of art in a fragmented modern culture where a Christian preponderance of freedom and thought has brought about a disruption of a previous metaphysical unity (Schelling 1989: 23–89; cf. Shaw 2010: 104–112). His own philosophical literary criticism in these lectures (e.g. of Dante and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*) are not intended to trace the intentions of their authors, but to reconstruct, even in the form of art, the basic presuppositions about existence that influence the self-understanding of human communities at large, at a given place and a given time in history. As for so many contemporary authors, antiquity does here serve as a nostalgic counterweight to the ruptures of modern public life. Schelling voices aspirations that the renewal of public art might reinstate something of that era's socially and ecologically holistic worldview, although modern conditions entail a more dynamic and existentially precarious unity of human freedom and nature than Greek conceptions of the absolute (Bowie 2007: 172–182).

⁸In his 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling presented art as the apotheosis, organon and document of philosophy. In other words, art holds a crucial place within human culture as the activity where presupposed reciprocity between nature and freedom, that philosophy itself cannot declare, attains its most complete presentation (see Jähnig 1966: 9–116).

3.6 Conclusions

This paper has suggested that Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* offers a distinct way to handle questions of art's essence. In contrast to typical 20th century concerns surrounding essentialism, it has been suggested that his unitary and seemingly static conception of art nevertheless facilitates a wide, dynamic and intense appreciation of art. A pivotal function in his system is the way notions of essences are elevated from the level of distinct subject matters, in order to conceptualize the general theme of how human freedom and natural being coincide. In the end, Schelling's empirically vacuous conception of essence largely eschews the endeavor to define what art is. In its focus upon the imagination as the life-giving force behind the appreciation of art, this distinct realm in human society is simultaneously presented as essential to the whole spectrum of human life. The prevailing quasi-religious aspect of his exposition of the absolute expands this wide significance further, and amounts to an argument that art is socially and politically important as a pivotal site for communal engagement with the most fundamental questions of human co-existence.

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Chapter 4

Aristotle Meets Schumann: Essence and Geist



John MacAuslan

Abstract What makes something *one* thing, and what it is? Aristotle developed intertwined concepts of explanation, definition and unity, which, even if not fully realizable, guide his answers. They support his concept of “*psuchē*”, an essence that shapes, animates, explains and unifies a living being. Schumann’s notion of “*Geist*” serves likewise for a musical work and echoes Aristotle’s “*psuchē*”. Neither resembles essentialism as usually understood. They can illuminate both the aesthetic theory of Schumann’s time and today’s musicological attempts to explain what it is for a work to be one work and to be the work that it is.

4.1 Introduction

What makes a musical work *one* work? What constitutes its *particular* nature? *Need* there be an answer to these questions? What would it have to be like? The concept of “*Geist*” used by Schumann in the 19th century is one sort of answer. It builds on Aristotle’s ancient concept of the “*psuchē*” of a living being. Each is an animating essence, shaping, unifying and explaining something: what makes it one, and what it is. This paper explores these ideas, which sit near the core of a conference on music and essence.

A meeting of minds is initially surprising. Schumann probably never studied Aristotle with much attention. And *psuchē* and *Geist* are not as alike as they sound when translated as “soul” and “spirit”: Aristotle’s *psuchē* is better seen as what being alive is for living things; and for Schumann, *Geist* is as much “musical conception”, including a work’s intellectual qualities, as “spirit”, mood or character (MacAuslan 2016: 80–87). (The German word’s history, wide connotations and Aristotelian and Plotinian echoes elude an English equivalent). Being alive may seem far removed from a musical conception (Table 4.1).

But Aristotle’s nuanced and far-reaching thinking about essence was seminal in strands of European metaphysics and German musical aesthetics: lines of influence

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Table 4.1 Analogies between Aristotle’s *psychē* and Schumann’s *Geist*

Aristotle’s <i>psychē</i>	Schumann’s <i>Geist</i>
is the animating essence, is indwelling, makes a living being what it is, gives it life;	“animates a work in every limb”, is “indwelling”, its “existential necessity”, gives it poetic life;
gives a living being form and shapes its matter;	“holds sway over [a work’s] form, material, idea”;
unifies a being’s otherwise disparate properties, and is the source of its unity;	as “the center from which all the work’s essential properties radiate”, gives a work its unity & coherence;
unless <i>psychē</i> is understood, no function or material of the living body can be explained or understood.	unless <i>Geist</i> is understood, no aspect of the work can be understood.

De An.: 412b27, 415b8ff. (II 1, 4); *Met.*: 1036a1–2, 37a5–7, 29, 17b17–26; Schumann 1914: I 85, 91; Jean Paul 1963: §4, §9 (copied in Schumann 1998: IX 13); Jean Paul 1963: §62 and §14; Novalis 1988: 229 (230) (copied in Schumann 1998: IX 186), and Novalis 1960: 286 (copied in Schumann 1998: I 60)

De An.: II 4; *Met.*: 1046b3–5 (art is inherently the power to induce form in matter), 33a24–35; Schumann 1914: 69–84; Marx 1997: 60–62

De An.: 411b7–9 (I 5); *Met.*: 1035b14–23; Schumann 1914: I 124, 52, 423 and 72; compare II 8, 9, 10 (“Rundung”, “abgerundetes”); 297, I 343 (accounted); I 162 (“Geistesradien”: an image from Plotinus: VI.8.18, 7–30; V.1.11, 8–15); Schumann 1914: 179 (“Geist”), 52, 59, 71 (“Ganzes”), 72–3, 224 and II 72 (“Zusammenhang”); Goethe 1972: 480 (224)

De An.: II 4; *PA.*: I 1; *Met.*: 1017b15–17, 35b14–25; Heinse 1962, copied in Schumann 1998: X 3 and 4

transmitted his thinking on *psychē* to the *Geist* used by Schumann.¹ Rather than tracing those lines, or justifying interpretations of either writer, my aim is to explore how Aristotle’s metaphysical ambitions, as he had, fruitfully, to qualify them, can illuminate the idea of *Geist*—in itself, in Schumann’s words, and in our understanding of what it is for anything, including a musical work, to be *one* thing and the *particular* thing it is.

Section 4.2 below looks at what Aristotle says about essence; Sect. 4.3 at how he uses *psychē* as the essence of a living thing, and how far Schumann uses *Geist* in comparable ways. This leads to a difficulty which Sect. 4.4 addresses with help from Plotinus. As befits an exploration, this essay will pose more questions than it answers. Aristotle, too, often scratched his head in perplexity, or led us to see afresh what we always knew: “the end of all our exploring”, I hope, “will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time”.²

¹E.g. Jean Paul 1963: §1; see also §4 beside *Met.*: 1036a28–30 and *De An.*: II 4 (food and substance).

²*Met.*: Beta, Zeta 1, 3, etc.; T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, “Little Gidding”.

4.2 Aristotle on Being and Essence

Aristotle's metaphysics have long been the subject of scholarly debate, which need not be referred to here given my aims. Even within *Metaphysics* (which as a whole is indeed a somewhat motley compilation), inconsistencies are often detected. If so, we can choose whether to reinterpret a text, to emend it, or to accept that inconsistencies arise through Aristotle's error or someone's juxtaposing passages from different dates or contexts. We probably need some mixture of these options, but within my prime focus, the central books of *Metaphysics*, I'd start by exploring the first. Inconsistencies may vanish if differences are recognized between Greek and English terms—not only “soul”, “essence”, “substance” and “definition” (as discussed here), but “mind”, “matter” and “cause”.³ Moreover, Aristotle's text is best seen as argumentative, perplexed, elliptical and subtle: stages in a lively fresh-air discussion need not be read as final statements of doctrine or generalized beyond the limits of their context,⁴ nor taken at levels to which they don't apply.⁵

To make a reasoned case for my interpretation would take a book. Instead, I'll simply present a version of Aristotle's essence. The bald assertions below are but one slant on the texts, contentious in themselves and as interpretations of Aristotle.⁶

Aristotle's focus is what makes something *one* thing, and makes it what it is. To talk of something is necessarily to talk of it as something. Just pointing picks out nothing in particular from among infinite properties varying with time, viewpoint and relationship (*Topics*: 103b27–39, I 9; *Met.*: Epsilon 2 (1026b8), Zeta 15). What are you pointing to there?—a direction? an obstacle? a woman? a mammal? a face? pallor? atoms? You have to specify something. That necessarily implies a framework of thought (economic production, human relationships, physical science) (*De An.*: 403a3–b19 (I 1)) and a taxonomic level (object, animal, mammal, primate). Being, that is, is spoken of in many ways, and goes with ways of speaking.⁷

But for Aristotle there is one primary way of speaking of what a thing is. She is indeed a mammal, a citizen, a lawyer, but she is primarily seen in a framework and at a level at which she is a human being; and that claim captures her specifically

³“Mind”: *De An.*: III 5. “Matter” is something like “a locus of instantiation of form”: relative to “form”, and not always material in our sense. “Cause” explains what makes something what it is (“formal”), or what brought it into being (“efficient”), or to what end, or as what “matter”: *Met.*: Delta 2.

⁴E.g. *Met.*: Zeta 4 is a stage, far from the final conclusion for which it is sometimes taken.

⁵As at *Met.*: 1035b28–33, 37a28, 49a25–49b2, 58b5ff.

⁶Given my approach, passages cited in these notes can only be indicative, not proof-texts. Charles: 2000 justifies an interpretation to which I'm indebted, despite some differences, and gives references to alternative views. There's no space to explain why I leave Book Lambda out of account.

⁷“To on legetai pollachōs”: *Met.*: 1028a10–20; Aristotle affirms a focal meaning of “be” with variants for different “categories” or definitions, not a systemic ambiguity: 1003a24–b16, 28a10–13, 42b15–28.

and directly.⁸ It enables us to point to her as “ousia”: a Greek word normally translated as “substance”, but literally “being”, often with connotations of the dependable or determinate, rather as in English “a man of substance”. Hence, I see it as stable or determinate reality or nature: various properties predicated in any of the categories—being a breast-feeding mother, German and legally-trained, etc.—are integrated in the one stable, unified individual that is this human being (*Met.*: Delta 8, Theta 1–3, 8).⁹

For Aristotle, “being what *x* is” (often translated “essence”) is how something is defined¹⁰—as the “being” or “substance” in which all its properties inhere and coalesce as a unity. And it explains why many of them are present. But “what *x* is” must itself be determinate, unified and prior enough to be up to that job (*Topics*: VI 4, 141a35; *Met.*: Delta 11, Zeta 4–12, 15, 17; Eta 2, 6). And it must be specifiable independently of *x* without being a separate thing on the same level. *x* is a house. But what’s a house? It’s bricks or the like as arranged to shelter people. In pinpointing that form or essence, conceptually prior to the house, you explain independently how it is conceived as a house and as a unity; but an actual house keeps the rain off, not some *separate* “essence” or “actuality”: the actuality *is* the house made. Only so is it prior in being.¹¹ Aristotle has no capital E Essence at all.¹² What he has is neither so esoteric nor so viciously essentialist as it’s painted.¹³

⁸Primarily: as *Met.*: Zeta 1 (going beyond *An. Post.*) claims for certain sorts of entities, centrally members of biological species; compare 1077b24–30. “Mammal” is less specific than you could be of a human; “citizen” or “lawyer” include or imply “human” in their definitions: *Met.*: Zeta 4–5. ⁹“Ousia” is sometimes more naturally translated “essence”.

¹⁰Nowadays we usually “define” a word, normally through synonymy; Aristotle’s “horismos” in its fullest sense delimits an entity as an instance of a kind: *An. Post.*: II 10; *Met.*: Delta 29, Zeta.

¹¹*De An.*: 413a4–5, 414a20–8 (II 1, 2); *Met.*: Zeta 6, 8, 10, 13–8; Eta 2–3 & 6, Theta 8 (substance as the actuality or “full reality”, “entelecheia”, of *x*), especially 1050a24–b6; 87a11–25. Aristotle carefully distinguished different sorts of priority. Substance and essence are given by universals (human, animal, bipedal); but a universal, I suppose, is not itself *thereby* a substance or essence; for that it would have to be identified as “this universal”, and “universal” given a “logos” and “horismos”.

¹²“Essential” and “essence” often translate “kath’ auto”, “ousia”, “to ti esti” and above all “to ti ēn einai”: *Met.*: 1029b13ff, etc. —the very variety suggesting Aristotle means no reified entity. This last phrase is much discussed. I take the imperfect tense as a not unusual way in Greek to get at what something really *is*, and both occurrences of “be” as predicative, not existential. This is clear when Aristotle adds a dative, as he often does (1029b28 and 52b4: “to heni einai”); and the phrase often occurs close to “to ti esti”, which is clearly predicative. Chiba 2010: 230–234 argues for construing the Greek as “what it is to be”. This, the usual English version, seems an answer to the question, “What is it to be?”, so that “be” leans unhelpfully towards “exist”; and Chiba has to supply an absent dative to counteract that; it would more naturally translate “[to] ti esti to einai”, as implied by similar constructions at 28a38 and 51b18. I’ve sometimes construed the Greek instead as “being what it *is*”, a normal word order (compare 996b18 and 1020a19), fitting better into the context of 1030a1–7, and especially 3, and *Topics*: 141a35, and needing no supplied dative, if sometimes less idiomatic in English. My argument is barely affected.

¹³It’s not about identifying this *x* as a particular, or about finding a minimal set of properties necessary and sufficient for that purpose: *Met.*: 1036b3–7. Necessary properties need not be essential (*De An.*: III 12; *PA*: I 1, 642a10–13, 24–6): as a something, a human has some unity and persistence through time; as a mammal she feeds her young on her milk; but such properties, however necessary, since

In sum, different ways of specifying something, in different combinations of framework and level, bring different kinds of essences and different sets of essential properties;¹⁴ but one specification should give the kind that something primarily is, as though striking its natural resonant frequency. This:

- focuses its nature, unity, and explanation on one point, *and*
- hangs it on some background theory, *and*
- gives it a place in the conceptual structure of our world: fundamental structures of the world and of our thought coincide enough for (some) truth to be attainable.¹⁵

There's plenty to doubt or discuss, but Aristotle's nuanced balancing-act is a tightly-drawn, ambitious metaphysical conception.

4.3 Psuchē and Geist as Essence

Aristotle's metaphysics require something *tied down, single and prior* enough to *pinpoint, unify and explain* the nature of a being as it *primarily* is. His oeuvre uses these ambitions as stars to navigate by in actual enquiries, such as biological enquiries, aiming to come "as close as possible" to meeting them (*PA.*: 640a33–b3). Thus human *psuchē* should differentiate the kind from sister-species, pinpoint its essential nature, and explain why its aspects, a human's modes of living—feeding, breathing, sensing, feeling, breeding, thinking, imagining, willing, etc.—are present and integrated. Can a single feature achieve all this? It's not enough just to apply a single label (essence or *psuchē*) to a heap of properties. So Aristotle relies on his concept of "form" and "matter". "Form" provides both singleness and explanatory power. It can be specified independently from "matter", but is just what caps a being's "matter" *as* a being, or "actualizes" as a living human being a particular kind of human "matter" (*De An.*: II 2, 4; *Met.*: Zeta 4–5, Eta 6).

How then are we to conceive of this "form" and "matter" in general? A being's "matter" includes many features. Some are peculiar to the species, others differentiae of various genera in its taxonomic tree; some are necessary or beneficial in physical, social and cultural environments it lives in. Some result from the evolving interaction of any of these factors (*De An.* III 12; *PA.*: 642a2–b4, I 4, 645b15–20, 669b8–13; *An. Post.*: II 6; *Met.*: Zeta 11, 1035b9–33; Charles 2000: Chap. 12; Lennox 2010). Sometimes Aristotle speaks as if the species could be identified by one last differentia imposed on this "matter" to distinguish it from other species; but it is not clear that there is a last differentia of human, or what it is. So the "matter", rather than being

a human is necessarily a something and an animal, may not be essential to her as a human. Or they may be: see below.

¹⁴*Met.*: 1078a5–9. Compare *De An.*: 424a26 (II 12): "The sense and its organ are the same in fact, but their essence is not the same."

¹⁵Compare Charles 2000: Chap. 10. A realist today might explain any "coinciding" in a Darwinian way: compare "survival" in *Sense* 436b20, *An. Post.*: 100a13–4 (II 19) and the view rejected by *Physics* II 8.

everything bar that last differentia, the arch without its keystone, is better seen as all the stones including that final stone, but described as stones; while the “form” describes the very same stones in a different dimension, *as* an arch. Without being reducible to them, an arch as “form”:

- integrates and explains all the stones that are features included in “matter” (*Met.*: Zeta 11–17, Eta 2–6, Theta 6–8, *de An.* II 1–2, 407b20–4, *PA* I 4, II–IV);
- has different aspects whose relations to each other and to the “matter” can be explained by background theories;
- in turn can be part of the matter of an aqueduct. In a nested conceptual structure, a compound of “form” and “matter” at one level becomes “matter” at the next.¹⁶

Can we specify human “form” and “matter”? I could guess that the “matter” might be everything implied by the brief encapsulation, “such flesh and blood arranged so as to be potentially a big-brained bipedal animal”: an essence in a different dimension that satisfyingly actualizes that human frame might be summed up as “an intelligently dexterous living being”. This combines compactness with explanatory power. It matches “big-brained” and “bipedal”. It integrates and implies features including mortality, opposed thumbs, mental sophistication (in turn allowing language), etc. How its aspects (respiration, feeding) relate to each other and to human “matter” is explained by background theories such as the circulation of the blood. But it’s my guess, not Aristotle’s.

He did not, I think, resolve all the tensions he explored between his metaphysical ambitions and actual enquiries. Every thing must be something; but what it is may, unless secured by stable theory in a stable conceptual structure, be less than final or definite (a palace is a house in one sense but not another; likewise a cabin, office or bungalow), often relative (“intelligent”, “dexterous”), qualified (“typically four-walled”, “of brick or the like”), contextual and evolving. Can it be so, and still be an Aristotelian essence?

Musicology often struggles, *mutatis mutandis*, with similar tensions. For Schumann, Geist shapes, animates, unifies and explains a musical work, and so invites Aristotle’s questions: is it, or anything, *tied down*, *single* and *prior* enough to *pin-point*, *unify* and *explain* the work as a *primary* nature?

I’d be relaxed about whether an aesthetic entity has a primary nature. Suppose “the *Iliad*” names one epic poem, say, and is unified as such, as Pheidias’ *Apollo* might be one instance of a bronze statue, both within a broad genus of works of art.¹⁷ Aristotle perhaps saw such kinds (epic poem, bronze statue) and their essences as primary only “in a sense”; we, though, may wonder how far “primary” should be used so rigorously: is human absolutely primary where person or woman are not? Other kinds, especially human constructs (houses, elections), may fall into more varied

¹⁶*An. Post.*: II.8: demonstration requires a theory. A thing can scarcely be conceived without some place in a structure ordered by sameness and difference at nested levels: what *An. Post.*: II.19 calls “Nous”.

¹⁷*An. Post.*: II 10 and *Met.*: 1030a1–b13, 16b9–10 argue that “The *Iliad*” does not name a *definition* because the *Iliad* as definition would be unified only “by continuity”, not by substrate, genus or essence.

taxonomic trees, and less neatly nested structures. Perhaps we should see primacy as relative to framework. In an economic framework, Beethoven's Opus 111 is primarily an object for sale; but in an aesthetic framework, common in Schumann's culture, it is primarily a work of art.¹⁸ Let's take Opus 111 then as primarily a piano sonata, which is one genus of work of art.

Now, Schumann's Geist is unique to an individual, not common to a kind. Aristotle's *psuchē*, by contrast, is different in nature for each species but common to all members of a species (if numerically different in each instance). So humans are all equally alive as humans, even though an embodied individual may be deficient to some degree in some aspects—more or less able to play Opus 111—and her other properties will vary contingently with time, viewpoint or relationship, and do not make up a determinate nature (*Met.*: Zeta 15). How then can we use the metaphysical thought behind Aristotle's *psuchē* to pinpoint, explain and unite Opus 111, while still treating the music's Geist as unique to the individual as well as common to a kind?

There might be several ways to have our cake and eat it. One is to suppose "musical work", as a high-level genus, is something like an individual musically-patterned flow of potential musical sound,¹⁹ that Opus 111 is a kind within that genus, and that its instances (performances, say) are aesthetic individuals, equivalent to individual humans:²⁰ the essence of each performance, or its being what it *is*, is being Opus 111. This is both Aristotelian (he could have seen a bronze statue as a kind captured in the mould, with castings as instances) and rich enough to serve as a Geist in Schumann's sense. Opus 111 as a kind unifies the performance's main properties. We can ask how it forms a kind, and is distinguished from other works as kinds, and what generic trees it sits in, with what higher genera (late Beethoven, sonata, piano sonata, piano music, C minor music, musical work, aesthetic entity etc.; for a work in the tradition of Beethoven and Schumann may fall within multiple generic trees). We can treat its properties (in itself, as compared to sister-works and as shared with higher genera) under the various aspects of Geist, to which we can also relate its individuality, unity and even quality.²¹ These aspects include among others patterns of scale degree, register, tonality, harmonic function, rhythm, meter, hypermeter and tempo, theme, middle ground, form and formal function, dynamics, material sonority, texture, gesture and expressiveness. All of these are shaped in part by evolving contexts and cultures affecting a work's composition, its various generic levels, and its performance and reception history. A given work instantiated in

¹⁸Other possible frameworks include scientific (as a frequency pattern) or sociological (as bourgeois diversion). You can try talking of music without works, but the tradition of Beethoven and Schumann finds it hard to get by that way. *Met.*: 1008b12–31 has a comparable argument, though against a different target.

¹⁹The phrase uses *differentiae* to specify an abstract temporal process ("flow") as a musical work. It may recall Hanslick's "tönend bewegte Formen".

²⁰Not a new idea: Wolterstorff 1980: 33–105.

²¹Differences between kinds are often comparative: *De An.*: II 3, PA I 4; but on differences in the relative value of species, compare PA I 5.

performance unfolds by negotiating complex, overlapping and partly self-generated force fields represented by such aspects separately and in combination.

Musicology is happiest dealing objectively, in theory-based languages, with selected compositional features within these aspects, and with selected patterns among the infinite relationships (more or less salient, more or less nested) between them (*De An.*: 432a22–7 (III 9); *Met.*: 1004b4–7, 78a5–9). But if the aim is to pinpoint Opus 111 as the aesthetic entity it is, or to explain it as one work rather than several (not just one publication, like Opus 119), then some ground is required why just *these* features are selected, connected and described just *so*.²² What is both single and powerful enough to provide such a ground?

In an Aristotelian spirit, we could try a “material” explanation as capped by the “formal” to give an aesthetic essence or Geist.²³ The “matter” could be potential sounds arranged by a composer in certain patterns, while the Geist or “form” pinpoints the work as an aesthetic entity, actualizing this “matter” *as* that work living aesthetically in performance. It imports the compositional features described as the “matter”, including those implied by the work’s different generic levels, shaped by its evolving material, performance, reception and cultural environments, or reflecting interaction between these factors. Being in a different dimension, it is not reducible to them, nor they to it.²⁴ It is independently specifiable, but not as a separately existing entity. It is prior to the work’s features, and:

- explains how they are sufficiently integrated; *and*
- rests on background theories—mature enough for tonality and form, as yet meager for timbre and expression—allowing inferences as to how patterns of sounds (“matter”) relate to various aspects of aesthetic nature; *and*
- should depend on conceptual structures (not necessarily neat or nested) including musical genres.

How close can we get to finding such an essence for a particular musical work, behind its kaleidoscopic properties? Musicology may try Aristotelian ways to get there, for instance via progressive division of genera and species by differentiae in an articulated taxonomic tree, or via generalization from experience; or it may take other ways. Sometimes it indicates it through say metaphors, images or narrative; sometimes such attempts are then at least partially withdrawn. Composers occasionally do likewise. Schumann, for instance, considered “Ruins” as a title for the first movement of his Fantasy in C major, Op. 17. It may provide something compact at an aesthetic level to explain and unify features of “musical composition”. The ruins of a sonata in homage to Beethoven make a fantasy of lament: fragments of lost

²²Compare *Met.*: 1030b7–10, Delta 6–7, Eta 6.

²³What Aristotle calls an “efficient” explanation is sometimes crucial, but not here. Matching his four types of explanation, Schumann listed four for music: the originating “idea” (efficient), “material”, “form” and Geist (teleological). His “material”, or “musical composition”, includes but is not limited to musicological “material” (Schumann 1914: I 69; MacAuslan 2016: 70–71); his “form” is not quite Aristotle’s.

²⁴Such an Aristotelian “organicism” may be less objectionable than versions that reduce a work’s Geist to particular (e.g. thematic) aspects.

order, an irrecoverable past, shattered love. So ruins imply fragmented compositional features from genera of sonata, fantasy, homage and lament: at the start, a restless tone and breaking-wave energy pattern more characteristic of sonata development, with fragments of an exposition scattered through the movement, no single moment when a recapitulation opens, and the tonic established only at the end, when a main Beethoven theme associated with lost love crystallizes. But Schumann withdrew the title—wisely, perhaps, as it constrains an aesthetic essence better expressed by the music. He never purported to state a Geist in his music criticism, only indirectly suggesting one through image or narrative.

He was right. The essence of a given aesthetic entity from the culture of Beethoven and Schumann is to some extent comparative and contextually dependent. It can evolve while also retaining identity. A work may recreate, undermine or deny its various (evolving) genera, rather than sitting stably in a fixed conceptual structure. More problematically, inferences about essence made on the basis of background theories are more or less partial and provisional; and direct, definite or compact expression of a Geist may be a kind of betrayal of what is inherently less than final.²⁵ Is an essence that is so indefinite a usable notion? Turning to Plotinus may help.

4.4 Plotinus and the Indefinable

Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* ends by affirming that a world of facts yields bodies of science in which we can come to find an intelligible structure; Plotinus, a self-confessed Platonist of the third century CE, substitutes for that triad a world of facts, a prior conceptual structure, and a single indefinite source of all. This source is never reached, but may be approached in a different mode of experience, integrative not analytical. A work of art is equally unapproachable without at least some access to some conceptual structure, but some different, integrative mode of experience of it as aesthetic may also be in play; as Schumann believed, the aesthetic and the analytic are complementary.²⁶ Turning to Plotinus at this point also has some historical justification: the German Idealist culture inherited by Schumann viewed the Geist of artistic works in part through his words and concepts, and developed his analogy between the generation of worlds from the source and artistic creation.²⁷

His integrated cosmos (Plotinus 1969–1988: V.8.9) is a continuum: an energetic outpouring from a non-anthropomorphic, transcendent, essentially active source

²⁵*An. Post.*: II 6, 19. Kant, 1971: Chaps. 49–50 said in 1790 that Geist presents “aesthetic ideas”, or “representations of the imagination that occasion much thought without any definite thought or concept being adequate to them”.

²⁶Schumann 1914: I 44, 422–423, II 263. *De An.*: 403b1–19 (I 1), 429b10–23 (III 4), where Aristotle's “aesthetic” is overlapping, not identical, with ours.

²⁷Bonds 2015: 14–26 credits Plato and Pythagoras where Plotinus might be added: for instance, Schelling's *Einbildungskraft* (page 20) looks like a fine paraphrase of Plotinus' *theoria*. See also Plotinus 1969–1988: VI.9.11 with the Romantic Isis trope; below on “infinite longing”; and MacAuslan 2016: Chap. 4.

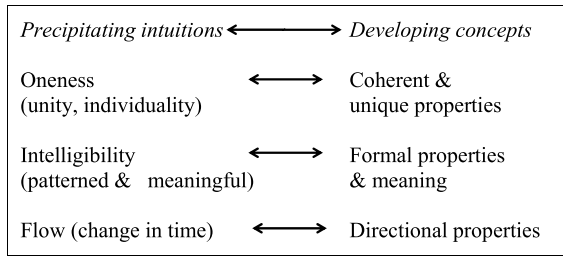


Fig. 4.1 Two of the modes of experience

eluding specification (“the One”: V.1.6–7; V.2.1, V.3.12–13, V.5.6), through the source’s reflection in changeless intelligible order (“Nous”: V.1.3) to *that’s* creative self-expression (“*psuchē*”: V.1.2–3) in the dynamic physical systems, many of them alive, we treat as existent entities in this world (III.3.1, IV.7.9, VI.8.14, VI.9.1). Every such entity is the outcome of nature’s creative realizing or modeling (“*theoria*”: III.8), in a living world of space and time, of the ordered energy pouring out.

Listening to music may involve differing modes of experience analogous to those depicted by Plotinus (above all in V.1.4, V.4, V.8.6–7 and III.2.1–2) as relations between oneness, intelligibility and a complex living system. Subject and object are undifferentiated in the music itself as in “the One”, but they may be separated in immediate apprehension, as in evolving “Nous” (albeit often unconsciously). And music may be taken, in intuitive integration, as one ordered process, imputing to it, without necessarily separating or naming them, oneness, intelligibility, and temporal flow (which are among Plotinus’ “*primals*”: V.1.4).

In another mode, these may become conscious, precipitating out as separate intuitions. They still imply one another: flow implies oneness and intelligibility, and oneness in a temporally extended thing implies intelligible flow; intelligibility in a flow implies the possibility of completion as one (Fig. 4.1).

In further modes, intuitions may harden and develop into separate concepts and background analytical theories; and those in turn may be converted into conceptual models of the work’s aesthetic nature, and may generate the communicable and potentially cross-fertilizing thought-worlds of particular interpretations (as by “*psuchē*” in “*theoria*”).

Such modes can perhaps be distinguished most clearly when a work’s very aesthetic nature seems to frustrate moves from one mode to another: in the first movement of Schumann’s Opus 17, the music arouses intuitions of intelligibility and oneness, but resists even as it suggests concepts for theorizing its form as an intelligible unity (sonata, for instance). It turns the elusiveness inherent in any musical work into its individual essence.

Viewed as successive phases, such modes progressively separate or analyze what also presents as inherently integrated or undifferentiated, with no analytical feature or aspect ultimately separable from any other or from the music. A work in the tradition of Beethoven and Schumann normally presents as prior to and transcending

the thought-worlds of its reception (like Plotinus' "the One": V.1.6, V.4.2; V.3.14, V.5.6, V.8.7, 9 and 10-11). It informs their creation without being thereby diminished itself, and is immanent in them; their creation is its nature (III.8.10, V.3.12; V.2.2, VI.8.18; V.4.1); and its aesthetic impact (Plotinus' "beauty" or "goodness": V.8, V.5.12, VI.7.31-4) is its essential being. It cannot be fully explained by an efficient cause of its creation, or fully grasped by science, discursive analysis or conceptual thought (V.8.6-7); its beauty is prior to all analytical structures, for all their splendor. It or its essence can be seen as an asymptotic limit, an object of aspiration approached but not attained. It draws us on an endless quest to grasp the music in itself, giving rise to an "infinite longing" (VI.7.32, VI.9.4, 9-11)—a far cry from an Aristotelian craving for determinacy—which re-emerges in the "unendlicher Sehnsucht" of Herder, Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Hoffmann.

4.5 Conclusions

Those who shaped Schumann's aesthetics were steeped in Aristotle and Plotinus as we are not. That background offers a way to understand how Geist shapes, animates, unifies and explains a musical work. For Aristotle, we understand a thing if we simultaneously define its nature and explain how shifting properties are integrated in it; and that is achieved by its essence—its being what it *is* within a stable background of conceptual structure and theory. If he found few if any kinds of entities for which his metaphysical ambitions for determinate nature, integration and explicability can be fully met, he still upheld those ambitions as living guides rather than ditching them as failed constraints; perhaps he expected stable theories to emerge across the natural sciences. Modern scientists likewise, with or without that expectation, may work *as though* towards buttressing sustainable kinds with stable theory.

Science may place an aesthetic entity, though, as inherently what science cannot do justice to. Demands for conceptual classification, theoretical explanation, determinateness and singleness are as indispensable here as in other enquiries where we talk of something as some one thing; but for aesthetic entities they may be inherently unattainable: ambitions serving as asymptotic limits.

So at the end of our exploring, we can try re-interpreting what musicology often does. When it selects, describes and connects compositional features and patterns from a work's kaleidoscopic material and temporal musical flow, these can be taken as Aristotelian "matter"; but they may not suffice to pinpoint the work as an aesthetic entity, explain it theoretically and integrate it. That would require some other compact and powerful notion of what the work *is*, in a different dimension and independently specifiable but matching the "matter"—as "intelligently dexterous living being" matches "big-brained bipedal animal". Such a notion is to some extent contextual, evolving and indefinite, remaining always beyond reach, and so forever productive of new interpretative worlds.

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Chapter 5

Musical Images in the Tanakh: Between Their Essence, Context and Interpretation



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Abstract This article deals with the analysis of specific musical and sound images found in the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. Being of voice and sound, the Hebrew culture implemented an exceptional function of music, including instruments, and their timbres. This analysis reveals how essence and context co-exist and influence each other in the most delicate, yet significant, ways, using multi-layered semantics. The problem of translations of the Tanakh into other languages is also adverted. Translations, being active relations to the written Text, encourage the Tanakh to preserve the character of a living and ever-widening tradition as well as create a multitude of interpretations which incorporate elements of different cultures. In the article, the biblical concepts of *kol* (Hebr. *kol*—a voice), of visible sound, and of ethical music are discussed.

5.1 Introduction

Throughout the whole 20th century researchers (Samuel N. Kramer, Harold H. Rowley, Nahum M. Sarna and others) have established many parallels between the Tanakh—the Hebrew Bible—and the poetic texts of Sumerians, Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians. By applying a comparative method, researchers arrived at the conclusion that the Hebrew culture came into being against the general context of a region, the so-called Great Canaan, by having internalized and transformed local cultural traditions (Kraus 1965: 5; Bayer 1982: 33). However, a somewhat different opinion was proposed by Mircea Eliade, which maintains that there was no need for Judaism to borrow myths or symbols of the neighboring nations since they shared a long history of religions which contained all of them (Eliade 1997: 96). Both approaches do not seem to be too diverse: by actualizing certain symbols considered to be of universal character, Judaism transformed them in accordance with the needs of monotheistic belief. Thus adding insights of a new quality, and employing a certain *ideological filter*, as characterized by Sarna (2000: 366).

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In the context of the great civilizations of the Near East, ancient Hebrews, though unique in their monotheistic world outlook, followed the same principles. Religion had a decisive influence on all spheres of life; Temple singers and instrumentalists enjoyed an exceptional status as the Temple was under the direct patronage of kings and priests; musicians commanded great respect and enjoyed special laws which entitled them to benefits; academies of professional singers and instrumentalists used to be founded on the premises of the Temple. Music was part and parcel of religious and family rituals, political ceremonies, and during battles, victory celebrations and folk festivities. Use was made of all types of instruments—strings (they usually comprised the most numerous group), winds, and percussion. They all served the main purpose to communicate with God in different ways, as:

For the Torah God is more than idea or spirit; God is physical, though largely invisible presence [...] God is life or rather, living-ness. (Greenstein 1984: 90–91)

The rich world of musical imagery, recorded in the Tanakh, is of great importance because it expresses the many facets of biblical thought. As Philip V. Bohlman puts it:

The musicality of sacred texts and worship has been crucial to biblical exegesis and traditions of commentary, in other words, to the tradition and transmission of Torah and Talmud. (Bohlman 2015: 13)

The further analysis of musical images in this article is based on the perception of the Tanakh as *a theological comment on history* (a definition offered by rabbi and biblical scholar Umberto Cassuto, 1883–1951), and takes into consideration the intangible and diverse aspects of biblical meanings. This article is structured into three sections:

- (1) The Essence—ancient Hebrew culture as the culture of voice and sound;
- (2) Multi-layered context—defining the versatile essence of semantics of musical phenomena;
- (3) Expansion or alteration of essence of images through translations/interpretations.

Due to the limited scope of the article, several examples for each section are introduced.

5.2 The Essence—Ancient Hebrew Culture as the Culture of Voice and Sound

The Tanakh testifies, that in Hebrew history God appeared as the Voice, and communication of God with man happened through that voice (*and God said...*, *and the Lord called...*, *God spoke...*, *Moses spoke to people...*, *the word of the Lord came to me...*, *and the Lord heard the voice of Elijah...*, etc). The main prayer of Judaism starts with the words *Hear, o Israel* (Deuteronomy 6: 4). Just one of many examples

of how listening and hearing is one of the most frequent and important leitmotifs in the Tanakh. *Hebrew culture, being the culture of voice and sound, determined the exceptional function of music, of instruments and their timbres.*

This voice and sound falls somewhere between visible and invisible. This is in part due to musical instruments that serve as mediators between material and non-material spheres. The texts of the Tanakh develop aspects of cognition as well as those of the theory of existence, by blending religious experience and the strict logic of life principles. Depending on the context, musical instruments are closely connected with the active properties and ways (sacredness, mercy, judgment) of the invisible God, who takes an active part in Hebrew history as well as the world history of those days.

Two passages displayed below reveal the contrasts within biblical thought, and expose the different sides of the same Essence. In both passages, the action takes place in the wilderness, on a mountain (the latter being a very important, divinity-related symbol in the ancient Near East). The main characters of both passages are zealous prophets. In the first passage, the first biblical prophet Moses, who lived around the 13th century BC, is being prepared by the Lord to receive the Revelation of the Ten Commandments in order to seal His Covenant with the Hebrew nation:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow [...] for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai [...] when the trumpet [shofar] soundeth long they shall come up to the mount. [...] And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet [shofar] exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. [...] And when the voice of the trumpet [shofar] sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. (Exodus 19: 10–19)¹

In the next chapter of Exodus, the verse following the revelation of the Ten Commandments describes the reaction of the people:

And all the people saw thundering, and the lightning, and the noise of the trumpet [kol ha shofar—K.R.], and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. (Exodus 20: 18)

It is precisely in this scene that the *shofar* (from Akkad. *shappáru*—a wild goat), an instrument, made from the horn of a ram or goat, appears for the first time in the Tanakh. The history of the shofar as an instrument is not being told, as is the history of other biblical instruments, that were invented by certain personalities—Jubal, Moses, King David, as the Tanakh testifies. The shofar appears without any explanation like the voice of God Himself.² Consider the context of one of the most significant events in Hebrew history—the presentation of the Ten Commandments, or the moral Law, which was the ethical beginning of the Hebrew nation. For that, the biblical writer

¹Hereinafter, for Bible quotations Authorized King James Version (AKJV 1989 edition) is used. Translated and explained in brackets where necessary by Kamilë Rupeikaitė.

²According to Jewish tradition, the first allusion to the shofar and its symbolism is seen when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Isaac, and saw a ram with its horns tangled in a bush (Genesis 22: 13).

chose images that have the highest visual, audible and emotional expression. He uses the phrase *to see the voice of shofar*, which is highly unexpected in the context of the Tanakh. Because visual aspects in ancient Hebrew culture were not strong—quite the opposite. In these verses, the audio is featured; the sounds of thunder, shofar and God’s voice are consolidated to express the strongest spiritual experience, identified by the common Hebrew notion *kol* (voice).³ Cassuto (1983: 231–232) interprets the voice of the shofar not as a sound of the instrument, but as a metaphor of strong wind which blows in the ravine of the mountains. Such interpretation connects the semantics of spirit, wind, and supernatural voice.⁴ The 1st century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria interprets the shofar of the Sinai as the Law given by God, and calls it unwritten Logos, the sounds of which were sent to the people by God himself (Goodenough 1992: 108).

Here is a short excursus to the subject of Part 3 of the article—Expansion or alteration of the essence of images through translations/interpretations—will help us relate to the interpretations of Cassuto and Philo. One of the first interpretations of the Tanakh into the Aramaic language, Targum, in the 1st century BCE provides deeper implications to one of the most known verses from the Book of Genesis:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul. (Genesis 2: 7)

In the English translation of the Targum Onkelos, the verse states:

And the Lord God created Adam from dust of the ground, and breathed upon his face the breath of lives, and it became in Adam a Discoursing Spirit. (NTCS Onkelos)⁵

Such interpretation not only distinguishes man from other creations, but it also provides a strong connection between spirit, sound and language, that extends the implication of language to significant historical and cultural memory.

The shofar sound can be called an audible memory of events on Mount Sinai, and is the only biblical instrument used in Jewish liturgy. The shofar, as Jeremy Montagu puts it (2015: 3), can arguably claim to be the oldest musical instrument in written history that is currently, still in use. The shofar as God’s voice is also used in other texts of the Tanakh—while taking possession of the Promised Land (Joshua 6); *shofar hagadol* (the great shofar) will be heard on the Last Judgment (Zephania

³Hebrew—English Tanakh (JPS 2003) is used for Hebrew words.

⁴In Hebrew, the word *ruach* means breath, spirit, and wind.

⁵In the Targum Jonathan Ben Uzziel, the thought is more expanded:

And the Lord God created man in two formations [...] and breathed into his nostrils the inspiration of life, and there was in the body of Adam the inspiration of a speaking spirit, unto the illumination of the eyes and the hearing of the ears. (NTCS Jonathan, <http://targum.info/pj/pjgen1-6.htm>).

1: 16; Joel 2: 1, 15). The shofar frequently appears throughout the entire Tanakh as a sound symbol of God's activities, His judgment and justice, and spiritual rebirth and creative potency. Montagu emphasizes the post-biblical use of the shofar for Rosh Hashanah—the New Year—when the shofar's voice becomes “a call from heaven [...] that has rung wordless down through the ages, wordless and yet full of meaning” (Montagu 2015: 113).

In the context of nature's effects, the visibility of the shofar's *voice* can be brought into focus by the aesthetics of the German romanticist Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776–1822), who emphasized the visibility of nature and music as being essential to nature. In German Romanticism, nature is exposed not through emotions, but through fantasticality: it is the most beautiful when it causes fear, and appears as a certain mystical power that is far beyond human control. Hoffmann's theory of *Naturmusik* became one of the most important in German romantic opera (see Siegel 1965: 601). One can see mystical relations to nature and the portrayal of nature's visible influence in Hoffmann's opera *Undine* (1816), in *Der Freischutz* by Carl Maria Weber, and also in the musical dramas of Richard Wagner.

In this second passage I present another renown biblical prophet Elijah (around the 9th century BC), who was grieving that the people of Israel had forsaken the Covenant with God:

And he [angel—K.R.] said [to Elijah—K.R.], Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.⁶ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19: 11–13)

Was this *small voice*, or sheer voice of silence comfortable? One may suppose that Elijah was waiting for God to speak to him powerfully and visibly through fire and earthquake, like the story of Mount Sinai. But it did not happen. In this passage, God's voice descends into silence. It is not witnessed by the whole nation, as it was on Mount Sinai. Instead, it happens individually, to one man, who needs to find peace for his soul, and that peace comes in silence. The story of Elijah reflects another stage of God's communication with man—not through the visible power and loud voice of the shofar, but through the *voice of silence*, or inner hearing. Elijah needed to recognize a different voice of the Lord; that as Covenant with God, it is also in peace of mind and soul. However, to convey totally different messages and God's various, complex feelings about man, scribes of the Tanakh invoke the same essential notion of *kol*, voice.

⁶ *Kol demamah dakkah* literally translated from Hebrew, means *sheer voice of silence*.

5.3 Multi-layered Context—Defining Versatile Essence of Semantics of Musical Phenomena

This subject has to be discussed from the perspective of the inseparable correlation of essence and context, or from the perception of essence transformed by context. In the case of musical instruments, the context of their use—religious rituals, political events, folk or family festivals, etc.—modifies the semantic essence, and as a result, allows it to be flexible. *Context becomes the essence of moral meaning of the sound.*

It can be illustrated by the symbolism of the *halil* (Hebr. *halál*—to scoop, to pierce), which was a folk instrument presumably of the double clarinet type.⁷ Due to its nasal, emotional timbre it was used to create a specific sentimental atmosphere, an ecstasy, and has been widely used to express both joy and mourning. The Talmud testifies that even a poor man had to hire two *halil* players for his wife's funeral (Kolyada 2014: 90).

The ambiguity of the *halil*'s symbolism is defined by the *context*. It becomes evident in the poetic fragments of the books of the Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah). In the book of Isaiah, sounds of the *halil* are compared to the joyous hearts of the pilgrims who ascend to the Temple in Jerusalem:

Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe [*halil*] to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lightning down of his arm [...] For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down [...]. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps [be *tuphim u ve kinnorot*]; and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. (Isaiah 30: 29–32)

In this passage, the relation of a song, the *halil* drone, God's voice and visibility of nature (the lightning), is perceptible. The ascension to *the mountain of the Lord* for a religious festival imparts a certain connection to the Exodus story, previously mentioned, of Moses going to the mountain. However, unlike that passage, this one expresses a joyful rather than fearful dialogue between the Lord and his people. Yet, simultaneously, God's voice is described as a weapon to destroy enemies. With that, one can relate the thoughts of German scientist, and supporter of *Naturphilosophie* Johann Wilhelm Ritter (1776–1810) who considered that music (sound, tone) is given to a man with consciousness.

The existence and the activity of man is tone, is language. Music is also language, general language, the first of mankind [...]. Every one of our spoken words is a secret song, for music from within continuously accompanies it. In audible song, the inner voice is raised as well. Song is praise of the creator, it completely expresses the moment of existence. (Rosen 1998: 59)

As Ritter has expressed in a delicate way, man is an active perceiver and interpreter of the world around him, invoking all his senses, both external and internal. Hebrews,

⁷In Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Tanakh, completed in the 2nd century BC—*halil* is translated as *aulos*; both instruments had similar constructions.

having a culture of sound, cultivated a variety of meanings for voice and sound, depending on the diversity of contexts—the voice as God’s choice and aspiration to communicate to man, as a means to impart essential moral laws of life, or even as a weapon for destruction. Words without sound are invisible. Therefore voice, sound and word are frequently woven together.

The verse of Isaiah 30: 32 is unique because of the context of two other musical instruments, the *toph* and *kinnor*, or timbrel and lyre, which have semantics of joy and festivity, and were used for accompanying singing of Psalms in the Temple. The *kinnor* is mentioned in the Tanakh as having a pleasant sound (Psalm 81: 3), and characterized as being royal and noble (2 Chronicles 9: 11), that produced sounds used for healing (1 Samuel 16: 23). However, in Isaiah 30: 32, is the only time in the Tanakh, the *kinnor* and *toph* are mentioned as the audible expression of God’s punishment and the wrath against those who don’t follow His commands. The essence of the *kinnor*—to praise the Lord, to soothe and heal a soul, to express joy—is transformed by the context of a battle and as a result, that essence is converted to austerity and justice.

In the book of Jeremiah the *halil* is depicted as a sign of deep sorrow. The prophet laments about the dramatic fate of pagan nations, which he sees in his vision:

Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes (halilim), and mine heart shall sound like pipes [halilim] for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches that he hath gotten are perished [...]. There shall be lamentation generally upon all the housetops of Moab [...]. (Jeremiah 48: 36, 38)

Using the principle of *parallelismus membrorum*, or grammatical parallelism, common in biblical poetry, the image of the *halil* is strengthened in this verse by repeating it twice and expanding the second half of the verse. Also, the instrument, in order to portray the immeasurable pain of the heart, has been named in the *plural case*, halilim. The image of wailing pipes providing strong and sensuous sounds, including the emotionally strong timbre, creates a poignant, atmospheric situation. These examples mentioned, reveal how various contexts can produce different essences of semantics and sound from the same musical instrument.

5.4 Expansion or Alteration of Essence of Images Through Translations/Interpretations

The final canonization of the Tanakh took place in the 1st–2nd century. It brought to light two main problems that resulted in its dynamic interpretation—the complexity of inner thought of the original text, and the specifics of conveying it into other languages.

For the Jewish textual tradition, interactive reading was a passionate and active grappling with God’s living word [...]. The Torah remains unendingly alive because the readers of each subsequent generation saw it as such, taking the holiness of Torah seriously, and adding their own contribution to the story. For the tradition, Torah *demands* interpretation. (Holtz 1984: 16–17)

Also, as Holtz (1984: 13) points out, the first problem—the complexity of thought of the original text—is reflected in nearly all Jewish literature written after the Tanakh, because of the history of interpretations and personal commentaries. The second problem—conveying the Tanakh into other languages—serves as an illustration of a paradoxical phenomenon: though translations are enemies of the original thought, by reflecting *linguistic exegesis* (Tov 2001: 119), they encourage biblical texts to preserve the character of a living and ever-widening tradition. For example, the above mentioned image of the *sheer voice of silence* as God's characteristic sign (1 Kings 19: 12), has a range of interpretations in translations of the Tanakh into different languages.⁸ The vast majority of those interpretations refer to even the weakest sound as being physical. In the Hebrew passage, however, *sheer voice of silence* is metaphysical, because just as it is physically impossible to see the voice of the shofar, it is physically impossible to hear the voice of silence. The voice of silence is *sheer*, in that it can disappear at any moment. In spite of the superficial fragility of that image, the inner message it unfolds is particularly powerful and radical. However, those become diluted in most of the translations because of the personal choices made by translators.

From the perspective of musical terminology, different semantic interpretations in most translations reveal the picturesque essence of the biblical images and the possibility to extend it in a delicate way. Yet by trying to make biblical thought more comprehensible and accessible for local readers, translators take a risk of reducing the authentic power of the images. Since the *shofar* is the most frequently mentioned ritual wind instrument in the Tanakh—74 times (Braun 2002: 26), the range and challenge of its translations is obvious. Since the very first translation of the Tanakh into Lithuanian (performed in 1590 by Jonas Bretkūnas from the German Martin Luther translation, 1534), the *shofar* is often interpreted both as trumpet and horn, within the same translation, and the trumpet notion is most common. And its depiction as a pipe, or even a clarinet (!) are invoked in the Lithuanian translation by Antanas Baranauskas (1902), performed from Latin Vulgate. It appears that Baranauskas was influenced by the Polish translation of Jakub Wujek (1590), where the *shofar* is translated as *cornet*, a common notion in Polish translations. Being a reed instrument, the clarinet typologically is distant from the *shofar* which is made from the natural horn of a ram or goat. The superiority of local contexts (the environment of translators) does not reveal the authentic power of the image, and diminishes its historical phenomenon. In the consciousness of readers the clarinet cannot be identified as the same instrument that symbolizes God's voice and is still in use in synagogues today.

⁸*The sound of a low whisper* (English Standard Version, 2001 edition); *the sound of a gentle whisper* (Lexham English Bible, 2011 edition); *the sound of a gentle blowing* (Amplified Bible, 1965 edition); *a gentle breeze* (Contemporary English Version, 1995 edition); *a quiet, subdued voice* (The Complete Jewish Bible, 1998 edition); *a sound. Thin. Quiet* (Common English Bible, 2011 edition); *vejanije tichovo vetra* [breath of a quiet wind] (Russian Sinodal translation, 1990 edition); *stilles, sanftes Sausen* [quiet, gentle swish] (Luther Bible, 1912 edition); *ramus, tykus šlamesys* [quiet and calm whisper] (Translation into Lithuanian by Jurėnas, 2000 edition), etc.

Naturally interpreters apply their own semantic scope. Therefore in the translations by local cultures the biblical lyre, *kinnor*—symbol of Psalms and of King David’s musicianship—becomes a typologically different instrument. For example: in Lithuania, since the very first translation of Bretkūnas, most translations have the *kinnor* as *kanklės* (Lithuanian folk cither); in German translations since Martin Luther it is a *lute*; in Catholic translations performed from Vulgate, it became an *organ* and in some contemporary European translations it became a *guitar*.

Though the original semantics of biblical instruments gets lost, the interpretation gets expanded by the knowledge of musical terminology that the translators possess and by their individual creativity, influenced by historical context and development of local languages. In many Lithuanian translations there would emerge new names of instruments that had not been employed in the previous versions. Some names of Lithuanian instruments and those used in Europe were recorded for the first time in the interpretations by Bretkūnas (1590) and Motiejus Valančius (1869). Thus they testify to the intercultural importance of biblical translations as written sources of the Lithuanian musical terminology.

5.5 Conclusions

Musical images in the Tanakh cannot be analyzed nor perceived without multi-layered context, as it defines the essence of significant images. Essence and context co-exist and explain each other, and neither has priority. The essence of musical images in the Tanakh is influenced by the historical-cultural context of the ancient Near East, and especially by the particularity of the monotheistic belief of Hebrews, which formed a personal relationship between man and God. Significant signs of audio culture, images of hearing, as well as voice and sound run throughout the entire Tanakh. And they define the symbolism of musical phenomena, which first and foremost is related to moral and ethical criteria. The flexible symbolism of many of the instruments pictured in the Tanakh reveals that context becomes the essence of moral meaning for sound.

In the field of interpretation through translations, local contexts dilute the essential characteristics of biblical musical phenomena, as translators inevitably apply personal creativity. On the other hand, such interpretations in a way expand the essence of the biblical meanings and contribute to a versatility of biblical thought.

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Chapter 6

Hsi Kang's Reflection on the Essence of Music: “*Hesheng*”



Mei-Yen Lee

Abstract Influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, “*he*” (和, being harmonious) was the fundamental essence of music in ancient China. As Confucianism considered music a tool of moral education, it only approved of music that had a positive educational effect on people and was conducive to the stability of society and country (known as “*yayue*” [雅樂, the ceremonial music]). It argued that any form of music that could stimulate indulgence and desire (known as “*mimizhiyin*” [靡靡之音, obscene music]) should be banned. However, after the Wei and Jin dynasties, Hsi Kang put forward a new perspective on the Confucian theory of musical art in his essay “Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun” (聲無哀樂論, “Music Has in it Neither Grief nor Joy”), which argues that music has its own intrinsic value and should be free from utilitarian purposes. He also proposed that, as the essence of music, “*hesheng*” (和聲) (There was no clear definition of “*hesheng*” presented in Hsi Kang’s article “Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun”). This study aims to investigate the significance of “*hesheng*”; hence, the author did not translate and define the term at the beginning of the article.) could only produce either a sense of agitation or relaxation, and could not produce sad or happy emotions; nor could it transform social customs or traditions. According to Hsi Kang, such transformations were functions of the human mind, rather than music. However, the true meaning of “*hesheng*” proposed by Hsi Kang was not clearly defined and remains to be explored. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the intended meaning of “*hesheng*” in Hsi Kang’s “Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun”.

6.1 Introduction

Based on historical records and past literature, it can be deduced that Chinese society in the Western Zhou period (1046–256 BC) was constructed based on close bonds between blood relatives and family members; hence, harmony of family, society, and country were ideals that helped to maintain an ethical and a stable society, and were highly valued. In this context, the Duke of Zhou established *Zhouli* (*the Rites of Zhou*)

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and created *yayue* as a means to consolidate the reign of the Zhou Dynasty. However, by the end of the Zhou Dynasty, the *liyue* (rites and music) systems established by the Duke of Zhou had collapsed, and philosophers of all schools began to propose various methods for its restoration. Confucianism and Taoism were the most prominently-represented schools of philosophy at the time. Confucianism acknowledged the value of the Zhou Dynasty's *liyue* culture, and believed that the reason it disintegrated lay in the human mind, rather than the system itself, emphasizing that people should respect the spirit of *Zhouli*. Taoism, however, rejected the *liyue* system of the Zhou Dynasty, arguing that *Zhouli* existed as a mere formality, and had no substantial significance. Both schools, however, agreed that “*he*” should be the essence of music.

6.2 The Ideal of “*He*” in Confucian Moral Education Through Music

Confucianism believes that everyone has a moral conscience and can attain a sacred state of being and develop ideal personal qualities/an ideal personality through constant self-cultivation. With this in mind, Confucianism applied the concept of “*zhong he*” (中和, balance and harmony) to the theory and practice of “*yue jiao*” (樂教, moral education through music), which allowed one to attain the realm of perfection in both morality and personality. Works of literature from the Qin and Han dynasties, such as *Liji: Yueji* (The Book of Rites: Record of Music), describe the bracing effect of music:

Therefore, when music has full course, the different relations are clearly defined by it; the perceptions of the ears and eyes become sharp and distinct; the action of the blood and physical energies is harmonious and calm; (bad) influences are removed, and manners changed; and all under heaven there is entire repose.¹

It can be concluded that Confucianism recognized the profound impact of *ceremonial music* on people's body and mind (“ears and eyes become sharp and distinct”; “the action of the blood and physical energies is harmonious and calm”), as well as morality and ethics, and adopted corresponding policies and practices in politics, socialization, and moral education. Based on the premise that music is an educational tool for ethics and morality, Confucianism proposed the aesthetic value of music; namely, “*zhong he*”.

Although Confucianism affirmed the practicability of *liyue* with regard to moral education, Taoism rejected the functional influence of *liyue* on morality. Taoists asserted that such a form of *liyue* tended to lead to untruthful, artificial, and unnatural behavior from people. Hence, Taoists proposed that “truthfulness” should be the central value of aesthetics; a spiritual life should be freed from the shackles of reality; and humans should pursue enjoyment and a carefree life. Regardless of the

¹For the original text of *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites], see Zheng (1989). My translation followed: James Legge, *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites]. Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/yue-ji/zh> [last checked 2 July 2018].

fundamental contradiction in their viewpoints toward the *liyue* culture, both schools arrived at the same conclusion that self-cultivation should be the "ultimate goal" of life, and that "*he* (harmony)" represents the ideal state for both caring for oneself and for nature. Confucianism and Taoism both advocated the ideal of realizing beauty through "*he*". This value of aesthetics thereafter become a mainstream belief in the field of musical aesthetics in ancient China.

Evidence of Confucianism's promotion of *yayue* and rejection of *zhengsheng* (a type of obscene music) can be found in *Lun Yu (The Analects of Confucius)*, which stated:

Banish the songs of Zheng, and keep far from specious talkers. The songs of Zheng are licentious; specious talkers are dangerous. ("Wei Ling Gong" of *The Analects of Confucius*)²

The Master said, "[...] I hate the way in which the songs of Zheng confound the music of the Ya". ("Yang Huo" of *The Analects of Confucius*)³

However, the debate regarding the differences of *yayue* and *zhengsheng* did not relate to musical aesthetics, but rather moral education. Confucianism intended to utilize the moderate and peaceful concepts of *yayue* to educate the people in moral and ethical values, to encourage the pursuit of non-violence, non-aggression, and honesty. Xunzi (a 3rd-century BC philosopher, known as "Master Xun [荀子 Xunzi]") inherited the traditions of Confucius, and further proposed that "*zhong he* (balance and harmony)" was the essence of music and should be the foundation of moral education through music. Xunzi stated:

Thus music is that wherein unity is manifested so as to establish harmony [...].⁴ Thus music is the great evening (*qi* 齊) of all under heaven; it is the ordering of centrality and harmony; and it is that toward which human sentiments are unavoidably bound. This is the path through which the former kings established Music. (Cook 1995: 416–417)

Xunzi advocated that balanced and harmonious music could be a tool for political, social, ethical, and moral education. Xunzi's "*he*" involved the pursuit of harmony in music by using certain tones, which in turn would produce certain positive forms of behavior, thereby reforming increasingly unfavorable customs and traditions. Consequently, Xunzi's "*he*" is based on utilizing the essence of music for moral education. Therefore, in addition to inheriting Confucius' practice of aspiring for perfection in morality and personality through moderate and peaceful music, Xunzi further extended the function of music to serve the practical purposes of political, social, and ethical education.

By the Han Dynasty, *Liji: Yueji* (The Book of Rites: Record of Music) had incorporated Xunzi's theory of music. In addition, *Liji: Yueji* further pointed out that music originates from the human mind, and human minds can be influenced by external factors; therefore, wise kings from ancient times employed the *liyue* system to educate people and shape customs and traditions:

²For the original text of the *Confucian Analects*, see Zhu (1978). My translation followed: James Legge, *Confucian Analects*. Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/analects/wei-ling-gong/zh?en=on> [last checked 2 July 2018].

³Ibid. Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/analects/yang-huo/zh?en=on> [last checked 2 July 2018].

⁴For the original text of the *Xunzi*, see Xun (1981). My translation followed: Cook (1995).

All the modulations of the voice arise from the mind, and the various affections of the mind are produced by things (external to it) [...]. Through the harmony, things do not fail (to fulfill their ends) [...]. In music of the grandest style there is the same harmony that prevails between heaven and earth [...] Music is (an echo of) the harmony between heaven and earth [...] From that harmony all things receive their being [...].⁵

According to *Liji: Yueji*, playing music is the method wise men employed to attain a harmonious state between humanity, heaven, and earth through “*he*”, the essence of music. *Liji: Yueji* developed the concept of “*he*” to an even higher level, by suggesting that “*he*” could lead to a harmonious relationship between the human mind and nature, as long as wise men apply music to promote ethics and morality.

6.3 Hsi Kang’s Reflection on Confucian Moral Education Through Music

Although Confucianism attached great importance to the educational role of music in ethics and morality, which was a dominant belief during the Qin and Han dynasties, Hsi Kang, in the period of the Wei and Jin dynasties, challenged the idea of *yue jiao* in his essay “Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun”. Hsi Kang repeatedly argued (eight times) that sound can convey a sense of “*zao*” (躁, agitation) and “*jing*” (靜, relaxation). However, music itself does not contain emotions, such as grief or joy, arguing that the reason people feel sad or joyful after listening to a piece of music is because music facilitates the expression of emotions that already exist. He contended that the ability of sound to invoke emotion is attributed to its essence, known as “*he*”. Thus, Hsi Kang advocated a disruptive argument that challenged Confucianism’s theory of *yue jia*; however, the fact that he still used “*he*” as the essence of music triggered a discussion of the true meaning of “*he*” in his work. Why would Hsi Kang challenge the traditional values but retain “*he*” as the meaning of the original essence of music?

In “Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun”, Hsi Kang first presented the ontology of sound, which emphasizes that sound is a natural phenomenon between heaven and earth, and is generated through the changes of *yin* and *yang* (dark and light) and the *wu Xing* (the five elements), and is similar to smell. Hsi Kang stated:

Heaven and Earth united their virtues and the ten thousand things by this were born. Cold and hot succeeded one another, and the five elements as a result came to be. These became manifest as the five colors and issued forth as the five tones. The arising of musical sounds is like the presence of odors in the air; they are either good or bad. And though they get mixed in with other things, they remain in essence what they are and don’t change. How could love or hate change the melody, grief or joy alter the beat? (Henricks 1983: 73)⁶

⁵For the original text of the *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites], see Zheng (1989). My translation followed: James Legge, *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites]. Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/yue-ji/zh> [last checked 2 July 2018].

⁶For the original text of the “Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun”, see Hsi (1981). My translation followed: Henricks (1983).

This viewpoint determines that, as the essence of sound "he" is a natural property of sound, rather than a property created by humans, it is highly unlikely for sound to contain human emotions. The question is why would Hsi Kang define the essence of sound as such? Studies have investigated the theoretical bases of Hsi Kang's definition of the essence of sound. A number of scholars believed that Hsi Kang based his statement on the assumption that sound is either a product or a property of nature. Therefore, his matching the five elements (earth, fire, water, metal, and wood) with the five tones of the ancient Chinese scales (*gong, shang, jiao zhi, yu*, corresponding to *do, re, mi, so, and la* in western solfeggio, respectively) is a representation exploring the origin of sound from the perspective of the creation of the universe.⁷ Other scholars have claimed that Hsi regards sound as objective, indicating that "he" has the properties of being.⁸ Nevertheless, these claims have yet to shed light on the grounds of Hsi Kang's statement.

It is worth noting that in "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun", Hsi Kang's viewpoints were elicited through the dialogue between a guest from Qin (representing supporters of Confucianism's *yue jiao*) and a host that lived in Dongye (representing Hsi Kang). Therefore, it can be concluded that Hsi's intention in writing the article was to reflect on and challenge Confucianism's statement of music being an educational tool for ethics and morality, not willing to simply accept the concept based on pure speculation.

Hsi Kang challenged Confucianism's "he"-centered views by arguing that "hesheng" induces the expression of emotions, and is not associated with a correct code of behavior; therefore, it lacks the ability to influence customs and traditions.

It is worth noting that Hsi Kang emphasized the difference between the sound of drums and bells (from stone or metal instruments) and that of wind and stringed instruments "harmonious tones are produced from the metal and stone; sounds of Perfect Harmony come from the pipes and strings" (Henricks 1983: 85).

Hsi himself was a *guqin*⁹ player. His love for *guqin* can be found in his other work *Qin Fu* (A Poetical Essay on the Qin). According to Confucian literature written prior to the *Wei* and *Jin* dynasties, the *guqin* had always been an indispensable musical instrument for literati and refined scholars. For example:

The nobleman guides (his) mind's intent with bells and drums, delights (樂) (his) minds with *qin* and *se* zithers [...]. ("Essay on Music" of *Xun Zi*) (Cook 1995: 422)

Without some (sad) cause, a ruler will not let the gems (pendent from his girdle) leave his person, nor a Great officer remove his music-stand, nor an (inferior) officer his lutes. ("Qu Li II" of *the Classic of Rites*)¹⁰

⁷Refer to Li and Liu (1999: 205). Similar viewpoints of other scholars include Xiu (1985), Li (1987), Tseng (1989), Zhang (1992), Sun (2000), Li (2004), Zhou (2015), and other scholars are not listed.

⁸Refer to Mou (1989: 346–348). Similar viewpoints of other scholars include Yang (2014), and other scholars are not listed.

⁹*Guqin* is a plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument of the zither family, "gu" = old; "qin" = stringed instrument, also translated in English as the *lute* or *qin*.

¹⁰For the original text of the *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites], see Zheng (1989). My translation followed: James Legge, *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites]. Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/qu-li-ii/zh> [last checked 2 July 2018].

When the ruler hears the sound of the lute and cittern, he thinks of his officers who are bent on righteousness. (“Record of music” of *The Classic of Rites*)¹¹

These descriptions indicate that the sound of lute (*guqin*) can inspire people; playing the *guqin* is not only a method of entertainment but also a way of self-cultivation, working toward the goal of becoming refined gentlemen with good manners and fine personal qualities. Moreover, a refined gentlemen only remove the *guqin* at times of illness and death.¹² *Bai Hu Tong: Liyue* (The Discussion of the Meaning of Classics at the White Tiger Pavilion: Rites and Music) clearly specified the meaning behind playing the *guqin*:

The word *qin* (琴, lute), by coupling it with the homonym *chin* (禁), which means “restraining”. The text reads, “Lute means restraining. With this instrument licentiousness and falsehood are restrained, and the human heart is rectified”. (Van Gulik 1969: 42–43)¹³

By that account, in Confucian philosophy, the *guqin* also served the function of moral education. However, Hsi Kang argued that, because of the natural characteristics of musical instruments, the tone of certain instruments, such as the *guzheng* (a plucked 21-string Chinese musical instrument of the zither family), *dizi* (a Chinese transverse flute) and *pipa* (a plucked four-string Chinese musical instrument), tend to be high-pitched and sharp, which are more likely to evoke the feeling of agitation; in contrast the tone of the *guqin* tends to be low-pitched and deep, therefore more likely to convey a sense of calm and relaxation. Hsi Kang stressed that sound is objective in its existence; the reason that people are influenced by music lies in the property of musical instruments, rather than music itself. Hence, Hsi Kang’s passion for the *guqin* was out of preference for the instrument’s characteristics, rather than treating it as an instrument that can prevent evil thoughts and ensure the rightfulness of mind, as was proposed in Confucianism.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²When his father or mother is ill, (a young man) who has been capped should neither use his comb nor walk with his elbows stuck out, speak on idle topics, nor take his lute or cittern in hand. (“Qu Li I” of *The Book of Rites*). When the illness was extreme, all about the establishment was swept clean, inside and out. In the case of a ruler or a Great officer, the stands, with the martial instruments suspended from them, were removed; in that of an officer, his lute and cittern. (“The greater record of mourning rites” of *The Book of Rites*) The original text of the *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites], see Zheng (1989). My translation followed: James Legge, *Li Ji* [The Book of Rites]. Chinese Text Project, <http://ctext.org/liji/sang-da-ji/zh>; <http://ctext.org/liji/qu-li-i/zh> [last checked 2 July 2018].

¹³For the original text of the *Bai Hu Tong* [The Discussion of the Meaning of Classics at the White Tiger Pavilion], see Ban (1966). My translation followed: Van Gulik (1969).

6.4 The Gains and Losses of Hsi Kang's Reflection on the Essence of Music

6.4.1 "hesheng"

Hsi Kang's important contribution to the history of Chinese music lies in the separation of music from rites and moral education, changing the prevailing opinion that *yayue* should be promoted, and *zhengsheng* eliminated. The key to his argument was his version of "he" as the essence of music. Hsi Kang stated in "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun" that "song variations though many also find their union in harmony" (Henricks 1983: 95), which points to the common essence of "he" shared by all types of music, bearing objective universality, which is independent from human perception. However, because of the variance in the subjective feelings of each individual, the same music may trigger a multitude of emotional reactions.

In other words, if "ping he" (平和, peace and harmony) is indeed the essence of sound, then music would only deliver the senses of agitation and relaxation. The grief and joy perceived by people originate from their already-existing emotions. Regardless of whether music is agitated or relaxed, its essence of "he" remains unchanged. Therefore, Hsi claimed directly that "peace and harmony is[are] the substance of music" (Ibid. 96). Influenced by the interaction of human emotions and external factors, people tend to have different perceptions towards the same music. However, human emotions that resonate with music are already in existence; music merely serves as a medium that stimulates the expression of these emotions. Hence, Hsi Kang put forward the viewpoint that sound and emotions must be separated.

Based on the argument that music does not carry any emotional properties, Hsi Kang further claimed that "hesheng" exists without a material form, which he labeled as "ziran zhi he" (自然之和, a "he" of nature), or in his words, "music has a natural harmony; it is unrelated to human feelings" (Ibid. 85). The natural property of sound, and the property of "hesheng" is, therefore, natural. In other words, "harmonious sounds have no sign" (Ibid. 75), which means the property of "hesheng" does not have physical shape or form, and exists in a purely objective state that acts as a facilitator in the expression of human emotion.

However, it is worth mentioning that Hsi Kang did not provide evidence to support the argument of his version of "he" being the essence of sound. If Hsi Kang's argument is true, and sound is objective and "hesheng" is an abstract property, more exploration is needed to explain the mechanism of sound having the ability to trigger human emotion. In addition, the statement that all types of music are different manifestations of "he" needs verifying, as well as the likelihood that certain types of music may not share the common principle of "he".

Hsi's article stated that the natural property of sound is "ziran zhi he", therefore, "he" is the common property of all sound. Regardless of the variety of other properties, all sounds share the same essence of "he", in his words, "great union in harmony" (Ibid. 95). However, if "hesheng" is a concept generated from the essence of sound, the question surrounding what causes sound to trigger various human emo-

tions remains unanswered. In fact, if a sound is created by humans, such as in the form of music, it is likely that the creator's emotions and ideas would be embedded into the creation of the sound. In such a case, "*hesheng*" may not be completely formless. Thus, it appears that Hsi Kang mixed up the metaphysical nature of "*hesheng*" with its physical existence, making it extremely difficult to understand his arguments.

Since Hsi's definition of "*hesheng*" is unclear, his interpretation of the relationship between "*hesheng*" and human emotions becomes questionable. Hsi not only failed to explicate "*hesheng*", but also failed to provide a clear definition of human emotions. Hsi stressed that "*hesheng*" is neither a human perception nor a physical existence, but rather is contained within a metaphysical nature that is independent from human values and judgments and bears no utilitarian purpose. He used descriptive language to illustrate the meaning of "*hesheng*" and re-examine the factors that supported the Confucian concept of *yue jiao*.

According to Hsi Kang, music being either *yayue* or *zhengsheng* has little impact on the shifting of customs and traditions, as both types of music share the same nature of "*hesheng*". The key factor that affects the transformation of customs and traditions is the human mind, rather than music.

Therefore, when the human mind returns to a natural state, "*he xin zu yu nei*" (和心居于内, filled with a harmonious heart on the inside) (Ibid. 101), this internal state is exhibited externally, presenting a state of "*he qi jian yu wai*" (和氣見于外, they manifested a harmonious manner on the out) (Ibid. 101). Then, "they spread it by means of the eight kinds of sound" (Ibid. 102).

...So, they sang to express their wills and danced to make known their feelings. After that they refined it (music) with stylish ornament, and displayed it in the 'Airs' and the 'Elegant' (Ibid. 101–102).

Thus, a person's demeanor and mindset are likely to influence the way they respond to music. When a person is peaceful and calm internally, he is naturally able to "respond to it with Great Harmony", so that "they caused mind and principle to accord with one another and made harmony and music mutually respond" (Ibid. 102), and thereby achieve the beauty of harmony between him/herself and nature. Based on such logic, Hsi put forward his last argument in the essay:

Therefore, music that has no sound is the father and mother of the people. To turn to the united harmony of the eight kinds of sound, this is what people delight in, and we also generally call this music. However, the improving and bettering of customs and traditions does not, fundamentally, lie in this. (Ibid. 102–103)

Through layers of arguments, Hsi intended to establish the theory that the basis of moral education through music lies in the human mind, rather than music. If a person does not have internal peace that can be exhibited externally, he/she is highly unlikely to resonate with peaceful music, which is why Hsi advocated that music has in it neither grief nor joy.

The main purpose of his argument was to challenge the traditional belief that music could be used to impart ethics and morality, by pointing out that such a belief is based on blind trust alone and groundless, arguing that it is a man's self-cultivation

that makes education successful. Hsi's conclusion that "the essence of music is such that the mind is the central thing" (Ibid. 102), demonstrated clearly his argument that the human mind is the key factor for a successful transformation of customs and traditions.

6.5 Conclusions

It can be concluded that Confucianists believed that the human mind could be influenced by external factors; therefore, the ancient wise kings utilized the harmonious *yayue* to educate people on ethics and morality. Confucianism's moral education through music had a utilitarian purpose. Ultimately, music was used as a tool to benefit society, the government, and the universe. Music, in such a context, was deprived of its independent significance as an art form. Hsi suggested that the properties of "he", "wu sheng" (無聲, soundless), and "wu xiang" (無象, formless) form the essence of music. He argued that as a property of music, "hesheng" can only stimulate the expression of human emotions that already exist, and no sentiment exists in "hesheng" itself. His statement intended to challenge the rigid mentality to which people clung at the time, and uncover the truth that customs and traditions shift due to changes in the human mind alone.

Nevertheless, several unresolved questions from Hsi's theory remain: Using "hesheng" as evidence to support his claim of the absence of sentiment in music requires further verification, and the mechanism of the interaction between "hesheng", as the essence of music, and human emotion deserves further exploration. Hsi did not provide answers to these questions in "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun". The emphasis of separating sound and emotion was proposed as an opposing argument to the statement that "*ba yin huixie*" (八音會諧, various tones aggregate together) is the reason for customary and traditional transformation. Despite his repeated arguments, he failed to provide evidence to illustrate that "hesheng" is able to stimulate human emotions. Hsi's article, thus, left an unsettled question: If music indeed contains no sentiments and only serves as a medium that triggers a man's physiological response (agitated or relaxed), thereby, facilitating the expression of human emotion, then what evidence can be used to support the argument that "hesheng" is the essence of music?

In summary, through "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun", Hsi re-assessed the Confucian idea of moral education through music, and proposed that the conceptual property of "hesheng" is the essence of music. His theory was based on the separation of music from utilitarian purpose, as proposed in Confucianism, and endowed music with the Taoist properties of "soundlessness" and "formlessness". His argument put forward a new viewpoint that was different from the understanding of music in Confucianism, which was undeniably a major contribution to the development of musical aesthetics in China; his theory, however, is not free from imperfections. The main reason is that, although Hsi mentioned "sheng" (聲), "yin" (音), "yue" (樂) (including "shi" [詩, poetry], "yue" [樂, music], and "wu" [舞, dance]) in "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun", he

did not provide a clear definition of each of these terms. Nevertheless, based on the fact that the eighth (last) round of questions and answers between the guest and the host echoed that of the first round, it can be concluded that Hsi's true concern and focus of the article was how "yue" (including "shi", "yue", and "wu") could be used to educate people. According to Hsi, when the political situation of the times was considered peaceful, the utilization of the type of "yue", which bears the property of embodying the rules of nature, and "taihe" (太和, great harmony) can inspire the human mind and facilitate a peaceful temperament. Thereby, self-cultivation can be used to achieve the status of "ziran wu wei" (自然無為, natural and effortless action) and mental peace. Only in such a situation of reaching "ziran zhi he" (自然之和, a 'he' of the nature), through music, can one shift the human mind and transform customs and traditions. From this we can see that, Hsi's ultimate intention was to affirm the feasibility of Confucian "yuejiao", by emphasizing that what is essential is to focus on the human mind rather than music.

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Part II

Genesis and Structure

Chapter 7

Deleuze, Ruyer, and Musical Morphogenesis



Audronė Žukauskaitė

Every organism is a melody that sings itself.

Jacob von Uexküll

Abstract The essay discusses Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the refrain, which is understood as a rhythmic pattern found both in musical compositions and natural phenomena, such as birdsongs. Following Jacob von Uexküll, Deleuze and Guattari argue that a refrain is an assemblage connecting a biological being and its milieu, and the appropriation of this milieu by specific practices of deterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari also refer to Raymond Ruyer, who argues that every living organism develops according to its melodic theme. In other words, a musical pattern becomes the organizing principal of morphogenetic development. This insight does not lead to the conclusion that music is biological or organismic; rather Deleuze and Guattari argue that music is a medium for becoming, which creates heterogeneous assemblages between musical and biological, artistic and natural phenomena.

7.1 Introduction

Before starting any research in music we should answer this simple question: is music a mathematical, calculable and self-referential structure, or is it a lived experience, related to material phenomena in the external world? Deleuze and Guattari would support the second version. In their elaboration on music in *A Thousand Plateaus* they argue that music is the force of becoming, which relates human and non-human beings and their milieus. In Chap. 11, '1837: Of the Refrain', they develop a theory of the refrain, which can be defined as a rhythmic pattern observable both in

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musical compositions and in natural phenomena, such as birdsongs. A refrain is not calculable or metric; rather it has a rhythmic character, which helps to define and create a territory, but which can also deterritorialize it into different milieu. In other words, a refrain is an active process of creation and becoming. This incites them to speculate to what extent music is permeated by natural rhythms and what is musical or artistic in biological creatures. Deleuze and Guattari often refer to biologist Jacob von Uexküll and his elaboration of the relations between an animal and its environment. Another point of reference is the philosophy of biology elaborated by Raymond Ruyer, which helps to make a distinction between aggregates or structures and living forms or organisms. Aggregates can be described as quantitative collections of entities formed by external forces; by contrast, living forms or organisms are defined as self-organizing, self-sustaining, and self-enjoying beings. Living forms or organisms are defined by their self-creating activity: every living organism develops according to its melodic theme and in this sense creates the melody of its life. In other words, a musical pattern, a musical theme becomes the organizing principal of morphogenetic development. This insight does not lead to the conclusion that music is biological or organismic; rather Deleuze and Guattari define music in terms of deterritorialization as becoming, which creates heterogeneous assemblages between musical and biological, artistic and natural phenomena. Deleuze and Guattari argue that these assemblages are “unnatural participations” or “aberrant nuptials” which disrupt the linear paths of development and destroy rigid structures. Again, this leads us to question to what extent nature and living organisms can be interpreted in artistic terms, and vice versa: to what extent art—and especially bioart as a specific case—is an intervention into a biological milieu seeking to alter the paths of its development and evolution? These questions will be discussed using a specific example of bioart, namely, the project *Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva sonification* by Robertina Šebjanič. The artwork investigates the sound produced by marine animals, moon jellyfishes, and in this sense examines a specific sonic assemblage created by marine animals and the performer.

7.2 *Natura musicans*: Biology and Music

Nothing seems to be so thematically disconnected as biology and art. But not for Deleuze and Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they dedicate Chap. 11, ‘1837: Of the Refrain’, to a rhythmic element, a refrain (*ritournelle*), which they try to explain in biological terms. Defining the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the biologist Jakob von Uexküll as the author of “an admirable theory of transcodings”, and point out that he interprets milieu components “as melodies in counterpoint, each of which serves as a motif for another: Nature as music” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 346). Following the theory of Uexküll, Deleuze and Guattari explain the refrain as an assemblage between a biological being, for example, a fish or a bird, and its milieu, and the appropriation of this milieu by specific practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. These practices follow a specific sonic or rhythmic pattern, which

reveals the interconnections between the biological and the musical milieus. A refrain can be related to such different phenomena as a child, trying to comfort himself by singing in the dark, a housewife, singing to herself and trying to manage the antichaos forces of her work, or a bird that sings to mark its territory (Ibid. 343–344). In all these examples a rhythmic pattern helps to manage the chaos and transform it into a manageable territory. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, “[t]he territory is the product of a territorialization of milieus and rhythms” (Ibid. 347).

To create this territory a living being has to invent certain expressive qualities and rhythmic characters. But what is an expressive quality? For example, the brown stagemaker (*Scenopoeetes dentiostriis*) makes signs every morning by picking leaves from the trees, dropping them down and later turning them upside down so that the paler underside makes a contrast with the ground. These signs have an expressive quality and mark the territory; at the same time these expressive qualities should have a certain rhythm, a certain repetitive pattern, which allows it to create the territory but also to deterritorialize or transpose it into another milieu or environments. In other words, the expressive quality starts functioning as an artwork only when it gets a rhythmic character. Rhythmic character, in contrast to meter, is unequal, incommensurable, and can operate in heterogeneous blocks, in different milieus. Rhythm is a difference, a relation between milieus. In this respect both expressive quality and rhythmical character create a territory. Is this creation a piece of art? Can we define the stagemaker’s territory as a piece of readymade art? Deleuze and Guattari argue that stagemakers are artists (practicing a kind of *art brut*) and artists are stagemakers. This leads them to a conclusion that, “from this standpoint art is not the privilege of human beings. Messiaen is right in saying that many birds are not only virtuosos but artists, above all in their territorial songs” (Ibid. 349).

However, the expressive quality and rhythmic character do not exhaust the refrain; there should be other qualities which all together form an assemblage. To continue with the example of the stagemaker, we can see how different interweaving activities make the assemblage:

As he sings, he uncovers the yellow root of certain feathers underneath his beak: he makes himself visible at the same time as sonorous. His song forms a varied and complex motif interweaving his own notes and those of other birds that he imitates in the intervals. This produces a consolidation that ‘consists’ in species-specific sounds, sounds of other species, leaf hue, throat color: the stagemaker’s machinic statement or assemblage of enunciation. (Ibid. 365)

Of course, Deleuze and Guattari take into account the fact that ethologists would not necessarily approve their theory of the refrain as an assemblage and would prefer to explain an animal’s activities in terms of behavior or by stimuli coming from the external milieu. However, to support their position, they refer to Ruyer, who:

[...] has demonstrated that the animal is instead prey to ‘musical rhythms’ and ‘melodic and rhythmic themes’ explainable neither as the encoding of a recorded phonograph disk nor by the movements of performance that effectuate them and adapt them to the circumstances. The opposite is even true: the melodic or rhythmic themes precede their performance and recording. (Ibid. 366)

In other words, an animal is pervaded by a rhythmic refrain before he is actually able to perform this act.

Deleuze and Guattari's preoccupation with rhythmic refrain in a bird's activities directs them to Olivier Messiaen's music. Messiaen notated hundreds of birdsongs which were later transformed and incorporated into his artworks, such as *Réveil des oiseaux* (1953), *Oiseaux exotiques* (1956), *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (1958), and *Chronochromie* (1960). Deleuze and Guattari interpret this artistic practice as a deterritorialization of the refrain: the artist takes a birdsong, a refrain closely related to a specific territory, and transforms it into something else, into some sonoric quality, which can express different intensity or haecceity:

If the sound block has a becoming-animal as its content, then the animal simultaneously becomes, in sonority, something else, something absolute, night, death, joy—certainly not a generality or a simplification, but a haecceity, this death, that night. (Ibid. 335)

In other words, the artist is not simply imitating the animal but is participating in an animal's and his own becoming:

The human musician is deterritorialized in the bird, but it is a bird that is itself deterritorialized, 'transfigured', a celestial bird that has just as much of a becoming as that which becomes with it. (Ibid. 335)

So even having in mind Messiaen's precision in collecting the birdsongs, we can argue that the composer is not imitating and in some sense "humanizing" the birdsongs but is transforming them into something else. As Bogue points out, to incorporate bird's sounds into his composition, Messiaen has to translate and transcode bird's sonority into the twelve-tone scale used in piano composition (Bogue 2003: 29). As Bogue argues, Messiaen observes that:

The high pitches, rapid tempos, and peculiar timbres of birdsongs require that he enlarge the intervals between tones, slow the tempos, and find substitute timbres among human instruments in order to provide musical counterparts to the original birdsongs. [...] For Deleuze and Guattari, Messiaen's interaction with birdsong is a paradigmatic instance of the musical process of becoming-other, a becoming-bird in which something passes between the fixed coordinates of human music and birdsong to produce new sounds. (Bogue 2004: 97)

Another important point is that Messiaen's translation also works as deterritorialization, relating a bird to its milieu—water, cliffs, and swifts. In this sense Messiaen's musical compositions can be interpreted as sonic assemblages, creating the continuum between the artist, the animal and its milieu, and in this sense transforming the cosmic forces.

Deleuze and Guattari's example of Messiaen's music reveals the antithesis between rhythm and meter. Using different techniques ("added values", "rhythmic characters", and "non retrogradable rhythms"), Messiaen invents a-metrical rhythms, which make his music sound as intensely rhythmical and timeless at the same time. Thus, Messiaen's music supports Deleuze and Guattari's division between metric and non-metric time, or between *Chronos* and *Aion*. The notion of *Aion*, which literally means "eternity", is the indefinite time of the pure event or becoming. Meter,

whether regular or not, can be measured and coded, whereas rhythm is immeasurable and is undergoing a transcoding. Meter operates in a homogeneous space-time, whereas rhythm operates in heterogeneous blocks and environments. Meter is dogmatic, whereas rhythm is critical (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 345–346). In other words, rhythm is the milieu's answer to chaos: rhythm is always in-between, between musical and biological, between human and animal.

Whereas meter presumes an even division of a uniform time, rhythm presupposes a time of flux, of multiple speeds and reversible relations. (Bogue 2003: 25)

In other words, rhythm is an active form of transformation and becoming, which merges the becoming-animal of music and becoming-music of an animal.

[As] Messiaen says, music is not the privilege of human beings: the universe, the cosmos, is made of refrains; the question in music is that of a power of deterritorialization permeating nature, animals, the elements, and deserts as much as human beings. The question is more what is not musical in human beings, and what already is musical in nature. Moreover, what Messiaen discovered in music is the same thing that ethologists discovered in animals: human beings are hardly at an advantage, except in the means of overcoding, of making punctual systems. (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 341)

In other words, a rhythmic refrain establishes a relation between different milieus—human and non-human—and supports their communication.

7.3 Raymond Ruyer's Melodic Morphogenesis

In their elaboration of the refrain, Deleuze and Guattari often refer to Uexküll, who interprets the relationship between a biological being and its milieu as a contrapuntal relation between two or more melodies:

For an oak tree, rain is a bearer of meaning that it utilizes as nourishment. The oak's leaves, which are fashioned with gutterlike veins and which spread like the tiles of a roof, form a melodic point in harmony with the counterpoint of the rain. In a similar fashion, the formation of the octopus' muscular pocket, which it contracts in order to swim, is a developmental melody in counterpoint with the incompressibility of water, which makes such hydraulic locomotion possible. (Bogue 2003: 60)

In other words, the different components of milieus are treated as melodies or rhythms, which secure the thematic organization and coherence of the surrounding habitat. This idea is very close to Ruyer's philosophy of biology, elaborated in *Néofinialisme* (1952) and *La Genèse des formes vivantes* (1958). Deleuze and Guattari refer to Ruyer's notion of morphogenesis, which explains the development of every living being in terms of a formative melody or theme. As was mentioned before, Ruyer distinguishes between aggregates, which were formed by external forces, such as rocks or clouds, and living forms, which are defined by self-shaping, self-sustaining, and self-enjoyment. Ruyer defines the living forms or organisms in terms of a melodic line which explains the coherence and continuity of their development. As Bogue points out:

Ruyer's controlling insight is that the morphogenesis of a living entity can never be explained via a mechanistic causality-through-contiguity, but must presume the existence of a formative theme or melody controlling its development. (Ibid. 62)

In this sense a musical element, the formative melody or theme, becomes the central feature of biological development. In other words, the morphogenetic development, or the process of differentiation, as Deleuze would say, proceeds according to a certain melodic theme, which is at the same time "vertical" and "horizontal". As Bogue points out:

According to Ruyer, morphogenesis proceeds in a temporal, 'horizontal' sequence, but always according to a 'vertical', trans-spatial and transtemporal theme, "an individualized melodic theme which can either be repeated as a whole or can be distributed in variations, in which the initial, repeated theme serves as its own 'development' (in the musical sense of the term)". (Ruyer 1958: 96; Bogue 2003: 63)

In other words, the structuring musical theme already exists in advance, and it precedes the actual development. However, the living being, undergoing this actualization, is not simply repeating the preexisting form, but is performing and creating its own material existence, similarly as a musical performance is much more than the collection of scores. For example, an embryo has a certain memory of how to make itself into a fully grown organism but in the process of its development it is open to variations, improvisations and adjustments (a field which is now well researched by epigenetics). As Ruyer observes:

The organism forms itself with risks and perils, it is not formed... The living being is at the same time agent and 'material' of its own action [...]. The living being forms itself directly according to the theme, without the theme having first to become idea-image and represented model. (Ruyer 1958: 261–262; Bogue 2003: 63)

Thus, even the idea-melody is preexisting, it is immanent to the process of development.

Ruyer's distinction between the "vertical" melodic theme and the "horizontal" temporal sequence which takes place in the process of development resonates with the Deleuzian idea about two types of differentiation elaborated in *Difference and Repetition*. Similar to Ruyer, Deleuze distinguishes between what he calls a virtual Idea (melodic or mnemonic theme, in Ruyer's terms) and a specific series of actualization (morphogenesis or development, in Ruyer's terms). As Deleuze points out:

We call the determination of the virtual content of an Idea differentiation; we call the actualisation of that virtuality into species and distinguished parts differentiation. (Deleuze 2004: 258)

It is important to note that even the melodic theme preexists its development, it is to be understood not as a transcendental idea or a pattern but as a phenomenon immanent to the processes of development. The melodic theme is like a score which exists as a virtual whole and which can be actualized in many different ways in a specific performance. As Elizabeth Grosz points out:

The transpatial theme pervades all of time, to the extent that it constitutes the melody, the rhythm, through which each thing forms itself. Primary form appropriates themes that have already been laid out for it in advance, not a priori like a command, but more like the musical performance of a score, which preexists and to some extent directs but does not determine each performance. Ruyer understands the mnemonic theme as the inherited potential of each form of material organization [...]. (Grosz 2017: 226)

In other words, the melodic theme contains the virtual potential of primary forms, which is actualized and developed according to a disparate series of differentiation. In this regard we can argue that the Deleuzian notion of differentiation not only rests on biological differentiation but also introduces embryogenesis into his ontology of becoming. In this sense not only does every organism perform its own self-creation and development, but the entire ontological field is explained in terms of creative morphogenesis.

These insights into morphogenesis as the unfolding of a virtual melodic theme may change our understanding of art as an exceptionally human invention. Ruyer distinguishes between different forms of consciousness: Form I, Form II, and Form III, which develop one from another and gain more and more organization and autonomy. Form I refers to self-enjoying and self-sustaining activity, common to all living beings; Form II refers to representational consciousness created through the development of organs and motor schematization; Form III refers to human consciousness (Ruyer 1958: 220; Bogue 2003: 64). Every form of consciousness expresses the growing autonomy of biological development and the increased organization of space and time.

Ruyer reviews the incremental changes evident in Forms I, II and III in terms of various organisms' inner developmental melodies and their external contrapuntal relations. He describes the amoeba's restricted domain of control, the broader domains of the spider, the mole, birds and various territorial animals, and the extensive domain of humans, noting that the expansion of space-time control brings with it increased specialisation of functions and increased freedom of activity. (Bogue 2009: 312)

In other words, every form of consciousness expresses a growing independence and detachment from time and space, a certain activity of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

However, even expressing a different degree of organization and autonomy, all these forms interpret the same melodic theme. This encourages us to ask whether there is a continuity between different forms of consciousness and between animal and human creativity. If every lower form of consciousness prevails in a higher form (Form I prevails in Form II, Form II in Form III), we can assert that all living beings share the same self-forming activity and take equal part in the process of creation. As Bogue asserts:

Every form, from atoms to molecules, viruses, bacteria and more complex organisms, is a self-sustaining configuration of forces of connection. Each of these forms, according to Ruyer, is a consciousness. Identifying form with consciousness must at first seem far-fetched, but Ruyer's point is not that all the attributes of human consciousness are present in atoms. Rather, he argues that human consciousness is merely a complex, highly developed, self-aware version of the primary self-forming activity that manifests itself in varying degrees

of complexity throughout the physical world. The amoeba, for example, is a self-sustaining form that exhibits the properties of a basic subjectivity. (Ibid. 304)

It is important to note, that Ruyer's theory of different forms of consciousness does not represent a certain form of panpsychism, arguing that human consciousness is present in every atom; rather it is a posthumanist assertion that human consciousness is a form of self-forming activity, which defines every living being. In other words, all living beings express the same self-forming activity. They all contain a certain consciousness as self-enjoyment and self-proximity and in this sense can be regarded as a kind of "subjectless subjectivity" (Bains 2002).

7.4 Chimeric Subjectivities, or the Non-human Art

If every living being has this potential of self-forming activity, can we claim that art is not exceptionally human but is a biological activity common to all living beings? As Bogue argues, "[yet] we may still ask whether animal creativity is an aesthetic activity, whether, for example, birdsong is really music" (Bogue 2003: 69). Although we might expect Ruyer to support this thesis, he thinks that only human consciousness or Form III can produce aesthetic forms, because only human consciousness can be detached from biological situations. By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari argue, as was mentioned before, that music is not the privilege of human beings; music permeates natural phenomena as much as human beings (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 341). In this sense not only nature is musical but also art is inescapably biological:

What we have, then, is a grand *natura musicans*... [...] Birds are musicians, but so are crickets, ticks, atoms, and stars. And the musical motifs composed by a Varèse or a Messiaen are intertwined with those developmental themes that unfold in the embryo and its coenacted world as it eventuates in the ongoing biological activity we call Varèse or Messiaen. (Bogue 2003: 75)

In other words, all living beings are intertwined and have to acknowledge their biological genesis and belonging to material world.

This is not to say that Deleuze and Guattari propose some naturalistic and organic interpretation of music and art. Rather they argue for some "unnatural participations", which interrelate human and non-human, culture and nature. Both culture and nature are in a state of becoming which forms heterogeneous and non-linear assemblages:

We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity, peopling by contagion to sexual reproduction... Bands, human or animal, proliferate by contagion, epidemics, battlefields, and catastrophes. [...] Unnatural participations or nuptials are the true Nature spanning the kingdoms of nature. [...] These combinations are neither genetic nor structural; they are interkingdoms, unnatural participations. (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 266–267)

In other words, Deleuze and Guattari do not argue that nature and culture, biology and music is one and the same thing; rather they argue that biology and music

can be explained according to analogous patterns. Deleuze and Guattari often refer to Gilbert Simondon, who elaborated the notion of “analogical paradigmaticism”. Simondon investigated and compared physical, biological, human, and technological assemblages as if they were analogical systems. The analogy between different “paradigms” or assemblages is based on the notion of transduction, which is defined as:

[...] a physical, biological, mental, social operation through which an activity propagates gradually within a domain, by founding this propagation on a structuration of the domain that is realized from one place to the next. (Simondon 2005: 32)

In this respect transduction is both the tool for differentiation and the matter which is being differentiated. The notion of transduction (in contrast to deduction or induction) explains how something can be developed or transformed without any transcendental or universal principle, and follow its singular line of individuation and differentiation.

Deleuze and Guattari’s idea about heterogeneous becomings and “unnatural participations” wouldn’t be possible without Ruyer’s discovery of equipotentiality, which explains the mechanism of interspecies connections. The notion of equipotentiality implies that in the early stage of organization embryonic cells are capable of developing in multiple ways. As Bogue points out:

Early in embryological studies, researchers found that grafting cells from one sector of an embryo into another [...] did not necessarily disrupt normal morphogenesis. If the graft was made early in development, the cell often simply assumed the function appropriate to its new location in the embryo. If, however, the graft was made later in development, the grafted cell developed as if it were in its old position. This suggested that initially embryonic cells are ‘equipotential’, capable of developing in a number of ways—to become a lung, a foot, or an eye—and that as development proceeds, cells become more specific in their function, such that at a certain point a given cell might be capable of forming only a limb, or even later, of forming only a right thumb. (Bogue 2009: 309)

Equipotentiality, which in some respect echoes Deleuzian virtuality, can be thought of as a certain melodic theme, which can be performed or actualized in many different ways. As Deleuze observes:

When a cellular migration takes place, as Raymond Ruyer shows, it is the requirements of a ‘role’ in so far as this follows from a structural ‘theme’ to be actualised which determines the situation, not the other way round. (Deleuze 2004: 269)

In other words, the cellular theme or melody may be actualized in different ways and acquire different structures.

However, even if initially the cells are capable of (virtual) equipotentiality, later in the process of development they are deprived of it. As Ruyer points out:

Primitive embryonic equipotentiality thus disappears progressively; it is distributed in more and more limited areas. The theme of organs, by taking shape, ceases to be a theme to become a structure. (Ruyer 2016: 70)

The cells have to become more and more specific in order to obtain a defined and organized structure. Nevertheless, a certain degree of equipotentiality still persists in every organism and its parts. Ruyer's interest in early experiments in embryogenesis proves that a certain degree of equipotentiality is still prevailing even in cells which were grafted into another organism. For example, a German embryologist Hans Spemann transplanted the dorsal lips of the blastopore onto the embryonic cells of tritons, and thus managed to change the host embryo. As Grosz explains:

Ruyer understands these early experiments in embryogenesis as demonstrating the force of the mnemonic theme in directing embryonic development long before there is a subject or even a body to be directed. The transplanted blastopores were still living elements or fragments that invoke a mnemonic theme other than that which regulates the host species, bringing into being a chimera that nevertheless obeys the overall form of the host. (Grosz 2017: 233)

The grafted cells still retain their potentiality and develop according to the specific site where they are grafted.

The embryonic host performs its melodic theme: the graft, while now located in the embryonic host, continues to play its own melody, create its own form according to its theme, even as the embryo continues to play its own mnemonic theme, with which the graft must now, in its own way and through its own inventiveness, harmonize. (Ibid. 234)

In other words, both the host and the graft have to interrelate with each other and form a certain chimera, or assemblage. This is a good example to prove that a biological being is not necessarily “organic” or “natural”; rather it is “assemblage-like” and “artistic”.

Deleuze and Guattari's ideas, following the insights of Ruyer and Simondon, incite us to think about different forms of art, which would be based not exclusively on human activity but could also include non-human art. These alternative forms of art have been actualized in specific examples of bioart, for example, in the project by Robertina Šebjanič called *Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva sonification* (2016, Honorary Mention Prix Ars Electronica).¹ The project investigates the sound produced by marine animals—moon jellyfishes. Jellyfish are one of the ancient species that has been around for more than 500 million years. Even though the environment of the oceans and seas is rapidly changing, mainly because of the human imprint, it seems that it does not disturb the jellyfish. They can adapt to a more acidic, less oxygen rich environment and survive, unlike a numbers of other species such as corals or fishes which are rapidly shrinking. *Aurelia Aurita* is one of the ancient species, having rudimentary sensory nerves which allow it to perceive light, smell and orientation. Its gravity receptors, containing calcium crystals, are similar to our vestibular system. In this sense the artwork creates a certain “analogical paradigmaticism”, which makes it possible to compare human and marine animals as two living systems.

What makes the project so attractive to the observer is its melodic part. The project features live sound generated by *Aurelia Aurita*. The sound was recorded during the *Deep Blue* project, enacted at the Institute of Marine Science and Technologies in

¹Robertina Šebjanič, *Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva sonification*, 2016. <http://robertina.net/aurelia-1hz-proto-viva-sonification/> [last checked 2 July 2018].

Izmir, Turkey in 2014. The prerecorded sound from the sea is mixed with sound loops containing recordings of jellyfish in a closed environment. The project also contains an interactive installation *Aurelia 1+Hz/proto viva sonification* which presents live jellyfishes in an aquarium. This sonic and visual experience creates the feeling that the observer is immersed in the milieu of a living organism and takes part in its creation and development. The movements, contractions and interaction of organisms are featured through the sound, which literally makes *Aurelia Aurita* a melody that sings itself and follows its musical themes. The performer, which navigates the sound and the recordings of previous experiments, here acts as a different organism, which is grafted into the first, and has to harmonize her melody with the host organism. In other words, the rhythmic sonification here acts a medium of becoming, which merges the becoming-animal of the performer and becoming-music of an animal. In this sense the performative sonification expresses the rhythmic character of the lives of marine animals. Can art add something to the organic creation and the self-enjoyment of the living organism? Very little, almost nothing. But it can create a scene where the virtual melody of life can actualize itself and make its development audio-perceivable.

7.5 Conclusions

Thus Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the refrain opens a different perspective on music: music is interpreted not as a calculable field of mathematical entities but as a live material, intertwined with all living beings. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the refrain is closely related with biology. As Bogue argues:

If one were to substitute 'refrains' for Ruyer's 'themes' and 'melodies', and speak of varying degrees of space-time mastery and autonomy in terms of relative degrees of deterritorialization, it would not be hard to see Ruyer's discourse on Forms I, II and III as a precursor of Deleuze and Guattari's entire treatment of refrains in the natural world. (Bogue 2009: 312)

However, Deleuze and Guattari's ideas on music do not represent a certain form of panpsychism, a conviction, that human consciousness is present in every living being; rather the philosophers argue that human consciousness is a form of self-creative activity, which defines every living being. Specific rhythmic patterns, such as refrains, or melodic themes, permeate both biological and artistic forms of expression. This does not mean that music for Deleuze and Guattari is simply natural or organismic; rather it is an assemblage, interweaving different territories and milieus of human and non-human living beings.

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Chapter 8

The Biological Constraints on Musical Structure as the Foundations of Musical Essence



Piotr Podlipniak

Abstract The diversity of musical phenomena seems to suggest that the answer to the question, “what is music?” depends on culture. This stands in contrast to the fact that all cultures use sounds, either as the building blocks of speech or music, depending on their interpretation by the nervous system. Although musical structure is influenced by the culture-specific characteristics of music, certain properties of music such as pitch class or musical pulse are music specific phenomena. It is therefore proposed that musical essence is based on a perceptive bias that is the result of the evolution of *Homo sapiens* and that musical essence lies in the organization of the human brain.

8.1 Introduction

Music is a term which encompasses a wide variety of phenomena, the diversity ranges from simple tribal rituals that use sounds to complex artistic musical works composed of several different voices. All such phenomena have been viewed in the Western tradition as examples of the ‘art of sound’ or ‘tonal art’—which are characterized by the aesthetic appreciation of sound (cf. Adler 1885). As a result of the 20th century avant-garde revolution in music, the problem of the demarcation between music and non-music became the real issue. Since every sound can be interpreted aesthetically, as many composers have claimed (e.g. John Cage), the decision about what music is lies in the mind of the listener, and not in the sound itself. Therefore, if one accepts such a cultural freedom, the only possible definition of music must include a subjective, or at least an intersubjective element, as music can be anything that a particular person or group of people decide it to be. Moreover, ethnomusicologists highlight that there are some cultures in which people do not use any specific term

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for to music (Gourlay 1984) in the Western sense, yet they still use sound in a way that Westerners would call music. If one accepts all of these reservations concerning the use of the term music, then looking for the essence of music would seem to be a very difficult task. From this perspective, musical essence solely depends on cultural choice. In contrast to such a *linguo-centric* point of view, there has been a long tradition of searching for musical essence in the acoustical characteristics of music (e.g. von Helmholtz 1863). However, even if we exclude Western avant-garde music from the picture, the variety of musical systems around the world still shows that there is no one ‘acoustically grounded universal basis’ for all musical systems which could be classed as the musical essence. Although some similarities between musical scales exist in the world, such as the use of octave and fifth (Nettl 2000), there are also systems which are based on intervals completely different from the contemporary Western equal tempered system (Ellis 1965). Thus, searching for musical essence in the physical properties of sound seems equally useless.

Another possibility to find the essence of music is to take into account that music is mainly a cognitive phenomenon (Serafine 1988). This point of view has recently become especially popular within cognitive musicology, which interprets human sound sensations and musical phenomena by the means of scientific methodologies (cf. Huron 2016). Such a naturalistic standpoint necessitates the search for the essence of music in human cognition which is, according to contemporary scientific knowledge, a product of the human brain. Since human cognition is a product of genetic, epigenetic and environmental (including cultural) factors (Jablonka and Lamb 2005) the search for musical essence should concentrate on both biological and cultural issues. For such research there is a question regarding whether there are certain biological constraints on human musicality. If there are, then music should come to be understood as part of human nature (Blacking 1973). This would mean that musical essence lies in human biology and must have evolved during the course of human evolution.

8.2 Musical Structure as a Mental Phenomenon

In the Pythagorean tradition music is understood as an external phenomenon explained and described by numbers and notes. From this perspective notes represent sounds as acoustical phenomena. What differentiates listening to music from listening to other sounds is the experience of musical structure, which means that notes only code certain sound properties. Although we used to think of musical structural categories such as musical intervals and rhythmical measures in terms of objective physical properties—the proportions of sound frequencies and time respectively—they are in fact intersubjective phenomena. This does not mean of course that physical properties do not influence our sensations. However, every perception is actually a prediction of upcoming events (Llinás 2002: 3) which suggests that

perception is an interpretation of stimuli by the nervous system rather than a simple reflection of reality (Purves 2017: 14–25). This interpretation is based on so called mental schemata which have been shaped as a result of the constant exchange of information between the nervous system and the environment. Therefore, even a simple sensation of pitch is a cognitive phenomenon (Huron 2016: 38), which depends on the specificity of the human brain and its experience rather than a mere reflection of the physical world. As far as musical structure is concerned, from the traditional point of view the most salient musical features are pitch and rhythm. There are also other traits however, which are often treated as important elements of music such as timbre, tempo, dynamics, and articulation. All these features as cognitive phenomena depend in different degrees on various physical parameters. For example, the sensation of timbre in music is mainly influenced by acoustical parameters such as spectral centroid, attack time, and spectral irregularity (McAdams and Giordano 2008), whereas the sensation of pitch by the fundamental frequency (F_0) (Stainsby and Cross 2008). But in order to experience a particular timbre or pitch the nervous system must be appropriately tuned by former experience. This means that in order to interpret a particular spectral centroid, attack time, or spectral irregularity as the timbre of a flute, the listener has to possess a mental category of the timbre of a flute in his long-term memory—a kind of pattern which must be compared with incoming data from the senses. If the amount of information obtained during perception is enough to match the level of similarity with the pattern, we experience the timbre of a flute and we are usually conscious that what we hear indeed is a flute.

Nevertheless, without any previous experience of that sound, this interpretation would be impossible. The same is true with pitch. However, some musical sensations seem to be endogenous, meaning that they may be influenced mainly by internal processes that depend on the human specific structural features of the nervous system. This influence can be obtained even without any external features of stimuli. In other words, it seems that humans have a certain proclivity to impart human-specific musical properties to perceived sounds. The best illustration of the endogenous character of the perception of some musical elements is the so called “speech to song illusion” (Deutsch et al. 2008, 2011) in which the same sound stimulus is interpreted at the beginning as speech and then after a number of loops as a song. In this phenomenon musical interpretation emerges without any change in the acoustical properties of the stimulus. Sounds of the same fundamental frequencies are interpreted at the beginning as changes in pitch in a linear way and then in a discrete mode, i.e. as belonging to particular pitch classes. In addition, the rhythmical aspects of perceived sounds change from a speech-like imprecise chain of long and short events into precise rhythmical measures. Another example of an endogenous musical phenomenon is musical pulse (London 2012). Musical pulse is a subjective phenomenon which consists of “a series of identical and regularly recurring (isochronous) beats equally spaced in time” (Snyder 2001: 159). Musical pulse is a reference point for not only rhythmical measures, but for also a more elaborate part of the temporal structure

of music—meter. The well-established endogenous phenomenon related to meter recognition is ‘subjective rhythmization’ (Bolton 1894) which according to London (2012: 6) should be named ‘subjective metricization’. The endogenous nature of this phenomenon consists of subjective, regularly appearing accents which are experienced during listening to a series of acoustically identical sounds. Yet what makes musical structure especially interesting as an intersubjective phenomenon is the fact that, similar to language, it is an example of the so called ‘Humboldt system’ (Merker 2002), a system which generates infinite diversity by finite means. In the case of music the finite means consist of pitch classes and rhythmical measures. The infinite diversity of music is possible thanks to tacit rules which allow the organization of pitch classes and rhythmical measures in an implicitly recognizable musical course. Although it seems that in contrast to language, the finite means of music can be organized without any constraints, psychological research shows that the majority of listeners without professional musical knowledge can recognize if the tacit rules are broken (Tillmann 2005). Therefore, musical structure is an example of an implicitly acquired syntax. The application of the tacit rules which govern this syntax results in the hierarchical organization of rhythmic measures and pitch classes (Lerdahl and Jackendoff 1983) and the most obvious phenomenon related to this is probably pitch centrality—a phenomenon experienced when listening to any example of tonal music (Huovinen 2002). Pitch center does not exist as an acoustical feature, but is an intersubjective phenomenon which is based on the experience of tonal *qualia* of stability, pleasure and contentment (Huron 2006: 145). However, in order to experience tonal center the distribution of pitch class occurrence must be statistically unequal in frequency, something Schoenberg must have known when inventing dodecaphony. What is interesting is that the recognition of all these structural phenomena are not idiosyncratic but intersubjective. The intersubjective character of musical structure proves that the recognition of music is at least governed by certain neurobiological constraints specific to our species. Musical structure, as we experience it, must therefore be considered as a mental, intersubjective phenomenon rather than an objective acoustical feature of music.

8.3 The Biological Roots of Music

Music and musical behavior as biological traits can be explained on two levels: proximal and ultimate (Tinbergen 1963; Fitch 2015). The former tries to explain how something works, whereas the latter tries to understand why it exists. As the processing of pitch and rhythm structure seems to be specific solely to music, and therefore differentiates music from other forms of human sound expressions, it is reasonable to restrict the search for answers to both the proximal and ultimate questions to those cognitive abilities which allow humans to experience the structural elements of music. This does not mean that other features of music such as dynamics, tempo,

timbre and articulation cannot be explained in terms of biology. These features, however, are not specific solely to music which suggests that they have probably evolved due to functions unrelated to music. For example, changes of tempo and dynamics are part of the so called ‘expressive dynamics’ (Merker 2003) or ‘affective prosody’ (Zimmerman et al. 2013: 117), which are communicative phenomena not only present in music and speech but also in vocal expressions of certain nonhuman mammalian species. Similarly, the recognition of timbre is most probably evolutionarily older than speech and music (Schellenberg and Habachi 2015) and can function as a pre-linguistic default label of various sources of sound (Huron 2016: 36). In contrast, pitch syntax and rhythm syntax based on a sense of musical pulse, which together create musical structure (Fitch 2006), are absent from the vocal expressions of non-human primates. Therefore, they must be either culturally transmitted features or they must have evolved after the split from the last common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees. From the proximal perspective, the ability to recognize musical structure is characterized by certain traits which suggest that it is a domain specific ability. First of all, the knowledge of musical syntax is tacit (Tillmann 2005) and is learned effortlessly without any formal tutoring (Tillmann et al. 2000). Apart from this, the syntactic organization of pitches and rhythmical measures is often indicated as a ‘musical universal’ (Brown and Jordania 2013) or as a music ‘design feature’ (Bispham 2010) in the sense that it is present in all known musical cultures. If a particular trait is universal among the whole species then it is usually interpreted by ethologists as a biological adaptation. Although the fully shaped ability to recognize tonal relations in music develops late in ontogenesis there is research which indicates that brain specialization for the processing of pitch syntax starts even right after birth. In a clever neuroimaging study Perani (2010) and her colleagues observed that the brains of newly born babies show right hemispheric dominance whilst listening to tonally correct music excerpts but not to tonally distorted versions of those same excerpts. These results indicate that the human brain is sensitive to the tonal structure of music right after birth. Such an early developmental specialization is most probably due to some neurobiological constraints. All these observations provoke us to assume that the ability to recognize musical structure can be a domain specific adaptive trait of *Homo sapiens*. If this is true then the ultimate question is what adaptive function or functions does musical structure serve?

As far as the possible adaptive functions of music are concerned many original explanations have been proposed. The oldest hypothesis proposed by Darwin (1871) has its roots in his idea of sexual selection. According to this idea, recently and elaborately revived by Miller (2000), human musicality evolved thanks to the function of music serving as a kind of sexual display. Another set of hypotheses concentrate on music as being a tool of social consolidation (Storr 1992: 17; Roederer 1984) or as a form of territorial advertisement signaling group cohesion (Hagen and Bryant 2003; Hagen and Hammerstein 2009). There are also theories which suggest that music understood as a behavioral and motivational capacity evolved because it enables and reinforces emotional bonding that is observed in mother-infant interaction, ceremonial rituals, as well as in adult courtship (Dissanayake 2008). Another question however is, which particular musical features are responsible for the adaptive value

of music. Taking into account musical structure which makes music unique among other sound expressions, the possible search for the adaptive functions of music should concentrate on music-specific features which constitute musical structure. There are some hypotheses which emphasize a particular role of certain structural features of music in fulfilling adaptive functions. For example, according to McNeil the synchronization of movement between people, the ultimate function of which is social consolidation, is possible thanks to chanting, singing, or shouting rhythmically (McNeil 1995: 2), which is in fact based on the human sense of musical pulse (London 2012). Another structural feature of music which can be responsible for the consolidating power of music is pitch structure. The ability to recognize pitch center has been proposed as a pre-conceptual way of informing individuals about being part of a group (Podlipniak 2016). Whatever the actual adaptive function of musical structure is, all aforementioned premises allow us to assume that music is a part of human nature.

8.4 Musical Essence as a Part of Human Nature

In terms of Aristotelian philosophy ‘essence’ is applied to attributes of objects that makes something what it fundamentally is. In other words the essence of a thing is responsible for its identity. If music is a part of human nature then our musical experience depends on the neurobiological constraints of the human mind. Since music is in fact a cognitive phenomenon, the search for musical essence should concentrate on the mental attributes of our musical experience which determine that we recognize a particular experience as musical. As previously mentioned, what differentiates music from other forms of sound expressions is a musical structure composed of pitch classes and rhythmical measures. Therefore, musical essence must be based on the neurobiological constraints which cause people to recognize pitch classes organized in the flow of time as rhythmical measures. In other words, the recognition of musical structure depends on human perceptive biases that force our minds to interpret acoustical phenomena in terms of musical pitches and rhythmical measures organized in reference to musical pulse. These biases are a result of the evolution of the nervous system in the lineage of *Homo sapiens* after the split from the last common ancestor of humans and chimpanzees. All other additional attributes of musical experience such as timbre, dynamics, tempo, and articulation cannot be treated as parts of musical essence as they are mental phenomena not specific solely to music.

This point of view causes some trouble, especially with certain examples of Western avant-garde music. From this perspective all musical works composed without pitch classes and rhythmical measures should be excluded from the phenomena of music. Such a notion however stands in stark contrast to contemporary musical culture in which music deprived of structure based on pitches and rhythms is an important part of artistic achievement. What is more, composing tonal music is often treated as backward and outdated. In order to avoid such a problem Merker (2006: 32–33)

suggests to divide the phenomena of using sound as art into ‘music’ and ‘sound art’. According to Merker music should be defined solely as the aforementioned Humboldt system whereas sound art as:

Spectro-temporal pattern creation, which has [...] been under active exploration by artists with a wide range of orientations and techniques for the better part of a century. (Merker 2006: 32)

Another possible solution to this problem is to divide the word ‘music’ into another two categories yet again. When we think about ‘poetry’, we do not understand this phenomenon as a synonym of ‘language’, although all poems are built from words of a particular language. Similarly, we can think about ‘music as art’ which is composed of ‘music as a tool of communication’. At the same time, not all musical pieces understood as art must be composed of ‘music as a tool of communication’ and not every expression of ‘music as a tool of communication’ is necessarily an example of art. It seems that, there are many examples of music which cannot be understood as aesthetical objects. Do football fans sing songs in order to elicit the aesthetic appreciation of sound? Or, do people sing *Happy Birthday* at parties because of their aesthetic needs? Despite these reservations the structural properties of football chanting and *Happy Birthday* are definitely ‘musical’. They consist of rhythmical measures and pitch classes ordered according to tonal rules.

In the majority of cases ‘music as art’ and ‘music as a tool of communication’ coexist, but as has been illustrated, this does not always happen. When we think about music as a part of our nature we should restrict our reflection to ‘music as a tool of communication’. Conversely, the examples of avant-garde music without the tonal organization of pitches and rhythmical measures must be considered as solely ‘music as art’. This means that there is not a common musical essence for *Happy Birthday* and Cage’s *4’33”*. What the essence of avant-garde musical works actually is, is a question for another article.

8.5 Conclusions

It is proposed in this article that musical structure, composed of pitch classes distributed in unequal frequency of occurrence and rhythmical measures, constitutes musical essence. Moreover, it is emphasized that music, at least music understood as a tool of communication, should be viewed as a part of human nature. This means that in order to understand musical essence one must take into account the biological constraints of human beings. As Purves has argued at the beginning of his recent book:

When considered in terms of biology, the whys and wherefores of tonal music are easier to understand than when considered in terms of mathematics, physics, psychology, or conventional music theory. (Purves 2017: ix)

This claim is consistent with the postulate presented above. However, all possible perspectives can contribute to our understanding of musical essence as long as they do not deny scientific knowledge and lead to ‘consilience’ postulated by Wilson at the end of the last millennium (Wilson 1998).

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Chapter 9

‘In-Between’ the Autonomous and Contingent Worlds of Music



Tijana Popović Mladjenović

Abstract “When and how does music ‘do’ things?” An answer is sought in the area of intersection between the autonomous and contingent worlds of music. The search for meaning takes place *in-between* these worlds of music, whereby it is emphasized that every act of music creation, performance, listening, understanding and interpretation determines itself, embodying a personal realization of mutual action of autonomy and contingency. Consequently, an analysis of the multi-layered contexture of musical, non-musical and symbolic settings, their multiplied and networked meanings of something before, during and after music in the *lifeworld*, unfolds as the *interpretation of a work* which means to discover the world to which this work refers.

9.1 Introduction

What do we enjoy in our apprehension of musical structure? *or* What is it we enjoy in listening to the formal and sensual properties of absolute music unfold in our listening space? (Kivy 2002: 69)

Peter Kivy’s answer to these questions can be summarized very briefly:

The events that we are enjoying, as they unfold, are purely musical events: sound events. [...] We enjoy musical ‘plots’, in something like the way we enjoy fictional stories, except [...] that musical ‘plots’ are ‘merely’ sequences of musical sound events, not stories about fictional events [...] [W]e interact with musical ‘plots’, as we do with fictions: they are ‘games’; the game of hypothesis and the game of hide and seek. (Ibid. 69, 84)

In this connection, Kivy (Ibid. 72) distinguishes two kinds of musical events: “syntactical events” or “small” events that take place within the musical structure and are governed by the “rules” of musical grammar, and “formal events” or “large” events of musical structure that are governed by various musical forms.

A similar question can also be asked in the following way:

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Why do we like music—or rather, what is the nature of liking itself? (Minsky 1981: 28)

Marvin Minsky emphasizes that the problems related to understanding and emotions, in general, as well as to music, are rather identical. Only the demarcation lines have been wrongly drawn, since only the surface of reason is rational.¹ Minsky holds that what we learn is not music itself, but the way to hear it, and that the whole idea is how those processes of hearing, *audiation*² and/or listening unfold. The interesting assumption of this author is that listening to music may activate an innate mental mechanism, the mechanism of “creating maps” that is similar to cartographic activity. It is possible that music is an illustration of that “building process”, namely the creation of mental maps. Hence, liking (or taking pleasure in it, etc.) lies at the core of our understanding what we listen to.

The question can also be like this: Why do we need music at all, and why do we allow it (or leave to it) to occupy our lives without any apparent reason?

According to Viktor Zuckerkandl, music revives the relationship between mind and body, between thinking and feeling, bridging that Cartesian abyss. In music, thinking and creation becomes one and the same thing. Music is *live motion (self-motion)*, that is, a kind of pure motion, devoid of all links with material objects, which can be realized in thoughts. Namely, when we listen to music, we do hear motion in the tones. When we use motional terms to describe music, we are not using metaphors (contrary to the spatial metaphors we use). We hear the musical motion that resides *between* the tones—the musical motion that transcends the tones. Since our hearing “does not remain with the tone, but reaches through it and beyond it” (Zuckerkandl 1969: 137), and since music does not involve things or places, motion itself is manifest “in absolute purity and immediacy” through music. Musical motion is the core of all motion, and “every experience of motion is, finally, a musical experience” (Ibid. 138).

Compared with seeing and touching, hearing proves to be the faculty that gets at the essence; that pierces to the core of the phenomenon. (Ibid. 146)

¹Minsky holds that those old distinctions between affect, reason and aesthetics, which can be compared to ancient alchemists’ soil, air and fire, undoubtedly represent the poorly drawn demarcation lines. In that sense, Minsky finds it fascinating that we all know that music touches our emotions, but hardly anyone thinks about how music touches other thoughts. In other words, he finds it surprising that there is so little curiosity about such an all-permeating and all-encompassing mental power of music.

²The latest empirical studies show that the processes of music thinking also exist outside music, like the observation and structuring of visual temporal sets. This shows that the physical presence of sound is not a vital prerequisite for music thinking. The power to think musically, that is, hear music in one’s mind is called (by Edwin Elias Gordon) *audiation*—the ability of inner *hearing, hearing* within oneself, when the sound is not physically present. This is where the justification has been found for an old belief that said: *music has a vision: the deaf can compose*.

As emphasized by Zuckerkandl (1973: 248), thinking in the terms of the motion of tones (or thinking in tones about tones, because, in contrast to conceptual thinking, in music there is no existence on one side, and thinking about it on the other) is thinking which, in itself, creates existence. Namely, musical thinking generates existence. And hearing music means *hearing an emotion* (Ibid. 142).

Following a similar conception of the experience of musical expressiveness to that of Zuckerkandl, Scruton (1997, 2004) argues that motion nevertheless must be understood as part of a system of indispensable metaphors involved in perceiving the music, and further that we perceive musical motion in spatial terms. Namely, the experience of musical expressiveness consists in hearing it as “metaphorical movements in a metaphorical space”.

As for emotion descriptions of music, which correspond to Scruton’s *nonemotion* metaphorical descriptions of music such as the metaphors of *motion* and *height*, Nick Zangwill’s aesthetic metaphor thesis reads as follows:

Emotion descriptions of music are (mostly) metaphorical descriptions of its aesthetic properties. (Zangwill 2007a: 394)

For music affects people phenomenologically—it makes them feel a certain way, they are aware of being moved by music—but what they feel are not the emotions that correspond to emotion description of music. Zangwill (Ibid. 395) points out that “they might be specifically aesthetic feelings” and adds that emotion theorists “confuse the feelings involved in the immediate experiencing and creation of music with emotions” (Ibid. 399).

In fact, the question can also be formulated in the following way (according to Storr 1975, 1992): Why do we need music as a way to express emotions, or why the understanding of dynamic sound pattern must move and unfold so deeply?

Namely, Storr (1992) holds that the most abstract intellectual patterns also engage our emotions. But, in contrast to other domains of the mind, music touches our emotions in such a way that they draw the body along with them, which feelings do not. Being personally more significant than other mental powers, music is more relevant for the tides and ebbs of our subjective and fragile life. Thus, *the motion* and *emotion* are also inseparably linked in music and by music.

In addition, in Storr’s opinion, we love music because it is very close to experiencing life as a whole. In music, one does not impart expression to something (one’s feelings, for example), nor does one create autonomous formal structures. In music, one finds (*invents*) oneself. In essence, as emphasized by Storr (1975), the law, under which one knows that he/she is alive, has been realized in music in its purest form. Music portrays an *inner life flow*—it is the train of consciousness, or primarily the stream of the unconscious.

9.2 The Autonomous and Contingent Worlds of Music

While following this trail, the question that now seems especially intriguing is *how does music move us?* Within the scope of this question the concepts of Serafine (1988) and Kramer (1990, 1992, 2002), cross each other—the concept of *strong* or extreme cognitivism on one side, and the concept of *new* critical musicology on the other.

Serafine's major thesis is that music resides, not in some external form such as the score, the sounds, or even the sensation of the sounds, but in the world of cognitive constructs—a mental world of thoughts concerning sounds and their relationships. This very extravagantly formulated view—understanding music as the result of cognitive processes, that is, the subjective category derived from mental operations—is extreme even for cognitivism because it has undermined the hitherto foundations of musical cognitivism in the sense of giving precedence to music as *thought in sound* over the characteristics of the sound itself. Furthermore, all nonaural material is excluded from Serafine's definition of music, including items that may be *about* but not *in* music, such as the following:

[...] verbal description [...]; conscious awareness of compositional or performance techniques of the piece; speculations about historical or biographical matters; verbal labeling of the progress of musical events [...]; all reflections rooted in verbal or visual imagery (including musical emotional reflections). (Serafine 1988: 70, 72)

This definition of music eliminates quite a lot of human behavior, namely, it presupposes that music can be segregated from meaning, signification, and affect (Huron 1990: 101).

So, without recognizing the superiority or inferiority of musical types, Serafine searches for *style* as a neutral concept (in terms of the essentialist determination of the *lower limit*), that is, for the set of the most elementary factors of musical expression (or, metaphorically speaking, for *atomic facts*, which are the *states of affairs* in music, and for *atomic statements* or *elementary propositions* of music—analogue to the *atomic stance* of Wittgenstein's philosophy), or for the set of principles on the basis of which every community/group can understand its music. Or, in other words, she searches for those generic music cognitive processes on the basis of which the *states of affairs* in music are brought into the relationship and are the same for all styles and all kinds of music (art, folk, popular, rock, jazz, etc.) and which do not primarily depend on the parts of the world and time in which music was created, as well as its genres, media, degree of complexity and the like. Consequently, it is a search for some kind of “musical thinking *degree zero*” (Popović Mladjenović 2009: 236–237), analogue to Barthes' *writing degree zero*.

As for the mentioned generic, panstylistic processes of musical thinking, Serafine differentiates, like Kivy, two kinds of these processes: “temporal”—successive and simultaneous, being primarily characteristic of the microsyntactic level of musical flow; and “nontemporal”—which include more formal, logical, abstract processes generated on musical material, being primarily characteristic of the macrosyntactic level of musical flow. These processes represent the basic processes by which a

given musical flow is shaped and/or processed. Consequently, an analysis of shaping musical flow is that necessary path—the essence of musical understanding being common to composing, performing and listening to music (Popović Mladjenović et al. 2014)—towards revealing how inner cognitive musical processes are externalized in a musical work.

On the other hand, “musical thinking *degree zero*”, according to Kramer, provides a basis for the reconstruction of some basic *discourse about music*, the possibility of rediscovering the lost general and widely accessible discourse about music, which has relieved itself of the semantic and ideological baggage of positivism, the burden of formalism and all those theories which do not establish the mutual relations of music and expression, sense, meaning and its *cultural context*.

Kramer notes that maintenance of music's autonomy does not jibe with the worldliness and *contextual contingency* that postmodern scholars find in all utterance, musical or otherwise (Kramer 1992: 9). Instead, we should abandon the myth of music's autonomy by broadening the horizons of our musical pleasure and welcoming the complex situatedness of musical utterances in webs of extramusical forces. Kramer writes:

The emergence of a postmodernist, that is to say, a critical musicology, will depend on our willingness and ability to read as inscribed within the immediacy-effects of music itself the kind of mediating structures usually positioned outside music under the rubric of context. (Ibid. 10–11)

It is interesting to note that with respect to music Kramer (1990) negates, in his *Music as Cultural Practice*, any projection of autonomy, universality, self-presence, as well as the sublime transcendence of specific meaning, in favor of revelations of contingency, historical concreteness, constructed and divided selfhood, as well as the intelligible production of specific meanings. However, in his *Musical Meaning*, Kramer (2002) just points out that music generally operates on the basis of a series of contradictory tendencies, that music presents its dual character in quasi-perceptual relations, that the interplay of autonomy and contingency is the general, higher-order context and condition of intelligibility for most Western music. In this connection, Nick Zangwill rightfully emphasizes:

Sociological writers on art tend to attack the *autonomy* of art practice. The idea under attack is that the reason artists do what they do is to some degree internal to the work of art in question, or to that work of art plus other works of art. Marxists and feminists and post-modernists may be right to insist that art is not *completely* autonomous. But they are wrong—and deeply wrong—when they deny *any* autonomous aspect to art [...]. The fact that some features of a work of art are determined by social factors does not mean that they all are. Let us call this the 'some-all fallacy'. (Zangwill 2007b: 55, 171)

Namely, Zangwill distinguishes *strong* and *weak* programs in the sociology of art. Thus, it could be stated that according to his texts from the 1990s Kramer belongs to the *strong program* that “sets out to show how art production is *completely* determined by the socio-economic conditions under which it is produced” (Ibid. 173). While according to his texts from 2000 onwards, Kramer belongs to the *weak program* that “by contrast, allows that *both* social factors and the artist's self-conception are

necessary but not sufficient conditions, which together, and only together, explain the production of art” (Ibid.). For Zangwill, who displays considerable sympathy for a *moderate version of formalism* that denies the importance of context in many cases, *contextualism* about aesthetic properties is compatible with his Aesthetic Creation Theory (Ibid. 50).

The ‘dual’ character of music, or its a priori ambiguity—purely musical and musically meaningful, purely existential and contingently, contextually realized—has prompted Serafine to shift the focus of her research to the disguised and overlooked generic, panstylistic processes, in full awareness of the contingency of music, which she primarily relates to the variety of stylistically specific processes of musical thinking and their affiliation with a certain world, participation in a certain *life form* (analogous to Wittgenstein’s term *Lebensform*).

At the same time, Kramer shifts his attention to the “opposite” side, to a neglected and excommunicated contingency of music, which he primarily links to its historical, ideological, cultural and functional imprint in the network of the contingent requirements of *worldlife* (analogous to the philosophy and theory of *lifeworld* expounded by Bernhard Waldenfels in his *In den Netzen der Lebenswelt*).³ In his later awareness of musical autonomy, Kramer also links the contingency of music to the eclectic and plural strategies of transforming and transposition different current or historical, stylistically specific models, to the characteristic indices of various models of styles, forms of expression and presentation, or specific encoding of other music in the production of meaning, sense and value. In a word, he links the a priori ambiguity of music to the articulation of one of *the substantive states of subjectivity*.

Consistently with his point of departure, Kramer further asks:

When music moves us, to what are we moved? What is at stake in what we come to feel? And just who do we become, who do we recognize in ourselves as being, when music addresses us? (Kramer 2006: x; Solomos Grabócz 2011)

Namely, the old question “*why* does music move us?” was already put differently by Kramer (2001: 156), placing emphasis on “*when* and *how* does music ‘do’ things”.

9.3 ‘In-Between’. *When* and *How* Does Music ‘Do’ Things?

In my text, an answer is now sought in the area of intersection between the autonomous and contingent worlds of music. The search for meaning takes place *in-between* such a dilemma, whereby it is emphasized that every act of music creation, performance, listening, understanding and interpretation determines itself, embodying a personal realization of mutual action of autonomy and contingency. Consequently, an analysis of the multi-layered contexture of non-musical, symbolic

³Otherwise, the notion of *lifeworld* (*Lebenswelt*), according to Husserl, encompasses all theoretical and non-theoretical (practical) activities and beliefs of one society or culture, and is interpreted as the area of the ultimate confirmation of our beliefs and as the source of our cognitive and non-cognitive records, that is, intuition as the basis of truthfulness.

and musical settings, their multiplied and networked meanings of something before, during and after music in the *lifeworld*, unfolds as the *interpretation of a work* which, according to Ricoeur (1975), means to discover the world to which this work refers.

For we do not satisfy ourselves with sense, we anticipate a certain denotation or, in other words, we do not satisfy ourselves with the structure of the work, we anticipate *the world of the work*. The search for the truth and the desire for the truth drive us to pass from sense to denotation. Thus, in Ricoeur's opinion, hermeneutics is nothing else but the theory that controls the passing from the structure of the work to *the world of the work*.

In fact, against the illusory search for the intention *behind a work*, Ricoeur pits the search directed to the world, which reveals itself *in front of the work*. And the work will expand the world in front of us only if its interpretation causes the second-order denotation, which is distinctly metaphoric as tension, dynamism, expression, ambiguous reference—*split reference*, and metaphoric truth.

Insofar as musical tension, dynamism and expression concerned, Kivy believes that things that are happening *in music*, and that we hear happening there, not in the listener:

The best way to view musical tension and release, or resolution, is, like the garden-variety emotions, as being heard events *in the music*. [...] The syntax of tension and resolution provides rich possibilities for the emotions *in music* to play a structural role. (Kivy 2002: 95, 97)

The palpable fact is that we are deeply moved, emotionally aroused, to a significant degree by the music we hear. The emotions are not, on this view, felt, but “cognized”. For this reason the view is called “emotive cognitivism”. Namely, Kivy tries to understand the role of emotive properties of music in terms not only of patterns and contrast, and other “surface” features, but in terms of musical syntax and deeper structure as well (Ibid. 93). Namely, in his view:

In order for music to be semantically interesting, semantically significant as an art form, it must not only refer but say something interesting and significant about what it denotes. If it cannot do *that*—which indeed it *cannot*—then its *only* significant interest remains in just those non-semantic features that Kivy's *enhanced formalism* recognizes: those of formal structure, syntax, and sensuous appeal. (Ibid. 100–101)

On the other hand, as emphasized by Imberty (1981), musical semantics is the semantics of time, temporal schemes and experience of the inner life and *self*, which are implied by time. Music is the possibility that time itself is thought, and that it is also felt like the substrate of man's inner experience of oneself, as inner coherence and the unity of self. Since time is also essential for musical expressiveness, it puts the pulsion of life and death into play at the unconscious level. Namely, something that lasts must also die and that is the whole drama of constituting the *self* as a unit. In essence, the decisive question of musical style is the question of life and death. Therefore, we *play (jouons)* our time through musical time in order to *enjoy (jouissions)* it, because we do not die in it.

In that context, it can be said that musical form exists and comes to an end. Consequently, it implies time and death or, in other words, it creates a “desire for

eternity” against death in the depths of the unconscious. For it seems that music works on the creation of all possible worlds within ourselves, but as the structure, sense or insignia of the “world of life”.

Thus, “the search for the truth and *desire for the truth* are directed to the world which reveals itself *in front of* the work”, such as Debussy’s prelude *La Puerta del Vino* in the processes of condensation, splitting and ambivalence, as well as in the phenomena of echo, silence, pulses of life and death, and phantasm of time or, in other words, in the process of rendering specific musical expressiveness and emotional climate of this unique Debussian music unfolding in time.

9.4 The Musicological Approach to the Prelude *La Puerta Del Vino*

The musicological analytical interpretative approach refers, above all else, to the domain of musical relationships and interactions, which activate, stimulate and transmit the “energy potentials” of music unfolding in time, and operationalize its externalized layers of stylistically specific musical processes. From this domain, the following stands out in the musicological approach as being essential:

1. The continuous process of hierarchizing the parts of music unfolding in time by continuously changing the temporal and spatial sound perspectives of the orders of smaller and larger entities; in fact, it is the question of the operative ability of music cognition, which does not depend on training, and represents the primary, “deep” level of the generic processes of musical thinking;
2. The process of balancing—debalancing and rebalancing (non)identical elements and (a)symmetric relations;
3. The process of continuous “advancement”, succession and progression of the motives by strengthening or weakening the interactions in the compact and diffuse motivic configurations of the microstructure which accompany (micro)tensional movements;
4. The process of segmentation by setting the boundaries;
5. The processes of integrating and disintegrating the segments through their mutual attraction and rejection which accompany tensional movements;
6. The processes of “breathing” musical flow, whereby the tempo or pace(s) of the unfolding of musical flow or musical time, deceleration and acceleration, as well as dynamics, agogics and articulation are the key factors in fine tensional tuning, primarily at the microlevels of the work, in specific “crystallizations” of the structure.

Bearing in mind empirical research in the area of cognitive musical psychology, as well as the possibility of a psychoanalytic interpretation of the musical flow of the above mentioned work by Debussy, the ‘syntactical’ explanation for the musical function of emotive properties (such as the listener’s experience of discomfort, immobility, discontinuity of motion, sorrow, melancholy, brutal rage, panic fear,

destruction and death, and their denial at the end of the prelude) might look like this in the context of a musicological interpretation that 'counts' on the Ricoeurian "live metaphor":

- The prelude *La Puerta del Vino*, or *The Gateway of the Alhambra* (a palace built near Granada, Spain, during the rule of the Moorish Nasrides dynasty in the 14th century), rests on the habanera rhythm, which creates a base for the lower, ostinato textural layer in D-flat. A superimposed melody is developed in the upper layer, being in some kind of bitonal relationship with it. It is "colored" with chromatic ornaments and elements, with the base in E as a specific centre of tonal gravity, the pronounced, lowered second degree in the Phrygian mode and the Andalusian dominant. Instead of the traditional designation of tempo (the rate of speed and passage of musical time), Debussy refers to the "movement of habanera", a dance, and adds "with an abrupt contrast of extreme violence, force and passionate softness, tenderness and gentleness".⁴
- The violent and brutal *introduction* (mm. 1–4) is a "throwing" into existence, disorientation and "attack" on the original space-time of the *self*.
- *Section a* (mm. 5–24), as an attempt to establish a harmonic "zone of illusion", consists of one sentence with two internal and two external extensions (8 + 2 + 2 + 4 + 4), whose structure, "unactivated" bitonality and complete separation of tonal objects, reflects the non-yet-constituted zone of transitive phenomena, stratification and disconnectedness of internal and external objects, an ideal and pure characteristic of sound duality. The first more significantly initiated motive of the melodic voice in m. 9 can be interpreted as the nucleus of the subject, an imprint of the existential time of the self, or Debussy's music. Toward the end, this expressive melodic voice becomes fiercely interrupted for a short time by one reminiscence (*sff*; m. 21) or, in other words, the juxtapositioned interruption of rudeness and disharmony of one of the first sound experiences (in the form of the double, simultaneous descending and ascending converging glissando of the "tunnelled" music unfolding in time or extremely accelerated passage of time in m. 21), cutting through the tissue of yet-to-be-achieved unity for a moment.

In a metaphorical sense, this characteristic m. 21 event or, more precisely, that is, the opening of the musical space-time "tunnel" (bridge)—"tunnelling" in musical space-time (analogous to the assumption of creating a local Einstein-Rosen bridge and "tunnelling" of the "subjective observer", or consciousness, over there and back, to the remote space-time point that was previously addressed in consciousness—it is the question of the potential very remote entry and exist points of so-called *worm-*

⁴*Mouv^t de Habanera, avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême violence et de passionnée douceur* (from the score of *La Puerta del Vino, Préludes pour Piano, 2^e Livre* par Claude Debussy, Durand & Cie, Paris, 1913, p. 11).

holes, as well as of *mental addressing*), seems to be one of the potential events occurring in short-lived *transitory states of mind* (between aware state and sleeping/falling into sleep, as well as between sleeping and awake state/awakening, between normal and changed states of mind). Namely, it seems as if this “tunnelling” in musical space-time helps achieve a high-intensity change and radical contrast, and creates discontinuity or, better said, as if the relationships between the subsystems of symmetry, which are positioned at a distance from each other in the musical flow but do not impede their spanning, are only seemingly broken (Fig. 9.1).

- *Section b* (mm. 25–30) also consists of one sentence (1 + 1 + 2 + 2) which is now in the service of transitive time, quite a specific internal “connective tissue” of crossings and passages, an unusual tunnel through which—in seemingly complete silence (*pp*) in which transitive connection is broken, in astral quasi-silence saturated with the (echoing) sounds of the disappearance of any anxiety, pain and fear, amidst that sounding from a distance, as the “breath from another planet”, some other, perfectly polished world, cold flat galaxy—everything is condensed into the purity (*pureté*) of its own substance. In other words, the unique existential “breathing” of the musical flow of the prelude *La Puerta del Vino* is generated in this specific bridge of *rubato* time (which is unambiguously requested by the composer), in its own liberated *in-between* space. Here the original destructive energy is transformed, redesignated and articulated in the context of creating a harmonic illusion of the integration of the *self*. For the glissando tones now remain to lie (attempting to catch and preserve their transient moment in life, that is, attempting to last), building the chordal vertical, namely a reverberating sound stratum (Fig. 9.2).
- Following the structuring of the echo, there begins—with *section c* (mm. 31–41)—the development of a fragmentary structure that enhances a progressive integration of the *self*.
- At the midpoint of time (m. 42), or the axis of symmetry of the whole prelude, there appears its beginning, the identical first two bars of the introduction. *Section d* (mm. 42–65), which follows after the reminiscence of this introductory material (mm. 42–43)—passionately at the beginning (*passionément*, mm. 44–49), then ironically (*ironique*, mm. 50–54) and, finally, (quasi) gracefully (*gracieux*, mm. 55–61), dies out and disappears in *pp* dynamics. So, the perspectives and alternatives of the ambiguity of the two basic, original sound experiences of this prelude differentiate and multiply in varied ways in terms of color, register, articulation, ornament and texture. In fact, the masks of time alternate and cross each other. Passing through, thinning, shortening, weakening, ageing and disappearance of the transitional time of the echo results in a transitional attempt (mm. 62–65) to retain it (*en retenant*) and in its definite disappearance through the dissolution of the familiar three-layered textural musical space-time.
- *Section a₁* (mm. 66–82; the sentence—8 + 1 + 4 + 4: the first inner extension has disappeared and the second one has been shortened, while both external extensions are present) represents the reminiscence of *section a*. It is the echo separated from its source in the past, whose sense, including the sense of recapitulation, has been

Fig. 9.2 Claude Debussy, *La Puerta del Vino*, section b (mm. 25–30). From: *Préludes pour Piano* (2^e Livre) par Claude Debussy, Durand & C^{ie}, Paris, 1913, p. 12

lost for the subject, because the transitive connection is immediately attacked and destroyed at the beginning. For this reason, the listeners do not experience this section, which represents a “factual”, “substantial”, that is, traditional, musically regular and symmetrically arranged thematic recapitulation, as a recapitulation and symmetric architectonics of the articulation of the prelude’s musical flow but, as emphasized by Imberty (1981), as a crucial point of the dissymmetry and unambiguous disruption of a harmonic illusion related to individual, existential harmony and balance of different life pulses, consistency and unity of the self, coherence and completeness, in contrast to death pulses. For, reminiscence is not consciousness memory which is regarded as such. It is just the penetration of a past event into the subject’s present, which is experienced once again, parallel to current events in a manner fit for the future. Debussy’s reminiscence is substantially contrasted to the echo phenomenon; it can be understood as an echo whose link to its original sound source has been attacked and destroyed (the destruction of the link between time and sense; reminiscence understood as an echo whose sense has been lost for the subject) (Fig. 9.3).

- *Section b*₁ (mm. 83–90; 1 + 1 + 5) is the slightly decelerated, delayed, tense and suspended (*un peu retardé*) recapitulation of *section b*—the echo that produces reminiscence, that is, a conscious return to the past, which has been recognized, but it came to be experienced as a genuine recapitulation, the recapitulation of psychological, existential time, just now, at the moment of unwinding the temporal

The image shows two systems of musical notation for Claude Debussy's 'La Puerta del Vino'. The first system is a piano arrangement with three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with triplets and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The middle and bottom staves are bass clefs, with the middle staff containing a bass line and the bottom staff containing a bass line with a dynamic marking of *pp* and a triplet. Above the first system, the text 'Un peu retardé' is written, followed by a dashed line and a bar line. The second system is a piano arrangement with three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *ff* and the word 'molto'. The middle and bottom staves are bass clefs, with the middle staff containing a bass line and the bottom staff containing a bass line with a dynamic marking of *p*. Above the second system, the text 'au Mouvt' is written.

Fig. 9.4 Claude Debussy, *La Puerta del Vino*, section b_1 (mm. 83–90). *Préludes pour Piano* (2^e Livre) par Claude Debussy, Durand & C^{ie}, Paris, 1913, p. 15

structure of the prelude. Namely, it is the question of the reminiscence that has no end and is not rounded off. Thus, it is left to echo and last indefinitely in (dis)appearance after the termination of the grotesquely playing pulses of death (Fig. 9.4).

9.5 Conclusions

In the prelude *La Puerta del Vino*, the composer requires the continuous centering of perception, which is conditioned by permanent contrasts to the point of opposition, i.e. more exactly, by the intensified external and inner centering of sound perspectives, drastic changes that can be easily registered as the equivalent places of specific condensation, which should facilitate, to the greatest possible extent, *interaction processes of attracting*, convergence or divergence, namely establishing of the gravitational centers of macro-form, as well as the process of hierarchizing the parts of this musical flow.

However, the result of these processes is quite opposite: there is a distinctly *poor perceptive hierarchization of the macrostructure*. Namely, the composer carefully doses, measures and tunes all incompletely equivalent places (in fact, there are no completely congruent segments) created by one kind of change or another (whose

duality of flows in the experience is constantly and simultaneously followed regardless of the fact that one of them is always alternately in latency), and adjusts all relations and interactions, both within and between each of them (bringing certain musical components, which are specifically combined, exchanged and nuanced relative to the micro-arrangement of local, inner bearers of structural focus, "into play"). At the same time, they do not allow (one might say unintentionally) maximum condensation in any concurrent place (or, in the opposite, maximum dissolution), so that none of such places can be singled out, thus enabling the hierarchization of contrasts.

Consequently, distinct changes and contrasts do exist, but their coordination is simply nonexistent. In this way, such an accented and aggravated hierarchization process, based on the weakening of interaction-based *links* among the segments or, in other words, based on their specific "connecting tissue", changes its primarily non-temporal characteristic into quite a specific, distinctly temporal, "step-by-step" one. The processes of musical flow segmentation and symmetrization are certainly related to it. On the one side, Debussy *facilitates the perceptive process of separating the temporal zones of* macro-form, since they are clearly delineated, divided and autonomously defined but, on the other side, the method, function and speed of their alternation *burden perceptive segmentation* in large measure at a macro-syntactic level and, in particular, at a micro-syntactic one due to the constant "request" for a new perceptual centering.

The ultimate result of these processes, which do not cross each other or get entangled, but condition and support each other, represents divergence between the thematic and temporal structures (evident when the function of/not/recapitulating sections a_1 and b_1 is in question) of the prelude *La Puerta del Vino*.

Thematism is present and so are the stereotype formal type or model, as well stylistically specific elements and processes. However, they cease to be relevant at a certain point and give way to the flaring of generic processes of musical thinking, which crystallize the ambiguity of the purely temporal structure of Debussy's music in widely varied ways.

The constant recentring of musical flow, immobilization of the end of the prelude, that "almost nothing"—on one side, and the whirlpools of life—on the other, in addition to that instantaneity of beings and things, pleasures and fears, represent the double face, the ambiguity of the purely existential and contingently realized temporal structure of Debussy's music, which rests on the simultaneous denial of time and death. The temporal horizon of life is nothing else but the succession of moments, and death is denied through the peculiarity of the moment and immobilization of time.

So, not *in* time, but *with* time, because to think about time itself in the form of tones is the only form by which time can be thought of at all, Debussy and his listener are repeatedly revealing man's archaic anxiety of destruction and non-existence, his panic and fear of everything that is alive and faced with death. In Zuckerkandl's view, the time thought by the composer/performer/listener is his subjective time and nobody can continue it completely as such—as a personal, individual realization of the interplay of autonomy and contingency. The disintegration of sensations gathered for their own sake, for the sake of sound sensual energy, or brilliant and fearful sensations in their absolute discontinuity, witnesses to the crucial search of the musical

unfolding in time of the prelude *La Puerta del Vino* for the unity of the *self* and *sense*.

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Chapter 10

Formulating the Essence All Together



Nicolas Royer-Artuso

Abstract This paper deals with the question of musical essences in the context of orally transmitted musical traditions. This question takes a very different color when we are dealing with musical traditions of this type. I concentrate on the related subject of *heterophony* and present my analysis of the phenomenon, an analysis that takes into account the orality factor. I propose the idea that in these forms of practices the essence of a musical composition is not a given but a collective quest, a forum open to negotiations. Of course, for this forum to take place, an ideal situation is necessary. I finally present some factors that often prevent this ideal situation to take place.

10.1 Introduction

This paper deals mainly with the problem of musical essences and more specifically of melodic and textural essences. It is not the work of a philosopher but the work of a theoretically inclined musicologist who has devoted almost twenty years to the study and practice of *maqam* music (some musical traditions that can be found from Greece to North Africa and that share a similar modal system, the *maqam* system) and who has been searching for musical essences in musical traditions in which musical works were (and still sometimes are), until recently, orally transmitted (but that are not transmitted as much this way anymore, mainly for the simple reason that archival techniques in the form of scores and recordings have appeared and have had a huge impact on the way musical works are now transmitted).

As I hope it will become clear from the following discussion, the question of essence takes a very different color when we are dealing with musical traditions that are orally transmitted. From the moment the original work does not have a fixed representation that prevents it from being transformed, reanalyzed or even forgotten, the question of essence cannot be answered the same way it is answered in situations where a score exists. In the later, the composer's intention is accessible through the conventions of the writing system and we always have the original score at hand

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to come back to in the case we have a question about what the work originally or essentially consisted in. In some sense, this paper deals with hermeneutics in the absence of a (fixed) text.

While the problem of musical essence as it appears in orally transmitted musical traditions is an important aspect of the discussion that follows, I have decided to concentrate on the (from my point of view) related subject of *heterophony*, a musical texture that is found in many of the traditions I have studied (but not exclusively in these traditions). The study of heterophonic practices permits us to ask many stimulating questions about the essence of musical works, about the relation of practice to musical works, about the relation of the individual musician to the essence of her tradition and about the role of the community of musicians in defining and redefining the essence of their tradition.

The paper is divided as follows: I first present the mainstream analysis of the musical phenomenon called heterophony. I then show in what sense this analysis is not complete and actually misses the most important part of the explanation, i.e. the central role of orality as the causal mechanism responsible for this musical texture. I then present an analysis that overcomes the problems facing the mainstream analysis, a theory of heterophony that I call ‘realistic’ and that was first presented in Royer-Artuso (2012a). From there I go on to discuss the question of essence in the context of heterophonic practices and propose the idea that in these forms of practices the essence of a musical composition is not a given but a collective quest, a forum open to negotiations. Of course, for this forum to take place, an ideal situation is necessary. The last section is devoted to some factors that often prevent this ideal situation to take place.

10.2 Introducing the Problem

The current definition (and therefore analysis) of heterophony is more or less the following:

Most polyphonic music employs identical or similar material in each part. The statement applies, of course, to the three most common forms of polyphony: heterophony, parallel intervals, and imitation. Heterophony, the use of slightly modified versions of the same melody by two or more performers, is the simplest in some ways, because it can come about accidentally, e.g. a solo performer may vary his part slightly while singing essentially unison material with a group. [...] Probably most of the primitive examples of it we have were accidental phenomena. Rhythmic variation is very likely the commonest form. [...] Thus heterophony is not necessarily simple and accidental: it may be elaborate and detailed [...]. (Nettl 1956: 80–81)

This is only one of the many definitions of heterophony that one can find in the literature. However, because all the definitions to be found are in fact only paraphrases of each other, I will consider this definition as representing the mainstream perspective on the phenomenon.

The important parts in this definition (and analysis) are the following:

- (1) [heterophony is] “the use of slightly modified versions of the same melody by two or more performers”; and
- (2) “while singing essentially unison material”.

As can be glimpsed from this definition, *heterophony* and *heterophonic textures* present puzzles at many levels of analysis. The main puzzle and the one that will be the central concern of this paper is in fact an ontological one: what can it mean to be the *same* thing (something like a *unison*) but at the same time to be *variants* of *the* or *this* same thing, i.e. what sort of polyphony can a texture consisting of (quasi) identical melodies be? At the same time: How can a melody that is transformed in the process of interpretation (still) be the ‘original’ one?

Presented in these terms, the problem really has to do with the question of knowing how to categorize two or more *tokens* that are not identical at the level of form (but still similar) while being functionally identical; and with the related question of knowing how these tokens can then be characterized as pertaining to the same (abstract) *type*. This is roughly the reasoning that guides the mainstream analysis: *because* these tokens are played simultaneously and *because* they are similar, they must share certain properties that qualify them as *identical* (in some interesting sense of the term and at some level of abstraction).

While it is true that at a certain level of analysis this description will fulfill our analytical goals, I claim that it only scratches the surface of the problem and that much more is involved in what is happening than what we are presented with in this analysis. This analysis will, I contend, only work if we take our data at a given synchronic moment and if our only concern is to give a description of these data in terms of (static) formal structures. As soon as we delve a bit more into the details, it becomes clear that the intricacies of the contextual, historical, cognitive, sociological, etc., factors that are involved ask for a very different picture of what is at stake here and, therefore, it becomes also clear that a much richer analysis is necessary. I argue that we need to look not at structures in themselves but at these structures as they are learned, stored, shared and used (performed) by actual members of the musical communities. Only then can the questions raised by the puzzle receive a satisfying answer.

10.3 A Cognitively Realistic Approach to Heterophony

In Royer-Artuso (2012a) I have proposed what I called a *cognitively realistic approach to heterophony* that consisted in showing that, even if the mainstream analysis of heterophony is correct from one point of view (because it actually reflects processes that actually do occur in the practice of musicians), it is far from being complete. The demonstration consisted in showing that heterophony is not only or mainly:

- (1) the simple superposition of *different* interpretations or variants of the *same* melody by different musicians, as proposed in the mainstream definition; but (or also)
- (2) the superposition of (slightly) different memorized versions of the same melody.

This analysis might seem controversial, but only if we omit to add to the picture presented above a very important fact about heterophonic textures, that is: the fact that they are mainly found in orally transmitted musical traditions.

In Royer-Artuso (2012a) I claimed that we ended up with the current analysis mainly because of a *written bias*, a bias that comes from the habit of musicologists and ethnomusicologists to reflect on musical practices from a framework where *scores* are central to the analytical game. But the notion of *score* comes packaged with an ontology in which invariant essences *exist* (somewhere) and therefore with an ontology in which deviation from this essence can then only be attributed to human error or intentionality (the performance does not correspond exactly to what should result if what is given in the score in terms of behavioral instructions was followed perfectly, i.e. without mistake, or followed as indicated, e.g. without ornaments).

I claimed that this written bias and the ontology it presupposes are (at least in the case of music, but probably in many other cases as well) the sources of an analogy where the notion of *copying* is central: copying can be done correctly or not from the moment there is a fixed external representation that exists as an *archive* (written, recorded, etc.) and from the moment this representation can be consulted freely to compare the source with the copies. From this perspective, only two possibilities exist when it comes to analyzing the relation between the original and the copies: either we have a correct (identical) copy, or we have an incorrect (not identical) one. From then on, we can debate on the truthfulness or untruthfulness of the correspondence between the type (the original score) and its tokens (the copies).

To offer an alternative treatment of what is involved in heterophony, I argued that in the case of orally transmitted music a better analogy should have as its core not the notion of *copying* but rather the notion of *transcribing* (something similar to what we do when we try to write down a melody from a recording). In fact, when we face heterophonic textures, a choice must be made as to which melody constitutes the ‘real’ one (and therefore a choice must also be made as to which melody/melodies is/are the ‘variant/variants’). The essence of the melody is therefore an object of negotiation and this negotiation is really about what we (should) *transcribe* (even if it is not always done on a fixed external representation but often only as a memory trace, a trace that can be subjected to the effects of natural or socio-psychological filters, e.g. forgetting, peer influence, etc.). Copying does not open a room for negotiation in the same way for the simple reason that to be able to copy we need something stable and only from there can we reflect on the ‘identity’ of the copy with the source. Heterophony in the context of orally transmitted musical traditions does not offer this for two main reasons: (1) since it is orally transmitted, there is no archive and therefore nothing we can *copy* from; and (2) since we are faced with variants, there is no *one* thing we can copy. I will in what follows come back repeatedly to these points.

10.4 A Cognitive Translation

To see why the mainstream analysis of heterophony offers an incomplete picture of the phenomenon, it is useful to translate this analysis in cognitive terms (in terms of *mental representations*). This is the picture we get when we do so:

(1)

Musicians' Representations of the melody → Variant 1, Variant 2, Variant 3, etc.

(played simultaneously)

In (1), the representation of the melody is the same for all musicians. This means that between the shared representation and its rendition we have steps that go from error (a problem in the execution where the representation does not surface as intended) to (the other extreme) the freedom given to the interpreter (we can play on some parameters of representations when we perform). This explains why and how what we find in (1) on the left side of the arrow is not always identical to what is found on its right side. And this also roughly summarizes how we are told *variants* appear.

This type of analysis is what I called the *algorithmic* version of heterophony: some 'algorithms' (errors included) are postulated as causal mechanisms that explain the encountered differences between what exists in terms of 'deep' representations and what we get in terms 'surface' ones. This analysis explains the causal motivation of the texture itself. Heterophony, when analyzed this way, can only be seen as a special case of monophony: it is monophonic in its *essence* because the intention (representation) is monophonic and only the *results* are not. There is an *intentional* blurring that occurs through algorithmic playing, but the musicians are seen as agreeing on the melody to be played: they are, in fact, playing (in an interesting sense of the term) *unisons*. However, I propose that this is not a complete picture of how heterophonic textures are or can be created.

If we take a logical standpoint, we have three situations where we can say that musicians are playing the *same* melody *differently*; these three situations are given in (2):

(2)

a) The musicians share the *same* representation but there are problems in the step that goes from intention to actualization (a mistake), at least for one of the musicians;

b) The musicians share the *same* representation and certain processes are applied to it, processes that create differences (this is what I called the *algorithmic* side of heterophony which corresponds to the mainstream analysis; the algorithms generally proposed are conceived in terms of different ways of ornamenting over the *core*, a core that consists, here, in this notion of *shared representation*); and

c) The representations that are encoded by each musician are not exactly the same but are in *some way* sufficiently similar to be called the *same* melody (notwithstanding the ontological/metaphysical problems brought by such a characterization).

10.5 The Orality Factor

In all works dealing with heterophony, it is explicitly or implicitly mentioned that the musical traditions in which it appears are orally transmitted. But strangely, when it comes to analyzing the heterophonic qualities of these musical traditions, their oral character does not occupy a place in the account, as if the fact that heterophony precisely appears in this type of traditions was random.

Now: If we suppose that these musicians make errors; interpret and add to their stored representations according to their algorithms; present these interpretations to their students (and audiences); and that these students copy (or, as we saw earlier, *transcribe*) these interpretations and that they do not have any *archive* (written, recorded, etc.) to compare. Is it realistic to suppose that these students have the power to separate what is added from what is/was originally in the melody? Do they have the power to see what is/was the underlying representation of the teacher; and the power to understand which algorithms were added, and erase them and thus create for themselves representations that are identical to their teacher's? It is in fact quite easy to show that for different musicians, representations are not (exactly) the same: we only have to look at different written (transcribed) versions of the 'same' pieces (e.g. of Ottoman music) to see that this cannot be a realistic scenario.

All this supposes that not only *one*, but a certain number of circulating similar representations of the 'same' melody(ies), co-exist at the same time in a musical community (and probably, as well, inside one musician/listener). When musicians start playing together, the different representations (plus the algorithms that are added, because it is true that musicians ornament) 'happen' together *with all that exceeds*, so to speak. A realistic theory of heterophony is therefore the third logical possibility presented in (2c) above. Instead of (3), we get (4):

(3)

Representation^x → Algorithmⁿ → Variantⁿ

simultaneous to

Representation^x → Algorithm^o → Variant^o

simultaneous to

Representation^x → Algorithm^p → Variant^p

Etc.

(4)

Representationⁿ → Algorithm^{a, b, c, or etc. (optional)} → Variantⁿ

simultaneous to

Representation^o → Algorithm^{a, b, c, or etc. (optional)} → Variant^o

simultaneous to

Representation^p → Algorithm^{a, b, c, or etc. (optional)} → Variant^p

Etc.

10.6 Hermeneutics in the Absence of a Text

Therefore: In this type of tradition, what we have to question is not the *source* but the *results* (and that way of putting things in any case makes no sense in an orally transmitted tradition where or when the composer/originator of the material is not present anymore to comment and share on what she intended in writing the composition, or when no written/archival material is present as a proof of the essence). The source or origin (i.e. the *essence*) is not relevant here, or is relevant only in so far as the causal or historical relation between the results and the source is concerned, i.e. in questions having to do with how each musician encountered the specific melody (from which teacher from which school and/or in which context, and so on); in what form (monophonic or heterophonic context) and in which way was it transcribed, e.g. memorized, written, recorded, and so on.

Listening to heterophonic textures implies a very specific hermeneutic process. Unlike polyphonic textures, where each voice has a function (e.g. main line *versus* background, etc.) in the conduct of the musical material, heterophonic textures do not suppose a complementary hierarchy of melodic material: each voice functions as the *main* line (and thus as background as well). Therefore, in listening to pieces performed heterophonically, the listener has the choice to see this or that line as being the 'real' one and the others as 'variants'. In fact, heterophonic listening can happen even in cases where *one* musician plays a melody that the listener knows differently (this way considering the performed melody as a variant of her version, or considering that she might herself have stored a 'wrong' version of it).

I have claimed in Royer-Artuso (2015) that heterophony provides the listener with a situation in which a lot of what constitutes the musical tradition can be discovered and then used in the creation of new material. For example, one of the main problems facing any student of a modal tradition is to discover what constitutes the *characteristics* of a given mode, its *ethos*, etc. This is equivalent to saying that he/she searches for the essence of a thing under the accidents of what is given empirically for analysis. For this, inevitably, we have to compare and find the commonalities, the *shared*. Listening to heterophonic material gives us access to 'paraphrases' of the 'same' material: it gives us access to functionally interchangeable material, material that can be used to create new musical phrases that respect the constraints of the given mode. This is the aspect of creation that deals with essence/difference coming from the analysis of various encountered representations. When we add the 'algorithms' that constitute the 'grammar of ornamentation' of a specific school, the possibilities of creation, given the 'same' material, multiply rapidly. In the same way, different pieces composed or improvised according to a given mode can also be seen as different tokens of the mode, i.e. variants of the underlying *type*.

This implies that the only way essence is to be searched here is in dealing with the outputs, and only these. At each moment, we compare the trace we have in our memory to what is given to us in the process of playing together (or even only through listening). When the 'version' differs, I can always treat the difference as a matter of ornament, i.e. a detail, and enjoy the superposition and the texture that is thus

created. I can also question my version and treat the difference as a detail or as an error. This might with time change slowly my representations. But since there is no recording or transcription of the performance, there is no way we can come back to what happened: the only way we can search for what occurred (i.e. heterophony) is to stop and take each musical phrase in isolation to see where the texture originates. But even this will not solve the problem of knowing which ‘version’ is the original one. Origin or essence is not a given but a quest, and this is to be done collectively (for the simple reason, among others, that we need other ‘variants’ in order to be able to compare).

At this moment the composition meets the tradition, the repertoire and the community. Some rules do in fact exist, even if they are not explicitly stated, and these are to be found in comparing the set of archives (representations) we created and stored during the period we acquired and played this tradition. We can in fact basically map the pieces one onto another and find regularities, e.g. important notes being longer and/or falling on strong beats, melodic formulae that fit a certain pattern but not another one, etc. In this sense, the questioning is holistic and requires looking at what we know as a group, not only as individuals. The composition is recomposed (not composed), and this, continuously and collectively. The underlying truth of the composition is to be found in the web that constitutes the encyclopedic mental repertoires (mine and others’). In this sense, heterophony is also a heuristic method that permits musicians to compare many different musical structures as long as at a certain level of abstraction something that can be considered similar can be found, e.g. a mode, a rhythmical structure, etc. Heterophony is therefore not only the mapping presented in (5), it is also the one presented in (6):

(5)

Underlying representations → surface representations

+

Comparison/mapping with other representations activated simultaneously
(the variants of the melody produced by the other musicians)

(6)

Underlying representations → surface representations

+

Comparison/mapping with other representations activated simultaneously
(the variants of the melody produced by the other musicians)

+

Comparison/mapping with the other (all?) representations that
co-exist in the mental encyclopedia (+ optional variants of these)

+

Comparison with representations that other musicians can bring into the picture
to justify the way they play the composition

Essence will also have to do with frequencies (e.g. some pieces are played more often than others and are or become for this reason more prototypical in terms of style)

and with cognitive biases (some pieces are treated as more adequate by the filter that constitutes memory, e.g. complex forms will tend to be simplified or forgotten or, in a reverse way, will acquire stronger representations because of the time and attention that will be necessary in memorizing them). The ‘collective musical memory’ (if such a thing exists) is in the case of our heterophonic community the set presented in (7), a set that comprises:

(7)

The individual’s representations relative to the repertoire

(including a ‘statistical’ but highly implicit knowledge in terms of frequency of occurrence, e.g. some pieces are more accessible than others because they are played more often)

+

The individual’s representations of variants of these

(the other musicians’; this includes a ‘statistical’ but highly implicit knowledge in terms of frequency of occurrence, e.g. some variants are more accessible than others because they are played more often and/or shared by more musicians)

+

A knowledge of the different ways to relate any of these representation to others

(and this can be done idiosyncratically)

10.7 Heterophony as a Forum

The conclusion of what precedes is roughly the following. There is no such thing as a melodic essence in heterophonic practices (of course until archival methods develop), at least not in the sense philosophers who have written on the subject of musical essences have used this term. And this, for several reasons, the most important ones being that:

- (1) as we have seen, there is no archive to be consulted to validate one version versus another (as long as the version respects the rules of the system, as they can be discovered in the totality of works that exist);
- (2) heterophony is a co-creation as the same time as it is an emergent structure: the texture is never similar from one performance of a composition to the other since the configuration of the performing musicians influences the results, each musician bringing with her the complex historical relation she has with the composition. Since these musicians also (generally) add to their stored representations (i.e. they ornament), even when the same musicians perform the same composition together the results will each time be different since they will create on the spot new versions of their already different versions.

Heterophony and the related heterophonic practices that it implies are therefore a forum where essence and truth are to be found *together*, collectively, in an infinite (and maybe impossible) search for essences, this forum being at the same time a negotiation on the product of the co-creation or re-creation of this essence, each time

anew, because depending on the configuration of the members of the community present at the time of the performance, each member embodying a special relation with the original musical material. The process is therefore much more oriented towards the future than towards the past. The question is: What do we do now with all that we have, rather than the question of origin and any question that is asked in, for example, any revival enterprise where what we care for is the possibility of 'authentic' performances.

This all means that when we play together, it is at the same time a questioning of the tradition, a constant redefinition, an experimentation with the limits of the system and an acknowledgement of our own limits (memory's limit, mainly, but also our limits in regards to being exposed to the totality of the tradition: an impossible task, for the simple reason that pieces go at the same time as new pieces enter the repertoire and this occurs differently for each musician from the community).

Some preconditions are needed for this forum to take place. First: accepting that it is fine to play differently at the same time and to superpose melodies that are not exactly the same. Accepting differences (as long as the rules are respected) is thus the main precondition of the exercise but this comes with the acknowledgement that it is the specific configuration of differences at that time that creates the particular texture that results (i.e. some differences are in a sense better than others because of the more satisfying textures that result). Individuality and a strong commitment to it are also preconditions to the collective aesthetic pleasure that takes place when playing heterophonically: the origin of the texture is a cumulative one and reflects the different trajectories of the musicians involved (their teachers, musical friends, etc.). In a heterophonic context, synchrony meets diachrony.

Of course, this picture of the forum represents an ideal situation. In the next section I deal with non-ideal situations, i.e. situations where the processes bringing variation are impeached and by the same token the communal forum from where negotiations, new potentialities and change can emerge. This, as we will briefly see, when some people or some institutions create tools to master diversity and tools to impose on everyone what they consider as being the true essence or what they consider should be regarded as the true essence.

10.8 Dealing (Politically) with Social Heterophony: The Case of the Turkish Republic

In this section I will propose a case study to show in what way institutions can try to control the representational diversity (as postulated in my Realistic Theory of Heterophony) that is found in heterophonic practices (this is a summary of some of what can be found in Royer-Artuso [2012b](#)). As we will see, they can succeed to some extent. Nevertheless, heterophony generally finds a way to take back its right.

Music pedagogy in the Ottoman period was based on *Meşk*, a slow learning process implying being near the teacher and imitating and memorizing the outputs of

his/her practice. Groups were forming around the master: his/her aesthetics, way of interpreting the melodies, personal taste, versions of the melodies, theory inferred from the repertoire, etc., were what was transmitted to the students. Therefore, during this process, different schools appeared, i.e. micro-traditions. Commentaries, methods, hagiography even, ended up differing from school to school. More importantly, representations of melodies ended up varying from one micro-tradition to the other (and surely, from one student/now teacher to the other).

At the moment of the constitution of the Turkish Republic, the repertoire had to be taken care of: Which music were we to propose *to* the nation as the music *of* the nation, now that its new limits had been traced? The acknowledged masters of the tradition were brought together so we could transcribe the repertoire.

The problem is that these masters confronted the ‘scribes’ with many different versions of the ‘same’ pieces. What seemed homogeneous was not and this, not only at the level of practice, but also, and more problematically, at the level of representations as well.

But we had to choose some version, had to create a ‘vernacular’ out of these ‘dialects’. Once the versions are chosen, we have a *repertoire*, a *canon*: the canon is what people need to know to be able to participate.

Once the canon is fixed, we need to propagate it. Teachers are trained in state conservatory, so we can control what they learned and therefore what they will teach: the danger of divergence is blocked at its potential source. We form choirs that are big enough so that they cannot afford to ornament, to comment on the score without a risk of dissonance: choirs that sing together what was prepared for them in a unified version, i.e. a *unison*.

But now that the repertoire is established and transcribed, new generations can only sing or play what got/is written. The rest, i.e. the history, all what was accumulated in the *Meşk*, in sum: all what we cannot possibly transcribe, fades away. Heterophony, a texture so important in Ottoman aesthetics, disappeared and was replaced by monophony, with choirs led by scores designed by an *elite* of compilers who chose which versions they wanted to be propagated. All variation becomes at this moment the product of ornamentation (or error), as stated by the algorithmic model of heterophony. If something differs, even if only a bit, we only have to look at the score to see what was intended (because now the intention is clearly *common* to the musicians).

10.9 Conclusions

At the moment some notational system or recording technique starts to appear in the context of a musical tradition, everything changes dramatically: the tradition becomes anchored historically. Transcriptions from recordings (formally or metaphorically, i.e. as mnemonic traces) become, by repetition (listening), stable representations of musical events (i.e. archives). The notion of a ‘true’ version suddenly becomes a possibility with the help of a potential proof (recording and/or score). After the tran-

scription process, playing the score and/or re-record what is taken from recordings, identically (if possible), is the only role attributed to the musician (with the exception of composition and improvisation).

But at the same moment, many different recordings appear that propose other versions, e.g. different phrasing, slightly or abundantly ornamented versions, etc., of the same thing. Some musicians might memorize the surface details of the performance. And this is where heterophony takes back its rights.

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Chapter 11

Mathesis as the Source of Beauty in Music



Rima Povilionienė

Abstract The juxtaposing Latin phrase *musica mathematica* can have a twofold interpretation as ‘mathematical music’ and/or ‘musical mathematics’ and clearly presents the intersection of seemingly opposite fields. The Latin *ars* generally covers the different subjects of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music; meaning not only ‘art’, but also ‘science’; not only ‘skill’ and ‘craft’, but ‘knowledge’ as well. Over the course of different epochs, music theory has been classified as Latin *musica theorica, theoretica, contemplativa, speculativa, arithmetica* etc. Theory was the domain of the scientist who came armed with academic knowledge and who studied the esoteric secrets of music. The philosophically based scientific approach to the subject of music is the general focus of the article highlighting the raise and establishment of quadrivium phenomena, the commonalities between musical and mathematical terminology and actions as well as the systematization of constructive and semantic composing of music in the 20th–21st centuries.

11.1 Introduction

The roots of the idea of mathematically explained music date back over two thousand years in the European worldview. It should be associated with scholars from ancient Greece, who raised this question in the frame of mathematical description of the all-surrounding environment. The sensual experiences of an ancient man, a material comparison or contrasting of things, was adapted to explore the environment—the cosmos using humankind’s senses united into *ratio*. The Pythagoreans were the first to discuss the issue of uniting music and mathematics, sound and number, considering the universal harmony of numerical proportions. The statements by Pythagoras and Euripides obviously underline the connection of mathematical sciences and the art of sounds:

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Pythagoras (c. 570–497/6 BC): There is geometry in the humming of strings. There is music in the spacing of the spheres.¹

Euripides (c. 480–406 BC): Mighty is geometry; joined with art, resistless.²

Probably the clue that explains the long lasting vitality of the idea of the interaction between music and mathematics lies in the statement that mathematics is the principal cause and source of an all-embracing beauty. The approach to a mathematically, or rationally and proportionally substantiated world was developed far back in antiquity, as displayed in the quotation from *Metaphysics* by Aristotle:

The main species of beauty are orderly arrangement, proportion, and definiteness; and these are especially manifested by the mathematical sciences.³

According to the German musicologist Heinrich Husmann, who brought attention to a particular interest in numbers that prevailed in antiquity and an admiration for the infinite possibilities of their manipulations, the ancient Greeks found arithmetic proportion less interesting than harmonious relations between numbers.⁴ This explains in part why mathematicians are intrigued by irrational numbers, for example the Archimedes constant π , which is thought to be beyond the powers of human perception, or the story about the swift-footed Achilles who never catches up with the turtle.⁵

The Book of Wisdom obviously testifies that the Christian worldview took over and elaborated the Pythagorean concept of a mathematically based world.⁶ At the beginning of the year of the Lord 387, the theory was continued by St. Augustine, admiring the eternity and universality of the number:

¹Pythagoras' quotation from: Young, Louise B. 1965. *The Mystery of Matter*. Oxford University Press: 113.

²Euripides' quotation from: *Mathematically Speaking: A Dictionary of Quotations*. 1998. C.C. Gaither & Alma E. Cavazos-Gaither (eds.), CRC Press: 84.

³The quotation from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (4th c. BC, Book 13, Part 3, 1078a–1078b, translated by Hugh Tredennick; also quoted in: Blackwell, Albert L. 2000. *The Sacred in Music*. Westminster John Knox Press: 162).

⁴Husmann reasoned this by presenting an example of the numbers 6 and 8: their arithmetic mean 7 is finite, so the arithmetic proportion is directly mechanical and not inspiring. The harmonic mean of these numbers $6\frac{6}{7}$, on the contrary, gives an impetus for a further development of numerical operations (for more see Husmann 1961).

⁵This is the so-called Zeno's paradox of continuum, attributed to pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea. If the tortoise is the first to move from point A to point B, Achilles, who starts later moving from the same point, by following the tortoise cannot catch up with it and every time lags behind it at a certain distance—when Achilles reaches point B, the tortoise has already travelled to point C. When Achilles reaches point C, the tortoise has already moved to point D, etc. The analogous example can be that of infinite process of summation when trying to calculate number 1:

it is obvious that $1 = 1/2 + 1/2$ or $1 = 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/4$ or $1 = 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/8$;

however, the process is infinite when $1 = 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + 1/32\dots$

⁶King Solomon addresses to God: “[...] but thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight” (The Book of Wisdom, 11:20; King James version).

But seven and three are ten not only at the moment, but always; [...] this incorruptible numerical truth is common to me and to any reasoning being.⁷

Later, the mathematically based theological mind manifested as the *mathesis universalis* phenomena. The Renaissance philosopher and Catholic Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (Fig. 11.1) asserted it in writings. He raised the question of *the possibility of knowing* God, rather than questions *about* God, which was possible only when man compared or measured the known and the unknown. Therefore, one had to choose the science of mathematics as one of the measures of knowledge. The rephrasing of antiquated ideas in the Christian environment is obvious in Cusa's theory, because numbers to him were also a symbolic prototype of things, a rudiment of intellectual activity. In his didactic sermon *Tota pulchra es, amica mea* (1443) he wrote the following:

[E]very number is present in an enfolded way, and just as in number all proportion and all intermediateness are present enfoldedly, and just as in proportion all harmony and order and concordance [are enfolded]: so too, for this reason, [there is enfolded in oneness] all beauty, which shines forth in the ordering and the proportion and the concordance. Hence, when we say that God is One, this One is Supersubstantial Oneness itself, which is also Beauty, enfolding in itself all things beautiful.⁸

In parallel to theologians, the scientists declared similar statements resembling them: Galileo Galilei called mathematics the alphabet by means of which God describes the world⁹; or the 20th century Hungarian mathematician Paul Erdős spoke about the imaginary divine book that contained the most beautiful mathematical proofs. The following utterance is attributed to Erdős:

[When asked why numbers are beautiful?] It's like asking why Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is beautiful. If you don't see why, someone can't tell you. I know numbers are beautiful. If they aren't beautiful, nothing is. (Cited in Hoffman 1998: 44)¹⁰

The Russian philosopher and culturologist Aleksei Losev related the definition of beauty to numbers stating that beauty was something "impersonal", neither spirit

⁷St. Augustine's statement from his *De libero arbitrio* written in 387–395 (On Free Choice of the Will, in 3 volumes, second book 2.8.21.83; the quotation was cited in English translation by Peter King, Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁸Quotation cited in *Nicholas of Cusa's Didactic Sermons: A Selection*. 2008. Jasper Hopkins (transl.), Arthur J. Banning Press: 174.

⁹The quotation in Italian "La matematica e l'alfabeto in cui Dio a scritto l'Universo" is said to have been recorded by Galileo Galilei in his treatise *Il Saggiatore* (Rome) in 1623.

¹⁰Bruce Schechter, the author of Erdős' biography, emphasizes that the eccentric Hungarian mathematician was an atheist but speaking about an especially successful mathematical proof he used to say that it was recorded in The Book:

Perhaps Erdős' most interesting coinage is the term "Supreme Fascist", or SF, which is what he called the God in whom he professed no belief. [...] The SF is the author of The Book of all the best mathematical proofs, and it is one measure of His cruelty that He keeps its content hidden. We are therefore obligated to use all of our intelligence and intuition to reproduce the contents of the SF's hidden Book for ourselves. (Schechter 1998: 70)



Fig. 11.1 A central fragment from the *Passionstriptychon* by Meister des Marienlebens (15th c.) at the Stiftskapelle des St. Nikolaus-Hospitals (Cusanusstift) in Bernkastel-Kues (Germany); Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (left)

nor personality, but an impersonal, non-qualitative structure. He cited, as examples, numbers (atom, initial structure, “the primary kernel”, “the clasp of the entire construction”; see Losev 1963: 506–507; Losev 1999).

Obviously one way of proving a theorem could be characterized as a boring theoretical operation, whereas another could be defined as a manifestation of elegance, in which every step of the calculation is a process, similar to that of a creation of a work of art.¹¹ So in the frame of beauty, what makes one mathematical proof considered as more attractive than another, regardless that both are correct? It is the elegance and refinement that make mathematical calculations something more than mechanical manipulations with symbols. As Herbert E. Huntley pointed out, discussing the beauty of the Golden Ratio, the emotions of a scientist who has proved a theorem are identical to those experienced while admiring a masterpiece of art, because both are a creative work (Huntley 1970: 76).

¹¹For example, at the age of three, the mathematician Carl F. Gauss solved the puzzle of what all the numbers added together from 1 to 100 would equal without doing any summation operations, but by having noticed that pairs of numbers 1 and 100, 2 and 99, 3 and 98, 4 and 97, etc. were equal to the same sum 101, which had to be multiplied 50 times (Rothstein 1995: 143).

11.2 Music in the Frame of *Quadrivium*

As stated earlier, the ancient worldview provided the mathematical basis to music, thus providing a scientific approach to the subject of music and offering a rich system of mathematical formulas, proportions and complex expressions for certain musical operations. This is typical for the works by Pythagoreans, who, besides the theory of musical intervals and their numerical expressions, emphasized a group of mathematical sciences uniting music, astronomy, geometry and arithmetic. Archytas, a scientist of the Pythagorean school, is said to be the first person to have distinguished four related (or canonical) studies generalized as *mathêmata*—logistic (i.e. arithmetic), astronomy, geometry and music. Soon after Plato wrote his *Republic*, and in its 7th book Socrates named the same four important branches, which are obligatory for a studying philosopher. But only in the 6th century it was Boethius, who merged these mathematical sciences into the so-called quadrivium, which was included in the system of seven disciplines—*septem artes liberales*—taught at the universities in the Middle Ages (Fig. 11.2). Furthermore, the development of the quadrivium concept and its impact on Christian thinking manifested in the texts by Nicholas of Cusa. The Renaissance thinker incorporated four sciences into the process of world's creation, which was described in his *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440):

[I]n creating the world, God used arithmetic, geometry, music, and likewise astronomy. [...] For through arithmetic God united things. Through geometry He shaped them, in order that they would thereby attain firmness, stability, and mobility in accordance with their conditions. Through music He proportioned things in such way that there is not more earth in earth than water in water, air in air, and fire in fire, so that no one element is altogether reducible to another. As a result, it happens that the world-machine cannot perish.¹²

The juxtaposition of music and mathematics was brightly reflected in various studies, titled *musica mathematica* that especially appeared around the 17th century. They are *Musica mathematica* (1593) by the German physician, astronomer and mathematician Heinrich Brucaeus (Joachim Burmeister, who prepared and published the treatise by Brucaeus in 1609, and named it more comprehensively—*Musica theórica*) or the study *Dissertatio mathematica de musica* (1672) by Johann Christoph Wegelin and Julius Reichelt. A source of special significance was the treatise *Musica mathematica* (1614) by Abraham Bartolus. This treatise analyzed—alongside different manners of tuning—the tuning of sounds proposed by Andreas Reinhard—dividing the Phrygian scale into 48 equal parts as an analogue of cosmic proportions. His insights influenced later representatives of musical theory, for example Johann Mattheson's considerations about the relationships between music and mathematics. In his treatise *Plus ultra* (1754–1756), Mattheson identified the process of composing music with an architectural construction and advanced calculations peculiar to it.

Attributing music to the sphere of mathematics was particularly characteristic of the Baroque epoch as well. The type of music found at that time, *musica scien-*

¹²Nicholas of Cusa. 1440. *De Docta Ignorantia*, Book II, Chapter 13 (quoted from: *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, Vol. 1. 2001. Jasper Hopkins (transl.). Arthur J. Banning Press: 99).

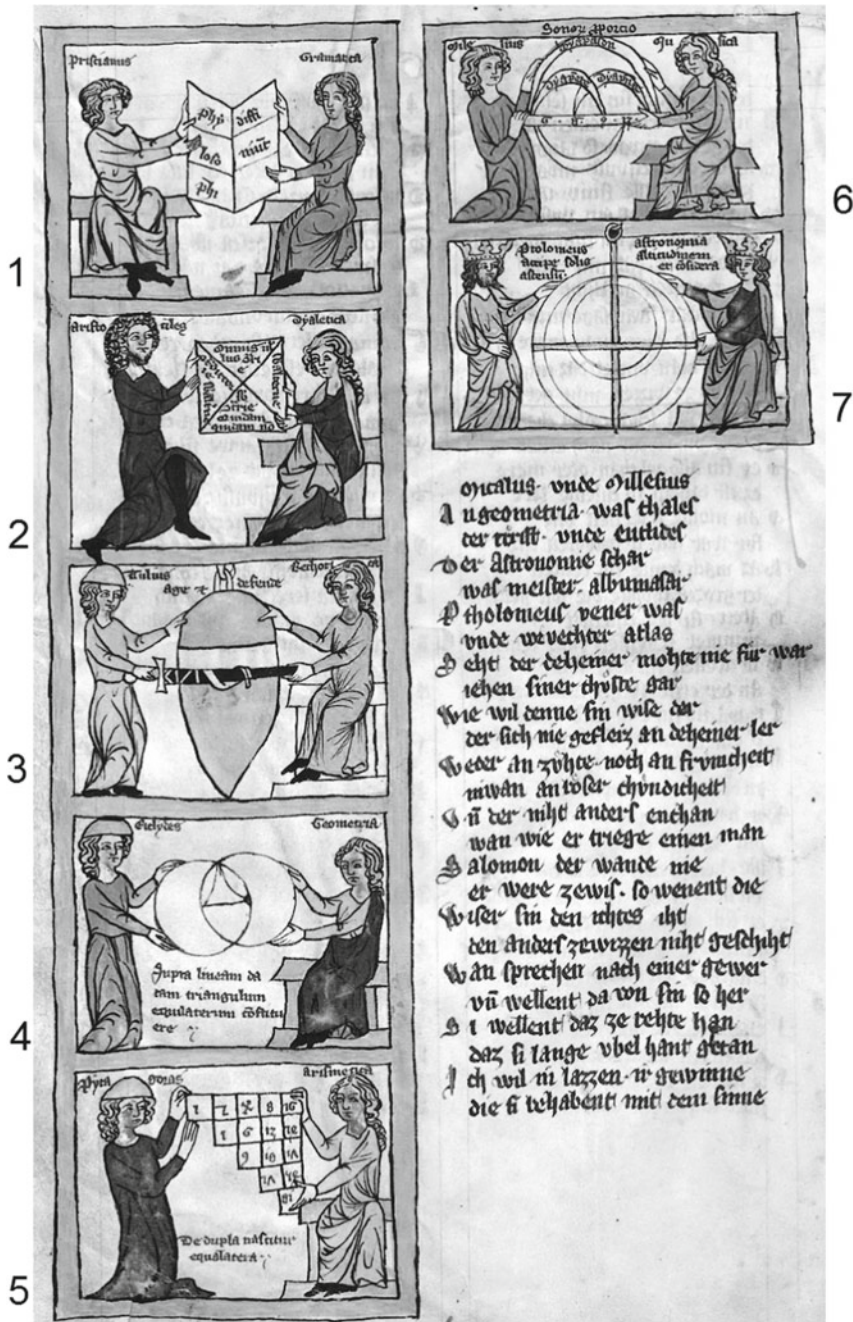


Fig. 11.2 Medieval drawings representing the septem artes liberales: 1–3 trivium of grammar, logic (dialectics) and rhetoric, 4–7 quadrivium of geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy (from Thomas von Zerklare: *Der Walsche Gast*, Ostfranken (?), 1340, fol. 65v. Forschungsbibliothek Gotha, Cod. Memb. I 120)

tia (also *musica contemplativa, speculativa, theorica, and theoretica*), was called by Gottfried Leibniz, Johannes Lippius, Jakob Adlung or Andreas Werckmeister “sounding mathematics”, “mathematical knowledge”, “the daughter of mathematics” or “the science of mathematics creating harmonious singing” (Lobanova 1994: 128). Johannes Kepler called the theory of music perfect science, whose eternal truth is mathematics.¹³ The first dictionary of music written in the German language, *Musicalisches Lexicon Oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (1732) by Johann Gottfried Walther, indicates *musica arithmetica* among different types of music. That is, arranging the sounds in proportions and numbers (Fig. 11.3).¹⁴

In the realm of contemporary music, the constructive manipulation of the interaction between music and mathematics has become especially active. Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff based their music theory on mathematics as a constructive basis. These insights were adapted from Heinrich Schenker’s *Ursatz* theory (score reduction and the process of prolongation). Mathematical formalism was typical of David Lewin’s theory presented in the early 1980s about the conceptual space of music, its points/elements and distances/intervals between them. In Lewin’s theory, musical space occupied all three dimensions—pitch, rhythm, and timbre. Each of them could be placed in structural models. Intervals between groups could be measured with a mathematical group system, called *Generalized Interval System* (GIS) (more see Lewin 1991).

The attitude towards mathematics as the art of the beauty of numbers has had an effect on the environment: operations with numbers, regularities of symmetry and proportions, have become beauty formulas in different spheres of art. Practice of music creation was no exception. As composer Johann Kuhnau wrote in the preface to his cycle of six sonatas for the clavier *Musicalische Vorstellung einiger biblischer Historien* (1700):

I should investigate further the fundamentals of music and demonstrate the splendid and wonderful usefulness of *Mathesis* and in particular the *ars combinatoria*, which serves the inspiration so magnificently [...]. (Kuhnau 1700/1973: xii; italics original—R.P.)¹⁵

¹³Original quote in German “in der Mathematik ihre principia aeternae veritatis hat” (Heher 1992: 30).

¹⁴Original description in German:

Musica Arithmetica betrachtet die Klänge nach der Proportion, so sie mit den Zahlen machen. (Walther 1732: 431)

¹⁵English translation by Michael Talbot. Moreover, this Kuhnau’s cyclical work is an interesting example because of its use of a musical texture in a numerical alphabet and plenty of numerical symbols. In the preface the composer explained how he encoded a certain name within his composition:

However, should any be so curious as to want to know his name I shall convey it to him in an algebraic problem for his amusement and as *lusus ingenii* (nothing in addition that this entire work of mine, as my maiden muse on the first printed page clearly gives to understand, is nothing but such a *lusus*). But, first he must know that I have allotted every letter a number corresponding to its position in the alphabet: thus A equals 1, B equals 2, and so on. Further, I shall leave the reader in doubt as to whether I have used one or two letters too many or

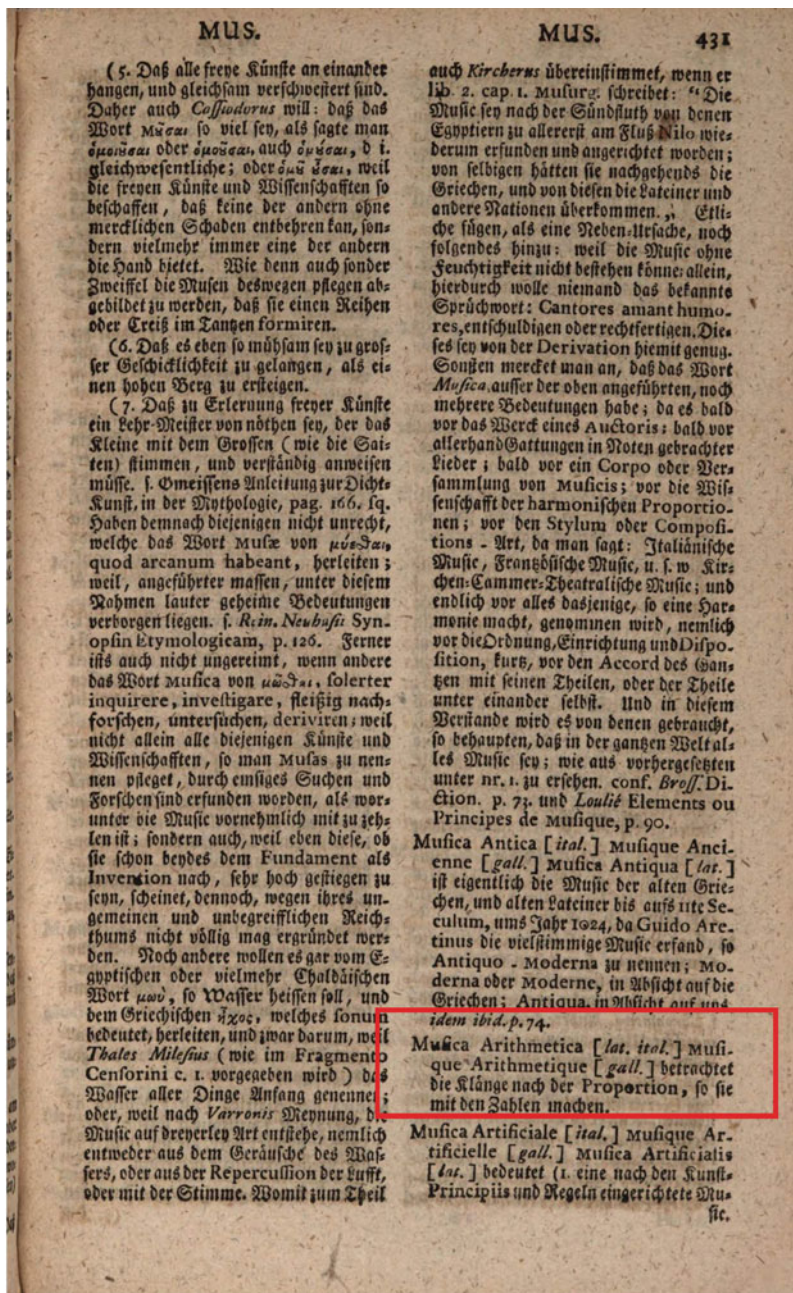


Fig. 11.3 A fragment from *Musicalisches Lexicon Oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (1732) by Johann Gottfried Walther, page 431, containing the explanation for "musica arithmetica"

11.3 The Influence of Mathematics on Musical Practice

Considering, that *beautiful* in music is perceived as that which is hidden in relation to mathematics (Powel 1979: 267), we may identify the logic of the structure of music with the logic of a mathematical equation. St. Thomas Aquinas' phrase deserves to be mentioned within this context too—"music, which studies the ratios of audible sounds".¹⁶ The statement by Gioseffo Zarlino that music derives its principles from natural science and from the science of numbers was recorded in the first book of his treatise *Le istituzioni harmoniche* (1558),¹⁷ in Chap. 20 "On Why Music is Subject to Arithmetic and is the Intermediary between Mathematics and Nature" where Zarlino discussed the relations between music and arithmetic on the basis of the famous Persian polymath Avicenna. Whereas in 1743 in the monthly *Neu eröffnete musikalische Bibliothek* Lorenz Mizler stated that mathematics is the heart and soul of music, and:

Without question the bar, the rhythm, the proportion of the parts of a musical work and so on must all be measured. [...] Notes and other signs are only tools in music, the heart and soul is the good proportion of melody and harmony. It is ridiculous to say that mathematics is not the heart and soul of music.¹⁸

Gottfried Leibniz was one of the first to speak about the links between prime numbers and music. While trying to establish the law of the sequence of prime numbers, he looked for causes and answers in the process of a musical composition (Klotz 2006: 105). The mathematician Leonhard Euler, who believed that prime numbers lay behind certain beautifully sounding combinations of tones, investigated the relationship between the consonants of music and integers (Rothstein 1995: xvi).¹⁹

too few at the end, so that he should not immediately draw any conclusion from simple observation of the number of letters. Nevertheless, the name will appear clearly from the correct solution. This algebraic riddle, then, proceeds thus: the sum of the letters is a certain number. (Kuhnau 1700/1973: xi; italics original—R.P.)

As the analysis of this riddle revealed, the hidden name was "Stephani"—Agostino Stephani (or Steffani, 1654–1728), an Italian clergyman and politician, a Baroque theoretician, and a composer of high standing, who lived in Munich, Hannover and Dusseldorf, was an important figure in German Baroque music at the time.

¹⁶Original quote in Latin "Musica, quae considerat proportiones sonorum audibilium" was written in: St. Thomas Aquinas. 1961. *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Bk 3 Lsn 7 Sct 412. John P. Rowan (transl.). Chicago: 201.

¹⁷Zarlino's statement in Italian: "Musica, che havendo con l'Arithmetica per commune soggetto il Numero, aggiungendo a questo per sua differenza la Sonorità, si fa ad essa Arithmetica subalternata, tenendo il Numero sonoro per suo soggetto." Cited from Zarlino (1562: 30), also see the translation by Lucille Corwin (*Le Istituzioni Harmoniche of Gioseffo Zarlino. Part 1: A Translation with Introduction*. 2008. ProQuest. UMI: 324).

¹⁸Lorenz Mizler. 1743. *Neu eröffnete musikalische Bibliothek*, Bd. 2. Leipzig: 54; English translation quoted from Tatlow and Griffiths (2001).

¹⁹According to du Sautoy (2003: 77), music was the first impetus that aroused the interest of mathematicians in the possibilities of the prime numbers and their infinite sequence. This is related to the discoveries by ancient Greeks of the infinite division of the string at the ratios 1/2, 1/3, 2/3,

A non-accidental union of music and mathematics is obvious in their fundamental commonalities. Music and mathematics is articulated in the language of symbols, graphical signs. According to Marcus du Sautoy:

Music is much more than just the minims and crochets which dance across the musical staff. Similarly, mathematical symbols come alive only when the mathematics is played with in the mind. (du Sautoy 2003: 78)

The point of intersection of commonalities between music and mathematics is analogous or isomorphic to their respective actions and processes. For example, the table of transpositions of musical tone-series (series of the original O, its transpositions—inversion I, retrograde R and retrograde inversion RI) is isomorphic to Klein four-group.²⁰ It consists of four elements with which permutations are performed; it has been noticed that transposition operations characteristic of Klein four-group correspond to transpositions of musical tone-series. Variants of transformations of geometric objects and musical transpositions are analogous as well:

- the most elementary way of geometric transformation is geometric translation. It corresponds to a simple repetition of a musical element (O);
- geometric transposition corresponds to a musical sequence (O);
- geometric reflection corresponds to musical retrograde (R);
- geometrical inversion and glide reflection correspond to musical inversion (I);
- geometric rotation corresponds to the inversion of musical retrograde (RI).

11.3.1 *Mathematical Music Composition of the 20th–21st Centuries*

The idea of an interaction between music and mathematics has left its mark in every epoch and is of great importance in the contemporary world. Having spread as the accumulation of experience of a two thousand-year old tradition, the idea of *musica mathematica* determined very diverse mathematical aspects of the music composition of the 20th–21st centuries. Contemporary composers confirm the close ties between music and mathematics. Ernst Křenek compared musical thinking with the independence of axioms, while Pierre Boulez related it to mathematical thinking and thinking about physics. George Crumb described music as a “system of proportions that serves a spiritual impulse” (Takenouchi 1987: 1). A variety of mathematical operations became the inspiration for the compositions of Iannis Xenakis. As Olivier Messiaen once said to Xenakis:

You have the good fortune of being [...] an architect and having studied special mathematics. Take advantage of these things. Do them in your music. (Quoted in Matossian 1986)

3/4, etc. seeking to obtain musical consonance. This was associated with the infinity of the series of prime numbers.

²⁰Klein four-group is named after the mathematician, initiator of the theory of geometry groups Felix Klein, is a subgroup of the symmetric group S_4 .

Nonetheless, it is possible to systematize and generalize the renewal of mathematical techniques in 20th–21st century music by making use of constructivism and semantics peculiar to the multiplicity of the centuries-old phenomenon of *musica mathematica*. Thus, the spread of the traditions of earlier epochs can be divided into two categories: the first, formal-constructive, and the second, semantic-symbolic ways of introducing numeration into musical scores. These two trends may function separately or as a synthetic interaction.

The process of the application of a constructive tool to organize sounds is of a purely technological nature, because manipulations with numbers, like structural models, are technical. The rational nature of numbers emerges in different parameters of a musical composition. Here are the general creative intentions applied in the process of music composition:

- the use of numerical proportions and progressions;
- the expression of symmetry and confrontation of symmetry and asymmetry;
- the renewal of polytempo, polyrhythm, and polymeter;
- the music composing according to combinatorial and transformational models (permutation, rotation, etc.).

The constructive nature of composing contemporary music often correlates with a semantic element, that is, with the rendering of notional underlying implications to a musical composition. Then a certain mathematical phenomenon or a formula, number or a complex of numbers in the musical material is used by a composer both as a working tool and as a symbol accumulating a certain meaning as an all-embracing idea or the contents of a composition. In assessing the character of a semantic composition, several tendencies generalizing the authors' ideas can be distinguished:

- the application of cosmological numeral codes and graphic constructions;
- the implementation of Kabalistic symbols and esoteric principles of the magic of numbers;
- the use of sacral numbers, especially Christian numerology;
- the manipulation with numerical alphabet and possibility to encode certain “messages” in the musical texture;
- the selection of personalized numbers as constructive elements.

The third aspect of mathematically composed music in the 20th–21st centuries is related to the innovations of mathematical processes, which considerably broadened the space of creative possibilities. The principles taken over from more advanced mathematics, fast developing spheres of information technologies, began to be transformed into a practice of musical composition in the middle of the 20th century. This has allowed the creation of complicated geometrical, graphic algorithms as well as the explication of complicated mathematical formulas or models, mathematical theories (fractals, chaos, groups, probabilities and others), practice of scholastic music, etc.

11.4 Conclusions

One might say that the compendium of *musica mathematica* of earlier epochs engenders a peculiar eclectic combination, one that employs a combination of a variety of different constructive manipulations. When analyzing the features of the creative process, one encounters models of additivity, progressions and symmetry, which have traditionally established themselves in the practice of composing music. In contemporary musical composition, the traditions of applying antique proportions, Kabbalistic numbers, Christian numerology, and numericalized semantics have been revived.

It would be correct to note that the variety of tools used in composing music helps determine contemporary composers' aspirations for individuality and exclusiveness, which dominates our modern worldview and which manifests itself in the especially personified intentions of composers. It would seem that never before has the creative space of music been filled with the search for original results as it is today. Opuses of contemporary music seek to "hide" an original special way of "deciphering", rather than applying a universally determined numerical interpretation. Most often it is difficult, or even impossible, to establish a specific semantic or logical code without the author's interference (his own testimony, or the like). This is because in most cases a contemporary musical composition is a one-off realization of a certain idea; a specific model is applied in the case of that musical composition only.

The innovative phenomenon inspired musicological literature of a new kind that investigated algorithms and their procedures in music, application of recursive models, and chaos theory or probability theory in creating computer music. In the frame of the 20th–21st centuries, it becomes more and more difficult to apply the concepts of traditional music creation and analysis. However, there is no doubt that the manipulations with various mathematical phenomena considerably extend the amplitude of interactions between music and mathematics and the spectrum of generating musical ideas.²¹

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Chapter 12

Some Remarks on Verbal Models in Music



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Abstract According to conventional points of view one of the most important ontological characteristics of music as an art form is the non-verbal way of communication which is inherent in it. On the other hand, the structures of this strictly conditional musical language often have something in common with models of verbal language. We can see here the formal (syntactical) analogies without lexical contents. We propose to present the results of observations on the influence of verbal models in musical structures.

12.1 Introduction

One of the most important ontological characteristics of music as an art form has traditionally been that it is considered an inherently non-verbal way of being. The musical discourse as such does not use words, even in cases when the word itself is a component of the work. However, the phrase *musical language* is generally accepted in the European tradition. It embraces a wide range of meanings from pure metaphor to interpretations in terms of semiotics. Obviously, this language, “which the reason does not understand”, “the language of the world, which ought perhaps to remain incomprehensible and only perceptible”, as Schoenberg defined it after Schopenhauer (Schoenberg 1950: 1)—this language has nevertheless a certain resemblance to verbal communication. Between them, there are relations not only of an expressive mimetic kind; we can see here a similarity of the formal (structural) principles. In other words, music *speaks* according to the same laws as poetry, or, say, philosophy. However, what it says, we cannot express adequately in words, here we agree with Schopenhauer. Moreover, it is this inability which leads to a true understanding of music and its perception itself.

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12.2 Music Essence and Verbal Language

Nevertheless, these two art forms lived for centuries in close interaction, as though they cannot be separated. The reason is not only that a huge amount of music is directly related to the intonation of speech. But also that instrumental music of the European tradition, in the course of time emancipated as pure art, *Ding an sich*, thing-in-itself, has also the formal analogy with verbal models, not to mention the direct reproduction of speech formulas at the level of thematic structures. In such relationships, we can hear the echo of syncretism of ancient times, which the poet expressed in invocation (in the poem under the title *Silentium*): “Oh word, return to music!” (Mandelstam 1913: 2)

The interaction of verbal and musical essence evolved over a long period of time, and its shape changed eventually. As we know, in its time vocal music borrowed directly from poetry. First of all, it concerns the verse structures based on the principle of repetition, such as stanza and Rondo, which became the basis of song forms of instrumental genres. Respectively, the verse forms determined largely the musicological terminology. The situation changed later, and since the 20th century, we can see the opposite picture, that is penetration, up to expansion, of the musicological terminology in the area of literature. Obviously, it was suitable for the tasks of the structural analysis of literary text. According to Oscar Walzel, “the formal analysis of verbal art is forced to borrow its terms from music” (Walzel 1916: 11). In Russia, this trend goes back to the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, in particular, to his concept of Dostoevsky’s polyphonic novel, which gave birth later to a whole line of research, both in literature and in musicology. According to Alexandr Makhov:

The easiness with which philologists use a number of musicological terms, such as “melody”, “polyphony”, “sonata”, “symphony”, etc., lets assert that “musicality” has long been recognized as a possible attribute of a literary text. (Makhov 2001)

In some cases, the musical terms do not appear as some arbitrary addition to the text from the outside, as an element of subjective interpretation and of pure speculation; they are extracted from the text itself and represent a deliberate author’s device. Among the most famous examples of this kind, we could mention the use of leitmotifs in the story *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann, where the final event title is foreshadowed through the sequence of “death masks” in the guises of different characters (Barsova 1988: 135–136). In its turn, the musicological terminology borrowed from the arsenal of literature is also very noticeable. We can see the list of such parallels in a separate study material (Bershadszkaya 2004). Examples of such terms are well known; we can remember symphonic poem, instrumental monologue, intonation fabula, not to mention the basic concepts of epos, lyrics, and drama, which are deeply rooted in the traditions of musicology.

This “cross-pollination” undoubtedly enriches the conceptual range of the two sciences, due to expansion of the context fields. We see here the influence of the comparison principle, of a simile, that is, a metaphor, which is based on a correlation of partial features, but does not relate to the essential characteristics of the

musical and verbal phenomena. Nevertheless, there are examples of a different kind, which demonstrate the profound meaning of this problem. We can find them in the statements of the composers themselves.

12.3 Musical Prose

These are the ideas of Arnold Schoenberg from the period 1900–1910, which are closely associated with his composer practice. We can judge them from Schoenberg's own words, that is, from his book *Style and Idea*.

It is the concept of *musical prose* which is particularly interesting to us in this context. Schoenberg developed it in an analytical article entitled *Brahms the progressive*. He analyzes the composition techniques of Brahms, especially the process of thematic development.

Schoenberg was most interested in the organic asymmetry of the virtuoso motivic work of Brahms, which overcomes the regular structures that originated from song and dance. Such forms Schoenberg considers obsolete:

Unfortunately, many illiterate composers still write two plus two, four plus four, eight plus eight unchangingly. (Schoenberg 1950: 86)

“Primitive” squareness, inseparably associated with “rhymes” of cadences and repetitions, must give way to what Schoenberg calls the movement of musical thought, “I wish to join ideas with ideas” (Ibid. 63). Structure must be justified by the musical essence of statements and as such overcome. Hyperdense, the most concentrated presentation, “the full pregnancy of meaning of a maxim, of a proverb, of an aphorism” (Ibid. 72)—these are the qualities which Schoenberg puts as the highest ideal of composition.

In other words, a transition, a codetta, an elaboration, etc., should not be considered as a thing in its own end. It should not appear at all if it does not develop, modify, intensify, clarify, or throw light or color on the idea of the piece. (Ibid. 63–64)

Great art must proceed to precision and brevity. [...] This is what musical prose should be—a direct and straightforward presentation of ideas, without any patchwork, without mere padding and empty repetitions. (Ibid. 72)

The ideal, which goes back to Brahms and to the late classical tradition, Schoenberg embodied in the new syntax of works created at the beginning of the 1910s.

Many of them are vocal works, and the first to be named here is Opus 15, *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, a cycle for voice and piano based on poems by Stefan George, one of the key works in the history of new music of the first half of the 20th century.

It is especially interesting for us that we do not perceive the vocal part of Opus 15 as a real dominant, for all its richness and subtlety. The voice has equal rights with the piano part in joining ideas with ideas; both incorporated in the process of thematic development. Let me give a small example, namely, the beginning of the eleventh piece (Fig. 12.1).

Sehr ruhig ($\text{♩} = 48$)

pp

poco rit. ... 8 - - - - -

ppp

pp

ppp

Als wir hin-ter dem be-blüm-ten To-re end-lich nur das eig-

pp

Fig. 12.1 Arnold Schoenberg. *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, for voice and piano, Op. 15

The piano introduction exhibits, in a question-answer structure, a complex of shimmering variant thirds and fourths, which the voice entry naturally extends. Furthermore, the interval relations create a structural basis for the entire piece, although it retains the features of traditional forms (stanza and recapitulation in the last six bars, *Ich erinnere...*). The deeper meaning of the composition, its true-musical “words” and “phrases” are formed however not so much by the expression of the vocal part, unsurpassed in its kind, but to an even greater degree, by a real comprehension of the meaning and form of the poem. We heard a free interchange of replicas in the piece, and we think there are more than two interlocutors, because the piano part consists as if of several “voices”. This is the idea of musical prose in practice.

We could remember here Schoenberg's earlier article *The Relation to the text* which was published in almanac *Der blaue Reiter* in 1912, three years after the completion of the Opus 15 (1909). Schoenberg confesses:

A few years ago I was deeply ashamed when I discovered in several Schubert songs, well-known to me, that I had absolutely no idea what was going on in the poems on which they were based. But when I had read the poems it became clear to me that I had gained absolutely nothing for the understanding of the songs thereby, since the poems did not make it necessary for me to change my conception of the musical interpretation in the slightest degree. On the contrary, it appeared that, without knowing the poem, I had grasped the content, the real content, perhaps even more profoundly than if I had clung to the surface of the mere thoughts expressed in words. (Schoenberg 1950: 4)

The same was discovered by Schoenberg in his own compositional practice:

It then turned out, to my greatest astonishment, that I had never done greater justice to the poet than when, guided by my first direct contact with the sound of the beginning, I divined everything that obviously had to follow this first sound with inevitability. [...] So I had completely understood the Schubert songs, together with their poems, from the music alone, and the poems of Stefan George from their sound alone, with a perfection that by analysis and synthesis could hardly have been attained, but certainly not surpassed. (Ibid. 4)

Schoenberg's judgments have something in common with the ideas of the poet himself, who claimed that it is not meaning which is important in poetry, but form. Form is "the creation itself; form of creation creates itself". Stefan George's concept of form represents to some extent a parallelism to the musical idea as the quintessence of the true substance of art.

At the same time, it seems to be that Schoenberg ignores the very structure of George's verses. Each of the fifteen poems represents a single stanza metrically strictly organized with refined rhymes, which are reminiscent of a sonnet and other poetic solid forms. The composer interprets the verse as a free *prose* monologue where he emphasizes or hides strophic accents, in accordance with the concrete moment of expression. However, in our example, the main rhyme (3rd–8th verses) still makes itself felt in the musical interpretation. The words "Seligkeiten—lang zu Seiten" form a "frame" of two musical stanzas which is unequal in relation to the text.¹

Als wir hinter dem beblühten Tore	<i>a</i>
endlich nur das eigne Hauchen spürten,	<i>b</i>
warden uns erdachte Seligkeiten?	<i>c</i>
Ich erinnere, daß wie schwache Rohre	<i>a</i>
beide stumm zu beben wir begannen,	<i>d</i>
wenn wir leis nur an uns rührten	<i>b</i>
und daß unsre Augen rannen.	<i>d</i>
So verbliebest du mir lang zu Seiten.	<i>c</i>

¹Arnold Schoenberg. 1952. *15 Gedichte aus "Das Buch der hängenden Gärten" von Stefan George*. Wien, London: Universal Edition. In the original publications of his works, George used individual spelling; in particular, nouns printed with a small letter against the rules of German orthography.

verses	3	3	2
rhymes	a b c	a d b	d c
vocal part	5 bars (3 verses) A	7 bars (4 verses) B/A	3 bars (1 verse) A ¹

12.4 Musical Grammar

The following example of the interaction of verbal structure and musical essence we present more briefly.

It borrowed from the legacy of Modest Mussorgsky, and we focus on the first song of the cycle for voice and piano *Without Sun* (or *Sunless*, 1873), *Within Four Walls*. Let me remind the reader that the vast majority of Mussorgsky's works are operas and songs, that is, the vocal music. He often wrote himself texts for his works, but the cycle *Without Sun* he created from poems of a young poet Arseny Golenishchev-Kutuzov, with whom Mussorgsky became friends at this time.

I also wish to remind the reader that the composer was a great innovator, and a conscious innovator; he was the creator of the original vocal style based on speech intonations. However, in the song *Within Four Walls* we hear a very restrained, almost a monotonous recitation, which slightly deviates from the steady dactylic rhythm only in the last phrase. A piano accompaniment is equally modest; it supports the voice with reserved chords, as if in a manner of a church recitative, only occasionally venturing a melodic counterpoint. A harmonic structure is also strange; it is chained to the authority of the pedal tone *D*; the harmony of the song caused particularly sharp accusations of author's incompetence and unprofessionalism. The singularity of this music, written in 1873 is not a coincidence; as usual with Mussorgsky, his musical solution is a direct expression of the content of a poetic source. The poem *Within Four Walls* is a monologue of a hero who tormented by the anguish and hopelessness of existence, is entirely immersed in his inner world. According to Stephen Walsh:

The relentless musico-poetic scheme is an image in sound of the 'cramped little room' and the enclosing darkness of the poet's 'lonely night'. (Walsh 2013: 302)

However, Mussorgsky's music solution is not limited to the semantic content of the poem and its rhythmic structure. In the verses, there is an important purely grammatical feature, namely, *the absence of verbs*. The poem entirely consists of nominative sentences, which indicate a series of moods and feelings, but not actions. We can hear in the music something analogical, videlicet the absence of a dominant harmony. It is also a grammatical characteristic, but related to music.² There is only once an allusion to the cadence D–T in C major, at the very end in a fleeting deviation, immediately "disavowed" by the last chord of D major (Fig. 12.2).

²It was my colleague from St. Petersburg, Professor Arkady Klimovitskiy, who noticed this feature of the song.

Andante tranquillo
[*pp*]

Ком - нат - ка тес - на - я, ти - ха - я, ми - ла - я;
 тень не - про - гляд - на - я, тень без - от - вет - на - я, ду - ма - глу - бо - ка - я,
 пес - ня у - ны - ла - я; в бю - щем - ся серд - це на - деж - да за - вет - на - я,

pp *cresc.* *dim.*

Fig. 12.2 Modest Mussorgsky. *Bez solnza* [Without Sun (Sunless)]

Mussorgsky's “apophatic” musical interpretation is undoubtedly a fruit of pure intuition. It is a spontaneous response to the essence of poetic source, a response of the composer, who was free from the burden of preconceived solutions, including the rules of the “proper” school harmony.

Music of later periods can also provide the material for further research in this field. A very interesting example might be repetitive minimal style, both in music and in literature, the basis of which in some cases is the idea of the tautological repetition. For example, we could notice the similarity in the musical and literary works of Vladimir Martynov (b. 1946), where we are seeing the repetition of words, circular constructions, and parallelisms with the use of the same words. All this reminds us of quasi-infinite repetition of cadence formulas in musical compositions.

12.5 Conclusions

Finally, we might assume that our comparison of poetry and music arises at the same grammatical level of these art forms. We can see the future perspectives in studies of such kind.

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Chapter 13

On the Role of Intonation in Music and Communication Practices



Diana Baigina

Abstract In this paper intonation is studied as a basic characteristic of music, and as a basis for verbal and non-verbal communication. Human thinking is not entirely mediated by verbal language and its richness surpasses the capacity of verbal expression. Considering intonation as a crucial means of communication and interaction, it is assumed that the need for communication could lie in the origins of music. Music permits us to put into practice various modes of social interaction. It is seen as a unique type of social communication, through which information about the psycho-emotional life of people is transmitted more clearly and holistically than through verbal communication.

13.1 Introduction

The question of how a human elaborates a holistic perception of the world is of great interest to the researcher. While we expose and accommodate ourselves to torrents of heterogeneous and sometimes unconnected pieces of information, consuming it via different channels of perception, our consciousness tries to find the sense that may constitute a meaningful unity towards integrating this diverse information. A human being's perception of life is not only carried out by the means of intellectual reflection but also by the means of feeling and sensing, experiencing the outer and the inner world. Regardless of the fact that each type of sensation provides a specific view of the world, a human being is capable of discovering in it meanings that complement and develop his or her own worldview which combines these disjointed pieces of information into meaningful integrity. At the same time the unity of perception is formed in the process of integrating the information received via channels of perception (sense data), each of which constituting a separate reality with undeterminable boundaries. From each of these realities whether it is sonic, visual or kinesthetic etc., humans can unlimitedly receive knowledge about themselves, the others and the world, which has a direct impact on the formation and development of one's person-

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ality. The ability to perceive and perform sounds is one of those realities, exploring which we may develop and deepen our knowledge of human nature. For ages, the greater part of knowledge has been formed and transmitted from one individual to another through the acts of communication with a significant proportion relating to different types of sonic messages.

In this context, music as a communicational phenomenon is of particular interest. This fluid, elusive sounding substance has always been known to be able to translate, to transmit feelings and emotions. Music acts directly and totally, it passes as if “through us”. The absence of a fixed signification attributed to the elements of music, distinguishes it from the verbal language. However, all types of social interaction may be implemented via music: group and mass communication, inter- and intrapersonal communication, and communication with the transcendent. Moreover, all those modes of communication may exist at the same time. They might as well be perceived and understood by representatives of different cultures without any special translation.

To define the impact of music in the field of social communication, it is necessary to determine what is it in the nature of music that allows it to be considered a communicative phenomenon.

Regarding this matter, I want to talk about the phenomenon of *intonation, as a basic element of vocal and sound-driven human communication*, and as a foundation, which both music and speech are based on.

Besides, it is necessary to study intonation in a wider context of the role of music as a factor in social communication. A profound study of nonverbal modes of communication is of great interest: firstly, against the background of the problems detected in the area of verbal communication, secondly, acknowledging the huge communicative potential of music throughout the history of human existence.

With regard to verbal communication, I would like to note that, as the intensity of the development and spread of information technology increases, more and more people from around the world start to communicate and develop a worldwide network of contacts. A large part of this communication is carried out through the Internet and does not involve personal contact. Given this, we may be inclined to speak about a certain crisis of verbal communication in contemporary society.

The meaning of a word depends on the conditions and the context of its use, it can change over time, to the point that a word begins to mean the opposite of what it meant before, due to which the boundaries of its meanings are blurred. The plurality of significations, the diversity of semiotic codes and the diversity of means of communication complicate the task of interpretation of the message for all communication partners. In addition, while communicating on the Internet, we use simplified language constructs, and express emotions through standardized signs. According to scientist and writer Greenfield (2012), this results in a lack of empathy in people, and thus, in a profound crisis of communication. The greatest difficulties become evident when we strive to discuss the most ambiguous and complicated topics, such as the mental and emotional lives of the individuals.

13.2 A Definition of Intonation

The concept of intonation is used in various fields of knowledge, such as musicology, linguistics, phonetics, poetics, psycholinguistics, neuropsychology, semiotics, and communication studies. Each of these sciences uses the concept of intonation in the perspective of their own research, and determines its content with slight variations. This makes it reasonable firstly, to define the boundaries of the concept of intonation.

I want to pay attention to the understanding of intonation as the semantic basis of music. This definition was developed by Soviet-Russian musicologists Boleslav Yavorsky (1935) and Boris Asafiev (1971). The principles of the semiotic concept of intonation were formulated in their works. Grigoriy Konson, a researcher of Yavorsky's intonational concept, combined the basic provisions of the theory of intonation formulated by Yavorsky, and suggested the concept of intonation as a "formally meaningful unit of figurative and semantic articulation of musical speech based on functional tonal gravity" (Konson 2010: 3).

Representing a complete semantic unit of musical speech, intonation is closely related to the whole of a piece. Intonation is the "principle of semantic division of musical speech", which includes melodic, pitch, dynamic, temporal, rhythmic and constructive characteristics of the composition. The main function of intonation is the "expression of character and measure of completeness of the form, precise expression of the idea and inner content". It articulates the emotional-volitional message of the composition (Ibid. 2–3).

Of particular interest is the idea of "social conditioning of intonation", outlined by Yavorsky and Asafiev. Historical time and place and the actual scheme of the social process directly influence the constructive-compositional style of thinking of the composer (Ibid. 7).

Regarding the linguistic definition of this phenomenon, I have conceived the concept of intonation as the rhythmic-melodic side of speech, serving in the sentence as a means of expressing syntactic meanings and emotionally expressive coloring (Rosenthal and Telenkova 1976). As a set of prosodic characteristics such as melodicism, intensity, duration, tempo and timbre of speech, pause (Ibid. 1976; Torsueva 1990); as the rhythm of speech, phraseological and logical accentuation (Rosenthal and Telenkova 1976). The understanding of the functions of intonation is quite broad:

- as a means to express the speaker's emotions, as the characteristics of the speaker and the situation;
- as the definition of communicative characteristics of the utterance (for example motivation, question, exclamation);
- as an expression of grammatical integrity of the sentence, as a means to split the utterance in accordance with its semantics, and in accordance with its phonetic and grammatical compatibility;
- as an expression of syntactic lexical-semantic relations between parts of the utterance (Rosenthal and Telenkova 1976; Torsueva 1990);
- as a means to display the subtext of the utterance (Torsueva 1990).

Intonation manifests itself both at the level of individual utterances, and at the level of the whole text.

Intonation acquires a special meaning in speech, performing a stylistic function, rendering an emotional-aesthetic impact on the listener. Performing the pictorial function, the intonation conveys the emotionally-semantic, dynamic, spatial and temporal characteristics of the content, of the described characters and situations (Ibid.).

The concept of intonation also includes the acoustic properties of speech, namely changes in melodic movement, range, loudness, tempo (Ibid.).

Summarizing the various intellectual positions taken on the phenomenon of intonation, I feel that it is important to define the boundaries of the concept before moving further. Intonation is a way to sonically represent feelings, emotions and thoughts that people use in the process of communication. Intonation is implemented through sound modulation, sound distortions, accents, pauses using melodic, timbral, dynamic, rhythmic and temporal characteristics of sound. Intonation is the tool of formal and semantic splitting in musical and verbal speech. It packages the semantic unit of the message, due to which we can perceive a complete thought as a part of a more complex message. Intonation is socially conditioned and contains the specific features of the social community in which it was formed. Nevertheless, the origins of intonation, as a way of communication used by people, determine its universal character. Semantic fullness of intonation and its emotional-expressive and communicative function are preserved regardless of tradition and field of knowledge. Intonation appears to be that substratum from which human communication could develop in its modern form.

If we take verbal speech as an example, we can see that a considerable part of information is transmitted via intonation: the nature of the situation, the speaker's emotional state, whether the speaker is asking a question or ordering the recipient to perform an action, or he or she is disagreeing with someone, etc. The intonation also marks the structural points of the discourse, such as the beginning and the ending of the phrase. When the intonations sound clear and "natural" to our ear, the statement is much easier to understand. If the intonation does not correspond with the meaning of the message, this might lead to misunderstanding or provoke doubt concerning the correctness of the interpretation. Moreover, only because of the intonation of the speaker, a meaning is attributed to interjections, such as "Eh?" or "Oops", or "Oh!".

13.3 Origins of Intonation

Animals, as well as human beings, make use of intonation: we can even state that the intonations which express primary emotions are much alike in the animal kingdom and in human society. Furthermore, it is difficult to imagine a demarcation line between these primary basic emotions and more complex, culturally conditioned ones.

In compliance with the evolution theory, we may assume that there are communication systems, which we seem to share with our ancestors. Steven Mithen mentioned such systems while describing social life of monkeys and apes in his 2006 book, *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body*. Mithen refers to studies of monkey and ape communication systems, drawing attention to the species whose natural communication has unique features similar to that of humans (Mithen 2006).

Vervet monkeys for example are characterized by their use of acoustically different types of alarm calls for different types of predators (Ibid. 108). Describing vervet monkey calls, Mithen refers to Alison Wray, a linguist at Cardiff University, who had described these calls as *holistic*, implying that the message is indivisible and cannot be disassembled into parts, unlike human language. The goal of such messages according to Wray is to *manipulate* the behavior of other monkeys in case of alarm (Wray 1998).

Gelada monkeys, who also live in large groups (Mithen 2006: 109), use acoustically diverse musical calls during their social interaction. Their breadth of sound-producing abilities is described by Bruce Richman as a complex of musical characteristics that appear in both music and speech:

Fast rhythms, slow rhythms, end-accented rhythms, melodies that have evenly spaced musical intervals covering a range of two or three octaves; melodies that repeat exactly, previously produced, rising or falling musical intervals; and on and on: geladas vocalize a profusion of rhythmic and melodic forms. (Richman 1987: 199)

The purpose of these vocalizations correlates with the purpose of intonation in music and human language:

Geladas used changes in rhythm and melody to designate the start and the end of an utterance; to parse an utterance, so allowing others to follow along; to enable others to appreciate that the utterance was being addressed to them; and to enable others to make their own contribution at the most appropriate moment. (Mithen 2006: 110)

The way geladas use rhythm and melody, “appears strongly analogous to its use in the early and non linguistic stage of infant directed speech” (Ibid.).

Another mesmerizing example is musicality in the communication of gibbons. Duet singing is typical for these creatures. The couple sings together, by which the pair-bond is manifested. In joint singing, this bond is strengthened and affirmed, and the boundaries of the couple’s territory are determined. The message becomes apparent to the rest of the group (Ibid. 113).

The above examples do not prove conclusively that there is a similarity between what constitutes communication in the world of monkeys and apes, and how it is in the world of human beings. However, it urges us to think more closely about the possible forms of communication of early people. All the aforementioned species of monkeys have common ancestors with people, separated from modernity by millions of years. Given the noticeable differences between us, the assumed common root could explain some of the observed similarities. This same common root highlights the depths of human communication and the natural foundations of sonic communication.

The studies of prehistoric man's intonational communication development have had difficulties with identifying the timeframe and the circumstances of the appearance of music and speech. Through a process of correlating the examination of archaeological evidence, study of apes' communication, observations of the life of tribes that managed to preserve the prehistorical features, with the remnants of prehistoric communal systems preserved in the cultures of contemporary societies. We can claim voice intonation and music played a significant role in communication, in the everyday experiences of prehistoric man.

According to Mithen, the communication of prehistoric man was similar to that of monkeys and apes (Ibid. 138). These were inseparable statements aimed at controlling the peers' behavior, rather than delivering a message about the world. At the same time, the communication of early peoples was musically richer than sonic communication of monkeys and apes.

To define the first communicative systems of early people, Mithen uses the concept "HmMMM", which means "Holistic, multi-modal, manipulative, and musical" (Ibid. 138, 172). He notes that during the evolution of communication, early humans accumulated a significant number of holistic utterances, each conveying a rather complex message, while retaining a single sound sequence that had to be remembered, reproduced and understood (Ibid. 172).

Studies of the sound communication of early people say that the use of voice intonation was associated with the applied aspects of the organization of social life and protection of the tribe. This included, communication and the transfer of communication skills from the mother to the newborn child, emotional self-expression and exchange of emotions, which ensured the unification and synchronization of the couple or group, expression of interest and commitment to each other (vocal grooming), which served to strengthen social ties, call to engage in joint activities, and notification in case of danger (Ibid. 128–138).

Joseph Jordania, an ethnomusicologist and anthropologist, also notes that group singing served to unite the group, maintain social ties and designate the territory (Jordania 2006: 303). He believes our ancestors used "well-organized loud noise", which allowed the group to rebuff the threatening predators and simultaneously call for help from other members of the group (Ibid. 303–310). According to Jordania, "well-organized loud noise" could have been the precursor of choral singing (Ibid. 304).

Sound capabilities were used by people to designate and name objects and phenomena of the surrounding world. The relocation of our ancestors to new lands gave crucial importance to the process of knowledge transfer. Many possible methods of it could have been used: sound designations, gestures and facial expressions, body language, indication of specific objects. *Onomatopoeia* and *sound synaesthesia* are considered one of the earliest ways of naming things (Mithen 2006: 170–171). By imitating the sounds of animals and environment, people were able to exchange knowledge about the world.

Our ancestors went through a long and complex path of survival, in which the ability to improve by learning from everything that surrounded them ensured the emergence of man as a unique creature. Gradual long-term development of commu-

nication led to the emergence of verbal language. However, even after the formation of this more sophisticated mechanism of communication, the importance of sonic communication tools remains very significant, and their impact insurmountable.

13.4 Communicative Aspect of Music Intonation

Musicologist Moris Bonfeld states that before the emergence of language and speech in the contemporary sense of these words, communication was carried out with the help of intonation (Bonfeld 1991: 25–33). According to Bonfeld, this practice stimulated further development of the speech organs and thus led to the emergence of articulated speech and language systems. This might be confirmed by the existence of the so-called “inner speech”, the fact that deaf-blind people are nevertheless capable of intellectual reflection, the human capacity of “insight”, that is, when a solution of a problem is found without the progressive verbal, logical thinking (Ibid. 26). This contributes to the argument that communication is not entirely mediated by verbal language.

Particularly insightful are the studies of infant-directed speech (IDS) by Dr. Anne Fernald of Stanford University during which it has been shown that communication with an infant is performed via special tunes and intonations, while the ability to perform such communication gets activated automatically in adults, teenagers and children when they have to communicate to an infant (Fernald 1989, 1991). Infants perceived intonation regardless of whether it was their native language which they might have heard before, or a yet unknown one (Mithen 2006: 69–76).

Any analysis of music as a phenomenon of communication is complicated because, unlike verbal language, it consists of elements that have no firmly attached out-of-contextual meanings. Yet intonation as a key element in the act of communication is present in both language and music. Without relying on words, intonation may be the transmission tool for a significant part of socially important information.

In the previous section, we talked about the key role of voice and sound communication in the social life of our distant ancestors. Despite the gradual emergence of the language, the entire subsequent history of man was associated with music. Labor and all of the activities of everyday life were rhythimized, and accompanied by songs. All the social rituals and celebrations were carried out with the help of music; the precision of performance of established melodic, harmonic and rhythmic sequences was of crucial importance, a question of life and death (Shumskaya 2006). As an essential attribute of various religious cults, music necessarily accompanies all the rituals aimed at the communication with the transcendental.

In spite of the major differences between a contemporary individual and his pre-historical ancestor, the need, the urge for music seems to remain unchanged. As during antiquity, music permeates all sorts of significant relations: religious rituals, festive activities or memorial days, work and free time are accompanied by music. Music can become a truly invaluable channel of communication for people who cannot, or may not fully use speech. The ability to perceive, reproduce and compose

music is preserved in people who have lost their speech, for example, in cases of brain damage (Mithen 2006: 33–36).

One of the peculiarities of music is due to the fact that sequences of sounds, intervals and rhythmic patterns don't have any concrete fixed meanings, nevertheless have a strong impact and appeal to a particular spectrum of emotional states. According to soviet musicologist Henry Orlov, music can participate in communication and unite people by a single emotion (Orlov 1992: 172, 333). Within a single cultural milieu there are similar ways of harmonic expression of emotions, the rhythm and the tempo provoke similar sensations regarding the dynamics and character of the movement conveyed by music. Moreover, some sonic symbols seem to have a universal character: that is, the sounds of a siren or a toll bell have a fixed signification for the representatives of different cultures: they warn of a danger (Ibid. 172–174, 333–334). At the same time, the specific traits of a particular social group also find their expression in music.

Music always implies a listener and always involves a transmission of a certain content (Bonfeld 1991: 32). Consequently, working in the field of music is to perform an act of communication (implying the creation, the transmission and the reception of a message). At the same time, despite all the attempts at analyzing music as a semiological phenomenon, in music there's no analogue of a language system, such as the one that makes verbal speech possible. Moris Bonfeld carries out a profound study of these questions, in his 1991 work *Music: Language, Speech, Thinking*.

Therefore, a language substrate which would have permitted music to be attributed to the class of communicational phenomena unequivocally, doesn't exist. Nevertheless, *in music, as well as in speech, the intonation is present, and it plays a major role in both types of communication.*

As for the expressive properties of intonation, they were thoroughly studied by the musicologist Yavorsky, who claimed that the intonational expression of the emotional attitude towards an object anticipates the verbal expression (Yavorsky 1935). *Whereas in verbal thinking a sign replaces the object, in the intonational speech this replacement doesn't take place, and the expression is thus more spontaneous, unaffected.*

Further developments to the semiology of music were carried out by Asafiev. This scholar called music "the art of intonated sense" (Asafiev 1971: 344), as he spoke of the key role played by intonation in music as well as in verbal speech. Considering intonation an essential means of communication and interaction, Asafiev understood the utmost importance of music for the organization of communication. According to him, the existence of music is only possible as an interaction between the composer, the performer and the listener (Ibid. 295).

Yavorsky and Asafiev remark the signifying, communicative function of intonation; it may also have a role as a mediator, linking the processes of thinking and the processes of communication, or, in some way, "socializing" the meaning, thus making it accessible to the other (Asafiev 1971; Yavorsky 1935).

13.5 The Question of the Symbol in Music

In the previous part, we described the communicative aspects of musical intonation, which impressively follows the contours of the vocal communication patterns of our early ancestors. The emergence of music as a separate activity, according to Mithen, occurred after the appearance of verbal language and was itself the development of a musical holistic communicative system, freed from the function of information transfer. The development of music was conditioned by the fact that it is capable of transmitting deep values and uniting people together. In addition, music has become the main means of communication with higher forces, becoming an important part of cult practices. Mithen connects the emergence of beliefs in the supernatural with the peculiarities of *Homo sapiens* thinking, the development of which is associated with the emergence of language (Mithen 2006: 266). The ability to freely combine various facts of reality, creating new ideas and representations, for example, a man with a lion's head, opened the way for the formation of knowledge about what is not represented in the surrounding reality. The existence of the language boundary denotes the space beyond which, all that cannot be expressed through language lies.

The communicative role of music was analyzed by philosopher Susanne Langer in her 1941 book, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*. According to her, a human being is characterized, among other things, by a profound need for symbolization (Langer 2000: 29, 41). Symbols, according to Langer, are divided into two categories: discursive and presentative. The discursive symbol is that of verbal language, where elements that have a stable meaning are reorganized to produce a new signification; *music is an example of a presentative symbol; an element receives its meaning only as it is juxtaposed with other elements* (Ibid. 73–93). Several levels of meaning open in the process of individual experience. The absence of fixed meanings attributed to the elements of music, opens up greater freedom for the expression and perception of complex, unanalyzable dynamic phenomena, such as, the mental life of man (Ibid. 183–218).

Due to its uncertainty, music is able to convey the instability of meanings to a far greater extent than verbal language. Music, Langer states, is a logical expression of human emotions in all their dynamism, which are perceived by us directly, without regard to any subject, by enlightenment, which is possible only if the “psychological distance”, implying a certain degree of abandonment of oneself and a specific aesthetic disposition, is maintained. Thanks to music, we can perceive and experience emotions and sentiments that we have not known before (Ibid. 199).

Henry Orlov explores the symbolic character of music in his 1992 book, *The Tree of Music* (Orlov 1992). According to Orlov, music is not something that has sense, but it is the sense itself. Drawing on the ideas of Paul Johannes Tillich and Carl Gustav Jung, the researcher emphasizes the dual nature of the symbol: when disguised in a representation that is perceived sensually, the symbol is most performant if the material form does not intervene in the experience. Music is a product of culture and tradition, a factor of social interaction. However, the existence of music, its creation and its perception is a profoundly subjective experience. Orlov perceives

similarity between mythological and musical perception. Applying a term proposed by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, he speaks about “participation” when it comes to perception of music (Orlov 1992: 334–335). Such “participation” supposes an identification with a particular reality that is represented by a particular type of music. According to Orlov, music is “one of the purest symbols” of reality, which cannot be defined nor named (Ibid. 337). Music gets assimilated into the individual experience, reestablishing the unity of the listener’s subjective reality, which has been formed by a centuries-old tradition and by the practice of social interactions, with their “original grounds”, dating back to prehistoric times when the individual wasn’t yet separated from their immediate social or natural environment (Ibid. 338).

13.6 Conclusions

Before the splitting of ancient holistic communicative system of prehistoric man, language and music were an inseparable whole. What in the thinking and communication of modern people is separated into discrete areas that can be named and labeled, originally constituted a communicative unity. Despite the long history of this differentiation process, it was preceded by a much longer period of existence of a holistic communication system.

The existence of non-verbal musical thinking and the capacity of its symbolic expression suggests that the first abstract ideas of humankind, such as those linked to life and death, the afterlife, the cult of the dead ancestors, which decisively made a human being a cultural entity apart from a natural one, had probably already been expressed in the intonational speech of prehistoric men.

What later evolved into complex “philosophical” notions, could then exist as a kind of awareness, which would find its expression with the help of intonational language, prior to the divisions of verbal language and music.

Human have the capacity to convey abstract cultural notions with the help of musical images, to communicate emotions and feelings in all their dynamism and complexity, as well as numerous similarities between the pitch and rhythmic associations in the most diverse cultures. Let music be considered a kind of universal language, which incorporates in itself all the diverse experiences of humanity.

The complex social manifestations of music represent a diverse socio-cultural experience of people determined by their life conditions, the specifics of their mythological and religious beliefs, modes of their social existence in different cultures, and, on the other hand, the universal nature of music. It implies that music consists of vibrations, which are the facts of the real world that exists within and beyond limits of any kind of human awareness. Music is a social phenomenon, it owes its existence and development to social communication, it is the medium which transmits the meanings of social reality, but its impact is due to the most profound processes that underlie our social reality.

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Part III
Musical Work and Performance

Chapter 14

In Defense of Authentic Performance: Adjust Your Ears, not the Music



Jerrold Levinson

Abstract The notion of authentic, or historically informed, performance, which had many champions in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, seems to have become rather suspect beginning in the 90s and continuing into the present, especially in some musicological circles. But one of the strongest briefs against such performance has been lodged by someone from my own circle, that of philosophical aesthetics, namely Peter Kivy, in his excellent book *Authenticities* (1995). In this essay, I attempt to defend authentic performance from Kivy's critique, seeking to establish both the coherence of the *concept* of historically authentic performance and the value of the *practice* of historically authentic performance. The starting point of my essay is a survey of plausible goals of performing music in this way, with an eye to identifying those that are appropriate, realizable, and defensible, and setting aside those that are inappropriate, unrealizable, or indefensible. Historically authentic performance, properly construed, is a reasonable and desirable form of musical activity, and achieves a kind of value that no other mode of performance can. However this is not to deny that there are other values achieved by other modes of performance, nor that historical authenticity has to be understood in a flexible manner, nor that our epistemic access to it is in many cases highly circumscribed.

14.1 Introduction

I begin by passing in review some conceivable goals of authentic, or historically informed, performance with respect to composers, performers, or listeners. What do we hope to achieve by performing music in such a way, guided by some ideal of historical authenticity? I should say at the outset that my reflections are restricted to the tradition of Western classical music, but with no disrespect meant to other world musical traditions, in which some of the issues taken up here may assume different forms, or even have no purchase at all.

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So consider now some such performance goals.

Goal 1: Performing so as to achieve the most satisfying musical experience for listeners.

This seems fine in the abstract, but it is immediately unclear what it may concretely involve. To go no further, if performance that is in some way historically authentic is important to a listener, then however fluent, however expressive, however individual, however sonically enticing it might be, it will not, for such a listener, be entirely musically satisfying.

Goal 2: Exactly reproducing the performing sounds heard and the performing conditions prevailing at the time a work was composed.

But it is unlikely we can really want that, because typical performances in eras past were probably far from ideal in terms of execution, performing venue, respect for what was written, and other values we take for granted now.

Goal 3: Producing the same effect on contemporary listeners as performances of the composer's time did on listeners of that time.

I will be examining this goal at some length in due course, so for now I will just note that it is far from obvious that such a goal is achievable, an even if achievable, something to be desired.

Goal 4: Performing music as its composer would have wanted it to be performed, given present capacities and circumstances rather than those of the composer's time.

This goal will also come in for close scrutiny later on, so for now I will simply suggest that to pursue it is in effect to favor *hypothetical* or *conjectural* music over *actual* or *existing* music. And that for performers to do so risks arrogating to themselves the prerogatives of composers, while also entering into an epistemological quagmire from which there may be no honorable escape.

Goal 5: Establishing real contact, to the extent possible, with a past culture and past musical tradition, by making available to listeners a composer's work, or if one is allergic to talk of musical works, to the music the composer has composed, with the least distortion possible and in the technically best performance achievable. This last goal, you may have already guessed, is more or less the one I am committed to defending today.

My main topic of business in this essay is a critique of Peter Kivy, the best known of American philosophers of music, on the subject of authentic performance, as contained in his stimulating and admirably clear book *Authenticities* (Kivy 1995). But before moving to that task let me briefly address the issue of the coherence of the idea of a musical work in music before 1800, which another philosopher of music, Lydia Goehr of Columbia University, has done so much to question, converting so many musicologists to her brand of skepticism, in my view quite unhelpfully (Goehr 1992). I will not address Goehr's overblown skepticism about musical works in my own words, however, but rather in those of yet another philosopher of music, Stephen Davies, who has succinctly put the case against Goehr's case better than I might. In an essay called "Ontologies of Musical Works" contained in his 2003 collection *Themes in the Philosophy of Music*, from which I will quote two central paragraphs:

It might be suggested that the historicity and social constructedness of musical works together entail that there is some datable moment before which there were none. As a general hypothesis, I guess this must be correct. There were no musical works before the evolution of the human species. Or to be less speciesist, there were no musical works until the evolution of beings who made music under that conception of what they were doing. Some advocates of the hypothesis take a more radical stand than this one, though. Lydia Goehr, for instance, has argued that there were no musical works before 1800. Only with Beethoven did the concept become regulative and concrete, with all notes specified and every mark in the score indicating an essential feature of the work.

In my view, Goehr mistakes features local to a particular musico-historical setting for ones essential to the work concept. As a result, she wrongly concludes that the musical creations of other times and places qualify as works only through the anachronistic imposition of a concept that is alien to them. Instead, we should adopt a view of musical works broad enough to encompass the full range of musical activities in which pieces are identified as repeatable individuals. Rather than identifying this or that moment as the one when works first put in an appearance, a better way of acknowledging the historical evolution of the work concept is to describe how works tended to become thicker with constitutive properties as time went on. We can accommodate the similarities and differences between Bach's and Beethoven's works by showing how both composers issued work-determining instructions, though these instructions—and hence the works that are instanced in following them—differ in their level of specificity (Davies 2003: 41–42)

I return now in my own voice. What, then, should we want to hear, above all, when music of earlier times, music of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries—involving, in most cases, gosh-darned musical works—is performed? I claim that we should above all want to hear what contemporary audiences heard, or would have heard, in good to excellent performances of such music. And that means that the overriding goal of performers of such music should thus be to offer historically authentic or historically informed performances that are as accurate, expressive, and satisfying as performers can make them.

14.2 Arguments for Goals 3 and 4

I turn now to Kivy and his book *Authenticities*. Following Randall Dipert in an influential article (Dipert 1980), Kivy holds that we should distinguish “high-level” and “low-level” performing intentions with respect to a musical work. The former concern pitches, rhythms, tempo, phrasing, instruments, and so on, while the latter concern the expressiveness, the aesthetic effects, and who the listener experience is aimed at. In prioritizing the former over the latter one is not being faithful, says Dipert, to the composer's more important intentions as to his music (Kivy 1995: 43–45).

In light of the preceding Kivy then proposes a distinction between “sonic” authenticity and “sensible” authenticity. Performing the opening chorus of the *St Matthew Passion* one way, say with a choir of modest size, yields one kind of authenticity, namely “sonic” authenticity, while performing it another way, say with a large or

massive choir, yields another kind of authenticity, namely “sensible” authenticity. “Sonic” authenticity reproduces the sound of a performance of the time in the sense of what a *recording* would have captured, while “sensible” authenticity reproduces the sound of such a performance in the sense of how the music would have been *heard* by an audience of the time, that is to say, the kind of *experience* that such an audience would have had. Kivy thinks we should primarily aim for sensible, not sonic, authenticity in performing music of the past. But I disagree, for reasons I will now explain.

14.3 Arguments Against Goals 3 and 4

To begin with, such goals are probably not achievable, given the distance between the modern world and that of centuries ago. Moreover, even if such goals are to some extent achievable, measuring our degree of success in achieving them remains highly problematic. More fundamentally, however, such goals are simply misguided.

Pace Kivy, we should primarily aim for *sonic*, and not *sensible*, authenticity, if we are interested in hearing Bach’s *work*—or if you prefer, Bach’s *music*—that elusive cultural and historically conditioned artifact, even if our experience of and response to it must inevitably diverge from that which attuned auditors of Bach’s time would have had. It is up to us, if we choose, to adjust our ears to whatever extent is possible and desirable, through adopting a mindset historically appropriate to the music, and thus perhaps recreating or recapturing some of the effect of the music on its contemporary audience. That success in this is both difficult and hard to demonstrate does not mean that it is impossible.

In any event, what is clearly misguided is to seek to produce by a modern performance in 21st century listeners the same cognitive-emotional effects that were produced by a contemporary performance of the music in 18th century listeners, by changing the music in one way or another. For such a project is risky and unconstrained, an open door to unverifiable conjectures about how the music should now be played so as to achieve those same effects. Moreover, it aims at the wrong kind of historical relation, one of accessing the *experiences* of past listeners, which are private and largely unknowable, rather than the *music* experienced by those listeners, which forms part of the public, and largely knowable, culture of their time.

Moreover, if the *objects* of experiences—that is, what they are *of*—are partly *constitutive* of those experiences, then if what one hears now is sonically *divergent* from what was heard then, then the experience one has now *cannot* be the same—that is, an experience of the same *kind* or *type*—as the experience contemporary listeners had of the music they heard performed.

Aiming at reproducing precisely the *experience* of early music had by listeners contemporary with the music is a misguided project, however one looks at it. For one, it is probably impossible, for many reasons. One reason is that we hear such music as music *of the past*, whereas they, obviously, did not. A second reason, as Kivy rightly

emphasizes, is that we hear such music with a keener *historical consciousness* than they possessed of the music that preceded it and against the background of which the music in question was created. A third reason, emphasized by Kivy as well, is that we also hear such music *retrospectively*, in light of music that succeeded it and was influenced by it, which perspective or framing was not, of course, available to listeners of that era.

But fourthly, and now contra Kivy, even if such experience could be had by us, it is not clear why we should prefer it to whatever experience that we, with our modern, historically informed ears, might have of the music, so long as it is *that very music* and not some *updated or modernized* version of it, and so long as we hear it in stylistic and expressive categories appropriate to it as the historically situated music that it is.

It is difficult to have much faith in counterfactual suppositions concerning a composer's *wishes*, what alterations or actions he *would have* embraced in other conditions. Suppositions, for instance, such as these:

- If Bach had known the modern piano he would have welcomed and even prescribed it as a means of performing the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.
- If Mozart were around today he would sanction wider string vibrato than was common in his day.

By contrast, how their music sounded, when composed and well performed, is something we often *can* ascertain, and to a large extent reproduce, thus putting ourselves in contact with their *music*, in the sense of music that would be recognizable by them as theirs. *Pace* Kivy, asking ourselves what a composer wanted for his music, at the time it is composed, is reasonably restricted to counterfactuals that are frameable in terms of options that are envisageable at that time.

More broadly, why should we be overly concerned with what composers in composing their works *wanted*, or with what they *would have wanted* in circumstances other than those they actually enjoyed, if we in fact have their *works*, understood roughly as ensembles of performing prescriptions encoded in scores and associated conventions of interpretation? Their works, or compositions, those publicly accessible objects, are both what should primarily concern us and that to which, if anything, we have cultural responsibilities. The following comparison may be useful. Should you be overly concerned with what I *wanted* to say here, rather than what if anything I *am* saying? Or with what I *would have wanted* to say if I were brighter, or better informed, or given forty pages in which to express myself, or if I were addressing you fifty years from now? I hardly think so.

Of course, in saying that our primary concern should be the composer's work or music, and not the composer's wants or wishes, that does not mean we should not be concerned with *what was in fact composed*—what its exact shape is, what it requires of performers, how its prescriptions should be understood, which notational markings are only optional, and so on. But that is a different matter from what a composer wanted, intended, aimed at, or hoped for, but did not in fact achieve, for better or worse, in his composition, in the music that he wrote.

As listeners concerned with early music, we presumably want to be as close as possible to the music as Bach—or Byrd, or Dowland, or Josquin, or Monteverdi, or Vivaldi—conceived it, and assuming good enough performance, as he would have heard it. At least that is so if we value being in touch with Bach’s *music*, as opposed to a contemporary *experience* of that music, even that of Bach himself. For the latter is a chimera, a mirage, a will-o-the-wisp—something which it is futile to pursue. The *experience* of a given piece of music, which no doubt diverges in many respects, not only *between* modern listeners and those contemporary with the music, but *among* modern listeners themselves, belongs to *each* of us, individually. But the music itself can belong, in the sense of being communally experiencable, to us *all*.

Kivy proclaims at one juncture that he would like to have an experience of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony “as if for the first time, knowing what he now knows” of that music and the context in which it was composed (Kivy 1995: 216). But however a 21st century listener might hope to approximate that experience, such a listener should presumably want it to be an experience *of* Beethoven’s symphony *as* Beethoven conceived and composed it, given the resources and means of his musical culture, and not some modified, reconfigured version of that work, however well-intentioned.

14.4 Arguments for Goal 5

I come finally to some positive arguments for goal 5, the last of those articulated at the start of my essay, the goal, roughly speaking, of making available to listeners a composer’s work as it was envisaged at the time of its creation, with the least distortion possible, and in the technically best performance achievable.

I submit that what we want above all is to be in contact with, to have experience of, *the music* of past eras, and thus that it should be the primary and overriding, though of course neither the exclusive nor the inflexible, mission of performers of such music to offer us that. In a nutshell, according to this norm the early music we hear in a performance today should all things being equal *sound* like the music one could or would have heard in a good or excellent performance at that time.

But *sounding* the same is not all that is required to put us in touch with music of the past, because how the sounds of the music are to be *produced* is integral to what the music as composed *is*. So authentic performance requires performing the music on particular *instruments*, played in a particular *way*. One reason for that is that the expressiveness of music depends, in part, on the sort of human gesture we hear in musical movement, which in turn depends, in part, on our sense of the performing gestures that produce the sounds that we hear.

This may seem patently obvious to musicians involved in historical performance practice, but some philosophers of music argue that the sound *itself*, in all its timbral specificity and distinctiveness, is the only thing of importance, not how the sound is *produced*. Such philosophers maintain, for instance, that if the specific sound of a Baroque flute playing Bach’s Sonata for Solo Flute in A minor can be produced, to

the point of indiscernibility, by a player on a synthesizer or by a computer program, then such a performance would be as authentic as that of someone actually playing the piece on a Baroque flute in a stylistically appropriate fashion. After all, we will presumably most likely still hear the sounds *as if* produced that way, and thus any expressiveness in the music that rests on imagined performing gestures behind the sounds heard will still be accessible to us.

But apart from the fact that we would not in that case *really* be in touch with the music, because not in touch with the kind of *performance*, the kind of musical *actions* the composer envisaged and conceived of as integral to the work composed. As listeners we would be in a position of *cognitive dissonance* with respect to what we are hearing, since how the sounds *seem* to have been produced—that is, by someone playing a Baroque flute—is in tension with how we would *know* the sounds to have been produced. That is not a desirable position to be in, and could only be avoided by misrepresenting or disguising the facts of sound production in such a case, which I take it no one would be prepared to defend.

Here is an anecdote that may serve to underline, perhaps more vividly than my abstract arguments, the importance of the means and manner of producing sounds in the performance of music:

I was listening to the radio the other day and caught a portion of a program called “Face the Music” on the local classical music station, where a panel of musical critics reacts to new recordings without knowing the identity of the performers. Featured in the portion of the program in question was a recording of two Scarlatti sonatas played sensitively and rather romantically on the guitar. All the critics praised the recording, in slightly different ways, but one made a point of saying that the sonatas sounded so much better on guitar than when played on that old instrument—now what’s it called? oh yes!—a harpsichord.

Of course, the critic’s pretended lapse of memory was meant to be funny, and was. But what was seriously objectionable in that critic’s remark is the implication that one in fact has Scarlatti’s *music* in such a performance, when the timbral coloration, the play between manuals, the sort of phrasing and voicing possible, the range of performing gestures and musical gestures, and so on, proper to the harpsichord—are all lost. To put it bluntly, one does not hear Scarlatti’s *sonatas* in those performances, one hears *arrangements* of them. Moreover, one specific aesthetic effect in many of Scarlatti’s keyboard sonatas is entirely undermined in a guitar arrangement of them—the *evocation*, by the harpsichord, of the sound and articulation of a guitar, often carrying with it as well an aroma of Spain. A guitar, of course, directly *offers* such sound and articulation, but it cannot *evoke* or *allude* to such, as do many of Scarlatti’s miniature masterpieces when played on the instrument for which they were written.

For performers to do what Kivy defends in the name of “sensible authenticity”, such as using modern instruments, changed performing forces, and styles of playing that arose long after works were composed, is in effect, if to a small degree, to recompose composers’ works for them, on the basis of conjectures with little or no epistemic warrant. This may constitute, in some cases, an aesthetically interesting musical experiment, or a pragmatically justifiable way of expanding a performer’s

repertoire—and perhaps both those rationales could be invoked in the case of the Scarlatti performances of my anecdote—but such practice in general cannot be held up as a legitimate approach to performing music of the past.

Kivy cautions those aiming to offer historically authentic performance to bear in mind that:

If one seriously claims or intends to give the present-day listener the musical experience of an eighteenth or fifteenth century one, [...] he or she must recognize that in doing the usual things musicians do to achieve “historical authenticity”, one does not necessarily achieve it and may, indeed, achieve just the opposite result. (Kivy 1995: 75)

The response to this is simple, and has already been stated once or twice: reproducing the *experiences* or *reactions* of listeners from past centuries is *not* what historically authentic performance should primarily aim at, though such a result is not entirely to be precluded. Rather, it is to reproduce the *sound* and *style* of the music as composed and conceived, in as good a performance as can be achieved. Kivy allows at one point that part of the rationale for sonic authenticity must be that it helps achieve sensible authenticity (Kivy 1995: 189).

This is true, but not in the sense Kivy has in mind. Without sonic authenticity, the *object* of the experience of a modern listener is not even the same as the *object* of the experience of an early-era listener, and *sameness of object* is part of what *sameness of experience* amounts to. But as far as the *qualitative character* of the experience is concerned, which is the heart of what Kivy calls sensible authenticity, it is not the goal of historically informed performance to secure the sameness of that between modern and early listener. And this is just as well, given that such sameness may, as Kivy himself demonstrates, be largely unachievable.

14.5 Contextually Conditioned or Historically Embedded

Consider briefly now the important issue of *contextually conditioned* or *historically embedded* aesthetic properties of music.

Contra Kivy, I submit that *perceiving* these properties is to a substantial extent possible—hearing the music *as* having them, not merely recognizing *that* the music has them—given informed minds and flexible ears. Kivy’s prime example of a historically embedded/contextually conditioned property of this sort is the innovative and revolutionary character of the opening of Beethoven’s First Symphony, which eschews the chord of the tonic, C major, for the dominant seventh chord of its subdominant, F major, and does not settle solidly into the tonic C until ten bars later. This no longer strikes us as wholly unexpected, accustomed as we are to more daring and transgressive harmonic moves, whereas that is how it would have struck Beethoven’s audience. However, we can hear that the opening has that character, as a historically embedded property, even though we are not struck by it in the same way contemporary audiences must have been.

Kivy acknowledges that historically informed listening can restore our appreciation of historically embedded or conditioned musical properties, like that just noted.

For although we cannot, for example, appreciate it [the symphony's opening—J.L.] *as* surprising and audacious, we can appreciate *that* it was surprising and audacious by appreciating it in the light of history, in its historical context—by, in other words, listening to it historically. (Kivy 1995: 71; italics original—J.L.)

I would maintain, however, that armed with our awareness of the music's context of issuance, we can, *to some degree*, also hear it *as* surprising and audacious, by assuming in imagination the mindset of an attentive contemporary listener.

Kivy asks whether sensible authenticity—that is, sameness of intentional musical object, or sameness of musical experience—between modern and early listener is a desirable goal. He then distinguishes usefully between 'historicist' and 'historical' listening. *Historicist* listening is putting oneself imaginatively in the mind frame of a listener contemporary with a work. *Historical* listening, by contrast, is knowing about and thinking of the mind frame of a listener contemporary with a work, but not imaginatively assuming or occupying that frame of mind.

Only *historicist* listening, says Kivy, has a chance of yielding sensibly authentic hearing of the music. But in fact that is not desirable, Kivy maintains, since audiences contemporary with a work often rejected, misunderstood, or were confused by new music displaying any originality (Kivy 1995: 207). However, that remark unfairly discounts the role of *sensitive*, admittedly somewhat *ideal*, contemporary reception as part of a reasonable project of historicist listening, and it was that sort of historicist listening that I was invoking above when I said that one might, to a certain degree, *experience* the historically embedded aesthetic character of the opening of Beethoven's First Symphony, and not simply *recognize* that it had that character. Of course, even that hardly implies, and falls far short of claiming, that our *total* way of hearing Beethoven's symphony could ever coincide with the *total* way of hearing of even the most enlightened contemporary of the composer, that the phenomenology of those two global experiences could ever be entirely the same.

14.6 Conclusions

I come finally to why authentic or historically informed performance is not only a conceptually coherent and largely achievable goal, but a highly desirable one as well. Why should one value experiencing the music of the past as it was—that is, as it was constituted, conceived, played, and heard—at the time of its composition, to whatever extent that we can manage to do so?

That one should so value that may seem virtually self-evident, but let me try, in these last few paragraphs, to unearth what might constitute a more fundamental justification for such valuing.

Well, perhaps we value experiencing music performed authentically because having such experience is a way of really *connecting* to the past, to those who lived and struggled and created in earlier times, a way of rooting ourselves, and at least temporarily, immersing ourselves, in the culture that preceded and formed us.

This value, the value of connectedness with the past achieved in convincing musical recreations, is related to but goes beyond the satisfaction we take in perceiving—in such cases by seeing or touching—prehistoric cave paintings, religious relics, the Magna Carta, the Rosetta Stone, the Wailing Wall, and the like. It goes beyond that, because with music of any worth the experience of perceptual-imaginative-emotional engagement with the music, this enduring object from our human past, this sonic embodiment of thought and feeling, is intrinsically rewarding, and is so regardless of whether that experience coincides to a large extent with the experiences had by those for whom the music was of the present. Connectedness with a treasured past, and exhilaration in the music that comes to us from that past: we can't very well ask for more than that.

But presenting musical works in other than their own sonic dress and through performing gestures foreign to them will not secure that for us. What is required are performances, which their composers would have recognized as representing or instantiating their music as they conceived and created it. Hence, to the extent possible, *authentic* performances. And hold the scare-quotes.

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Chapter 15

Where Is the Essence of a Musical Work?



Per Dahl

Abstract The essence of music engages the human ability to create symbolic meanings from any impression. In our search for this essence, we must first follow the communicative path of a musical performance. The double ontological status of music as both cognitive activity and observable object makes any transition from cognition to object a reduction from thick to thin entity, and any transition from notated/sounded work to interpretation/musical experience a thickening of the music's properties. The process of elaborating upon the epistemological elements in this communicative chain positions the essence of the musical work as a discourse on relational dimensions that are culturally contextualized by the idea of a musical work.

15.1 Introduction

Humans are able to derive a coherent world of symbols, meanings, and ideas from a single impression. Daniel Kahneman uses the term “System I” in his description of this prediction code theory in *Thinking Fast and Slow* (Kahneman 2012: 19–38). When we need to think about what kind of impression we have just processed, it is the slow “System II” that is at work. Focusing on the epistemological dimension, I view most musical experiences as a combination of these two cognitive processes. System II, that is, involves the search for the ontological entities and concepts that are structuring our impressions. System I describes a musical experience whereby symbols, meanings, and ideas come together based upon a single impression; this is possible because previous impressions are stored in our memories and available at the moment of the next impression. There are many potential conditions to this particular prerequisite, but one stands out here: when we store impressions in our memory, they are not unique and rigorous units but rather groupings differentiated according to what is often referred to as one's “horizon of understanding”. This aggregation generates concepts that in turn facilitate the System I process. It is vital to note, as well, that these concepts need not be only linguistic but can also be

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musical, such as, for example, *Tönend bewegte Formen sind einzig und allein Inhalt und Gegenstand der Musik*, as Hanslick wrote (Hanslick 1854/1973).

The double ontological status of a musical work as both a physical event (the sounding music) and an impression of a phenomenon has blurred many of the discourses about the musical work and its essence. Stephen Davies points out that even the most detailed score is (ontologically) “thinner” than any performance of it (Davies 2001: 211). The musician will read the score as a collection of imperative symbols (Ingarden et al. 1986) and thereby add more properties to the music. As a result, the “musical work” becomes a social construct encompassing more properties than those that are written in the score. The listener will refer to his/her concept of music when appreciating the musical work, activating a social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966) that relies upon his/her musical knowledge and affinities to combine the impressions of the sounding music with its social setting.

15.2 Discourses of the Musical Work

Communication is bound up in human activity. The traditional way of thinking about musical communication involves three (human) figures arranged in a sequence from the *composer* via the *performer* to the *listener*. This model has been paradigmatic to nearly all discourses in music history and music theory, often without the benefit of any distinction among the ideas of music that might accompany or even characterize these three figures. Communication as an exchange of ideas has dominated the discourse about the musical experience, but music’s double ontological status demands that we include the most important non-human elements (or objects) in musical life as well. In classical music, these would be the notation, the sound of a performance, and the discourse about the music. The model, then, will look like this (Fig. 15.1).

Based on this model, we might then want to link Davies’ distinction between thick and thin works to ideas and objects, respectively, making the transformation from idea to object into a reduction from a thick to a thin entity. The composer’s idea of the musical work is developed during the process of composing the work, and what ends up in the work’s score is limited by the actual notation practice. The notated musical work is the thin element and needs to be interpreted—that is, given (musical) meaning through the addition of properties that consequently open up for

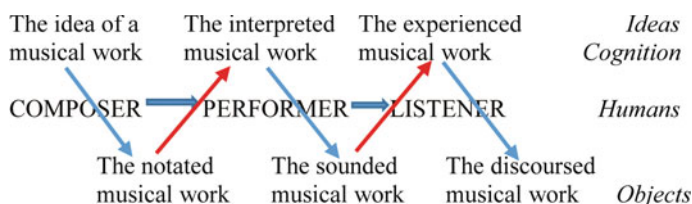


Fig. 15.1 The communicative chain

meanings other than those intended by the composer. The performer's reading of the notation generates an interpretation based on the performer's horizon of knowledge (which is not restricted to music/sound/notation) and his/her performance skills. The performance as a sounded musical work, though, is thinner (has fewer properties) than the performer's *concept* of the interpreted musical work. The listener will then interpret the performance in accordance with his/her expectations and horizon of knowledge (which is not restricted to music at all). The utterances in a discourse of music are thinner than the musical experience that prompted them. Note that it is not possible to trace this model backward, both because of the lack of a consistent linearity to the communicative process (which involves three different people with unique ways of structuring musical knowledge) and because of the information lost in the process of comparing objects and ideas at each stage.

So, we might ask: Where is the essence of a musical work? Is it a quality raised in the discourse about music? Is it something in the listener's mind, a quality of the sounded musical work, a phenomenon governing the performer's interpretation, or something we can identify in the score? Is it an exclusive quality only accessible through the composer? We must remember, as well, that often when composers perform their own music, there is a significant discrepancy between the score and the performance, or between different recordings of the same piece that were conducted by the composer (Cook 2003: 176–191). To respond to any of these questions, it seems, we need another model—one that serves to illuminate the semiotic and communicative aspect of music as a performative practice. First, however, I will present three perspectives on knowledge acquisition in music that could be illustrated with this model.

Performance practice studies often focus on the first two figures (composer and performer) in the communicative chain and shed light on the transition from the composer's idea to the score/notation practice, and on how this insight might guide interpretation (Butt 2002). In an HIP (Historically Informed Performance) project, the position of music in a given society, the aesthetics of music in a given historical period, and the geographical area itself all supply relevant perspectives on the notation (and then the performance). Yet all of this information only provides a secondhand description of how the music should sound, and the performer still needs to develop his/her interpretation in line with expectations regarding how the music should sound in the present as well. The overall goal of the performer is to communicate with the audience in such a way that the signs and symbols that supply meaning to the musical work are accessible to the listener. The performer needs to develop and use his/her practitioner knowledge to complement his/her background knowledge, and this is the second perspective on knowledge acquisition in music.

The performer must incorporate constructing (building up) the interpretation (thickening the score), and, in his/her performance, must be able to react to the responses from the intersubjective contexts of audiences and venues (acoustics and fellow musicians). Awareness of the actual intersubjective context is part of the practitioner's knowledge and will always include non-conceptual, non-propositional knowledge, in addition to the propositional knowledge of cultural and historical

studies. The practitioner's knowledge will further include the performer's assessment of the possibilities for answering to the composer's intended interpretation, given the performer's skills, the condition of the instrument, the venue, and one's fellow musicians. This knowledge is part of the thinning process by the performer in the communicative chain model. The performer's interpretation must be both reliable and valid. It is reliable when the performance/action is based on signs within a relevant ideology (HIP knowledge). It is valid when the musician adjusts his/her performance using expressions that are adaptable to the context/venue (audience and acoustics, respectively). The challenge for the performer is to put a contextual knowledge of signs and the musical work's expressions into the melting pot of his/her horizon of understanding, giving the product an identity and making it meaningful to the audience.

It is possible to regard a musical work as an objective entity—an accumulation of actions and signs within an ideology to be manifested as a sum of expressions in a given context. Such an approach is standard in teaching situations and used by many performers. This perspective permits analysis of the work outside of exclusive reference to the originator/composer's intentions, along the lines of Roland Barthes' theories about the reader constructing the text (Barthes and Heath 1977). References to the historical background of the work will implicitly draw upon terminologies of style and genre and thereby give some hints about the composer's intentions for interpretation of the music/score. However, in trying to locate the essence of a musical work, we would be best advised to focus on the musical expressions in a performance, and they depend upon the performer's capacity to create valid and reliable symbols and signs. In this way, the embodied knowledge, skills, and horizon of understanding that are necessary to the epistemological process will support the ontological perspective of the musical work as an objective entity. From the performer's perspective, the challenge is to see what connections exist between sign/symbol and ideology (in classical music, that is, the theory of music and its history, styles, and genres), and what connections the chosen expression, as a sign/symbol, can manifest in a performance today. The artistic expression's functionality depends on references to certain accepted musical gestures and *topoi* to communicate with a public (Hatten 2004). In the absence of such references, there is no possibility of meaning construction. Music has no denotative power (only some onomatopoetic features)—it is all based on connotations (that is, the listener's meaning construction). Being inherently symbolic, the artistic expressions in music can only contribute meaning when it is possible to relate new impressions to existing references.

From the listener's perspective, a performance that is both reliable and valid will release the essence of music through artistic expression as a personal reflection (that is, using System II), based on the cultural context (manifested in System I). For the listener, the essence of music no longer implies a search for ontological entities in the performance but instead implies an acceptance of the epistemological process of an impression residing in the category of music. The traditional discourse in music analysis, however, seems to skip the performer and jump directly from the listener's position to the score, searching for the composer's intentions as though they contain

the essence of the musical work. Using the score as an objective representation of the musical work, the theorist can reveal a great deal about the syntactical structure of the work, the way in which it was composed, some characteristic elements of its style, and the reasons the composer chose that kind of notation. In the extensive literature on composers' lives and music, though, many theorists have gone a step further and incorporated (literate) information about the composer's social context in a semantic fashion, attaching meaning to the composition's syntactical structure and reflecting upon the composer's intentions and, in turn, the essence of the musical work. There are some serious methodological problems with this practice, however. As my model illustrates, moving from the object (the composer's notated work) to the composer's idea of a musical work entails a reversal of the thinning process. Using the objective facts, we purport to see into cognitive processes in the composer's mind, but our lack of access to the composer's entire horizon of understanding will make any logical inference invalid. Living in a time and space other than those of the composer, the theorist's understanding is incommensurate with the composer's horizon of understanding (Kuhn 1962). The amount of information available about some composers (including their own autobiographies) allows some insight, but any logical inference concerning performance and the essence of the work will be invalid.¹ Nevertheless, it is the lack of logical inference that makes different interpretations of the "same" musical work both possible and enjoyable.

15.3 The Triangulation of the Musical Work

In their search for the essence of music, many books and theories have presented an ontological approach, and all have failed to provide a final answer. It is impossible to establish a discourse on the essence of music without involving knowledge about the cognitive processes in the human mind as an epistemological dimension that is fundamental to all musical contexts. Therefore, I will propose a semiotic model to sort out some central concepts and relations in establishing the musical work and its essence.

In this model, there is a triangular relation between the person (performer/receiver), the performance (action), and the product.² First, I will present an everyday situation as an illustration:

- A person (A1) approaches another person (A2), and A1 lifts his right hand to greet the person he approaches. When the approaching person has identified this act as part of a greeting ritual, the person in question (A2) will (likely) lift her right hand to return the greeting.

I will describe this situation with a terminology that includes three levels.

¹This view is in contrast to the fusion of horizons (Gadamer 1960), and more in line with accepting the "inductive cliff".

²Some consequences of this model for artistic research are elaborated by Dahl (2017).

Level 1: Person A1 has an intention to greet person A2 and acts by raising his right hand (element B). A2 identifies the act (B) as a product in the context of greeting rituals (element C) and lifts her right hand. To identify a sign is to categorize a segment of reality (the act) as a single element (the product) that is classifiable according to a pre-existing category (the context). Insofar as both people perceive the greeting the same way—that is, relate it to the same familiar context of greeting rituals—a meaning transfer of A1’s intention to A2 is possible. A2 has interpreted A1’s action. This can result in a joint action (they greet one another), given that it is appropriate to shake hands in this situation. If a shared understanding is absent, the sign or gesture can still be identified, but its result will depend on the interpretation that A2 attaches to it. This demonstrates that interpretation is more than the identification of signs. It also involves situating sign identification within the interpreter’s mode of expectation (A2’s intention). In addition to the identification of the sign and its contexts, A2’s appraisal of the consequences—that is, the possible contexts—and the sign’s potential come into play. Without this appraisal of consequences, we could say, preliminarily, that A2 had no contact with the essence of this action (the greeting ritual): she simply identified it.

At level 2, this simple situation can be described as follows: a person has a belief (the personal meaning) (A) that is shown through the signs used (B) to express the action (C). The beliefs of the person can be articulated as intentional explanations. The identification of the sign is indicated through operational explanation (the operationalization of the sign), and the understanding of what it expresses can be explained through causal explanation (a discovery of the causal connections obtained between the expression and the perceivers of the expression). While the person, action, and product (all at level 1) are observable to others, only the sign is directly observable at level 2.

This elementary situation can also be described on **a level 3,** as follows: a person has a horizon of understanding (the representational world) (A) that is evident in his/her choice of ideological statements (B) in given contexts (C). In our case, this means that the person has a conception of the elements of a greeting ritual and of situations in which those elements are typically used. Implicitly, the elements are culturally conditioned: what counts as belonging to a greeting ritual varies from culture to culture. These differences might be described as alternative ideological superstructures that set up the framework for the development of the cognitive structures in greeting rituals. Within each cultural context, an intersubjective agreement (an understanding) exists about which expressions (ways of understanding sign elements) are presupposed for the signs to be understood as a greeting. In our culture, the right rather than the left hand is the one used for a greeting. This kind of understanding presupposes an imaginary organization of the elements or signs in relation to the ideological frames constituting the cultural context. This structure can be called a pre-judgment, in Gadamer’s sense, insofar as it is not the conscious act of an individual but rather belongs to his/her way of being (Gadamer 1960) (Fig. 15.2).

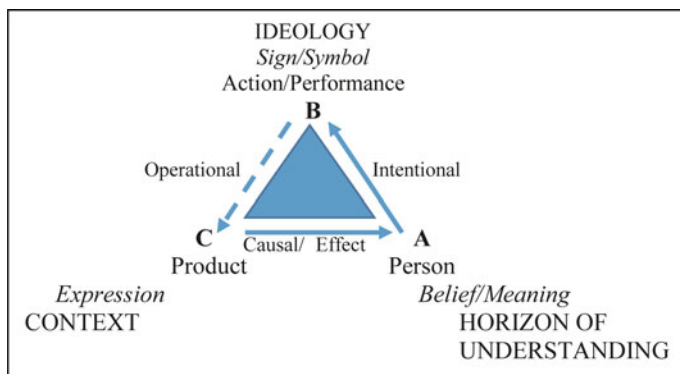


Fig. 15.2 Triangulation of performance

What makes this an interesting communication model is its insistence on the necessity of reflecting upon the difference between sign and expression—on the sign as an observable element in the performance, and the expression as an element in the intersubjective context of understanding the performance. The performer’s intentions generate the signs used in the performance, but it is only when the receiver accepts those signs as expressions in the receiver’s intersubjective context that a communication of musical content has taken place. The model shows not only that the significance/meaning of music for the public depends on the actions/signs and ideological superstructures that are discoverable in the work, but also that these elements must be operationalized according to the context and expressions in which the sound product appears. This intersubjective context of operationalization forms the basis for the establishment of code recognition (Eco 1976: 48–151), interpretive communities (Fish 1976: 191), and good taste (Hume 1995; Kant and Weischedel 1790/1974). Music’s ability to shape real-time social interaction facilitates the construction and negotiation of personal and collective identities, or what Bourriaud (2002: 18–20) called “relational aesthetics”.³ Moreover, it is in this intersubjective context that the personal legitimacy of a musical experience is transmuted into public legitimacy through the application of a pre-existing (standard) discourse. This act does not undermine the ontological basis of music, but, in this situation, I would say that the listener’s value-driven statements are more dependent on the communicative context and its epistemological potential than on the ontological chain of elements in music. Based on the elements in the discourse, we could differentiate between Kenner (using more technical terms) and Liebhaber (using their appreciation of the music). However, this should not be taken as evidence of the possibility of different musical experiences. It is only that the transformation of the personal experience to a public statement has different traces and will establish different (social) contexts for the utterances.

³There are no references to music in Bourriaud’s book, however.

15.4 The Essence of a Musical Work

Given a pointed focus on the performer, the relation between essence and effect in music becomes crucial to the search for the former. In *Absolute Music* (Bonds 2014), Mark Evan Bonds devotes part 1 to the period from antiquity through the middle of the sixteenth century, an era when music's essence was understood to be the direct cause of its effect. According to my model, this would mean that the effect that the sounding musical material in a performance had on the listener could be taken to be the essence of the work. It would then follow that a search for the essence of a musical work would focus on its sounding elements (the doctrine of ethos)—scales, modes, and so on. In the period between roughly 1550 and 1850, the most important of the qualities used to explain the connection between the nature (the sounding object) and the power (the effect on the mind) of music were expression, form, beauty, autonomy, and disclosiveness, that last of which valued music as an organon of knowledge—a means by which to gain access to truth.

Amidst the babble of conflicting discourses concerning the essence of music in the mid-nineteenth century, Bonds suggests that Hanslick's book *Vom Musikalisch Schönen* (1854) and various Wagnerian polemics in the 1850s were the watershed for the idea of absolute music. Nevertheless, in my search for the essence of music, I would point to four other developments in the period 1750–1800. First, there was the establishment of aesthetics as a distinctive discipline of philosophy in the works of Baumgarten (1961) in the 1750s. Second, literature on music began to emphasize the performer's responsibility for making music more than just a sensuous sound experience in the first textbooks on playing instruments: the flute in 1752 (Quantz 1956), the clavier in 1753 (Bach and Schwickert 1780), and the violin in 1756 (Mozart 1956). This shift was part of the gradual division of the composer/performer role into two distinct pursuits; along the way, it loosened the composer's control over music performances and allowed for different interpretations of the same composition. To the growing bourgeoisie, this articulation of several market participants represented access to a new kind of knowledge that became part of their new identity. Third, and in tandem with music's disclosiveness, these two developments (aesthetics as a discipline and the division of labor/new identity for composer versus performer) generated the concept of the musical "work of art" by the end of the eighteenth century—a concept that would become fundamental to the appreciation of music in Western culture for the next two hundred years (Goehr 2007). It was materialized via the beginnings of modern music publishing, and Beethoven could be considered the first composer to benefit from this paradigmatic shift. Fourth, the listener's perspective became important in philosophical works. In his widely read *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (Schelling and Brandt 1992: 299), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling declared that art "constantly makes known that which philosophy cannot present externally, namely, the primordial unity of the conscious and the unconscious". And one important premise of *Kalligone* (Herder 1800: 811–812) is the idea of listening with the entire body. We see, then, that the act of listening comes

to unite the sense of hearing and the mind at the deepest possible level, as the mind simultaneously analyzes the structure of what it hears. The move from searching for ontological entities in the sound of music to an epistemological perspective now became very important to defining the essence of music.

Small (1998: 218) is quick to note that the performance came first, whether historically (the musical history of the human race), ontogenetically (musicking in the life of the individual human being), or aesthetically (the critical evaluation of the experienced impression). The aesthetic dimension is what I would further characterize as conceptualizing the symbolic potential of musical expressions. As such, Small's aesthetics is in fact a continuation of the disclosiveness of music—its means of gaining access to truth. In artistic research, the primacy of performance in music (and especially the practitioner's knowledge) is an important point of departure for seeking knowledge acquisition in music, which implies more focus on musical elements and less on extramusical knowledge and truth. However, the communicative potential in music seems also to be part of the universal/genetic constitution of the human race. Music is performed and appreciated in all human cultures, and this appreciation is not restricted to cultural expressions that are part of one's own identity. This apparently borderless acceptance of musical expressions as potential meaning constructions (aesthetic experiences) represents a challenge to certain theories in philosophy (Is there a universal essence in music?) and cognition (is there a generative element in all music?). The main question, however, is this: How can musical expressions—that is, symbolic/ideological content—be transferred via the sonic objects from the performer to the listener, or from one subject to another subject?

According to Niklas Luhmann, communication is constituted by three elements: “information”, “utterance”, and “understanding”. Luhmann explains:

Communication succeeds and is experienced as successful when three selections (information/utterance/understanding) form a unity to which further communication can connect. Participation in this occurrence—whether as a source of information, as an utterer, or as someone who understands the utterance in relation to information—is the basis of all socialization. (Luhmann 1995: 243)

In Luhmann's theory, information is not restricted to propositions, or linguistic utterances, as it is in most theories of communication. A “bit” of information is defined as a difference that makes a difference.⁴ While human perception stands ready to scan a familiar world for information without requiring a special commitment to do so, works of art, by contrast, employ their perceptions exclusively for the purposes of letting the observer participate in the communication of the invented artistic expressions. From the perspective of consciousness, that is, perception frames all communication. The music intensifies the awareness of communication, in turn, as our consciousness becomes aware of being directed and captivated by communication, experiencing the discrepancy between an external control and our unlimited operative possibilities:

⁴Luhmann uses the same concept of information as Bateson in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Bateson 1972) and reveals an interesting affiliation to Derrida's *différance*.

The self-awareness induced by art is always the experience of a difference. (Luhmann 2000: 21)

Elsewhere, he notes:

Communication can no longer be understood as a 'transmission' of information from an (operatively closed) living being or conscious system to any other such system. (Ibid. 9)

Communication emerges only if the difference between information and utterance is observed, expected, understood, and used as the basis for connecting further behavior. When I underlined the difference between signal/symbol and expression, it was primarily from the performer's perspective. Translated according to Luhmann's thinking and taking the receiver's perspective, we might say that signal/symbol would be the information, and expression would be the utterance, in the receiver's understanding.

Communication is a self-determining process, and whatever is established as communication is established by communication. Vagueness, incompleteness, ambiguity, irony, and so forth are part of the realm of communication and can introduce uncertainty in ways that secure a certain usage. This deliberate vagueness (like the musical expectations) plays a significant role in communication, and especially in the artistically mediated variety. This freedom is especially relevant in classical music, where we are confronted with the apparently infinite interpretability of "finished" canonical works. It is important to remember that the distinction between determinacy and indeterminacy is an internal variable of the communication system and not a quality of the external work. From the performer's perspective, uncovering the ontological entities (the qualities of the external work) is but the first part of the process of developing the performance. The communicative elements also have to be integrated into the interpretation to make the performance both reliable and valid.

An artistic expression is an external event that we take in as an impression and compare to an existing horizon of understanding. To be expressive, the given impression must contain more information/knowledge than a comparable impression. In any process of knowledge acquisition, the establishment of the primary interpretative elements becomes the fundamental source of knowledge. These interpretative elements, developed via differentiation, can be non-conceptual and non-linguistic, as long as they can be differentiated. This differentiation is based on our previous knowledge and is a result of cognitive automaticity, in contrast to more reflective awareness (Systems I and II). As such, this process is fundamental also to identifying an impression as an artistic expression, even though this identification might be non-conceptual. This is in line with Derrida's idea of *différance*:

Différance should function not as a concept, not a word whose meaning should be finally 'booked into the present', but as one set of marks in a signifying chain which exceeds and disturbs the classical economy of language and representation. (Norris 1987: 15)

As listeners, we can identify an impression as an artistic expression in music without any identifiable property (ontological element) in our awareness of the aural sound. This is unique to the performing arts, as opposed to fine art, and particularly to music, which is abstract and has only the potential of connotative meaning. From

the performer's perspective, the interpretative elements represent a set of marks in a signifying chain that exceeds and disturbs the tight bonds between language and representation. Artistic expressions might, therefore, introduce new perspectives to already existing knowledge and challenge propositional knowledge.

In an artistic expression, the set of marks (the aural elements of the performance) can be distinguished from other objectifications by its intention to serve as a pointer to or indicator of meaning. Musical signs are explicitly intentional and formed with the purpose of referring to something meaningful beyond the actual acoustic soundscape. It is important to remember that not all elements in a performance are necessarily part of the same meaning construction. Listeners seldom completely agree on details in the performance, even if their overall judgment is congruent. However, combined with the multitude of cognitive processes, the possibility of establishing meaning-bearing signs in music arises among differentiated elements. The processes of meaning construction therefore take different paths for a musician and a listener. This complicates the search for the essence of a musical work, unless one denies the primacy of ontological definitions and accept the relational dimensions and contexts of the musical work.

15.5 Conclusions

To answer the old question of how aesthetic communication achieves its goal, Luhmann goes a step further:

Communication is made possible, so to speak, from behind, contrary to the temporal course of the process. (Luhmann 1995: 143)⁵

Positioning communication as ultimately perfected in the addressee makes it possible for our "understanding" to construe a communicative event where there was none intended, or where it was intended as an entirely different thing. The listener might decide to experience any sound aesthetically in the same way that he/she experiences music. This freedom is restricted to the intersubjective social/cultural systems founded in the difference between actuality and potentiality, with actuality presented by the performer (A–B in my model) and potentiality experienced by the listener/receiver (C–A in my model). The distance between sign and expression (B and C) can be reduced in my model by narrowing the angle in A. This would represent a situation where A1 and A2 share a greater part of their horizon of understanding through a united context and ideology.

The epistemological process of listening to classical music engages the concept of the musical work. If there is no musical idea beyond the sounding music, there is no need for a discussion of the essence of music: the essence of music equals the effect of the music. On the other hand, we do have this concept, and this makes

⁵Wolfgang Fuhrmann, in his presentation of Luhmann's theory, concludes, rather bluntly: Without listeners, there is no music (Fuhrmann 2011: 147).

possible a discourse based upon a performance of (classical) music works where one issue could be the essence of the musical work. However, the arguments would be bound to the (intersubjective) context, and Luhmann underlines that one cannot get at the work's "essence" while disregarding the "nonessential", as there is no such thing as a distinguishable essence (Luhmann 2000: 204). Therefore, an answer to my question regarding the location of the essence of a musical work is that a successful performance of classical music will offer the audience possibilities for reflecting upon the essence of music as a relational dimension within a cultural context and contextualized by the idea of a musical work.

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Chapter 16

Performance as Understanding in Action: Re-thinking the Concept of Musical Experience



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Abstract Many music lovers, critics and professional performers believe that music can provide deep insight into the interior of human life. However, the customary ways in which we describe musical experiences in philosophical and musicological discourse are analytical and formal. My own view is that pure, instrumental music is intended to resonate with the inner life of an interpreter (performer, critic, and listener). I call my view ‘moderate aesthetic personalism’. It comes to the defense of the personhood of the performer, but it does not ignore his role of a messenger between the composer and the audience.

16.1 Introduction

Let me start with a painting *Thracian Girl Carrying the Head of Orpheus* (1864) that is a poetical outpouring of Gustave Moreau (1826–1898). I would like to use it as a metaphor of musical experience. The horrendous ordeal suffered by Orpheus and described by Ovid is followed here by a calm scene mysteriously free of morbidity. This scene, painted by Moreau, does not appear in mythology. Orpheus’ head rests on his lyre. A Thracian girl is gazing at him. The two faces, strangely similar to each other, with their closed eyes, seem absorbed in infinite contemplation. Their gaze is neither destructive nor fatal. Two beautiful faces are mirroring each other in a quite narcissistic way. The clairvoyance of their inner eyes allows them to contemplate each other as in some hypnotic dream. Orpheus is a musician. The Thracian girl represents the figure of a listener. In more general terms, Orpheus is music, whilst the girl is a person experiencing the music (Fig. 16.1).

As a pianist myself, I have always been personally involved in vivid, intense interaction with sounds. As a philosopher of art, however, I am partly responsible for the ‘objectification’ of Western classical music. Adopting formalist aspirations, music aesthetics has tended to understand music in terms of musical structure and to treat the score as a basis for philosophical analysis. It amounts to the construction of

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Fig. 16.1 Gustave Moreau, *Thracian Girl Carrying the Head of Orpheus*, 1864

a strong opposition between the work (as a task for the mind) and the performance (as an object of live experience).

In 2004, Carolyn Abbate sharpened the work/performance alternative by boldly enquiring whether music was at all present in musicological reflection today. In Abbate's opinion:

Between the score as a script, the musical work as a virtual construct, and us, there lies a huge phenomenal explosion, a performance that demands effort and expense and recruits human participants, takes up time, and leaves people drained or tired or elated or relieved. (Abbate 2004: 533)

In the article "Music: Drastic or Gnostic?", she invokes the reflection of Vladimir Jankélévitch, who refers to the 'drastic' sphere of music, ignored by musicologists, namely its intense experiencing, pre-reflective, sensory immersion in the sounds of a live performance (Jankélévitch 2003). That kind of experiencing constitutes genuine

contact with music that is present 'here and now'; its opposite consists of cold, gnostic speculation. The accusation of 'gnosticism' is effectively and convincingly rebutted by Karol Berger. According to him:

Abbate overdraws the opposition between the real performance and the imaginary work. In her view, the former is the object of immediate, sensuous experience; the latter, the vehicle of mediated (that is, interpreted, "hermeneutic") intellectual meaning. In fact, however, the hermeneutic element cannot be wholly banished from the arena of performance: there is no such thing as pure experience, uncontaminated by interpretation. (Berger 2005: 497)

As hermeneutic creatures, we seek meanings and interpret even when we are ostensibly concentrating on pure sensations, on the actual experiencing of music 'here and now'. Berger elaborates further:

The mind not only marks attentively what happens in the present moment, it also expects what will happen in the future and remembers what has happened in the past. The experience is the gradually enriched palimpsest consisting of the superimposed layers of the constantly diminishing expected future, the ever changing marked present in which the expectations are confirmed or disproved and thus instantly transformed into memories, and the ever growing remembered past. (Ibid. 497)

It is to be emphasized that Berger writes about the musical experience of listeners. However, his statement is essentially plausible in the case of performers as well. I would suggest, in favor of Berger's position, that in the performance of classical music the silent contemplation of a work as a structure and immersion in the musical 'now' cannot be judged against one another. Moreover, I believe that acknowledging the role of the former is a necessary condition of experiencing the latter. Another way to reach my point is through the contrast, accentuated by Carolyn Abbate, between the learned 'culture of meaning' and the spontaneous 'culture of experience'. I aim to demonstrate that performance exemplifies the total coexistence of those two cultures. Ultimately, in the interpretation of classical music, the 'culture of meaning' and the 'culture of experience' become complementary.

Yet the performer's perspective can serve the listener as an important lesson in 'interacting intensely with sounds'. Many issues arise here. First, what kind of music provokes such a profound, aesthetic (or even 'existential') experience of 'interacting with sounds'? Secondly, can that experience be 'fully democratic' for musicians as well as for listeners? What is most important to performers varies with their personal experience as members of an orchestra, chamber musicians or soloists. As one whose professional life is founded on intimate acts of playing the piano, I am inclined to approach music as affording solitary intimacy and private encounters with the musical work. That is why I seek to rethink the very nature of the intimate dialogue between Orpheus and the Thracian girl. I admit that the unique set of my personal experiences as a pianist (who has almost exclusively played solo) may cause me to underestimate the social dimension of experiencing music. My experiential, less objectivist approach does not aspire to be universal, although I would anticipate some agreement among receptive listeners and musicians. Though this essay falls into two parts, its structure is not strictly linear. In the first part, I focus on Stan Godlovitch's model of musical performance and try to elaborate a counterpoint to

his radical personalism. My model is value-centered and focused on the intimate dialogue between the musical work and its performer. Let me note here that the performer's efforts sometimes unite pragmatic, purposeful activity (performances are deliberate, skillful sound sequences, intentionally and humanly caused) with a 'suspension of reality' and 'hiatus' in serious living. The experience of being *in music*—an experience accessible to performers—distills the essence of humanity. Generally, a performer intends to play well and even to exceed certain standards of proficiency. Whatever the notion about the desired effect, the performer can never be sure of achieving the highest level of execution and experiencing a 'suspension of reality'. In other words, one cannot have a perfect plan for a miraculous meeting between Orpheus and the Thracian girl. Time and circumstance may frustrate the performer's desires. The second part considers the mysterious ways in which the idealized 'suspension of reality' can be fully realized. The axiological perspective from Part I is complemented by an idiosyncratic one.

16.2 Moderate Aesthetic Personalism

Theoretical disregard of the performance as a work of art formed the impulse for Stan Godlovitch's concept, is expressed in the book *Musical Performance*. According to him:

Work-centered accounts may treat performance purely functionally as merely one means to reveal the work in sound, thus reducing it to a kind of messenger mediating between composer and listener. More formal accounts of works may portray performance as simply token instances of the work type while underestimating the significant fact that works massively underdetermine their performances. (Godlovitch 1998: 3)

Already at this stage, it becomes clear what crucial consequences may derive from adopting Godlovitch's point of view. From this perspective, the division between the work as 'type' and the performance as 'token' is annulled. The performance itself becomes a type, which reorganizes the musical ontology in a crucial way. In Godlovitch's opinion, in the ontological dimension, we should distinguish the composition or framework from the work proper. The author gives the following explanation:

The former are given to us by composers and are usually in score, while the latter are what performers collaboratively create in performance in using composition. (Ibid. 3)

Without doubt, Godlovitch's findings correspond to the practices of the newest music and the concept of the open work, and in that respect, they do not arouse any opposition. However, the author wishes to regard every performer as a co-author of a work, given that, in this approach, performance is simply an elaboration of stories. I think that Godlovitch rightly focuses on fighting for the performer's independence, and he also rightly emphasizes the performer's role as a co-creator of the work of art. What I find rather worrying, however, and somewhat contradictory is his desire

to separate interpretation from that which he himself calls its foundation. Thus, he clearly favors the listener and tends towards strengthening his or her relationship with the performer. What is surprising here, however, is his eschewing of the question of the values that ultimately determine whether a performance is deemed a work of art. The connection with the composition/framework is also lost as a source of potential interpretative values. He writes:

Performers need their listeners, but do not need any one (or even any) composer. Where works are intended as musical and not mere theoretical exercises, composers need performers. Performers are thus in a privileged position of musical brokerage regarding what counts as standard repertoire and how it is delivered. (Ibid. 50)

From this perspective, the performer is not merely helping to create the value of a work, but is an independent creator of it. My intellectual and practical interests move me to compare Godlovitch's arguments with my own experience. My background as a pianist forces me to conclude that Godlovitch's findings are strongly counterintuitive. Having devoted years to studying scores, I am personally inclined to read and interpret music as affording a private encounter with a composer. As an interpreter, I feel responsible for the artistic and aesthetic values that inhabit the musical work. However, those values exist in score in potential only. They need me as a 'translator' or 'mediator' between the composer and the listener. Let us refer here to the reflections of the Polish philosopher Władysław Stróżewski, who mentions that:

Interpretation, etymologically speaking, means establishing values between two sides, transferring one value to another, or creating a suitable equivalent to one value in another. (Stróżewski 2002: 276–277)

I have no intention of defending the virtues of Godlovitch's radical personalism, since I find them rather dubious. What I would propose is a milder version of that concept, in which the relationship between the work and the performance remains a relationship between a type and a token. Moderate aesthetic personalism comes to the defense of the performer's persona, but it does not ignore that which is his or her *raison d'être*: the role of a messenger between the composer and the audience. Messengers who forget that they are there to serve cannot impart luster to the message. Neither can they trust the strength of the message, preferring to take the limelight for themselves, which momentarily electrifies the audience but is generally no more than an investment in the market of fleeting sensations. For me, the temporality of the 'success of the narcissus' is the most compelling evidence of the weakness of personalism in its radical variety. Moderate personalism rejects stopgap investments, and its dividends are truly disinterested, devoid of income, as George Steiner would no doubt put it. Aesthetic dividends result from the rejection of all self-interest. Originality—which distinguishes performances from the perspective of moderate personalism—reminds us of the 'source that beats in the distance'. It reminds us, as Steiner writes in *Real Presences*, about the 'dur désir de durer' of a work of art (Steiner 1989: 27). After all, the etymology of the word 'originality' bids us think of a return to source, in form and in content. Hence, the moderate personalism postulated here supposes that the performance reveals aesthetic values that are

continually acquiring new dynamism and refulgence through their embodiment in the person of the performer. Yet they are also ‘archaic’, since we hear in them the rhythm of the source beating in the distance.

Moderate aesthetic personalism is also sympathetic to the Platonic perspective, so it rejects relativism or extreme subjectivism with regard to the treatment of values. In this perspective, the performer is essential for the emergence of beauty, a personal medium through which the beauty of the composition (the source) manifests itself. Roman Ingarden implicitly assumes such a possibility, given that he calls the musical work an ideal limit to which various good performances aspire, although always departing from it to some extent. Let me quote Ingarden:

If between the musical work and the multiplicities of auditory aspects (by experiencing which the listener is able to hear the performance and through it to grasp the work itself) there is a connection, it is only that every musical work determines a certain ideal system of auditory aspects to be experienced by a listener if the work is to be given faithfully and fully in aesthetic experience. (Ingarden 1986: 20)

At this point, it becomes clear that the question of a ‘faithful performance’ has an axiological dimension. Although the listener discovers musical values thanks to the talent and creativity of the performer, in classical music he or she must also rely on the performer’s faithfulness to the score.

When art philosophers wish to render justice to values, they head towards the classic division into what is artistic and aesthetic. Scholars agree that artistic values concern the defining and constituent features of the work of art or artistic craftsmanship. Thus, the perception of artistic values in a performance allows one to regard it not just as a faithful reading of the composer’s work, but also as a work of art in itself. It would be useful, perhaps, to define the artistic values in classical music performance as expressivity, virtuosity, authenticity, coherence of interpretation and faithfulness to the score. Aesthetic values, meanwhile—as Roman Ingarden and Stanisław Ossowski declare—manifest themselves thanks to the aesthetic experience of the receiver, who with his or her sensitivity, imagination and knowledge responds to the quality of the performer’s interpretation. Let us note, therefore, that aesthetic value is a fruit of the relationship that arises between the work of art and its beholder. So in order for aesthetic value to manifest itself in the competitive situation, there is a need for inter-subjective dialogue. The two sides of that dialogue, the listener and the performer, open themselves up to the presence of the *Other* (as Emmanuel Lévinas would say). Let us consider the enriching presence of that *Other* in musical experience on several levels. The first *Other* is the composer. A careful interpreter follows the composer’s lead, internalizing his or her message and imparting to it a personal stamp. Secondly, from the listener’s perspective, an *Other* is also the performer acting as a translator of the meanings of the score. Thirdly, and finally, for the listener and the performer, the musical work is evidence of the presence of an *Other* whom we should harbor within, internalizing the message that it communicates to us. Finally, a performance may be regarded as a special kind of attempt at inter-subjective dialogue, one that tests our ability to bring an answer to the message of the *Other*. Here, the perspectives of the listener and the performer

seem to be quite similar: both of them meet Orpheus in the aesthetic experience and appreciate the ‘suspension of reality’. Both of them meet the ‘unfathomed Mystery of the work’: only in that sense can the glories of classical music be available to ‘intuitive listeners’ as well as to professional musicians. I agree with George Steiner, who invites everyone to make an ‘interpretative response’ which is, at heart, responsible. However, that does not mean to tell us that there is no difference between a naive and a sophisticated ‘meeting with Orpheus’:

In respect of meaning and of valuation in the arts, our master intelligencers are the performers. (Steiner 1989: 8)

16.3 The Total Involvement in the Music

Let me continue that line of thought, assuming, after George Steiner, that approaching the essence of music enables us to formulate an answer to the question as to who man is. Steiner, seeking to redefine the categories of aesthetic experience, reminds us of the *real presence* in the work of art of Mystery. He has in mind the unfathomed Mystery of the work that tells us about ourselves, and also about the open horizon of the work’s meanings. Interpreters who are ‘really present’ in their performance on stage impart to the music their existence; respond to it with their life. The dialogue between Orpheus and the girl is full of hope: both of them are ephemeral and defenseless but at the same time longing for the absolute and plenitude. Their dialogue, based on a profound desire to be understood, accepted by each other, is amorous.

Edmund Gurney’s theory of music, presented in his remarkable work *The Power of Sound*, makes use of Darwin’s theory to explain the specific but indefinable emotional excitement of expressive music. Malcolm Budd, referring to Darwin, states:

The emotion specific to music is the distillate form, it is the sublimated quintessence of primitive sexual passions, and it has descended to us by inherited associations through the ages. (Budd 1992: 57–58)

Therefore, we can say that the root of musical power lies in the sublimation of the elementary emotions associated with the pleasure and transfiguration of sexual passion. It is important to notice, however:

That we cannot explain why any individual finds those particular melodic forms impressive that in fact he does. It offers no explanation of why contact with the emotional spring suggested by Darwin is made in the case of certain melodic form but is broken in the case of all others. What it attempts to explain is the power and depth of the emotion with which a melodic form can be experienced when it is found impressive. (Ibid. 58)

That is probably why Roland Barthes, in ‘The Grain of the Voice’, was determined to understand his relation with the body of the man or woman singing or playing and to discover that his relation with the ‘Voice of the Other’ was erotic. Barthes says:

I shall not judge a performance according to the rules of interpretation but according to the image of the body (the figure) given me. I can hear with certainty of the body, of thrill—that

harpichord playing of Wanda Landowska comes from her inner body and not from the petty digital scramble of so many harpichordists [...]. As for piano music, I know at once which part of the body is playing—if it is the arm, too often, alas, muscled like a dancer's calves, the clutch of the finger-tips [...] or if on the contrary it is the only erotic part of the pianist's body, the pad of the fingers whose *grain* is so rarely heard. (Barthes 1996: 55)

Barthes gives us 'sensuous' or even 'erotic' justifications of his aesthetic choices, yet we should equally call them 'idiosyncratic'. His idiosyncrasies are musically motivated and conditioned. Generally, according to Kathleen Marie Higgins:

...idiosyncrasies are not reveries that take music as a mere stimulus or point of departure. Nor are they the consequence of willfully perverse listening (e.g. listening for the fourth beat of every bar, or listening so attentively for the appearance of Neapolitan second chords that one effectively ignores the rest of the music). These idiosyncrasies emerge from intimate familiarity with and attention to music by individuals who are well acquainted with the stylistic context of the music they are hearing. (Higgins 1997: 95)

Such a personal way of listening is mentioned by Jerrold Levinson in connection with specific, idiosyncratic values of music:

Music can have value for a given listener that need not be shared, or even shareable, with others. Music's idiosyncratic value is a matter of the way some music speaks to someone in a completely individual way, resonating with his or her specific memories, associations, history, and physiology. Of course what I am calling idiosyncratic value, which is a cousin of sentimental value though not quite identical to it, can attach to anything—a dilapidated wall in one's neighborhood, a piece of bottle glass found on the beach, the way one's sister shakes her head—but music seems to have a particularly strong propensity to take on such value for us. This is the phenomenon of 'just something about it' or '*je ne sais quoi*', that strange appeal that resists explanation. Think of the ineffable charm that the 'little phrase' in Vinteuil's sonata in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* has for Charles Swann, whose model was possibly Gabriel Faure's Violin Sonata in A major, the soaring main theme of which, consisting of a series of five-note motifs, squares well with Proust's description of the Vinteuil. I suspect that music's unusual capacity to take on idiosyncratic value of this sort has something to do with music's so often striking us as a sort of veiled speech or opaque utterance, in which something is being said, something of significance, but which one nevertheless cannot quite make out or pin down. (Levinson 2014: 113)

Levinson—like Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*—seems to indicate here that familiarity with music results in such an engagement with a work or a performance that can only be compared with the state of being in love. Here is Nietzsche:

This is what happens to us in music. First one has to learn to hear a figure and melody at all, to detect and distinguish it, to isolate it and delimit it as a separate life. Then it requires some exertion and good will to tolerate it in spite of its strangeness, to be patient with its appearance and expression, and kindhearted about its oddity. Finally there comes a moment when we are used to it, when we sense that that we should miss it if it were missing; and now it continues to compel and enchant us relentlessly until we have become its humble and enraptured lovers who desire nothing better from the world than it and only it. But that is what happens to us not only in music. That is how we have learned to love all things that we now love. (Nietzsche 1976: 262)

Here we have looked at the bright side of music, illuminated by love. However, music also reveals our human, ephemeral nature, thanks to the ephemeral nature

of the sound, which is not absolutely independent, but has a permanent, constant relationship to silence. Sound does not remain in this world; it evaporates into silence. According to Daniel Barenboim, in this respect music is a mirror of life, because both music and life begin and end in nothing. He says:

Furthermore, when playing music, it is possible to achieve a unique state of peace, partly due to the fact that one can control, through sound, the relationship between life and death, a power that obviously is not bestowed upon human beings in life. Since every note produced by a human being has a human quality, there is a feeling of death with the end of each one, and through that experience there is a transcendence of all emotions that these notes can have in their short lives; in a way one is in direct contact with timelessness. (Barenboim 2008: 10)

I would suggest that the most striking aesthetic responses to music are those in which a listener's and a performer's normal sense of individuality is transcended. They both forget themselves, and they impersonate the music during their musical experience. The listener and the performer need each other, in order to experience total immersion in an intimate, wordless dialogue. Strangely enough, that perspective has generally been neglected in literature, with the exception of several musicians, such as Daniel Barenboim, Alfred Brendel and Charles Rosen, whose books provide rare opportunities to hear how a master musician thinks. Philosophy of music is surely concerned with how music can have its fullest impact; if so, it cannot ignore the problem of the performer's 'being in the music'. According to John Rink, a pianist and a musicologist, some authors do write from the performer's perspective, although their focus is on 'what makes a performer'. The literature has nevertheless remained conspicuously lacking in individual musicians' accounts of how they understand their performance and how they develop an understanding of their chosen repertoire. This lacuna was the rationale behind Rink's studies focusing on how subjectivity is constituted through musical performance, how the performing 'self' is embodied in performance and who the 'I' is that performs. In this account, relevance to the performer's personal engagement is crucial. Alf Gabrielsson declares (quoted by Rink):

When music takes over, the surrounding world disappears. Time stands still, all that counts is the music and me, here and now. When it comes to strong experiences, there is often a form of "bonding" with the music. It is described in various terms: one lives the music, is embraced by the music, is embedded in the music, possessed by the music, one identifies oneself with the music, the music and oneself are on the same wavelength. Sometimes, it is described as a special understanding of the music, the music feels self-evident, it is already there and one knows how it is going to continue. (Gabrielsson 2011: 77)

According to John Rink, Gabrielsson's study not only highlights music's role as a 'technology of the self' but also points to the 'identity as a performer'. Gabrielsson quotes musicians' testimonies, which show how this works empirically:

The total involvement in the music—confesses an anonymous instrumentalist—the 'now' without anxiety or fear of the difficulties, when your hearing is sharpened, your enjoyment is increased, and above all when time ceases to exist, all that is there in a course of musical events. The closest you can get is to call it a state of trance, but keen and clear as crystal, without any thought of your own ego and your own life's circumstances, the focus is somewhere else, on a general human, or rather universal, plane. (Ibid. 225)

Needless to say, many musicians similarly observe that this kind of immersion is possible only if they are really well prepared. Only the hard work of practicing and assimilating musical structures heightens and conditions the total immersion in the music during performance. But the contrary also happens: an embarrassing lapse, when a musician's memory suddenly fails; although they can easily play a piece without the score in rehearsal, they experience a kind of mental block in performance. This shows that the music has not been properly internalized. John Rink describes this kind of catastrophe as a salutary lesson—one that led him to develop a technique to avoid memory loss when performing in public. Rink confesses:

Now, several hours before going on stage I play through the entire programme in my mind away from the instrument, making certain that each and every note is felt and heard deep in my imagination, with mental reference to the score as required even though the score itself is kept well out of reach. This sort of visceral mental rehearsal requires enormous concentration if every detail of the music is to find its place in the unfolding narrative. (Rink 2017: 346)

I would suggest that an embarrassing lapse is also a good lesson in modesty, especially if a performer possesses a strong, narcissistic personality. Moreover, the psychology of music emphasizes the importance of familiarity with the musical material when describing the 'flow experience'. Loss of ego is simultaneous here with a sense of total control over one's actions. Marcia Herndon and Norma McLeod observe:

In such moments the performer can move into a new awareness of the piece being performed which is transcendent of himself and his formal view. (Herndon and McLeod 1980: 93–94)

Authors also describe another type of musical experience, one that makes me finally return to the concept of idiosyncratic response among listeners. Herndon and McLeod again say:

In circumstances of this kind [the listener] may be immobilized; his arms and legs cease to function. Another common concomitant of this state is the raising of the hair on the back of the neck, the tingling of the scalp and other indications of psychic shock. (Ibid. 94–95)

In both 'flash' and 'flow' experiences, time becomes meaningless, reduced to a psychological 'now'. According to psychologists, after such an experience, one often tends to babble, becoming not only speechless in a rhetorical sense, but also temporally unable to think verbally.

What, then, is the main value of that musical state of 'being here and now', in an intense 'encounter' with the *Other*? The most striking recompense, from the listener's point of view, is a precious moment of trance, clear as crystal, when the Thracian girl, gazing at Orpheus, discovers the laws of musical gravity. She understands that the lifespan of each note is finite, but she enjoys the direct contact with timelessness. As for the performer, the most personal recompense is the unity of 'being and doing' when communicating directly with one's instrument. From the philosophical point of view, Orpheus—as a musician—creates the difference between being and becoming. He brings music into the physical world. Unless he provides added energy, the sound will die. Furthermore, the musical performance can serve as a metaphor of love. Let us look, for the last time, at Moreau's painting and think about our most absorbing musical experiences. It is like illumination, like a *coup de foudre* that we tend to rationalize.

The relationship between Orpheus and the girl is rooted in the dialectic of freedom and necessity, determined by the musical text as a rational factor, and yet wondrously unpredictable.

16.4 Conclusions

Ultimately, I think that the profound experience of ‘being in the music’ is a pure consequence of a deep grasp of the musical work. I can agree with George Steiner when he states that performers could give us the most striking example of the internalization of a piece of music because they learn music *by heart*. They are true ‘respondents’ or ‘answers’ in action.

They learn by heart, perceiving the elemental pulse of love implicit in that idiom; knowing that *the amateur* is the lover (*amatore*) of that which he knows and performs. (Steiner 1989: 11)

The performer becomes a paradigmatic listener when his or her prior familiarity with a work of music heightens his or her response upon hearing it. Kathleen Marie Higgins observes that:

Practicing musicians would seem to be among the very individuals one would expect to be the most expert at *intellectually processing the score*. In fact, however, these musicians are perhaps least likely to be simply attending to “tonally moving forms” when they hear a familiar work. (Higgins 1997: 95)

The mutual understanding and fascination between the Thracian girl and Orpheus are determined by factors both axiological (artistic values of the work) and idiosyncratic (personal engagement). That reciprocity requires—at least in order to take full effect—an openness to musical values and the ability to resonate with them. I am deliberately not responding to the question of the democratic character of the experience of ‘being in the music’. I would rather quote Peter Kivy, who is not afraid of snobbery, elitism and all those other undemocratic vices so much feared in the academic world:

I am far from suggesting that one needs a doctoral degree in music to enjoy Bach and Beethoven. But one does, after all, have to know which one came first. (Kivy 2001: 216)

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Chapter 17

What Is a Musical Act? Understanding Improvisation Through Artefact and Performance



Roberto Zanetti

Abstract The purpose of this article is to address the process/product dichotomy focusing on improvisational phenomena, in which most of musical ontology's assumptions—the duality between work and performance, creation and rendition, essence and context—seem to be flawed. I will focus on the notions of artefact and performance, seeing them as complementary counterparts in what I would call musical act. The idea is to consider improvisation as the ideal paradigm in which performance conditions enter directly into the constitution of an aesthetic artefact, and, hence, a musical act takes place.

17.1 Introduction

The ontology of music is a rather recent discipline. Its key question may be put in the following terms: what kind of thing is a musical work? What is its way of existence and what criteria may help us in identifying and appreciating it?

In this article I would like to move from a quite unusual point of view for almost every approach in analytical ontology of music. My claim may be summarized as follows: it is not satisfactory to focus exclusively on the concept of a work of music to understand what happens when we make or listen to music. Thus, it is worth concentrating not on the sonic entity being produced—composed or performed,—but on the very act of performing and listening. The notion of improvisation could be extremely helpful to fulfill such a task.

The first paragraph includes a general outline of the main positions in analytical ontology of music, with particular attention to the link between work and performance. The second paragraph is devoted to the concept of artefact, while the third to that of performance. The last paragraph will analyze the notion of the musical act and argue against the idea that a musical act is always identifiable with a performance.

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17.2 Works of Music and Their Performances. A General Outline

In 1987 Peter Kivy published his famous article *Platonism in music: another kind of defense*, where he wrote:

It may not be true for improvisations, and it may not be true for certain kinds of electronic music. It may not be true in the absence of a notational system. Indeed, it may not be true for most of the world's musics. But for a great deal of the most valued art music of the West, since the development of a sophisticated musical notation, it seems to be true that there are musical works, and that there are performances of them. (Kivy 1987: 245)

The view Kivy defends here is based on the conceptual couple work/performances, which was always considered as rather straightforward in ontology of music. Since its birth in the mid-fifties of the 20th century, musical ontology is committed to understanding what kind of entities works of music are, what their mode of existence is and what properties allow us to identify them. The theoretical approach in Kivy's arguments—that is, structuralism, where performances are intended as single, particular, spatial and temporal occurrences instantiating abstract, universal and a-temporal works of music—aims at fulfilling this goal. According to such a view, works of music include various sets of properties—i.e. sonic, timbral, duration, expressive...—liable to be presented, instanced in different performances. The more these properties are displayed and, consequently, heard in performances, the more these succeed in being appropriate sonic rendition of the correspondent works of music. Therefore, the properties heard *in* or *through* a certain performance are regarded as the only way to gain access to a work of music. The nominalistic account of Nelson Goodman, which identifies works of music as sets of performances compliant with a score, even if it differently articulates the relation between work and performance, cannot do without such a duality.¹

Now, the main critical point moved to Kivy, who replied in the article that was previously mentioned, may be summarized as follows: a perspective based on the couple of work/performances “may not be true” for most of the musical practices we experience nowadays. What is the point, then, to keep on identifying works of music with abstract, eternal, non-creatable but discoverable types, liable to be instanced through singular and contingent tokens? The main purpose of the type/token model² was in fact to preserve the identity of works of music *in spite of* its repeatability in different spatial and temporal occasions; then, it does not really matter where and when a performance of a particular work takes place. If the token sufficiently and/or satisfactorily displays the sets of properties included in the type, an aware and educated listener is always able to correctly identify the correspondent work of music.

Such a view was particularly appropriate to outline the conception of work typical of late-romantic music, in the mid-19th century. In her famous and controversial book,

¹Apart from Goodman (1968), other interesting nominalistic approaches to the ontology of music were made in Predelli (1999, 2001).

²The type/token model was first used in Peirce 1960, in a context strongly influenced by linguistic analysis.

The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works, Goehr (1992) strongly claims against the idea that a work of music was and will be always regarded as a fixed and abstract entity, completely detached from both the author and the performer. On the contrary, Goehr focuses on a fact: a work of music is, first of all, a historical entity, whose concept is (re)shaped and (re)determined by the cultural and social elements that influence a particular artistic context. Leaving aside the critical remarks addressed to Goehr's work—most of them quite appropriate, indeed—(Borio and Gentili 2008: 247–274; Born 2005: 8–10; Davies 2001: 86–91; Davies 2002), there is an element of her analysis that is still extremely relevant: addressing a work of music as a historical entity means that its properties are recognizable not *in spite of*, but precisely *because of* their changeability in time (Bertinetto 2016: 204–210, 317–325).

Anytime we listen to a piece of music, what we actually expect is not to experience always the same thing. If so, listening to music would be quite repetitive and, to tell the truth, far from any kind of aesthetic experience. As D'Angelo (2011: 58–71) writes, such an experience is aimed at putting into doubt what the observer—or, in our case, the listener—supposes to know about the world, the art and, ultimately, herself. Similarly, in a performance of a work of music—because music is first of all performance, as we will see later in more detail³—we do not look for something we already know.⁴ The work is a sort of common framework, a “way of speaking” (Young 2011: 291) that constitutes the basis to detect and, eventually, judge the rate of creativity in a performance. According to authors like Godlovitch (1998: 96), Martin (1993) or Small (1998: 53), in fact, a work of music is only an “opportunity”, a “fiction” to give a musician something to perform. Shelving these extreme conclusions, we anyway cannot expect that a performance of music has the task to reproduce a work in every single detail. As we shall see, a performance is the way to bring again, (and again) to present something that was composed in a different time and space.

Provided that ontology of music helps us in better understanding what musical entities really are, how are we supposed to achieve this goal if we commit ourselves to a philosophical model not applicable to most of musical practices available to us? To say it with David Davies:

Artworks must be entities that can bear the sorts of properties rightly ascribed to what are termed “works” in our reflective critical and appreciative practice; that are individuated in the way such “works” are or would be individuated, and that have the modal properties that are reasonably ascribed to “works”, in that practice. (Davies 2004: 18)

The focus on musical practices led scholars to make extensive use of another conceptual duality, the one between process and product. As Wolterstorff (1994) claimed, in fact, “the work of making a work of music” could tell us very much about the work of music itself. That is why the properties of a musical work, intended as a historical entity, are influenced and shaped by the way they are conceived and, as a consequence, concretely made. Producing music is an activity always connected with some kind of preliminary comprehension of the cultural tradition we intend to place

³See the third part of this article.

⁴See the comments on musical experience as non-repetitive in Adorno (1973).

our product in. As the Italian philosopher and aesthetician Luigi Pareyson observes, having a general idea of what kind of musical work and/or performance we want to produce and what kind of properties and features it should possess is the condition to produce anything artistically relevant (Pareyson 1974: 50–53). In addition, it seems unavoidable to say that in musical experience “something is produced”, and that this “something” is made of articulated sounds and silences, as Davies (2003) observed. Nevertheless, problems for musical analysis are far from being over: if it was difficult to articulate the relation between work and performances, now the artistic process giving rise to a work of music and the final product of such an activity are similarly hard to connect. Furthermore, the term “process” can be referred both to the inventive and to the receptive activity, since the way in which a musical product is distributed and listened to seems to strongly influence the ontological claims we possibly make about it (Arbo 2013: 34–37).

Improvisation, as one of the main musical practices based on what Christopher Small called “musicking” (Small 1998), that is, “music-making”, represents in this sense a significant example. Let us have a look at the definition of improvisation in the *Grove Dictionary of Music*:

[Improvisation is] the creation of a musical work, *or the final form of a musical work*, as it is being performed. It may involve the work’s immediate composition by its performers, or the elaboration or adjustment of an existing framework, or anything in between. To some extent every performance involves elements of improvisation, although its degree varies according to period and place, and to conventions or implicit rules. (Sadie and Tyrrell 2011)

Just from the basic definition of improvisational phenomena, it strongly emerges that most of musical ontology’s assumptions—the duality between work and performances, creation and rendition, and even essence and context—seem to be flawed. In addition, the distinction between a musical work and its “final form” seems to suggest the idea that improvisation could not be immediately identified with the production of a musical work *strictu sensu*. Given the fact that improvisation is an ambiguous term, that indicates both the process and the product of musical activity, it should be noted that a musician recognized what she has done as her “product” not so much in the very moment of playing but, rather, once the act is over, that is, when the musical product has acquired its “final form” (Bailey 1992: ix–xiii). Consequently, it could be argued that improvisation allows us to reorient the debate in ontology of music towards an investigation about the sense of a musical act as a whole. The next sections of this article will analyze the notion of artefact and performance as essential counterparts of such an act.

17.3 The Notion of Artefact

The analytic philosopher Risto Hilpinen has defined an artefact as follows:

An artefact may be defined as an object that has been intentionally made or produced for a certain purpose. (Hilpinen 2011)

Nevertheless, there is a great difference between an intentionally made object and something produced for a certain purpose. In particular, one of the main features of an artefact is that most of its essential properties do not depend on its material shape, but on the context it is located in. It could also be argued that an artefact does not possess any essential property at all, since it can constantly be modified in accordance with the time and place it is made and, partly, experienced (Marconi 2016: 217).

Putting together Hilpinen's definition and Marconi's remarks on artefactuality, it is possible to highlight two features an artefact possesses: it is somehow linked to a human action and an intention. Not significantly far from a work of music indeed, since George Dickie has also written that "artefactuality is [a] necessary condition for artisticity" (Dickie 1984: 63). This emerges with particular evidence if we consider that both an artefact and a work of music could strongly be modified in their relevant features changing the context they are located in. As far as a musical artefact is concerned,⁵ this shift from a particular time and place to another is quite essential, since music is a performative art. Works of music, in fact, are mostly invented at a time and place x to be performed at another time and place y . Therefore, musicians are rather used in re-collocation and re-contextualization, because of the very nature of the art they are engaged in. Music would not mean anything without considering the importance of performance that is able to "erase the score" (Cook 2013: 236). Thus, the moment of performance could radically change the modes of reception connected to a certain work of music.⁶ Similarly, artefacts may be produced for a certain purpose, but can be used intentionally far away from their purpose. Let us explain this with a little example: performing the American national anthem in a stadium, before a football match begins, would have a very different effect and meaning from the version played on electric guitar by Jimi Hendrix on a Woodstock stage in 1969. The first would be easily connected with a feeling of solemnity, the second exemplarily belongs to a social and historical period of outrageous and cheeky revolt against the traditional notion of authority.

Furthermore, the notion of artefact provides us with a higher degree of flexibility compared to works of music, for at least two reasons:

- (1) the concept of artefact is able to *cover a larger amount of musical experiences* compared to that of a work of music. This means that it could effectively be referred to musical traditions in which talking about "work" could be misleading, or at least not straightforward. These practices include phenomena in which the performative aspect is particularly relevant, that is, the moment in which music is actually *heard*. Improvised music undoubtedly falls under such processes. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all traditions based on music making are improvised. Let us for example think about practices not based on reproduction, or, better, re-interpretation of pre-existing works, but rather on performative re-articulation of given patterns, consolidated rituals and instrumental habits, such as those typical of a large amount of folk music, the Javanese *gamelan*

⁵As we shall see in the last two parts of this article, a musical artefact can be a work and a performance as well.

⁶From this point of view, as we shall see, improvisation can play a fundamental role.

or the Indian *raga*. Here, namely, there is not a work to be faithfully rendered, but a tradition to be respected or, in some other cases, re-elaborated. However, improvised or not, making music is not just a matter of composing or interpreting a given work, as musical ontology has always simply observed;

- (2) the concept of artefact puts into light a feature of musical entities that ontological analysis has rarely considered: musical entities, namely, are the result of a *human action*, a process whose outcomes are made perceptible in a material object.

As the anthropologist of art Gell (1998: 13–14) stated, an artefact is an *index* of a human action, that is, it *stands for* a human action. Similarly, we can say that smoke is an index of the presence of fire. And, as Langer (1953) suggests, a sign merely consists in something *resembling* something else, whereas a symbol—or, as Gell would say, an index—*represents* the dynamic form of the *x* being represented. Langer develops her reasoning considering music as expressive of human emotions: a piece of music symbolically represents joy, rage or sadness not in the sense of an iconic representation of the outline, but as a sketch of the dynamic features of a particular emotion or set of emotions. Similarly, an artefact brings directly into the context it is located in the story of its production: a coin would not be *regarded* and *thought* as such in a time and place deprived of any vague notion of money. In other words, it would not be a coin if its particular story of production did not have any significance at all in that particular context.

But what does an artistic, or, specifically, a musical artefact possess more than other artefacts? A first step to answer this question may be saying that a musical artefact refers to a human action insofar as its indexes are eligible to be recognized by at least two people and for being inscribed on a material support, that is, memory, a piece of paper, in the case of a written score, or a phonographic means of recording and reproduction.

Accordingly, we could consider the musical artefact as a social object, as the Italian philosopher Ferraris (2009) would say. This means that such objects acquire their artistic relevance due to a public act of recognition, an intersubjective stipulation, made possible by the fact that they can be inscribed and transmitted orally, through written and/or phonographic means (Arbo 2013).

Nevertheless, this is not sufficient to qualify a generic artefact as artistic or, in our case, musical. Thus, we need to consider the specific action whereby such an artefact results, that is, a performance.

17.4 The Notion of Performance

As claimed in the previous paragraph, an artefact is an entity that emerges from an intentional human action. This process can be sketched as a performance, which I intend as an action whose outcomes are eligible for being evaluated by someone else. In the case of an artistic performance, this “someone else” is commonly identified with an audience. The most important aspect, in a performance, is not merely the

achievement to produce an artefact, but the fact that the performer, in making her action, is consciously guided by her expectations about how the audience will react to what she has done. And in the case of a musical performance, what has been done always consists in producing sounds that may be publicly recognized as music, according to certain cultural and social traditions.

It should be kept in mind that musical ontology usually considers performance as tokens, which concrete renditions of something that *is not* performance itself, that is, a work of music, usually understood as an abstract Type. Hence, the main task of a performance is to *exemplify*, to *exhibit* the artistic properties belonging to the work of music being performed. A performance may also have some exclusive properties, which are not ascribable to the corresponding work of music (for example, being brilliant, outrageous, flat, conventional etc.). However, these properties derive their artistic relevance from their connection with a work of music to be instanced: to say it more clearly, a performance is brilliant, outrageous or flat insofar as it *brilliantly, outrageously or flatly* exemplifies a work of music.

Against this view, my claim is that performance may also have a genuine aesthetic value. This is particularly evident in practices based on music making, such as improvised music. In such cases, the invention and the sonic rendition of a musical artefact happen in the same temporal occurrence. Thus, improvisation exemplarily shows us that music is, first of all, performance, that is, a human activity aimed at producing expressively relevant sounds, not abstract and metaphysical entities.

In a recent essay, Jerrold Levinson writes:

Appreciating the performance of a musical work has a *twofold* character, having two proper targets: one is the *work* that is performed, and one is the *performing* of the work. The quality of the former is the measure of the *composer's* achievement, while the quality of the latter is the measure of the *performer's* achievement. The two sorts of excellence just invoked are, though related, quite distinct. (Levinson 2015: 198)

The distinction the American aesthetician sketches in these lines has a remarkably minor impact in case of improvised music, since the two roles (composer and performer, the inventor and the exhibitor) tend to overlap. In improvisational processes, it could be argued, performance acquires a radically inventive role, which traditional accounts within the field of ontology of music tend to rule out. As Bertinetto (2016: 107–112) rightly claims, improvisation highlights the fact that performance does not consist in the mere repetition of the same old story—namely, a certain work; on the contrary, performance (re)shapes a musical work anytime it is sonically rendered. If such works are regarded as cultural and historical entities, performance emerges as the only way to make a musical piece meaningful to those whom listen to it, in different times and places.

What has been said so far could easily lead us to identify the focus of appreciation of a musical event—traditionally consisting in the work—with the concrete performance, or play (Kania 2011), of a musical piece. As Davies (2004: 98; 2009: 170) claimed, although works of art are defined in terms of “individual generative actions”, performances still do not have an eminent aesthetic value.

Even if their task is to articulate an artistic content through a specific material—such as color, marble, sound...—shaped according to the rules typical of a given

artistic practice, performances, according to Davies, derive their aesthetic relevance from a “causal-intentional relation” to the instances that properly exemplify the corresponding work of art.

Consider again the case of improvisation, supposing that a pianist decides to improvise on a famous jazz standard, such as *Summertime* by George Gershwin. All that she plays—variations of basic chords, chromatic patterns linking melodic passages, changes in the rhythm, virtuosic bridges and so on—is artistically interesting insofar as it is viewed as “an-intended-departing-from-*Summertime*-basic-structure”. But is really the link with properly formed instances of *Summertime* a necessary condition for aesthetic appreciation of such a performance? Things do not appear to go this way, since the pianist’s performance could be easily appreciated even though there is no evidence of what piece of music she is playing. It is undoubtedly true that the challenge to recognize the basic structure of *Summertime* hidden in a virtuosic, flourished and improvised performance represents an important part of the pleasure we can draw from it. Nevertheless, it does not follow that knowing how should a correct instance of *Summertime* sound like is the only possible way of appreciating a performance based on it.

Trying to follow Davies’ view: then, we should claim that every musical act, that is, every action publicly and intentionally relevant as music, consists in a performance, an action whose sonic outcomes are intended to be judged by an audience. This position seems to be not entirely plausible: identifying a musical act with a performance can be true *strictu sensu*, since music is basically something to be listened to. Though, there is a sense in which a musical act, broadly considered, is not totally identifiable with an action producing musically evaluable sounds, that is, a performance.

17.5 Musical Act and/or Performance?

Focusing on the notion of musical act implies that sonic objects may be regarded as musical not so much depending on the display of a certain structure or essence, rather, due to the experience we may have of them (Bertram 2014; D’Angelo 2011: 58–71, 144–161). In other words: as music is something to be played and listened to, being involved in such an activity allows us to orient our usage of body and perceptual faculties to expressive purposes that are unavailable, as such, in everyday experience. Let us take into account, for instance, the acts of dancing, beating the tempo with a foot, or trying to figure out a theme from a fugue, a symphony or, also, from an improvisation on a famous jazz standard. These few examples highlight that music is far from being an abstract and intellectual activity, detached from any kind of engagement by the agents directly involved in it. On the contrary, when music is intended as an abstract cultural field—as happens, for instance, in case of meditation music,—it is probably due to a determinate artistic intention that deliberately sets aside bodily expression, indirectly admitting the unavoidability of such an aspect in music expressiveness (Caporaletti 2005).

This does not mean that musical and aesthetic experience is hierarchically prior or superior compared to other fields of human expression. This would mean to confine aesthetic experience within the boundaries of an “exceptionalism” that authors like Goodman (1968) and Gadamer (1960), from different perspectives, have rightly criticized. On the contrary, music deserves attention precisely *because of* its connection to human non-strictly aesthetic experience.

As a consequence, a musical act is every action that implies a reference to intentionally produced sounds aimed at being expressive of some aspect of a human being. Following this partial claim, listening and dancing may be regarded as musical acts, even if they cannot be identified with performances. From a perspective linked to production of music, the act of composition may be similarly intended as musical, even if it is not performative as such. However, its musicality is based on its reference to a possible performance of what is being composed. As Alfred Gell would say, an act is musical when it indexes a direct or indirect reference to a performance.

Claims such those of Schoenberg (“I’ve listened to my work at least once: as I wrote it”) and Brahms, who said that he would rather read a score of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* than listen to a performance of it (Bertinetto 2016: 193), should seem mere provocations to our ears, since every composition is made in order to be (possibly) performed. As highlighted by Alperson (1984: 19–20), the act of composition underlies the moment of performance, insofar as the composer conceives parts and elements of her product by playing or singing them. Consequently, it may be said that composing is not a mere conceptual act, limited to the structure of a musical piece. On the contrary, listening to how a piece of music “should sound” represents an essential part of its conception.

17.6 Conclusions

In conclusion, we could argue that improvisational activity displays in a particularly effective way the centrality—although not the exclusivity—of performance in musical experience: here there is not a dividing line between production and reception of music, since both players and listeners may be considered as *participants* in the performance (Bertram 2010). Musicians are listeners, insofar they interact with themselves and possibly with other co-players, trying to provide a successful performance (Bertinetto 2012, 2014), and listeners contribute to produce musical meaning actively or passively reacting to what happens on the stage.

Therefore, ontology of music should not forget that music is first of all an activity, and works of music represent only part—and, to say the truth, a relatively limited one—of this expressive human practice.

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Chapter 18

The Experience of Music as a Process of [Self] Development



Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska

Abstract Music presents itself as a process, a continuation, following through. Musical works and music experience is perceived as development, succession, dialogical reaching out and harmonizing. Not one process but many. Among those various processes that make music the author focuses on a specific process of human development, which occurs during listening as much as during performing music. This is a process of growing and self-realization. In the course of the paper following the processual character of music, the author turns to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Mikel Dufrenne in the phenomenological tradition, to Jerrold Levinson and his understanding of music through a listening moment to moment process and also to Theodor Adorno and his way of explaining music as a process of dialectical development.

18.1 Introduction

The processual—if not theological—character of music and the experiences of music seems to be most pronounced. Music appears as dialogue, reaching out and harmonizing. Music is primarily development and change, flowing and following. The entanglement of ways, in which musical processes appear in the world, is almost infinite. The busy buzzing of the world at large is in itself quite musical. The humming of the life around, the rhythmical changes in sounding of the air and weather, the voices of the planet are vividly present. Sometimes the sounds are there but it takes something unexpected—like a sudden stopping of all the other audio-events—to make them audible again. In contrast to sounds and rhythm which are so pervasive, musical process appears before an open and disengaged mind. In order to recognize aesthetic subtlety, as David Hume said, one must be “careless and inattentive”. Only the relaxed state of mind will help in realizing something which is different, new and surprising (Aldrich 1966: 368). When walking in the woods or strolling down the pavement in a city one might unexpectedly notice sounds coming with such an impact and in such surprising variety that their sheer pronouncement or the pitches

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alone makes one stop and listen for the music. Sometimes it takes more to notice a musical process, but often they are in the soundscape ready to be picked up. A melody, something music has been constantly—if not officially—defined by, may be realized out of the incongruent sound space surrounding us. After all music is a way of perceiving. It occurs because, as Husserl reminds us, individual consciousness keeps a sequence of tones bound together by continuity of apprehension (Husserl 1991: 89).

In what follows I would like to present a look at the musical work as a process through the phenomenological glancing first at the composer, then performer and finally the listener, through whom the aesthetic experience of musical work takes place illuminating the work, the artist behind it and the musical process as such.

18.2 Musical Work and the Composer

In 1967, Steve Reich wrote a piece entitled *Piano Phase*. It is a piece—in the tradition developed by Reich in the 60-ties of looping and phasing with machine recorders and players—based on two piano players playing a short musical phrase. From the beginning, one player runs evenly while the other slowly accelerates the tempo. The time relationship between the two phrases is what makes this piece. Reich tells the story of a machine invented phasing process, which was transferred for musicians:

Late in 1966, I recorded a short repeating melodic pattern played on the piano, made a tape loop of that pattern, and then tried to play against the loop myself, exactly as if I were a second tape recorder. (Reich and Hiller 2002: 22)

With an easy enough material that doesn't require studying the score, during a performance a musician may be listening to the other musician or the musical phrase changing through the process of performing. *Piano Phase* in Reich's words is a work, which allows for listening while playing:

What you have to do to play the piece is to listen carefully in order to hear if you've moved one beat ahead, or if you've moved two by mistake, or if you've tried to move ahead but have instead drifted back to where you started. Both players listen closely and try to perform the musical *process* over and over again until they can do it well. Everything is worked out, there is no improvisation whatever, but the psychology of performance, what really happens when you play, is total involvement with the sound: total *sensuous-intellectual involvement*. (Ibid. 24; italics added—M.S.)

But it is also, considering the change from the machine playing or simple mechanical process to the human players and their ability to be machinelike and at the same to remain themselves, very much a process of development. The process of understanding the music, the relationship between the players, the tempo and other changes, all those things are in the *Piano Phase*. It is what makes this piece. As a process of development, of changing tempo and relationships between parts of different performers, *Piano Phase* is as complex as it is simple. It is a true musical phenomenon composed for two performers. In *Music as a Gradual Process* Reich made it clear:

I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music. (Cox and Warner 2004: 304)

In this particular work what happens in the piece is what happens to its performers. The development achieved in the piece is both the development of the performer and of the music itself. Listeners hear the music through the performer, as usual, but they also hear the development of one as the development of the other. Furthermore, this quite simple and predictable piece offers uniquely vast possibilities for growth to the performers. Sometimes in most unexpected ways. In 2011 during the Sacrum Profanum Music Festival in Cracow Polish pianist Leszek Możdżer decided to perform Reich's *Piano Phase* all by himself without the other pianist. The idea seems very bold not because there are no such recordings (one may find at least two other attempts over the internet) but simply because the amount of work required for performing on two pianos seems enormous. Nonetheless, the concert and the performance took place and ended with a considerable success—with composer coming on stage and congratulating the pianist. Możdżer performed *Piano Phase* on the specially constructed double piano-forte and was hailed as a genius. Not only did he perform by himself this complex if minimal music, demanding that both of his hand move completely independently, but he even decided to add a little improvisation to the performance, keeping well with the tempo and rhythmic development. However perhaps succeeding in performing the work solo wasn't the most important in all of this. In one of the interviews Leszek Możdżer admitted:

I finally realized that *Piano Phase* it is not about the perfect performance, but the process itself. It was a very enlightening experience [...]. (Możdżer 2011: 1)

It is difficult to see what exactly Możdżer meant in his short comment but clearly the effort to perform the piece moving in time was in a way misguided. It took away the element of dialogue and play between musicians as well as grounding the process of time relationships in human interaction. Deciding to play the work by himself, Możdżer changed the work irreversibly, placing it in a different framework all together.

The work of the composer is a process of choosing, of combining musical elements to make a fluctuant moving structure of sound. A composer's work is also what makes those processes and thus music in general audible, accessible and perhaps, more importantly, more attuned to human needs and cultural expectations. Finding a way of resolving seemingly chaotic ways of musical proceedings lies in following gradually along the way of one of these processes while acknowledging the *chiasmatic* character of all trains of experience. The composer creates the social situation or its constrains, in which musicians find themselves and through their mutual efforts create new aspects of the work.

In phenomenological accounts of artistic and compositional technique, philosophers such as Mikel Dufrenne or Arnold Berleant place most stress on the relationship between music as art and the factual, concrete musical experiences. The physical impulses, the social, communicative realm and the inner artistic impulses that themselves are coming from all the experiences physical or otherwise, form the matrix of

influences in a composer during his work. They overlap and annihilate one another but still the environment of those vibrant elements accesses a composer's projecting mind. It is the author, who is responsible for the work, which emerges from these dialectic trials. It grows as much from the composer as with him and alongside him. Dufrenne explains artistic creation as a process:

But it is only a demand, one entirely inside the creator. It is nothing he can see or imitate. In preparing himself for the execution-performance, the artist puts himself into a state of grace, and the demand which induces it is the expression of an inner logic—the logic of a certain technical development, of a peculiarly aesthetic searching, and of a spiritual maturation. All this comes together in the artist, who is precisely that individual in whom it all merges. *More deeply than other men, he creates himself by creating and he creates because he creates himself.*

Let us pause here for a moment to ask ourselves whether this logic is really one of *personal development*. (Dufrenne 1973: 31; italics added—M.S.)

The question at the end is one I would like to think about. Is a process of composing an artistic work a process of self-development? I would like to think so. And not only in the sense of developing one's skills of an intellect or artistic *métier* but more importantly in a sense of getting to know oneself. The process of composing a musical work, and perhaps similarly in another domains, is a process of gradually developing trust in oneself. The process of learning to rely on ideas of one's own and acting more and more without consulting others. To be independent means to be without need to ask and to be given consent. In making mistakes as much as in progressing into further unknowns.

18.3 The Performer

An artist, who performs a work of art, in a performance changes and develops not only his/her skills and abilities, but develops as a person as well as an artist. The example of Leszek Możdżer might be useful in this regard. The work of music is not only an occasion (an extreme one to be sure) for the performer to shine, but it is a process through which the music and musician develop.

The performance adds nothing. And yet it adds everything: the possibility of being heard, that is, of being present in its own way to a consciousness and becoming an aesthetic object for that consciousness. (Ibid. 4)

Just as the performance of the work is the means through which the work is given, so the artist and performer is the one, through whom the musical process gains its significance, the sensuous enactment.

The work must offer itself to perception: it must be performed in order to pass, as it were, from a potential to an actual existence. At least performance [*l'execution*] is indispensable for those arts whose works endure in the signs in which they are set down while waiting to be enacted [*jouees*]. (Ibid. 19; italics original—M.S.)

In the example of Steve Reich's *Piano Phase* the process of performing it is itself a developmental experience. It may happen that a pianist will play this piece thinking that there is something more to it, trying to perform it in a certain way, attempting a more difficult or demanding version of this piece, before he realizes that the difficulty, the mastery was in the performance alone. *Piano Phase* is a performance piece and it is about performance as a process. The realization, however, must come from the act of performance, after the piece has ended. In such and similar ways, musical compositions are processes of self-realization and foster the growth of a performer for each performer in each case. Perhaps then, it is fair to say, that every performance of a work of art is such a process and demands to be seen as such. With trials and triumphs, it moulds the performer making him more resistant and more open to the circumstances and yet still more assured in his chosen path. Artists attest to the way each performance helps them develop their skills and strengthen their endurance. As the sounds and sonic awareness of the instrument player forms her inner self, the reliance on the sounds and their tactile experience during performance is a powerful tool for shaping a musician. However, as Naomi Cumming noticed, performing experiences are as important as experiences gained earlier in the process of enculturation (Cumming 2000: 11).

Noticing those sounds I "cannot" make, I begun to gain awareness of those scarcely articulate "beliefs" that present themselves as inhibitions to a convincing performance of a work. I see that my musical inhibitions and social ones are not entirely unconnected. The "outward" identity, in choices audible in sounds, reflect a pattern of belief, desire and inhibition that constitutes an "inner self"—what is to me "me". (Ibid. 11)

18.4 The Listener and the Aesthetic Experience

The music performance occurs in front of an audience that listens to it. As a process musical performance requires the presence of the listener. In this, both the performance and the aesthetic experience of the listener are deeply linked. Obviously the listener isn't the only one being influenced, he influences the performer and thus the performance in many various ways Berleant elaborates on this:

The matter of performance is still more complex, however, for we are inclined to overlook the role of the listener in this process. Not only does the ear contribute materially to our auditory perception, but our attention and knowledge deeply affect what and how we hear. And what the audience offers to musical occasions ranges from its aura of attention to exclamations, clapping, singing, and applause, affecting musician and listener alike. (Berleant 1999:73)

Again in Berleant's words:

The entire situation is bound up in the process of the music: player, instrument, sound, audience, hall, all fuse into a complex union. (Ibid. 77)

Those various and changing aspects of performance are crucial for the whole event. As many authors maintain and even more music lovers take for granted, every performance is based most profoundly on a human presence and furthermore on

relationships that can be founded upon this presence and its interpretation by the audience. Stan Godlovitch explains in the philosophical theory of performance that:

We hear a performance not only as a sequence of perceptible but also as the effect of real effort expended, as the product of a complex of inner affective and cognitive states, as a stage in a developmental continuum—in a word, as deriving from a story which drags in with it all the peculiarities of any human life. In many ways, there are just human beings involved—mortal, self-absorbed, dependent upon others, giving and taking, fallible, under the skin much the same. [...]

The performing artist, after all, occupies centre stage. One hears, of course, but one also sees the hands or voice causing musical sound, the players' shifting facial attitudes, their bodies moving, their occasional recognition of the audience, their sweat. Some of it distracts, some of it flatters. No two players have it quite the same way. All this and more feeds what one hears and affects how one values what one hears. (Godlovitch 2002: 140)

So, as Godlovitch shows, performance and attending to one is based on a unique relationship, one that develops in the time of the concert, halfway between expecting and attending, between immediate, personal experience and culturally-mediated and socially practiced skill. It is nonetheless an event during which, if it is of aesthetic quality for the attending listener at least in their intentional approach, everything may affect the event and the experience thereof. The room and its acoustics, the attitude of the performers, the mood and the number of attending audience members and many other factors. All of those things come into play in the time and space of performance although not all at once. Therefore, the listener as much as he is a part of the performance develops his attitude in time according to those various factors, which he may or may not be conscious of. Thus far, the process of the listener's listening is not only important for the presentation of the musical work to her but it is as a process of aesthetic reception equally rich in aspects of personal development. During the time of the listening, the recipient grows more and more conscious of the different aspects of the work and at the same time more engaged in the process of the work performance. But he/she changes accordingly to another trajectory of inner processes and expected travels. The interaction with the work, the performance, the players but also the social event as such and many other social consequences of this occasion will affect him/her in regard to his/her own situation. This is difficult to assess or analyze due to many fleeting elements that play such an important role in it.

The process of development as aesthetic, on the other hand, even if it may be short lived, truncated or simply failed on many occasions (with growing boredom or irritation no aesthetic experience will be achieved) is easier to research. I would like to start with the theory of aesthetic experience as developed by Roman Ingarden in his phenomenological aesthetics. His account of aesthetic experience seems to me exemplary of the developmental way of perceiving art in general and in music especially.

Ingarden conceives of the aesthetic experience as a complex process having various phases and a characteristic development (Ingarden 1961: 295), which may take place only if certain minimal conditions are fulfilled. Those minimal conditions are among other things, being free from various heavy emotional concerns, being physically sound or not having concerns over one's physical state, being free to

engage in intellectual considerations and so on. Ingarden explains the aesthetic experience through enumerating individual phases, which may appear during its development. The additional quality of this theory of aesthetic experience as unfolding in time comes with the fact that each of the phases is of a different emotional and dynamic character. Therefore the experience develops in a certain wave like process in which the phase that is more aggressive and productive follows the phase which is more reflective and imaginative requiring different intellectual engagement of the mind in each case.

The whole process of aesthetic experience includes, on the one hand, *active phases* and on the other hand, again, the fleeting phases of passive experiencing, the moments of turning motionless and contemplative. (Ibid. 300; italics original—M.S.)

The whole appeal of this theory has to do with the fact that Ingarden presents aesthetic experience as a process, in which various phases change one into another and in which emotional and intellectual aspects of the recipient's approach allow her to proceed through it with ease and a sense of fulfillment. It must be clear, however, that as Ingarden stresses, even if the experience proceeds with considerable success, it will only be fulfilled if both the aesthetic object (the face of the artwork) appears as the result of the experience and the recipient's [emotional] response to it in turn allows for a culmination in the constituting of aesthetic values. Then, and only then, the experience will be fulfilled. Following the process of constituting the aesthetic object and thus getting to know the musical work is at the same time a process of realizing aesthetic potential of the situation one is engaged in.

The aesthetic experience is a process of self-development in more than one sense. It allows for one to attend to the complex and fluctuating work of art and it does so by demanding attention to many different qualities both artistic and aesthetic in the work. Thus, the intellectual processes involved in the experience are themselves quite demanding.

Jerrold Levinson in his *Music in the Moment* (2007) follows the ideas of British psychologist and pianist Edmund Gurney. Gurney's understanding of music was based on listening experience and in this it was a phenomenological account of music. Gurney considered listening to music an experience, through which music is made known without any additional formal or structural apprehension of the detailed form of the musical work. The listener follows the work through individual steps and moment to moment listening. This understanding of music upon individual experience recognizes the time and process character of music as its most important features, through which the musical is known and appreciated. As Levinson maintains:

The primary focus of listening consciousness is the shifting boundary between the bit just heard and the one to come. (Levinson 2007: 39)

Listeners, Levinson suggests, know instinctively how to listen and what to listen for and in their listening the reaction to music is primarily, whether it is subtle or more vividly manifested. But it's upon many more listening experiences, that the listener begins to understand music just like she begins to understand her own taste and musical expectations. Thus the listening to the music is a process of developing one's own ability to understand and cherish music always more than before.

18.5 Conclusions

Music is a wide highly complex phenomenon. It is a process in physical as well as emotional and perceptual senses. In order to be understood and appreciated music must be experienced. And if some of the processual and developmental characteristics of music are difficult to describe precisely or faithfully, it is still fair to say that the process of listening to the music is a process of individual and social development. It is a process of changing through knowledge and growing through building an imaginary society; through reaching out to the other and explaining oneself in a process of self-presentation but most importantly through *listening-into* the world around. The phenomenological accounts of musical experience, such as the ones given by Mikel Dufrenne and Roman Ingarden, although seemingly both concentrate on the aesthetic experience as composing a special aesthetic object, are still explaining the process of experiencing as a process of changing and developing. Getting to know the world as sensuous—as in Dufrenne—or realizing the need to compose the world in its entirety through the aesthetic processes are processes of enriching and growing of the experiencing self most of all.

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Chapter 19

Essence and Context: Exploring the Links Between Music and Philosophy in the Light of Henriette Renié's Reflections



Temina Cadi Sulumuna

Abstract How could the essence of music be described? Could the many facets of music mirror one essence? These issues are considered against the background of Henriette Renié's philosophical reflections. For years, Renié—an outstanding French virtuoso harpist, composer and pedagogue of international repute in her time—had consistently studied and applied to her concepts on essence in music the teachings of well-known philosophers and theologians, among others Plato, Saint Augustine, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and Auguste Joseph Alphonse Gratry. The article is based on thoroughly examined source materials gathered in the course of extensive research carried out by the author in the USA and in France.

19.1 Introduction

In the present article, the issues of essence in music and its contexts are considered in the light of reflections made by Henriette Renié (1875–1956), a remarkable French virtuoso harpist, composer and a worldwide known harp teacher in her own time. Her incredible talent enchanted many personalities of the French and international musical milieu, like Maurice Ravel, Camille Saint-Saëns, Albert Zabel. Renié would regularly study and apply to her concepts on the essence and the context of music, the teachings of well-known philosophers and theologians, among others Plato, Saint Augustine, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, Auguste Joseph Alphonse Gratry, and Charles Louis Gay. Such an attitude is evidenced by her prolific manuscript diaries and separately entitled notebooks, which she kept all her life. Now, they are preserved at the International Harp Archives in the United States, and in private collections (particularly, in the composer's heir's private archives) in France; in total, for the time being more than 18,000 pages. Renié also used to immortalize her philosophical thoughts on loose sheets of paper, and sometimes in letters, the total number of which thus far exceeds 8000. She would define the essence of music by drawing on philosophical beliefs of highly regarded

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thinkers in her correspondence with her eminent harp students and her goddaughter Françoise des Varennes (1919–2004), a recognized poet and playwright.

In the first part of the article, I outline Renié's process of defining the elements by which the essence of music is determined. In the second part, the focus is placed on the relationship between essence in music and contexts of music in Renié's understanding. An attempt is also made to answer the question whether the plurality of music can manifest one essence. In the last part, attention is given to the importance of feeling, which in Renié's view played a significant role in the process of trying to fathom out the essence of music.

19.2 An Attempt to Define the Constitutive Elements of the Essence of Music in Renié's Understanding

Renié, like all members of her family, was a devout Christian. In her life, religion, Christian philosophy and art merged, and complemented one another. Therefore, she wished that her compositional output, concert activity, and pedagogical work would not be considered and evaluated separately from her spiritual attitude. The same should apply to her aesthetic attitude as well as all her life choices. Due to a rarely-encountered spiritual profoundness that marked her life, it is worth explaining how her spirituality should be interpreted. For this purpose reflections made by renowned philosopher, Paul Ricœur are of great assistance. He would advocate that a devout believer drew on the Bible whenever his will equally acknowledged faith and understanding, following a succinctly formulated rule:

One must understand in order to believe, however, one must have faith in order to understand.¹
(Ricœur 1985: 24)

Renié's manuscript writings clearly manifest her belief that essence in music is conditioned by values, and more precisely Christian values. Why did she base her compositional output and artistic attitude on Christian values? The reason is that art should express the truth. But what should the truth be based on? On constant values. And what is constant? For Renié, only God was constant. In her diary entry dated 9 March 1955, it reads:

And what is true in this world—science, medicine, surgery? Everything changes. [...] The *absolute truth* does not exist, for the truth is relative in regards to what we feel, to what we are seeking for [...]. (Renié 1955: 80–81; italics original—T.C.S.)

Her thoughts clearly reflect Saint Augustine's teachings according to which people's knowledge compared with God's knowledge is ignorance (Saint Augustine 1996: 114) for only God's existence, knowledge and will are immutable (Saint

¹All the cited excerpts are in my own translation from Polish (the excerpt from Paul Ricœur) and French (all the remaining excerpts) with the exception of the excerpts from Saint Augustine's *Confessions*.

Augustine 1996: 147). And since essence should flow from Christian values, Henriette Renié created, as she would say, *for the greater glory of God*. Indeed, I have found during my research her manuscript original compositions bearing the abbreviation “A.M.D.G.”² alongside the date and the composer’s signature.

Another determinant of essence in music is a relentless striving for perfection. Why did Henriette Renié so indefatigably seek after perfection in both composing and performing musical works? Here as well, the main reason lies in the teachings of a Christian philosophy. Renié would associate perfection with both the sphere of art and developing her own spirituality. It is therefore not astonishing to discover in many of her writings the assertion that one shouldn’t be satisfied, if one doesn’t notice one’s own mistakes. In her diary entry dated 1 November 1955, one can read that whenever she practiced harp, she was not pleased with a satisfactory level of performance, and that she admitted she had to restlessly work, so that her art could be better and more beautiful. Renié firmly believed that the same principle should be applied to her morality, for working on improving one’s own spirituality was also infinite, and *everything* could be improved in it, and made *more sacred*, as she would say. In a sense, one cannot avoid perfection. Obviously, Renié admitted that there were Christians who had abandoned the seeking of perfection, and thus the improving of their virtue. However, she made a clear distinction between Christians and the principles of the Christian religion by stating in her undated notebook entitled *Diverses pensées* that “there is no rule in the Christian faith that would not lead to the development of virtue”. Thus, seeking after perfection is for the composer a *sine qua non* condition in an attempt to define the essence of music.

What did the term “perfection” exactly mean to Renié? It meant seeking for beauty which should be as near as possible the beauty coming from God. It is worth noticing that Renié would remind her students that this kind of beauty was not completely attainable. In her diary entry dated 25 February 1937, it reads:

The artist’s soul is eager to pursue an unachievable ideal; it has a passion for Beauty [in the manuscript with a capital letter—T.C.S.] which it can hardly glimpse; it knows that the day it believes itself to possess it, it will fade like a flower, for a true Beauty is not achievable in this world; all one can attempt to do is to place oneself in such a position with it, that its rays can be reflected and perhaps? may shed light around us. (Renié 1937a)

Renié deepens these reflections by stating that seeking for beauty is essential in both the process of improving one’s own soul, and the process of improving one’s own art; and these processes seem to be related. Thus appears another *sine qua non* condition: achieving mastery in art is conditioned by improving one’s own soul. The question arises as to how beauty in the soul can be achieved. Renié provides an answer to it inspired by Saint Augustine’s teachings that is beauty in the soul can be achieved through inner humility which in turn can be developed through contact with a fellow human being. In his treatise *De musica*, Saint Augustine (1999: 269–270) teaches us that love for the fellow human being is a sure way of uniting with God. For Renié, beauty was linked with both good and truth. Her acceptance of the Platonic triad is immortalized in the undated notebook *Diverses pensées*: “Goodness, truth

²Latin motto: *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*.

and beauty are inseparable.” With respect to goodness, she would often write down a phrase like the one below from her undated and untitled notebook:

Lord, grant me the grace to do good through my art!
 In everything and for everything
 A.M.D.G.!

Renié firmly believes that one of the determinants of essence in music is conveying beauty. She strongly advocates that artists should not strive for modernity at all cost, for modernity defiles their sense of beauty, and gives free rein to extreme, sick and morbid emotions as well as to desire for depicting the reality by emphasizing ugliness, brutality and negative values. In a letter dated 27 July 1937 addressed to Françoise des Varennes, she considers this issue by drawing on the teachings of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627–1704), a French theologian:

It was Bossuet who compared the purity of soul with a beautiful mirror, in which God’s light is constantly reflected. [...] Artistic creativity does not need stimulants; imagination should not resort to narcotic drugs! [...] We should only say what we think, giving voice to our own originality and strong personality, if God bestowed them on us. If not, there is always a risk of plagiarism or dirt. In any case, we will create a work of art that will pass quickly, like fashion! (Renié 1937b)

Undoubtedly, Renié must have familiarized herself with the teachings admonishing against fashion, proclaimed by a French theologian, poet and writer, living at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, known as Fénelon, whom she counted among her favorite thinkers. In his *De l’éducation des filles*, we read:

But fashion destroys itself: it always seeks perfection, and never finds it or, at least, never wants to stop there. It would be reasonable, if it were changing only not to change any longer, after having found perfection being in harmony with comfort and goodwill; but, changing constantly, isn’t it rather seeking volatility and confusion than true politeness and good taste? (Fénelon 1929: 233)

In Renié’s belief, essence in music is also determined by the act of creating, and more precisely by preparing oneself for such an act. In her undated notebook entitled *Les sources—Père Gratry*³ (*conduit de l’esprit—conseils*)⁴ she wrote down, inspired by Saint Augustine’s and Gratry’s teachings, that one should not create without having prayed to God for strength, intellectual and physical faculties and help; nor should one create for the sole purpose of being praised. In the act of creating, Renié would emphasize the importance of not thinking about what people would say on a newly created work of art, for such thinking could only hinder the process of creating. Therefore, she would always remember the following words from Gratry:

³Auguste Joseph Alphonse Gratry, known as Père Gratry (1805–1872)—French Catholic priest and theologian.

⁴The title of Renié’s notebook is a paraphrase of the title of Gratry’s work *Les Sources, conseils pour la conduite de l’esprit*.

But what does Saint Augustine say? “Do not try to attract all this crowd, for a few will understand you”. (Nec modo cures invitationem turbæ legentium)

Respect coming from people is a disaster in all sorts of things. Think of God and truth, and do not fear people—this is a fundamental rule for good writing and speaking. (Gratry 1861: 25)

Undoubtedly, having been influenced by Saint Augustine’s thoughts, she became convinced that writing music was to a large extent an act of praying; and a prayer itself was solace and a respite for the soul and the intellect, just as sleep was a respite for the body. Further in her *Les sources*, she concluded that also another kind of respite existed—music:

Nothing can be a greater solace than a true music. A true music is a sister of prayer, just as poetry is. (Renié *Les sources...*)

Music has a soothing effect, gives emotional vitality to the soul, brings closer to the ideal, and—like a prayer and poetry—guides us towards heaven, a place of rest, according to Renié. It is, therefore, not astonishing that in her diary entry dated 3 May 1949 one reads that she prayed to God for teaching her to play the harp in such a way that her playing could become a prayer.

Another constitutive element of essence in music, closely related to preparing for the act of creating, is divine inspiration. On several occasions, the composer acknowledged that God had provided her with inspiration. In her manuscript writings entitled *Ma vie d’âme depuis 1894–1932 et après-!*, one can read:

Lord, the work is within my reach, but the inspiration is only in yours. Have mercy on me, and give me what cannot be achieved with the work only! (Renié *Ma vie d’âme...*)

Without God any actions would be of no value, as stated in her diary entry dated 30 May 1955:

What can I do without your help, without your inspiration? (Renié 1955: 58)

Divine inspiration leads to another important determinant of music essence: conversations with God. Such a conversation is characterized by a cheerful and contemplating nature. Nevertheless, it can also take the form of a violent revolt arising out of the inability to understand God’s will. Renié’s composition entitled *Pièce symphonique en trois épisodes* for solo harp is precisely an artistic fruit of such a tempestuous conversation. The composer revealed the circumstances surrounding the creation of the piece in a letter dated 11 August 1907 addressed to her beloved friend and great musician, Geneviève Aubert, wife of Jean Ibos who was a cellist at the Paris Opera. In July of that year, Renié had written the first bars of an *appassionata* and a *chorale*. The unexpected news of her dearly beloved cousin’s death made her change the concept of her new musical work. She preceded the mentioned *appassionata* by a *marche funèbre*, and for the mentioned *chorale* she adopted the following motto:

The thought of future hope will not overcome pain, but will transform it. (Renié 1907)

While examining the contents of the letter, one cannot help the impression that Renié followed in Victor Hugo's footsteps in expressing her emotional states and analyzing them. Just as Hugo, she came to the conclusion that creating a work of art inspired by tragic emotions allowed one to understand that suffering could only be overcome through art, faith and contemplation being a sort of conversation with God. I would like to emphasize that Renié was a great connoisseur of literature, and therefore she successfully took inspiration from it. Hugo was one of Renié's favorite poets. She adapted as a motto three lines from his poem *La Prière pour tous* from his book of poetry *Les Feuilles d'automne* for her musical composition also entitled *Feuille d'automne* (but in the singular). Renié highly regarded Hugo for his strong faith and a very mature nature of his conversation with God held in his poems. It is very probable that in her composition *Pièce symphonique en trois épisodes*, she developed her own conversation with God, having been influenced by the message conveyed in Hugo's poetry that for a devoted Christian such a conversation is the only way to overcome pain. Hugo's resignation, depression, and even a sort of a revolt expressed in a poetic language after the death of his beloved daughter Léopoldine must have been very impressive for the sensitive Renié.⁵

For Renié, music essence was intrinsically linked with *a noble virtuosity* which should be clearly distinguished from *an empty virtuosity*. She thoroughly explored this issue in her writings. In her diary entry dated 27 January 1953 one can read that a virtuoso playing without mistakes is deprived of "a positive Beauty" (*Beauté positive*), starting with a majuscule. In Renié's opinion, searching for a noble virtuosity consists in searching for beauty in one's own soul. Thus, only a consciously spiritual path can lead to virtuosity understood in such a way. Why is spiritual attitude important? Renié believed that searching for a positive virtuosity was equal to seeking perfection, and—as already mentioned—only God was an inexhaustible source of perfection. However, she admitted that she had been for some time in her youth in the claws of the empty virtuosity by attaching too much importance to technical aspects of musical performance.

The last element shaping essence in music in Renié's understanding that I would like to discuss is the artist's adequate attitude. The composer considers this issue in her notebook *Ma vie d'âme depuis 1894–1932 et après-!* by evoking Fénelon's teachings:

Those who are severe on others, have never had *a closer* look at themselves. (Renié *Ma vie d'âme...*)

Bearing in mind this admonishment, Renié would judge herself very severely, not only as a human being, but also as a composer and a performer, and therefore she was trying to shun all praise. In the section entitled *Les Louanges* from her *Diverses pensées*, we read:

One should do good in God's eyes, and avoid as much as possible the praise coming from people. (Renié *Diverses pensées...*)

⁵See poems *A Villequier* and *Un jour, le morne esprit, le prophète sublime*.

One can clearly see the imprint of Saint Augustine's and Bossuet's thoughts on Renié. Indeed, in *Confessions*, it reads:

I am sometimes sorry, too, to hear my own praises, either when others commend me for qualities which I am not glad to possess, or when they value in me, more highly than their due, qualities which may be good, but are of little importance. (Saint Augustine 1996: 109)

And in *Sermon pour la profession d'une demoiselle que la reine mère avait tendrement aimée*, it says:

We laud in order to be lauded. We honor others in order to be honored, and we grant each other such a vain reward. Let us not talk about the minds of the weak that are easily controlled through praise, who stop at every mirror that flatter them, and are overcome with joy at the slightest demonstration of flattery. (Bossuet 1866: 343)

The question arises as to whether Renié, such a great artist admired by many (like Marcel Bertrand, Nadia Boulanger, Théodore Dubois, Jean Roger-Ducasse, Noël Gallon, Philippe Gaubert, Maurice Imbert, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Gabriel Pierné, Marc Pincherle, Jacques de La Presle, Maurice Ravel, Albert Roussel, Marcel Samuel-Rousseau, Camille Saint-Saëns, Louis Vierne, Charles-Marie Widor⁶) could really avoid being praised. In her diary entry dated 15 November 1954, she asked herself this question too, responding to it by suggesting that in order to shun all praise, she would have to isolate herself:

Praise for my harp, my music, my lessons and my intelligence? Unavoidably, I would have to stay on the sidelines! (Renié 1954)

At the same time, she concluded with relief that she hadn't let the praise influence her, for all praise coming from people she had tried to direct towards God, the sole source of her artistic talent. Again the composer followed Saint Augustine's teachings:

But they were all gifts from God, for I did not give them to myself. (Saint Augustine 1996: 11)

The composer raised the same issue 44 years before in a letter dated 2 September 1910 addressed to Marcel Grandjany, her remarkable harp student, composer and a harp professor at the Juilliard School of Music in New York from 1938 till his death in 1975:

Exceptional talents are not everything; similarly, conscientiously honing them [is not everything], for true art consists in being aware of where these talents come from. (Renié 1910)

Renié expressed a similar thought in a letter dated 7 September 1930 to her gifted student Odette de Montesquiou by referring to an excerpt from St. Matthew's Gospel (22, 21):

Who by rendering a denarius, *rendered* unto Caesar the things which were Caesar's! [...] Of course the fact of being satisfied with one's own success is understandable and natural [...] but, satisfaction with any success does not mean that you can attribute it to yourself! (Renié 1930; italics original—T.C.S.)

⁶This being confirmed by the correspondence between Renié and the enumerated persons.

19.3 Cultural Contexts Mirroring One Essence?

It seems that Renié paid definitely less attention to the issue of contexts of music than to trying to describe and define the determinants of essence in music. Nevertheless, her scarce writings on the issue of contexts seem to indicate a positive answer to the question as to whether the many facets of music can mirror one essence. If music is based on truth, beauty, moral values, then historical and cultural contexts begin to lose their significance, and start mirroring one essence, she thought. In any case, it was undeniable for her that anti-essentialism could harm the music, and lead to composing and performing a kind of valueless music that blindly follows fashion. These beliefs of hers were also molded by Théodore Dubois, her professor of composition and director of the Paris Conservatoire. In a letter dated 24 July 1906 addressed to Renié, he wrote:

We adore music, and try to listen to it intently, and, particularly, *to create the least bad music*; and as usual: for the glory of God! (Dubois 1906; italics original—T.C.S.)

Some insight into Renié's view on cultural contexts can be provided by the following excerpt on Malagasy religious music from her letter dated 1 April 1918. It is addressed to her brother François Renié (1873–1951), a professor of history and a secretary at the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in Paris:

This morning, we⁷ attended the 7 o'clock mass in a grotto. The Malagasy mass!! The whole one side was destined for these brave black soldiers, very neat, and manifesting great artistic intuition. Imagine, they chanted two or three canticles *a cappella*! For two and three voices! At the beginning it was worryingly out of tune, however it got better, and, believe me, it was very in tune, and very rhythmically in their own fairly soft dialect, which gave a particular savor to their uniform devotional canticles! About twenty of them received Holy Communion, and generally all looked very pious and very convincing. One of them served at the mass. (Renié 1918)

19.4 The Importance of Feeling in the Process of Understanding the Essence of Music

Renié dedicated in her writings only a few passages to feeling. However, she assigned to it an essential role of enabling one to grasp essence in music. Therefore, the role of feeling is discussed in the present article in a separate paragraph. In this context, she analyzed Beethoven's works. In a letter dated 2 September 1910 to Marcel Grandjany, she admitted that while listening to Beethoven's symphony, she had never managed to get to the essence of it.

It has always surpassed my abilities to comprehend. It does not relate to *understanding*, one must *feel it*. (Renié 1910; italics original—T.C.S.)

⁷Renié and her mother, Gabrielle Marie Renié.

Then she tried to explain to her student what this feeling is, and how it can be developed.

And feeling of the soul is conditioned by its abilities, and these abilities are conditioned by warmth [...]. And the warmth of a soul is her love for God. The more the soul loves God, the more its abilities develop. Certainly, we differently delight in listening to the same musical work, even if it is the most marvelous of all works. In this *ineffable* joy we feel, there is a part of *us*; and depending on whether the soul is prepared more or less, it enjoys the work to a greater or lesser extent. (Renié 1910; italics original—T.C.S.)

19.5 Conclusions

In her reflections on the relationship between art and philosophy, in particular Christian philosophy, Renié put special emphasis upon trying to determine essence in music. She came to the conclusion that there existed many elements closely connected with one another which molded the essence of music. However, the substratum of them all should be Christian philosophy. The consequence of an essence understood as being based on immutable Christian values is Renié's belief that anti-essentialism could harm music, and lead to creating and performing music oppressed by fickle fashion and insidious modernity. It is worth mentioning that musical critics lauded her for this uncompromising attitude of hers. Let me leave the last word to one of them, Jean Huré, also a successful pianist, organist and composer:

I would like to praise her also for her never being anti-musical—it is rare nowadays—nor does she admit ugliness in order to be original... (Huré 1906: 323)

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Chapter 20

Redefining Essence: Tuning and Temperament of Chinese Traditional Music



Sheryl Man-Ying Chow

Abstract Since the 20th century, the circulation of Western music has induced different reactions in the non-Western world. Chinese music reformers saw Western music as scientific and progressive in its use of harmony, technologically advanced instruments, and mathematically rational temperament. Under China's national music reform, many fretted or fixed-pitch traditional Chinese instruments were modified for equal temperament. The original tunings of Chinese traditional music, which employ microtonal intonations, were disessentialized in favor of equal temperament. However, in the 21st century, more and more Chinese music scholars and musicians have advocated the use of microtonal intonations as an essential attribute of traditional Chinese music.

20.1 Introduction

In 1981, an article in the journal *Asian Music* was devoted to a discussion of the nature of Chinese traditional music (Fang et al. 1981). The article was published in response to the comments on the performance of an ensemble from the Central Conservatory of Music in China during the second Durham (England) Oriental Music Festival in 1979. The Chinese music played by the ensemble includes modern compositions that employ Western temperament, harmony, and orchestral techniques, such as *Dance Music of the Yi People* (*Yízú wǔqǔ* 彝族舞曲), as well as classical solo pieces arranged as orchestral pieces, such as *A Moonlit Night on Spring River* (*Chūnjiāng huā yuè yè* 春江花月夜). The program was criticized by some foreign audience that it contained westernized music and did not present traditional music from China. The leader of the ensemble Fang Kun defended the ensemble against such criticism by expressing his view of what constitutes traditional music. His position is that although traditional music should have come down from an earlier age, it is not static and has great vitality, so the notion of traditional music should also encompass its modern development. With respect to the doubt as to whether orchestral arrangements of classical pieces

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should be called traditional, Fang argued that preserving the mood of the piece is more important than the form of its presentation. In response to Fang's view, Alan Thrasher urged us to look into the Chinese concept of change. He shared Fang's view that Chinese musicians most highly honor the mood or spirit of a piece of music, whereas structural elements such as form, rhythm, choice of instruments, texture, and ornamentation can be interpreted more freely. Yet he also stressed that the attitude towards change between traditionalists and modernists can be different. An example of a traditionalist is Robert C. Provine. While agreeing with Fang that traditional music can be kept vital through change, he suggested that the change should be confined within 'a consistent stylistic framework' (Fang et al. 1981: 12). But what actually is a consistent stylistic framework? What musical elements are inside the stylistic framework, and hence need to be kept consistent, and what elements are outside the framework, and hence can be freely replaced or dismissed?

The core concern of the above discussion is the distinction among changes, which is also the central concern of the Aristotelian theory of essentialism. Aristotle proposed that changes can be divided into two categories: accidental change and substantial change. While an object that undergoes accidental change would retain its identity, an object that undergoes substantial change would go out of existence. The two types of changes are in turn determined on the basis of the distinction between two types of properties held by the object: accidental properties and essential properties. While the loss of accidental properties would lead to a mere accidental change, the loss of essential properties would lead to a substantial change (Brody 1980: 71–83). The question here is how we can tell which properties are accidental and which properties are essential, especially for such an abstract object as musical style.

While most studies have explored this question by focusing on modern Chinese composers and their compositions, in this paper, I would like to examine the changing attitude in China towards the properties of traditional music instruments as an essential aspect of Chinese traditional music, paying special attention to tuning and temperament. I shall first discuss the discourse on tuning and temperament against the background of twentieth-century China, where musical experiences were shaped by the globalization of Western music, its modernization and nation-building projects, and its political relation with the Soviet Union. Then I shall show how the discourse began to shift from a modernist to a traditionalist approach in a new cultural, social, and political context around the turn of the 21st century.

20.2 Modernizing Chinese Traditional Music

The impact of Western musical culture on other parts of the world has been ideological as well as musical. The importation of Western pieces, genres, instruments, singing style, notation system, composition techniques, and theory has induced different reactions in the non-Western world (Nettl 1985). Nettl (1985) suggested that the ways in which non-Western people handle Western music are conditioned by the

nature of their musical systems. And here I would like to add that it is also conditioned by their attitudes towards their own musical traditions under the influence of Western culture and ideology. Some music reformers in various places saw Western music as scientific in its use of harmony, technologically advanced instruments, and mathematically rational temperament, as well as its association with scientifically advanced societies.¹ They saw the absence of harmony and standardized tuning in their music as a sign of inferiority and advocated the incorporation of tonal harmony and equal temperament into their music (Kraus 1989: 101; Chehabi 1999: 146; Takenaka 2010: 108–110; Van der Linden 2015: 438).

Since the 20th century, Chinese intellectuals and policy makers have striven to drive the nation towards modernity by adopting Western culture and technology while preserving traditional traits to serve their nationalist agendas (Chow 2008).² They tended to dispose of things that they deemed backward and unworthy, and adopted things that they deemed representative of the nation. The determination of which features or parameters of traditional music are to be valued and thus retained, or to be debased and thus dismissed, inevitably leads to an essentialism of Chinese music in that some of the musical dimensions are selected at the expense of others.

Criticizing the approach of maintaining every aspects of Chinese traditional music in modern performances and compositions, Chinese music scholars Yang Yinliu wrote in 1942:

National tunes have their own inherent properties. They will not become western tunes when played by the violin, nor will they lose the important parts of their original spirit when played in equal temperament. (Reprinted in Yang 1989)

Similarly, the founder of today's Shanghai Conservatory of Music Xiao Youmei, in 1939, suggested that the merit of Chinese traditional music lies not in its theory of tuning and temperament, its instruments, or its performance techniques, but in its melody and lyrics. He even proposed the complete replacement of Chinese traditional instruments with Western instruments so that Chinese music could keep up with Western music, since Chinese traditional instruments are inferior to Western instruments in terms of pitch range and accuracy (reprinted in Xiao 1990: 539–542). Yang and Xiao's view suggests a disessentialization of tone, color and tuning as inherent properties of traditional music, while essentializing melody as a mere abstraction of pitch movements.

Although many music reformers at that time shared Xiao's view that Chinese traditional instruments are inferior in various aspects such as volume, pitch range, and tuning, most of them preferred improving the instruments instead of replacing them altogether with Western music instruments. Starting as early as 1900, the reform of Chinese traditional music instruments eventually became a national project in the 1950s, involving various levels of music workers such as individual

¹For a discussion of equal temperament in terms of rationalization of musical intervals, see Weber (1958: 93–97).

²For the influence of Western music on the relationship among music, modernity and nationalism in 20th century China, see also Mittler 1997; Melvin and Cai 2004: 300–334.

musicians, non-governmental music associations, state-run music troupes and conservatoires, and music instrument manufacturers. Concerns about retaining the original ethnic characteristics of the instruments were common, but tuning was often not an aspect of consideration. In 1956, the Central Regional Industrial Bureau (*Zhōngyāng dìfāng gōngyè bù* 中央地方工業部) drafted a Twelve-Year Scientific Research Plan of the Musical Instrument Industry (*Yuèqì gōngyè 12 nián kēxué yánjiū jìhuà* 樂器工業12年科學研究計劃). In the policy section of the plan, it stressed that the original ethnic style and artistic properties were to be preserved, while at the same stating that the tuning of the instruments should match international standards (Zhongyang 1956: 111).

Under the reform of tradition music instruments, many fretted or fixed-pitch traditional Chinese instruments, such as the *pipa*, the *ruan*, the *yangqin*, and the *dizi*, were modified for equal temperament. For instance, according to an illustration in the Hua Collection published in 1819, the *pipa* used at that time has only four ledges and twelve frets. Some semitones in the chromatic scale are missing. Two special frets—the seventh and the eleventh—give pitches that are sharper or flatter than they would be in the equal-tempered scale, including two sharpened fourth degrees and flattened seventh degrees in the *gong* mode or D mode (Wu 1986). In the early 20th century, individual performers began to add more frets to the *pipa*, adjust the special frets to expand its pitch range, and enable it to play all the semitones in the equal-tempered chromatic scale, so that it can play in and modulate to all keys. In modern editions of *pipa* notation, the sharpened fourth degrees and flattened seventh degrees were altered as sharp four flat seventh respectively. There were a few scholars who suggested that the employment of equal temperament would destroy the character of Chinese traditional music. However, Li Yuanqing 李元慶 (1954: 25), a Party Secretary in charge of the state-supported musical instrument reform in the 1950s, contended that although the sharpened fourth and the flattened seventh degrees are the special features of Chinese musical scales, they were only a small part of it, hence the loss of them will not affect the ethnic character of Chinese music.

The replacement of traditional tuning with equal temperament in twentieth-century China was certainly not unique among other non-Western countries. But we can still see the factors that mark its unique situation when comparing it with the perception of equal temperament in a country that also saw Western music as a symbol of modernity and progress. Egyptian modernizers, similar to Chinese music reformers, also saw the piano as a vehicle of musical progress for mechanical technology and standardized tuning. But as seen in the Congress of Arab Music held in Cairo in 1932, they were more inclined to retune the piano to play microtonal intonation for Arabic music rather than adopting its equal temperament; the piano became the least attractive instruments in Egypt in the 1990s and electronic keyboard instruments that were adjusted microtonally were widely used (Racy 1991: 77–79, 91). Although equal temperament is also alien to traditional Chinese music, Zhu Zaiyu's 朱載堉 (1536–1610) theory of equal temperament provides a historical basis for Chinese music reformers to legitimize the use of equal temperament as an indigenous invention.

20.3 Historiography of Tuning and Temperament

In China, the mathematical solution to equal temperament was first introduced by Zhu Zaiyu in his *New Theories of Harmonics* (*Lǜxué xīnshuō* 律學新說) in 1584. Zhu's aim was to find a common ratio ($1:2^{1/12}$) among the twelve semitones in an octave in order to solve a problem of the traditional tuning method, which is called the “subtracting and adding thirds” method (*sānfēn sūnyì* 三分損益).

The “subtracting and adding thirds” tuning has a long history in China. It is discussed in many classical texts, such as *The Annals of Lü Buwei* (*Lǚshì chūnqiū* 呂氏春秋 [ca. 245 BC]), *Writings of the Master of Huainan* (*Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子 [ca. 139 BC]) and *Writings of Master Guanzhong* (*Guánzǐ* 管子 [ca. 475–221 BC]). As described by the name of the method, it generates, from a starting pitch called *huangzhong* 黃鐘 (C in Western music),³ eleven pitches within an octave by alternately decreasing and increasing the length of a pipe or a string by a third, so each step gives either an ascending perfect fifth (length ratio 2:3) or a descending perfect fourth (length ratio 4:3) (von Falkenhausen 1993: 301–7). Resembling the Pythagorean tuning in Europe, which also employs the length ratio of perfect fifth, the “subtracting and adding thirds” tuning procedure also creates a comma. The spiral of fifths does not return to the starting point. The common ratio 2:3 does not allow the length of the starting pitch *huangzhong* to be regenerated from the eleventh pitch, which is *zhonglü* 仲呂, the Chinese counterpart of F. Increasing the length of *zhonglü* by a third gives a length slightly shorter than the original length of *huangzhong*. If the length of *huangzhong* is 9 unit length, the twelfth note generated by the method from *zhonglü* is 8.8788633 unit length. The difference between these two pitches, the comma, is 23.5 cents, which is less than a quarter of a semitone.⁴

Three theorists who attempted to deal with the comma before Zhu Zaiyu are Jing Fang 京房 (202 BC–AD 9), Qian Lezhi 錢樂之 (fl. 415–455), and He Chengtian 何承天 (370–447). To maintain the pure fifths relationship between the pitches, and in the hope of regenerating the original length of *huangzhong* (C), Jing Fang continued the spiral of fifths for five times to create sixty pitches. Treating the sharpened *huangzhong* ($524288x/531441$) as a distinct pitch category with its own identity, he labelled it as *zhishi* 執始 and subtracted a third from it ($524288x/531441 \times 2/3$), thus creating a slightly sharpened *linzhong* 林鐘 (G), which he labelled as *qumie* 去減 (Fan and Sima 1965: 3000–3014). The process was continued until sixty pitches were generated. Qian Lezhi carried on the process to generate 360 pitches. He Chengtian, realizing that there was no hope to generate a pure octave by extending the spiral of fifths, distributed the comma evenly among the eleven pitches generated from *huangzhong* (C) (Needham et al. 1962: 219–220). But since interval size is a function of logarithmic ratio instead of linear proportion, He's tuning is not an equally tempered one.

³The twelve pitch classes in the Chinese and Western musical systems are only comparable in terms of their orders, arranged according to pitch height, in the octave. They are not exact equivalents of each other for their frequencies are different depending on the tuning method and the pitch standard.

⁴One semitone equals to 100 cents.

The history of tuning and temperament in China is generally constructed as a teleological development towards equal temperament as the ultimate solution of the comma and hence the ultimate goal of the progress of tuning theory (e.g. Needham et al. 1962: 212–228; Kuttner 1975; Robinson 1980; Cho 2003). Attempts that had been made before Zhu Zaiyu to eliminate the comma are interpreted as preliminaries to equal temperament. For instance, Qin Luo 秦洛 (1987: 87) described Zhu's theory of equal temperament as a "full stop" to the history of ancient Chinese tuning theory. In his study on Zhu Zaiyu's theory of equal temperament, Kuttner (1975: 172) interpreted Jing Fang's calculation of the sixty pitches as an attempt to select, among the sixty, twelve pitches that are close to the twelve pitches of equal temperament. Yet this is clearly not Jing's attempt, as he gave an individual name for each one of the sixty pitches, suggesting that the sixty pitches serve individual functions in his tuning system, rather than as mere precursors of equal temperament. Kuttner's view of the development of tuning theories in China is framed by linear progressivism, which finds its expression in many studies and comments on Zhu Zaiyu's equal temperament.

The wide circulation of equal temperament in the world has created an illusion of universality, and Zhu is canonized in China as a great contributor to the world's scientific development. Wang Guangqi 王光祈 (1936: 88) described Zhu's equal temperament as a revolution in Chinese music. Dai Nianzu 戴念祖 (1986: 1) portrayed Zhu as a great scientist who reached several peaks of scientific achievement. When Jiang Zemin 江泽民 (2006: 59), the former President of the People's Republic of China (PRC), gave his talk at Harvard University in 1997, he introduced Zhu Zaiyu's equal temperament as an example of China's achievement in science and technology: "Zhu Zaiyu of the Ming dynasty was the first inventor of the equal temperament, which later became the standard temperament around the world."

In his 1954 article, Li Yuanqing advocated the adoption of equal temperament by attributing the rapid development of European music to it, which facilitates the use of harmony and modulation. He suggested that Zhu Zaiyu discovered the mathematical solution of equal temperament earlier than Europe, and lamented that it was not put into practice in China for its backward industrial technology and its lack of precise measuring instruments (Li 1954: 24). Li's view is clearly shaped by an idea of progress that couples musical development with scientific and technological advance. It sets up a historiographical "temperament race" between China and Europe, where China lost a race that it had once led.

20.4 A Traditionalist Turn

Since the turn of the 21st century, there has been a reversal of the modernist viewpoint that Chinese traditional music is backward and thus has to be improved based on Western models. The progressive concern with the backwardness of tradition started to be replaced by a nostalgic concern with the loss of tradition. Following the global trend of protecting and preserving national cultural heritage, such as Japan's Law for

the Protection of Cultural Properties passed in 1950, the Philippines' National Living Treasures Award launched in 1988, and the Association of Romanian Folk Artists set up in 1992 (Howard 2012: 7–14), the previous modernization project of traditional Chinese music, which emphasizes change and progress, has been eclipsed by national and regional preservative measures that emphasized continuity and authenticity (Rees 1998, 2009, 2012). One of the most notable initiatives is the establishment of the Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Centre (*Zhōngguó fēiwùzhì wénhuà yíchǎn bǎohù zhōngxīn* 中國非物質文化遺產保護中心) in 2006, whose work is to promote the protection of China's intangible cultural heritage by carrying out policy consultation, conducting theoretical research, and organizing conferences, exhibitions, performances, and public activities. Another preservative measure is the documentation of traditional music by field recording and its digitalization, which has been done by the Music Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Arts in Beijing. To facilitate the transmission and thus the continuity of different genres of traditional music, financial incentives have been provided to practitioners of traditional music to pass on their skills (Rees 2012: 29–35; 2009: 62–65).

One of the primary factors behind China's national effort in preserving its traditional music is its engagement in UNESCO's proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. According to UNESCO's brochure, one of the criteria of the election of The Masterpieces is that:

The proposed cultural expressions are threatened with disappearance due to insufficient means for safeguarding or to processes of rapid change. (Masterpieces 2006: 4)

In 2001, the classical operatic genre *Kunqu* was successfully nominated as one of the nineteen Masterpieces, followed by the seven-string zither, the *qin*, in 2003, and the *muqam* suites of the Uyghurs in 2005. To China, the proclamations represent international recognition of China's traditional music, which was formerly disparaged as backward and inferior to Western music. As observed by Bell Yung (2009: 152), the honor aroused great pride and jubilation, just as when the country had breakthroughs in weaponry, science and technology, sports and other areas.

The shift in China's cultural policy from modernization to preservation does not mean that the tension between development and preservation have disappeared. Taking the *qin* as an example, there are still *qin* "masters" who actively promote the modernization and wide dissemination of the *qin*, and criticize the musicians and scholars who oppose the inevitable artistic changes that occur as society changes (Yung 2009: 156). Gong Yi 龔一 (2005), a *qin* master from Shanghai, sees *qin* music as an ever evolving living tradition and supports the need for new *qin* pieces and forms of performance other than solo, such as concerto and ensemble. He cites examples of the evolution of the *qin*'s physical structures and performance techniques from the ancient time, and provides evidence that solo was not the only form of *qin* performance in the past. On the other hand, Wu Zhao 吳釗 (2005), a researcher at the Chinese Academy of the Arts and the president of the Beijing Society of Qin Research, holds that some modernizing approaches to the *qin* have been based on Western aesthetics and deprived the instrument of its original flavor and unique value, thus placing the instrument in the danger of being easily replaced by other instru-

ments. These approaches include increasing the *qin*'s volume, playing it with large ensembles, and replacing performing techniques that produce unstable pitches, such as the free glissando technique *yinnao* 吟猱. This, as suggested by Wu (2005), has led to the loss of rhythmic freedom and the nuances of the *qin*'s tone color.

Wu's traditionalist point of view represents the voice of musicians and scholars who see the some approaches to the reform of traditional instruments as deteriorating acts that deprive the instruments of their original flavor, ethnic character, or essences (*běnzhi* 本質 or *tèzhì* 特質) (e.g. Wu 1986; Yu 1997a; Tang 2010; Li 2012). The properties that are disessentialized by the modernists on the grounds of a different aesthetics are now essentialized by the traditionalists. The subtlety and diversity of the *qin*'s tone color is taken by Wu as the essential property of *qin* music, which, he believes, should not be abandoned in favor of other aesthetic concerns, such as pitch accuracy and volume, which are not its essential properties. Traditional tuning, which was disessentialized in favor of equal temperament under the large scale reform of Chinese musical instruments in the 20th century, has been reassessed since the turn of century. There are still advocates of equal temperament as a progressive and scientific tuning (e.g. Zhao 1995), but viewpoints that alert to the use of equal temperament in traditional Chinese music has gained a higher visibility in journals and conferences than in the 20th century.

20.5 Re-essentializing Traditional Tuning

In 1986, a study on the traditional tuning of the *pipa* was written by Wu Ben 吳犇, who supported the preservation of the traditional *pipa* and contended that the elimination of the special frets for the sharpened fourth degree and the flattened seventh degree in the modern *pipa* is not only a loss, but also influences the scales and modes of traditional *pipa* pieces. Wu gave an example from the first section of *Ambush from All Sides* (*Shímiàn máifú* 十面埋伏), where a large number of sharpened fourth degrees and the flattened seventh degrees are used. In the modern editions of its score, these two notes are altered to natural fourth or sharp fourth degree and natural seventh or sharp seventh degree respectively to adapt to the equally tempered *pipa*. Such alterations have led Chinese music theorists to characterize the first section of *Ambush from All Sides* as having frequent modal changes. Although the sharpened fourth degree and the flattened seventh degree can be played with the equally tempered *pipa* by stretching the string with the left hand to alter the fourth degree and the seventh degree, Wu suggested that this technique is difficult to apply to fast pieces. He suggested that the *pipa* with the traditional tuning should be preserved (Wu 1986).

Musicologists Li Wuhua 李武華 and Tang Pulin 唐朴林 also published papers in 2005 and 2010 respectively to support the preservation of the sharpened fourth degree and the flattened seventh degree. In addition to the traditional tuning of the *pipa*, Tang (2010) provided examples of other tuning systems that contain notes that are not compatible with equal temperament, such as the sharpened fifth degree in Hunan's flower drum opera (*huāgǔ xì* 花鼓戲) and the flattened third degree in

folk songs of the Miao ethnic group. Tang warned against changing the form of the instruments, for it will change their attributes, function, and characteristics (*shǔxìng* 屬性, *gōngnéng* 功能, and *tèzhì* 特質 respectively), though he regarded the unfretted *ruan* as a successful case of reform, lamenting that it is not widely adopted because of the reformers' predilection of equal temperament.

In an interview in 1997, Taiwan musicologist and *pipa* performer Lin Gufang 林谷芳 criticized the way in which traditional music was often preserved, i.e. preserving the melody (quoted in Yu 1997a: 5). He saw this approach as superficial, arguing that the beauty of Chinese traditional music lies not only in its melody, but also the coordination of melody with tone color, tuning, musical mode, and instrument (quoted in Yu 1997b: 10). Therefore, imitating the Western orchestra will make the special quality of Chinese traditional music disappear, leaving only a dry melody (quoted in Yu 1997a: 5). Lin acknowledged that equal temperament can facilitate modulation, but he contended that one should not conceptualize Chinese music in terms of a Western musical system, suggesting that the blind adoption of Western musical elements would result in inferior imitation (Lin 1998: 103–104).

In 2012, the reporter of *Musical Instrument* interviewed eight musicians and scholars for their opinion on the reform of Chinese traditional music instruments (Li 2012). Two of his main questions were what the most important properties that must not be lost in traditional music instruments are, and whether the reform of traditional musical instruments equals to the employment of equal temperament. Most of the interviewees, including the Vice Secretary Feng Yuankai 豐元凱, associate professor of The Chinese Conservatory of Music Li Lingling 李玲玲, the chairman of the Beijing Society of Organology Liu Zhenghui 劉正輝, and two representatives of the music instrument manufacturing companies, suggested that the tone color and tuning of traditional musical instruments are part of their essence. They disagreed with the approach of modifying all instruments for equal temperament.

In the same year, a conference was held by the Society of Chinese Folk Orchestra (*Zhōngguó mínzú guǎnxiányuè xuéhuì* 中國民族管弦樂學會) to discuss music instrument reform (Zhu 2013). Presenter Zhang Yanhong 章艷紅, who is a *pipa* performer and leads an ensemble that emphasizes its dismissal of the model of Western orchestra, stressed that Chinese music is not equal temperament and that it is necessary to know which tuning system should be used in order to manifest the ethnic features of Chinese music. She admitted that modern society features a multiplicity of cultures and agreed that China can still learn from the West. Yet she criticized that the reform of Chinese music instruments fifty years ago was a result of imitating the West out of an inferiority complex, and that China should rebuild its national pride when confronting foreign cultures. Other presenters, such as composer of the Oriental Song and Dance Troupe Wu Hua 吳華, and musicologist Qiao Jianzhong 喬建中 from The Chinese National Academy of Arts, also warned that Chinese traditional musical instruments should not be compared with Western instruments.

20.6 Conclusions

Innovation and development are needed to maintain the vitality of traditional music, but at the same time, its essence has to be retained in order to maintain its identity and uniqueness. While this is agreed by most Chinese music practitioners and scholars, opinions vary on what musical elements can be changed and what cannot be changed. The modernization project of China in the 20th century emphasized the role of music as a science, especially in music theory and the technology of making musical instruments. Equal temperament was seen by Chinese musicians, composers, and scholars as a sign of scientific advance and the teleological goal of the evolution of tuning theory. Many traditional musical instruments were adapted to equal temperament at the expense of their original tunings.

In an interview with Yu (1997a: 2), Lin Gufang suggested that the unique character of Chinese traditional music has to be preserved in order to resist the homogenizing effect of globalization. He criticized the blind incorporation of Western musical elements without considering the different aesthetics of Chinese and Western music (Ibid. 4). Believing that evolution of culture is multidirectional, he rejected linear progressivism, which leads one to compare the progressiveness of different cultures using the same linear scale (Ibid. 2). Comparing Chinese music with Western music in terms of progressiveness would project Western music as an evolved version of Chinese music, especially when progress is defined in terms of technological complexity and mathematical rationality. The reformers' attempt to make Chinese traditional music match up to the standard of Western music, as observed by Lin (Yu 1997b: 13), stems from an inferiority complex.

The rapid economic growth and rising political power of China in the 21st century has provided a source of national pride and confidence that enables it to handle foreign cultures and technology from an equal position. As seen in the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, which showcased performances of Chinese traditional music, China is now taking its traditional culture as a symbol of its long history of civilization instead of backwardness. Musicians, composers, and scholars started to reassess those properties of traditional music that were once deemed to be flawed and hence disessentialized as something that can be dismissed without losing the character of traditional music. As Rees' (2016) research on the recently constructed notion of original ecology folksong showed, there is now an increasing awareness of culture loss and the importance of preserving cultural heritage. It is against this background that Chinese people started to reflect on their musical past and reassess the essence of their traditional music.

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Part IV
Musical Aesthetics of Modernity

Chapter 21

The Final Radicalism of the Avant-Garde and Its Postmodernist Consequences



Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman

Abstract The subject of this paper refers to the post-utopian state of the avant-garde, in which it became aware of its own transience. The avant-garde agonistically mythologized it, yet realized that the transience could be overcome only by the avant-garde's own entering tradition which, otherwise, the avant-garde had previously aggressively denied. To achieve that it decided on its last nihilistic move: it destroyed itself by reaching a compromise with tradition, which meant abandoning its basic ontological tenet. This self-destructive gesture of the avant-garde, which I consider as its final radicalism, at the same time meant the methodological starting point of postmodernism.

21.1 Introduction

The issues involved in the topic which I have chosen to deal with on this occasion could perhaps best be encompassed by the metaphor used by Gao Minglu when—in qualifying avant-garde art in China—he indicated that this art “has become an avant-garde with two heads, one modern and the other, postmodern” (Gao 2003).¹ It seems obvious that this formulation largely exceeds the characterization solely of the Chinese artistic environment in which, otherwise, the Western European relationship between modernity and postmodernity is essentially relativized by the position of modernity, according to which the *modernity* meant “a new idea of the nation and not a new epoch, and postmodernity [...] was nothing but an alternative version of modernity” (Erjavec 2013: 156). So, the syntagm *the double-headed avant-garde* can be also understood as a metaphor for today's artistic and theoretical position of the avant-garde, since it implicates several moments which crucially determine this position in an historical and aesthetic sense.

¹Cited according to Erjavec (2013: 156).

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On the one hand, the quoted formulation refers to the avant-garde as a central and rebelliously innovative phenomenon within modernism; on the other hand, it refers to the avant-garde as a conciliatory phenomenon of a dismantled entity, within postmodernism. Thereby, it concerns two different ontologies and two unrelated appearances.

The *modernist “head” of the avant-garde* denotes the phenomenon of a specific artistic genesis and physiognomy,² a psychological and social causality and uniqueness, the specific organizational dramaturgy of the movements through which it is articulated, the manifest, aggressive forms in which they occur and act in the name of affirming their individually anti-conventional programs: nihilistic, in those cruelest destructive forms, like Italian futurism was (*Futurism. An Anthology* 2009), for example.

The *postmodernist “head” of the avant-garde* does not, however, have anything in common with the physiognomy of the movement. In postmodernism, the avant-garde exists in its fragments, constitutive elements, in “traces”, and is, as such, present only as a potential constructive element of different structural, media-technological and aesthetic constellations.

So, both “heads” of the avant-garde have their “share” in the avant-garde’s present-day position. It will be considered, here, from the perspective of their characteristic interconnection, more precisely, as the consequence of the avant-garde’s final radical step, that is, its self-destruction, which actually discloses two aspects of the transformation of the avant-garde:

- (1) the aspect of its falling apart into fragments, due to which postmodernism was initiated, and
- (2) the aspect of the specific revitalization of the avant-garde exploratory spirit and compositional-technical means of the avant-garde provenance *in the framework of postmodern compositional methodology*.

21.2 The Self-destruction of the Avant-Garde

Due precisely to such a transformation, the avant-garde enables, suggests, maybe even “expects” a certain reconceptualization. Today, however, this reconceptualization does not appear to be so challenging when it is directed towards the revision of the historical avant-gardes, that is, of the avant-garde as an artistically shaped, and already profiled phenomenon in its utopian dimensions, with its typical traits exemplifying radical modernism as an identifying artistic symptom of the first decades of the 20th century. Apparently more provocative is the reconceptualization that tends to explain the avant-garde more systematically and more accurately as a *postmodernistically altered phenomenon*. And yet, hitherto, the reconceptualization of the

²For more about my understanding of avant-garde, with the emphasis on the musical avant-gardes, see Veselinović 1983.

avant-garde, which otherwise are mainly marked by a cognition specific for post-modern culture, largely resort to the critical revision of the avant-garde exactly as a radical phenomenon of modernism. It is noticeable, however, that the decisive impulse and the real motif for that do not primarily arise from a direct relation to the avant-garde artistic substance itself and from a direct insight into it, but primarily from the sphere of philosophy and aesthetics. More precisely, from the theoretical disagreements of a number of postmodern authors³ with some thoughts that Peter Bürger presented in his book *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974). Otherwise, besides the book *Teoria dell'arte d'avanguardia* (1963) by Renato Poggioli, the book by Bürger is fundamental and inescapable in the investigations of the phenomenon of the avant-garde. So, both theories, each from its own aspects, analyses and argumentation, in a mutually complementary manner have shaped the existing theoretical awareness of the avant-garde, and hence its relevant definitions. Poggioli's book, which presents a certain theoretical "rounding off" of the avant-garde, was originally first published close to the end of modernism, and in the English translation in 1968, in the year that *symbolically* indicates the very end of modernism due to the breakdown of the May'68 demonstrations which then swept across Europe and thereby marked the beginning of the epoch that already experienced the clear hints and the first examples of postmodernism. Bürger's book was, however, published eleven years later, when artistic, but also philosophical and aesthetic thought were already largely pre-occupied with postmodernism. Therefore, my assumption that theoretical circles at that time expected Bürger's theoretical discourse on the avant-garde to be post-modernistically illuminated—which actually did not entirely match the real state of things⁴—does not seem to be groundless. One can perceive this based on the kind of objections made regarding Bürger's central theses, and also from the applied critical methodology and argumentation of these objections. In other words, it is as if the majority of critical observations on Bürger's theory reveal a kind of reaction to the "unfulfilled" postmodern expectations.

This is best evidenced by the critiques directed at two theses of that theory: about the failure of the historical avant-gardes, of their utopia, and about the concept of the neo-avant-garde. But on this occasion, I shall deal neither with these viewpoints nor with the mentioned theses. After all, the most genuine comment on them was presented by Bürger himself,⁵ in his text "Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of *Theory of the Avant-Garde*" (Bürger 2010). What I shall deal with here is the fact that the said theses themselves, which, according

³For example: Fehér, Buchloh, Foster, Murphy (see Bürger 2010; Erjavec 2013).

⁴Bürger himself emphasized that:

From Habermas, [he] had learned that the illumination of the past only succeeds insofar as it simultaneously lights up the present", that "[t]he history of the historical avant-gardes and our history were mirrored in each other". And that, for this reason, he used exactly the social constellation of that time "as the basis for a theoretical construction". (Bürger 2010: 698–699).

⁵Bürger writes:

I would [...] use this criticism, where possible, as an opportunity to think through further what was only sketched out in *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, and, second, to try in each case to discern the focus from which individual critics are speaking. (Bürger 2010: 697).

to Bürger, provoked the most unanimous opposition of the critics, disclose the role of the avant-garde itself, at least the musical avant-garde in its own dismantlement, which resulted in postmodernism. But this has remained theoretically neglected both with Bürger and his critics.

In his answer to the critiques, Bürger does not renounce the assertions from his *Theory*: that the significance of his elucidation of historical avant-garde movements lies in the specificity of their novelty, that is, in his concept of avant-garde being grounded on the permeation and interdependence of two principles—“the attack on the institution of art and the revolutionizing of life as a whole” (Bürger 2010: 696). And these are the principles from which “the other aspects of the avant-garde concepts” then directly arise, among them “renouncing the idea of autonomy” and the central position of the work of art (Ibid. 696). Therefore, the failure of the historical avant-gardes actually did not occur in terms of their artistic solutions, innovations and achievements, but in terms of the said principles. That is why Bürger stresses how he “suggested that the failure of an historical project should not be equated with a lack of effectiveness and importance” (Ibid. 700).

So, the breakdown of the avant-garde project refers to the breakdown of the avant-garde attack on the institution of art, and of the idea of the eradication of the boundaries between art and life.

The avant-garde was mostly aware of that failure. But, according to Bürger:

Whereas some avant-gardists understood very well that their project would in all likelihood never be actualized [...], and while they were also highly conscious of the danger of being incorporated into the institution [...], the aestheticization of everyday life only develops on a large scale after the Second World War and could not therefore enter their field of vision. (Ibid. 705)

Above all, the avant-garde was aware of the paradoxical situation in which it found itself due to the failure of its utopia, since this failure at the same time meant the avant-garde’s success in the framework of the institution of art, in fact, the annulment of the avant-garde’s basic principles.

One could almost say: in their very failure, the avant-gardes conquer the institution. (Ibid. 705)

I would rather say that the institution conquered the avant-garde, since it accepted the avant-garde and integrated it, despite the avant-garde’s previous efforts to demolish the institution.

Anyhow, Bürger’s account and the statement given, lack an important dimension: of respecting the very spirit of the avant-garde, more precisely, the avant-garde psychology of those artists who lost their avant-garde position through experiencing the natural sequence of moments in the life of a typical avant-garde movement (Podoli 1975).⁶ Because, the quite neutral conclusion that the avant-garde failed to realize its aims of defeating the institution of art and identifying art with everyday life, which means—to put it briefly—that *it conquered this institution by letting itself be*

⁶Basically, it is about the following moments: activism, antagonism, nihilism, and agonism (Podoli 1975).

conquered by it, actually, contains a sensitive, problematically pregnant avant-garde core. Namely, this implies that the entrance of the avant-garde into the institution of art was a sort of double interest. On the one hand, due to its tolerance of the historical avant-gardes that undermined and attacked it, the institution of art arrived at its enrichment by means of their achievement, having in that way enormously expanded its overall range (thematic, technical, media etc.); and, on the other hand, the avant-gardes, faced with their own agonism, tried to overcome this by accepting the institutional coverage.

Thus, the avant-garde was not only aware of “the danger of being incorporated into the institution” (Bürger 2010: 705), but also of the fact that this incorporation was the only artistic recourse it had from a threatening historical oblivion. Hence, that incorporation was neither automatic, nor accidental, nor uncontrolled. In fact, it involved the rational choice of the avant-gardists themselves to “make peace” with the institution of art. Or, we could say, with tradition, considering that it is this institution within which, or through which, tradition is decisively selected, accumulated and axiologically shaped. However, reasonable motives reside in such a choice and decision of the avant-gardists, more accurately, the trauma of their agonistic experiences which, otherwise, Poggioli considers as the final point of the formal dynamism of an avant-garde. In my hitherto discourse about the (musical) avant-garde, I added to this Poggiolian agonistic moment a thesis about the existence of an important *interspace* between the agony of an avant-garde and its integration into tradition (or, in other words, institution). The interspace refers to the point of the unstable position of the avant-garde; unstable, because neither was it positioned there anymore as avant-garde, despite the feeling of its strong awareness of its own avant-garde values; nor was it still then included into the institutional hierarchy of art, meaning, of artistic tradition.⁷ That is why the decision of the avant-garde to leave that interspace by effecting a turn towards the past/tradition/institution, the rejection and destruction of which was the avant-garde’s central goal, was essentially radical and far-reaching. Namely, it was then that the avant-garde for the last time acted as the avant-garde, by bringing its final nihilistic decision and carrying out its last destructive execution: of itself. So it made a radical change of its own construct due to the type of its compromise with tradition, through which it actually established postmodernism and determined its own position within it. In the light of what has been said, it is highly symptomatic that—not solely in music—the first representatives of postmodernism were among the leading avant-garde artists (Veselinović-Hofman 2003b, 2017).

⁷I presented this thesis for the first time in 1983, in my book *Stvaralačka prisutnost evropske avantgarde u nas* [The Creative Presence of the European Avant-Garde in Serbian Music] (Veselinović 1983), and have developed it in the studies among which are Veselinović-Hofman 2002, 2003a, 2008, 2017.

21.3 The Position of the Avant-Garde in Postmodernism

That self-destruction of the avant-garde led it to the position shared in postmodernism with all other artistic formations of the past. They all were—including the avant-garde—neutralized both in their external (mutual!) and internal (individual!) constellations. In other words, they exist as pulled apart to their own constituents, fragments which, in single, newly produced works can be mutually combined with an unlimited freedom, in accordance with their authors' creative ideas.

As such, deconstructed in relation to itself as a modernist phenomenon,⁸ the avant-garde lacks its wholeness and cannot be reconceptualized in the sense of the radical, genuinely modernist phenomenon from the beginning of the 20th century. And this, not only because, according to its nature, an avant-garde novelty can be avant-garde merely once: in its first appearance. Thereby, we should take into account that its first appearance in other local settings is already a matter of its reception, and through that a part of the problem field that contains the transformation of the avant-garde from the movement to a "style" (Veselinović-Hofman 2017). After all, it was not only that the ontology of the avant-garde changed in postmodernism, but also the entire social conditions, which had once corresponded with the avant-garde and had "vibrated" with it. Today, the social environment is marked by the omnipresent spirit of commodification in the contemporary era characterized by multinational capital and globalization, which has influenced the formation of a fundamentally different sense of any "stylistic", and also "avant-garde" configuration and constitution. Therefore, the term *avant-garde* should not be used today without a more specific determination which would point to its ontologically new condition; so, neither "simply [as] a synonym for progressive modernization", as Bürger had warned (Bürger 2010: 713), nor as a synonym for "those who", as Walter Adamson pointed out, "create 'experimental art' as well as more narrowly to those seeking to merge art and life" (Adamson 2010: 869). Although the term *avant-garde* is still most frequently used in that widest and most unspecified sense which mainly signifies "a mindset of formal innovation" (Sers 2010: 849),⁹ thereby usually referring to the vitality of the "traces" of those categories that used to feature radically unconventional breakthroughs, efforts have been made in conceptualizing the contemporary notion of the avant-garde.

This notion requires an attribution which would specify the real position of the avant-garde in the real environments of today, and dispel the illusion of the possibility that the term *avant-garde* may now signify a phenomenon implying the strategies of the *historical avant-gardes* which have—"hidden" and despite everything—"just" been waiting for their "inevitable" revival. So, Adamson is correct when he claims

⁸A complex question of how modernism "becomes" avant-garde will not be discussed on this occasion.

⁹Philippe Sers indicates that:

The notion of avant-gardism subsequently takes on a different meaning than it had originally: it has come to signify a mindset of formal innovation, rather than a dedication to exploration and radical creativity that clashes with convention. (Sers 2010: 849)

that the difference between the contemporary and historical avant-gardes is too great for the use of the term *avant-garde* still being appropriate today. Therefore, he suggests the term *immanent avant-gardism* instead, for “the form of avant-gardism most appropriate to and most likely to prevail in the contemporary world” (Adamson 2010: 871), bearing in mind that it covers and unites various efforts “to contest the existing cultural vocabularies and sometimes institutional practices as well”, and to revise “cultural vocabularies in a culturally democratic direction” (Ibid.).¹⁰

The issue of cultural democracy as a key preoccupation of postmodernism seems to guide John Roberts too, in his formulation of the proposal for the replacement of the concept of *avant-garde*. So he uses the terms *suspensive avant-garde* and the “*third space*”, which actually refers to the avant-garde’s facing “the pathos of its post-Thermidorian condition” (Roberts 2010: 723), with “the new democratic ethos” of the contemporary art, which is revealed in the links between artistic and nonartistic practices, artistic and nonartistic knowledge (cf. Ibid. 722), to the avant-garde’s passing into the space of “the concrete implication of artistic practices in the critique of capital, the state, labor practices, and the official institutions of art” (Ibid. 726). And no matter how acceptable the mentioned constructs are, each from the perspective of its argumentation, these actually refer only to the position of the particularized avant-garde and fragmentation as its new ontology, which are the direct consequences of the avant-garde’s self-destruction.

However, the consequences of this self-destruction are also indirect, reaching problematically even further. As for music, in the mature and the late phase of postmodernism, which can be noticed since around the mid-80s of the 20th century. In the then methodologically already completely mastered and aesthetically layered creative field of the leveled hierarchical relationship to the artistic tradition including the avant-garde one, the logic of hierarchization has again come into creative focus. And this has been manifested through the prevalence of the chosen artistic “traces” used as elements for the shaping of a piece of art. Depending on its author’s conception, *elements of any musical heritage can dominate* in the piece, any styles, including some fragments (materials, procedures) of the decomposed avant-garde. Thereby, however, postmodernist methodology in itself does not change, but continues to rely on the coexistence of the particularized tradition, in principle within the most diverse thematic, problem, aesthetic, disciplinary, procedural and media contexts and permeations. It is only that an emphasis occurs now on some factors that were once of avant-garde status; ultimately, on those semiological instead of semantic factors. The result of that is no revived avant-garde, but a new phenomenon I designate with the term *postmodernist avant-garde*.¹¹ It can be identified wherever it is about such a postmodernist coexistence of the various fragments of tradition, which is dominated and distinguished by the fragments/contents of the formerly avant-garde nature be they factual or procedural. Such a state is characteristic of the

¹⁰Adamson reminds of those contestations in the spheres such as “sexuality, marriage, family, food, ethnicity, national identity (including complex, hybrid forms of it), and historical memory” (Adamson 2010: 871).

¹¹More about this see Veselinović-Hofman 2017.

mature and closing postmodernism, and involves the second—possibly final—phase of the transformation of the avant-garde.

21.4 Conclusions

As already stressed, the first phase of the transformation of the avant-garde was actually a direct consequence of the avant-garde's reaction to its own failure: the avant-garde's fragmentation. The second phase has been a reaction to this fragmentation: that is, a sort of a new hierarchization of the avant-garde "traces" and remains, within the stylistically neutral postmodernist net. Ultimately, as if both phases exist in the manner of "another of the same", in the sense of the field of general globalization to which they belong, the globalization considered as a "double process: the particularization of the universal, and the universalization of the particular" (Robertson 1992; Erjavec 2013: 73). More precisely, applied to the topic considered here, as the particularization of the avant-garde, and the "universalization" of its remains.

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Chapter 22

Essence and Context: Process of Becoming and Dialectical Temporality in Adorno and Nono



Hyun Höchsmann

Abstract Adorno emphasizes the processual nature of works of art, in contrast to the notions of essences as static formal structures. Essence and context of music can be configured in terms of Adorno's understanding of dialectical temporality as the interweaving of subjective and objective dimensions of temporality. The central concepts of Adorno's aesthetics (works of art as processes of becoming, the autonomy and social significance of music, and the fragmentary nature of truth) are at the foundation of Nono's understanding of the essence of music as an "intervention in the sonic reality of our time" and are aligned with his exploration of musical material transcending the boundaries of tonality and atonality.

22.1 Introduction

Adorno's conception of the work of art as a process of becoming and his emphasis on the simultaneity of the autonomy and social significance of art present a possibility of bridging the gulf between essence and context. The essence of music consists in its development of musical ideas and elements in the internal organization, which is identified as the continuous process of transformation among the constituent parts. Insofar as the internal organization of works of art is governed by the parameters pertaining to the specific field of art, the works are autonomous. The internal features establish the "autonomy" of music. But at the same time, as Adorno emphasizes, to the extent that works of art exist in the external contexts of historical, political, cultural, and social spheres of interpenetration, art can be meaningful in presenting alternative ways of being in the world. Because of the independence of art, it can clarify or illuminate social reality as a mirror or a lamp and can have objective social significance. Contexts of works of art are determined by historical, cultural, and social frameworks of creation, and also by receptions of works of art which influence the possibilities of their dissemination.

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Adorno's understanding of works of art as processes of becoming invokes the concept of temporality. Essence and context of music can be configured in terms of Adorno's understanding of dialectical temporality as the interweaving of subjective and objective dimensions of temporality.

Although permanence cannot be excluded from the concept of their form, it is not their essence. Daringly exposed works that seem to be rushing toward their perdition have in general a better chance of survival than those that, subservient to the idol of security, hollow out their temporal nucleus and, inwardly vacuous, fall victim to time: the curse of neoclassicism. (Adorno 1984: 177)

Adorno's aesthetics of music comes to life in Luigi Nono's compositions. As André Richard states:

[Nono] was not interested in the way that, for example, Boulez is, in the creation of a perfect or complete music. His music was always in transition [...] his music was very much in the moment and not created to become a monument. (Quoted in Covell 2004)

The central concepts of Adorno's aesthetics (works of art as processes of becoming, the autonomy and social significance of music, and the fragmentary nature of truth content) are at the foundation of Nono's exploration of musical material transcending the boundaries of tonality and atonality and his compositional methods of montage (Vieira de Carvalho 1999a, b).

22.2 Essence and Process

Above all, the work of art is processual in so far as it is a relation between a whole and its parts. In other words, this relation itself is a process of becoming. (Adorno 1984: 255)

Works of art are not fixed once and for all, but are in flux. (Paddison 1997: 190)

In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno explores the ways in which works of art are processual (Adorno 1984: 252–256). Adorno emphasizes the processual nature of art in contrast to notions of essences as static formal structures or a composite of discrete attributes:

The work of art is not a totality in the sense of a structure integrating the parts: once objectified, the work keeps on producing itself in response to the tendencies at work in it. (Ibid. 255)

When situated or “objectified” in the context of historical, social, and cultural settings, music “produces itself” in accordance with its essence, “the tendencies at work within it”. The work of art is not simply a fixed object, a closed system as text and an artifact; it is also a process, being in a state of constant flux and becoming (Paddison 1997: 189).

But clearly, the world of music is not only a Heraclitean flux and becoming into which we cannot step twice but also a Parmenidean realm of being? Adorno recognizes that there is an Archimedean fulcrum on which the work of music is lifted:

All “Becoming” in music is in fact illusory insofar as the music, as *text*, is really fixed and is not “Becoming” anything as it is already all there. (Ibid. 191)

A musical work as a composition consisting of formal structure and thematic core is clearly a fixed entity. But in the context of seeking to understand the meaning, the relations and development of musical ideas, a musical work is processual and becoming.

From the epistemological and ontological perspectives, Adorno regards a work of art as a “force-field (Kraftfeld) organized around a problem” (Ibid. 190). As Paddison explains, for Adorno:

The tension between movement and stasis, which constitutes one of the paradoxes of the musical work, also constitutes its processual character. (Ibid. 191)

What Adorno means by being (*Sein*) and becoming (*Werden*) is illustrated by the contrast he sees between Wagner as “allegorical” and static and Beethoven as “developmental” and dynamic (Ibid. 296). Adorno characterizes Wagner’s use of the leitmotif as being static by its very nature in spite of the general impression of Wagner’s music as being a continuous development.

Adorno’s conception of works of art as a process of being and becoming expands the understanding of musical temporality. Musical temporality at the intersection of the boundary between essence and context can be explored further in terms of Adorno’s conception of dialectical temporality (Adorno 1973: 197–198).

22.3 Dialectical Temporality

Adorno characterizes the relation of music to time as dialectical in explaining the progressive, dynamic, and developmental temporality in music.¹ Music “must act upon time, not lose itself to it; must steer itself against the *empty flood*” (Phillips 2009: 116). Modern music is “in time” and also is synthesis “through time”:

Zeitkunst, the temporal art, is equivalent to the objectification of time. This applies to the individual elements, or musical content, to the extent that they come together in a context by means of the organization of their sequence, rather than dissolving as they pass away; and to the temporal dimension itself, which aims, potentially, at its own sublation (*aufgehoben*) based on the strength of the unity of what occurs within it, following the example of certain movements of the truly symphonic Beethoven. (Adorno 1995: 66)

Dialectical temporality is the interweaving of subjective and objective dimensions of temporality distinguished by Adorno in two “modes of listening” (Adorno 1973: 197–198). Adorno’s distinction in *Philosophy of Modern Music* between two modes of listening, “the expressive-dynamic” and “the rhythmic-spatial”, provides a launching point of exploring musical temporality. The expressive-dynamic mode,

¹This is elaborated in Adorno’s criticism of Stravinsky:

Stravinsky’s music remains a peripheral phenomenon [...] because it avoids the dialectical confrontation with the musical progress of time. (Adorno 1973: 187)

with its origin in singing, “is directed towards the fulfilling domination of time” and in its highest manifestations, “transforms the heterogeneous course of time into the force of the musical process”. This is the realm of creative subjective freedom. The rhythmic-spatial mode, obeying the beat of the drum, is an “articulation of time through the division into equal measures” in a “spatialized” objective context. This is the objective domain of measured time. Adorno explains and maps his analysis of two types of listening on to his analysis of the individuals’ alienation from society:

The two types are separated by force of that social alienation which separates subject and object [...]. The idea of great music lay in a mutual penetration of both modes of listening [...] in the sonata. (Ibid.)

This leads us directly to Luigi Nono’s conception of new modes of listening.

22.4 Luigi Nono: “A New Way of Thinking Music”

To wake up the ear, the eyes, human thinking, intelligence, the most exposed inwardness. This is now what is crucial. (Nono [1983] 2001: 522)

Seeking to discover “a new way of thinking music” and “a transformation of thinking”, Luigi Nono (1924–1990) explored the possibilities of new modes of listening and re-awakening active listening (Stenzl 2013).

[Composition] is not about a kind of artisanship, but about a consciousness of technique which is made possible by a transformation of thinking. (Nono 1975: 15)

Nono’s music elucidates the truth content of Adorno’s thought that the commercialization of music by the culture industry lead to passive listening habits and “regressive listening”. Nono developed most completely the full implications of serialism—an approach to structuring every aspect of musical composition developed from Schoenberg’s ideas of order, structure, and completeness in the use of the chromatic scale (Iddon 2013). Nono’s significant contributions to the development of contemporary music has been widely acknowledged (Deliège 2003). Nono’s musical thought articulated the major concerns which music has come to acknowledge subsequently: the relation of composition to social reality and the performance, the nature of musical material, approaches to listening, musical time and space, and the uniqueness of the musical event (Impett 2004: 29–36).

Nono’s engagement with Critical Theory permeates his music and political commitment. Nono understood the development of serialism as not only a revolutionary departure but “the result of a historical evolution of music, conditioned by the human and musical necessities of our time”. Nono affirms the simultaneity of musical invention, moral commitment, and political action. Emphasizing the necessity for contemporary music to “intervene” in the “sonic reality of our time”, Nono’s critical composition resonates with active moral and political engagement in the historical conditions of the present (Mahnkopf et al. 2006; Mahnkopf 2006, 2015).

Nono emphasized that it is the composer's and the listener's responsibility to recognize how every sound is politically charged by its historical associations. The idea of openness and continuous questioning are at the center of Nono's musical thought.

22.5 *Prometeo, Tragedia Dell'ascolto*

Many islands of quiet sounds magically travelling through space. (Abbado 1999)

Prometeo, Tragedia dell'ascolto, a “musica per drammatica”, is regarded as one of the most significant compositions of Luigi Nono and among the most important works of contemporary music. With the conception of opera as “azione scenica”, stage activity and the libretto by Massimo Cacciari incorporating texts from Aeschylus, Goethe, Hölderlin, and Walter Benjamin, Nono presents reflections on Hesiod's narration of the Prometheus myth and an affirmation of the continuity of creative endeavors for freedom and utopia (Nono and Cacciari 1984; Vieira de Carvalho 1999a, b).²

The insights of the pioneers of Critical Theory, Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno, on history, aesthetics, and music resonate in Nono's music. Nono's conception of “theatre of consciousness” in *Prometeo* corresponds to Adorno's understanding of historical consciousness as a “dynamic totality” (Adorno 1977: 211). *Prometeo* is a realization of Adorno's conception of listening as thinking. The exploration of the relation between chronometric time and musical time in *Prometeo* creates, in Adorno's phrase, “passage of time that is holding its breath” (Phillips 2009: 131).

The dialectical confrontation with the musical progress of time [...] is the basis of all great music since Bach. (Adorno 1973: 164, 187)

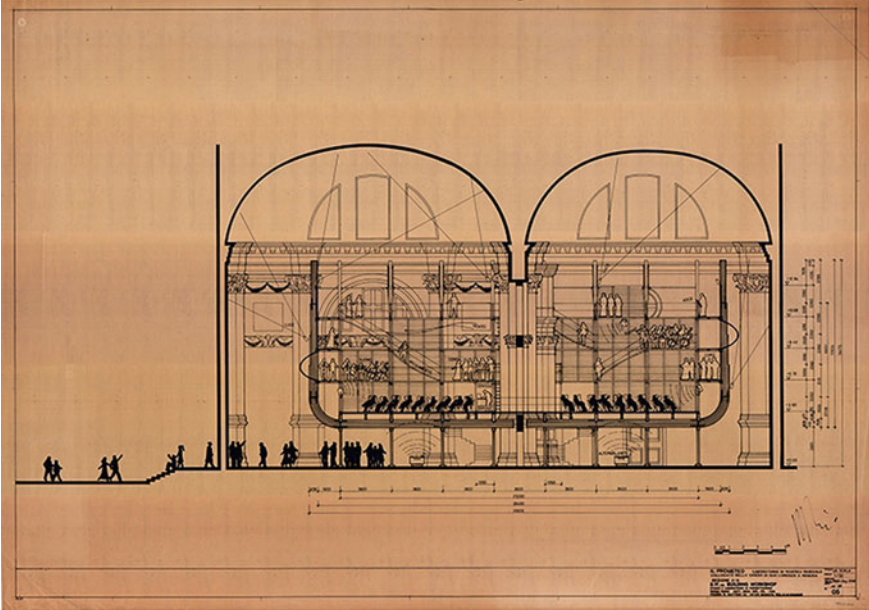
Affirming “the time continuum of permanence” and “musical progress of time”, Nono's *Prometeo* is a manifestation of Adorno's conceptions of dialectical dimensions of temporality in music. *Prometeo* enlivens Adorno's conceptions of the capacity of art to articulate the “destiny of temporal-consciousness” and historical consciousness as a “dynamic totality” investigated in *Philosophy of Modern Music* and *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (Adorno 1977: 211).³ *Prometeo* comprises shifting microtonal chords in the chorus (*cori spezzati*, split choirs of the polychoral singing in Venice in the 16th century), the contrapuntal overlapping of the solo voices and the orchestration in which the instruments are played at the extremes of their ranges. The electronic acoustic configurations in *Prometeo* generate continuously changing contextualizations of sound.

Nono's realization of “mobile sound” in “musical space” in *Prometeo* confirms Adorno's view that “the idea of great music consists in a mutual penetration of both modes of listening”. Nono explains that:

²The libretto is available at Fodazione Archivio Luigi Nono website: http://www.dicoseunpo.it/N_files/Prometeo.pdf [last checked 2 July 2018].

³Phillips (2009) states that Nono shares Adorno's thinking on historical consciousness in his lecture, “History and the Present in the Music of Today” (1959).

(a)



(b)

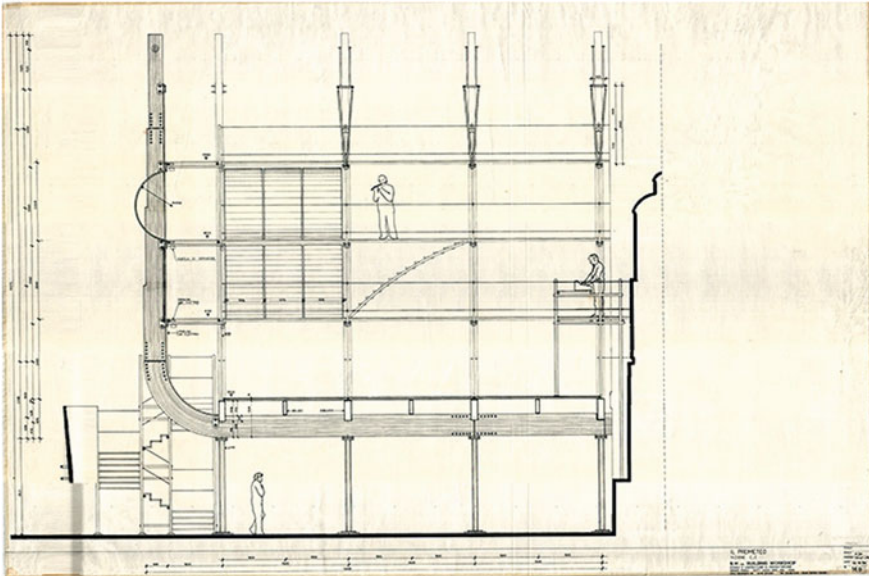


Fig. 22.1 Drawings of the musical space for *Prometeo* (Fondazione Renzo Piano 1985)

[Mobile sound] does not fill the space, but discovers it, unveils it. And this provokes an unexpected and unpredictable being in the sound, not to begin to perceive, but to feel part of the space. (Phillips 2009: 162)

Nono's conception of "musical space" for the performance of *Prometeo* was realized within a colossal wooden structure for the listeners and the musicians, enabling a complete immersion in sound (Piano 1985; Drees 1998). The music generated inside caused the immense soundboard to vibrate; the structure was built inside San Lorenzo in Venice, with the sound reverberating from the walls (Fondazione Renzo Piano 1985) (Fig. 22.1).

22.6 Being and Becoming in Nono's Compositional Methods

"Don't write, listen", Nono urged. In search of transforming and bringing together different sounds in the composition of music, Nono explained: "I never went with a ready score to a studio, as many did."

Adorno's conception of the essence of works of art as becoming is exemplified in Nono's compositional methods. Nono's conception of sonority in *No hay caminos, hay que caminar... Andrei Tarkovsky* (1987) exemplifies Adorno's understanding of processual nature of works of art. The soundscape of continuously fluctuating and pervasive inner mobility in *No hay caminos* transcends the boundary between sound and the "blue silence". Nono writes in the short liner note accompanying *No hay caminos*:

A few choirs ever changing
Formants of the voice—timbres—
interdynamised spaces
and some possibilities
of transformation
through live electronics.⁴

With the "a few choirs ever changing", the oscillating dynamics in both of the solo parts from *p* and *ppppp* to sparse leaps of *mezzo forte*, a continuous fluctuation of sound emission is created. The different pitches of sharp Aeolian tones, whistles, and harmonics, with sporadic basic "shadow tone" explore the possibilities of mobile sound in space. In *Varianti* for violin, strings and woodwinds (1957), in the violin solo, each note has a different tonal marking, creating a continuously changing passage.

As Mário Vieira de Carvalho has explained, the processes of quotation concerning the sound material, the compositional techniques, and the text components as well as their association with the usage of montage on macro and micro structural levels are

⁴Quoted in Petazzi 2000.

central in Nono's music (Vieira de Carvalho 1999a: 37–85, 1999b: 127–35). Montage and musical quotations in Nono's compositions enhance dialectical listening by calling forth the critical capacity to explore the dynamic interweaving of discrete contextual musical material in the unified configurations of present sonority. Montage and quotation establishes a continuum of significance and understanding of the original context of a musical theme. Nono's arrangement of montage facilitates dialectical listening with a critical capacity for perceiving the dynamic unfolding of the musical structures (Hall 2010).

Contrappunto dialettico alla mente (1968) takes as its sound sources singing, speaking, and uproar, using texts by revolutionary poets and a pamphlet criticizing war. Nono explained that the work was inspired by a madrigal comedy of Adriano Banchieri (1608), invoking early Baroque musical conventions (Eddins 1988). Nono's openness to the context and the compositional methods of quotation and montage extend Adorno's conception of works of art as a process of becoming (Sallis 2000). In Nono's methods of composition, the essence emerges from a context free of presuppositions (Feneyrou 1993).

22.7 Autonomy of Works of Art

Adorno explains that autonomy is an essential characteristic of works of art. Art comes to exist via autonomous activity, as its form, process, and material are determined not by conformity with prevailing standards set by existing norms and conventions but by bringing forth what does not yet exist. The thematic core of a musical work is created by musical ideas and rules and not caused by external contextual factors of individual predilections or circumstances of the composer or the listener. What Adorno means by individual autonomy in music can be illustrated by his analysis of Schoenberg's serial compositions as a vigorous affirmation of individual autonomy of music in the *Philosophie der neuen Musik*. Adorno regards Schoenberg's development of musical ideas and musical material independently of the parameters of tonality as demonstrating that tonality is not an irrevocable fundamental law of music. Schoenberg's music demonstrates the capacity and the resources for constructing the elements of his musical language and to transform its disassociation from the dominance of the "old style".⁵ The scope of the creative process of art is not confined within the boundary of socially governed norms. To the extent that Adorno considers that music does not represent objects outside itself his views are aligned with the formalism of Hanslick: works of art must be explained in terms of the formal laws, which govern their production.

Paraphrasing Mallarmé's view that poetry is not made of feelings but consists of words,⁶ it can be said that the essence of music is not emotions but relations among

⁵Jürgen Vogt's discussion of Adorno's interpretation of Schoenberg is illuminating (Vogt 2014).

⁶*Ce n'est pas avec des idées qu'on fait des vers, c'est avec des mots* (Maria Elisabeth Kronegger, *Literary Impressionism*, Rowman & Littlefield, 1973: 77).

sounds. The sketches for Nono's *Il canto sospeso* (1955–56) demonstrate the mathematical relations, which determine all the elements of composition, from pitch and duration of the notes, and volume to sound character. Musical works are composed with the knowledge of compositional rules and forms and musical intentions and not by psychological motivations or patterns. Composer's intentions, individual reception, traditions, and individual biographical facts may constitute contexts for music but not their essence.

Adorno explains that while art is autonomous insofar as it does “not reflect and communicate with society” but stands apart from society, it is precisely the capacity of art to be independent from society, which enables it to relate critically to social totality from an independent perspective (Schulte-Sasse 1984: xviii). Tracing the development towards autonomy of art, Adorno acknowledges that laws pertaining to works of art are products of historical developments within society.⁷ Similarly, while Nono believed that all music came from formulae, he also recognized that works of art have social and historical dimensions insofar as they are produced not in isolation but in specific lived circumstances. Since the laws governing works of art are products of history and undergo transformations throughout history, Adorno concludes that works of art are to be understood by their relation to the social whole in which they exist.

22.8 The Relation of Works of Art to Social Reality

Understanding the process of works of art involves comprehending their essence at the intersections of various domains of contexts. The context of works of art is the social totality determined by the historical contingencies of the past, present, and projections into the future. Art “becomes social by its opposition to society, and occupies this position only as autonomous art” (Adorno 1984: 225–226; also see Phillips 2009: 165). Adorno characterizes the relation between serious music and society as “mimetic”; the “antinomies” of the formal musical language expresses the contradictions within society; “the coded language” reveals the necessary change in society. For Adorno music is autonomous and a part of society simultaneously: within the totality of social reality, works of art maintain their autonomy. Adorno's perspective of the simultaneity of autonomy of works of art and their social frame of reference is succinctly encapsulated in his characterization of works of art as a “monad”.

Appraisals of Adorno's ideas on the connection between art and society have debated the question whether there is a contradiction between his conception of the autonomy of a work of art and his recognition of its social origins. Peter Uwe Hohendahl has argued that for Adorno a work of art is essentially a “closed monad” without directly depicting an external environment (Hohendahl 2013). But this

⁷I am indebted to Professor Richard Taruskin's comments on clarifying Adorno's views on autonomy and social dimensions of art.

overlooks Adorno's acknowledgement that the impetus and the truth content in art pertain to social reality.

Images of the objective world appear in music only in scattered, eccentric flashes, vanishing at once; but they are, in their transience, *of music's essence*. (Adorno et al. 1998: 7)

As Adorno succinctly sums up, "society is essentially the substance of the individual" (Adorno 1974: 17). While Adorno's conception of works of art as monads, unlike Leibniz's monad which is an individual entity (monad has "no windows") reflecting the whole universe (Leibniz 1968), does not reflect society, society constitutes the essence of works of art.

Adorno affirms that the work of art is social even "in the most extreme refusal of society" (Adorno 1984: 349). It is *because* of the autonomy of art in its "materials and procedures" that art has a vital place in society (Ibid. 344). Only when music is autonomous and not a mere instrument of an ideology can it have truth content and a vital function for society. The autonomy of art is an important factor in ensuring its independence from the culture industry. Adorno's perspective of sociology of music brings out the significance of music in enhancing the sphere of common understanding (Adorno 1998: IV.15).

Adorno's understanding of the essence of works of art as being simultaneously autonomous and significant for historical, political, and social developments and his conviction that music can express social truth are reinvigorated in Nono's music.

22.9 Al Gran Sole Carico D'amore

In *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (1972/74), Nono's innovative conception of opera as "azione scenica", stage activity, consisting of a succession of independent actions expands Adorno's conception of dialectical temporality. In place of a linear chronological narrative sequence of causally related succession of events, Nono constructs a synthesis of historical documentary evidence, songs, letters, and poems. In montages of citations from both musical works and philosophical and literary texts, ranging from Marx to Rimbaud (from whose poem the title of the work originates), Nono presents a vigorous affirmation of freedom and revolutionary courage throughout history, from the Paris Commune of 1871 to the struggles for national independence in the 20th century in Asia and Latin America.

In the thematic development of the affirmation of revolutionary courage, Nono's interpolation of tonal material in the tone rows of composition, in a clear departure from the prevalent practices of the serial composers, is a resounding synthesis of compositional approaches (Nono 2001). In a letter from 27 July 1982 to Berio, Nono wrote:

You are talking about using the series rigidly; I am speaking instead of using the series with liberal fantasy. Bruno [Maderna] and I used to be perfectly convinced of this necessity. (Quoted in Guerrero 2006)

22.10 Conclusions

22.10.1 *Common Features of Essence and Context: Objectivity and Truth Content*

All aesthetic questions terminate in those of the truth content of artworks [...] the truth content of an artwork requires philosophy. (Adorno 1984: 498, 507)

In clear distinction from the tradition of Kant and Hume, which maintains that aesthetic judgments are judgments of taste, non-conceptual, and non-cognitive, Adorno (agreeing with Hegel) upholds that art has a “truth content” (*Wahrheitsgehalt*) (Hulat 2016). The significance of the idea of truth content has been generally recognized as being pivotal in Adorno’s aesthetics (Zuidervaart 1991; Wellmer 1991: 1–35).

The idea of truth content of art, the way in which art critically evaluates existing conditions revealing the possibilities for the transformation of society, is predominant in Adorno’s aesthetics. Adorno’s conception of aesthetic truth has a vital significance in his philosophy of music. While aesthetic truth is not discursive as it is not reducible to conceptual analysis, it is analogous to philosophical truth. In *Music and Language*, Adorno emphasizes that the “succession of sounds is like logic: it can be right or wrong” (Jarvis 1998: 127) and that “philosophy and art converge in their truth content” (Adorno 1984: 172). Adorno upholds that “the forms of art reflect the history of man more truthfully than do documents themselves”. The truth content of art is constituted by its form and connection to the given historical, social, and political contexts.

Adorno emphasizes that each work has import (*Gehalt*) by virtue of an internal relation between content (*Inhalt*) and form (*Form*). Critical judgments beyond affective responses to a work of art are necessary to explore both the internal organization and its relation to the social and historical totality surrounding the work. A work of art has an internal truth content to the extent that its significance can be ascertained in its internal relations. At the same time, to the extent that works of art also make implicit or explicit epistemological claims regarding the internal structure and the external world, art functions as a mode of knowledge about its internal organization and also as a presentation of the natural, social, and historical contexts.

For Adorno truth is experiential, fragmentary, and momentary. Adorno illuminates the fragmentary nature of truth and meaning in music. In Beethoven’s last quartets, the profundity of the work consists in its fundamental open-endedness. They are fragments in the sense of Ernst Bloch’s “end-times” in which the imagination presents the totality as not the finality but the process of becoming and transformation (Bloch 1986: 219). In the fragment, the imagination manifests its search for truth, imbuing the work of art with an intensity of meaning, as the world is not closed but continuously moving with emerging forms.

Adorno’s conception of truth as fragmentary process of transformation is aligned with the soundscape of Nono’s *La lontananza nostalgica utopica futura* (1988–89) for violin and 8-track tape. Consisting of many fragments of significantly differenti-

ated and sustained sounds, interspersed with harmonics and sporadically interposed eruptions and silence recorded during experimental studio work, *La Lontananza* focuses directly on the working process of transformation of sound material incorporating the musical quotations of historical elements of violin techniques (Drees 2001). In the duration of the performance a continuous interactive process among the different components of the work is developed: the violinist interprets the rests and the phases between the sections in accordance with the sounding tape material and the sound engineer responds to the violin by distributing the selection from materials on the tape amongst the eight speakers.

Adorno's conception of the search for truth as an open-ended process of becoming elucidates the endeavor of Nono's music. Nono's search beyond systematizing solutions in the string quartet, *Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima* (1980) resonates with an awareness of the fragmentary nature of truth. The truth content of Nono's composition is discovered in the process of hearing the music which integrate the fragments of poems of Hölderlin, score markings from Beethoven, Ockeghem's chanson *Malheur me bat*, and Verdi's *scala enigmatica* from *Ave Maria*.

22.10.2 *Objectivity of Works of Art Both in Essence and Context*

It has been debated whether Adorno's social theory has an objective standpoint outside society since any conception of just society is necessarily a reflection of society.⁸ If this were the case, then Adorno's social theory would be at best intersubjective, replicating the standpoint of society and not objective, independent of social constraints. However, Adorno's articulation of the autonomy of works of art indicates the possibility of objectivity in art.

Adorno affirms the objectivity of works of art in his explanation of truth content and the autonomy of works of art: Aesthetic cognition consists in knowing the truth content of works of art not in isolation but as their essences are manifested in interconnected contexts. Adorno emphasizes that the most specific experiences encapsulated in art are not subjective illusions, but "objective" and "experiences which melt into the particular are transformed into the general revealing their objective significance" (Adorno 1960: 53). Adorno affirms that music encompasses intimations of utopian possibilities for a better world related to the task of philosophical activity as a transformation of society:

The real social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevailing. (Adorno 1967: 122)

Truth content of works of art is the way in which art encounters the external environment and suggests how things could be better. Adorno encapsulates the capacity of art to present an appearance of truth as that which is free of illusion:

⁸Jarvis refers to Lukács' theory of reification (Jarvis 1998: 9).

Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless. (Adorno 1984: 32)

Adorno's thinking on the autonomy and the truth content of art elucidates the epistemological and social importance of music: the development of theoretical and practical understanding of music expands the freedom of creative process as a significant form of knowledge.

Nono's moral commitment to political action in his compositions is aligned with Adorno's understanding of the social significance of music. Nono's compositional procedures are autonomous in their construction of structures consisting of musical ideas and relations. Nono's emphasis on the necessity for contemporary music as "interventions in the sonic reality of our time" creates an impetus in the process of listening as thinking. With the conception of opera as "azione scenica", stage activity, Nono's understanding of the simultaneity of musical invention, moral commitment, and political action pertains to the essence and the context of music. Nono's music urges the listeners to direct themselves *inwards*—toward a simultaneous renewal of listening, perception and reflection (Nono 1993).

On the horizon of anticipation, Adorno points to the possibility affirmation of freedom in art in unity with society. Adorno invokes the utopian potentiality of art:

As a musical composition compresses time, and as painting folds spaces into another, so the possibility is concretized that the world could be other than it is.⁹

Committed to the concept of criticism as that which saves or preserves,¹⁰ Adorno seeks to overcome the prevalent "regressive listening" in the passive consumption of music and to initiate "thinking with ears". Adorno affirms the hope for musical listening to "leave the road of the always identical" and to align itself with the idea of "progress in the consciousness of freedom".

As little as regressive listening is a symptom of progress in the consciousness of freedom, it could suddenly turn around in art, in unity with society, should it ever leave the road of the always identical. (Adorno 1982: 314)

This hope resonates in Nono's music.

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⁹*Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7: 138. Phillips has observed that:

Adorno is [...] less skeptical about utopian promise in his aesthetic theory. (Phillips 2009: 169)

¹⁰Bürger has noted that Walter Benjamin upheld this concept of criticism (Bürger 1984: 40, 46). This positive view of the task of criticism is also sustained by Adorno as well as Ernst Bloch in *Geist der Utopie* (1918).

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Chapter 23

The Distance of *Presque-rien* Between the Musicology and the Philosophy of Music



Vita Gruodytė

Abstract When discussing the topic of music and philosophy as a musicologist, we cross a threshold and take another direction. Limited by a musicological perspective, we are often tempted to have a reductionist attitude, leaning towards synthesis and simplification. Crossing this threshold to reach the philosophy of music, we head for the quest of the nature of the work and of our own musical experience, in which explanations not only do not reduce the thought, but may continue, at least theoretically, to infinity. This impulse however is very quickly stopped by the *unprovable*, the *unspeakable* or, according to French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch, by “something that does not exist and yet is the most important thing of all the important things, the only one that is worth saying and the only one that in fact we can’t say!” The philosophy of music allows us to seek this *Presque-rien* which precisely separates musicology from the philosophy of music, and which immerses us in the search for the deeper meaning of the work. Faced with which we are like Giacinto Scelsi at his piano, stubbornly hitting a key and waiting for the *quintessence of its essence* or *the meaning of meaning* to appear. Musicology, by saying *Presque-tout*, can never cross the threshold of this *Presque-rien* which is missing in the ultimate understanding of a work, can never elucidate the mystery, *the Charm* which emanates from a musical work and which, in fact, affects us first. Vladimir Jankélévitch himself, who was both a practitioner of music and a philosopher, has followed through his writings, the path between the *grammarian* and the *philosopher*, in other words, has covered this long distance of *Presque-rien*.

23.1 Introduction

To begin with I would like to state that I am not a philosopher of music. I have chosen to write about French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch (1903–1985)—who, as we know, was also a very good musician—not with the aim to summarize his entire musical philosophy, but to examine some of his thoughts on music. It should be

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immediately noted that they relate to a limited period (from 1870 onwards), and almost exclusively to French and Russian music.

Jankélévitch begins his musical approach with quite traditional analyses. Let's consider here the term "traditional" as limited to the framework of the French academic musicology of his time. Then he deviates from common musicological discourse and takes another path. Therefore, the first stimulus for this text was the curiosity to understand the deviation from the musicological discourse, and its progression towards the philosophical one. In other words, it was the will to analyze the change of viewpoint that occurred between his first book dedicated to music, entitled *Gabriel Fauré and His Songs* (1938), and his most philosophical work, which reflects the essence of his thinking about music, *Music and the Ineffable* (1961). Putting myself just between those two texts, between those two landmarks, I tried to understand the distance between those two works, the distance that the philosopher himself travelled, undoubtedly, to find the answers to his own questions, that is to say, the distance of *Presque-rien*, fundamental in his reflections on music.

23.2 Analytical Distance, Philosophical Frustration

Vladimir Jankélévitch:

Is not music supreme reason? Reason is the power to lead ahead and separately several lines of thought, so that they remain in accordance while remaining independent.

In his first book dedicated entirely to music, Jankélévitch analyses the works of Gabriel Fauré with the musicological means and tools of his time. His analysis is chronological, he describes the influences of the composer, he compares his style to that of his contemporaries, he characterizes the poetic affinities of Fauré, the choice of texts, the relationship between music and text, the peculiarities of its musical language. That is to say harmony, rhythm, tonality, musical forms, themes, the moods that reflect the composer's works, even the graphical evolution of his scores, etc.

Throughout this study about Fauré, Jankélévitch keeps a perfect analytical distance—neither too far nor too close—in order to understand and describe the intellectual mechanisms of the composer. Progressively, as if he felt too cramped within this established distance, he expands his field of investigations. Sometimes he comes closer to the subject of his reflection (and admiration!), speaking on Fauré's behalf, for example:

Fauré *does not want* pianists who play with only one hand. (Jankélévitch 1938: 233; italics added—V.G.)

Or:

Fauré *wants* limpid melody and sharp edges; *he knows* that beautiful things are difficult. (Ibid. 244; italics added—V.G.)

And sometimes Jankélévitch distances himself from the composer's scores, in order to take a wider look at his work, in order to "reflect on the wonderful language

that Fauré gave himself, and of which we have just completed the story” (Ibid. 231). The philosopher gives us more abstract, universal conclusions, evoking “obscure laws by which sounds disperse or assemble, attract or repel each other, link and disconnect” (Ibid.). For example:

This gestation, this becoming of chords, doesn't it sound like the rumble that rises from the bowels of the earth at the approach of spring? (Ibid. 234)

Or then again:

Therein lies the deep meaning of this music of water murmuring and chattering from everywhere like enchanted fountains in the walled garden. (Ibid. 240)

Throughout his study of Fauré, Jankélévitch the musicologist also preserves the direction of his analysis, it is *to* the work that he turns, he gives his point of view on the music he deciphers plays or listens to. On the other hand, once he has reached the end, in his conclusion he admits:

Now that we have analyzed in him [Fauré—V.G.] all that can be analyzed, we recognize that we may have missed the essential, this residue which can't be reduced to analysis, which is precisely the inexplicable. The Je-ne-sais-quoi, the ineffable, the perfume of the mind [...] that must be what is called Charm. (Ibid. 248–249)

Thus, it is at the end of his book on Fauré that the first glimpses appear of the upcoming changes. At first, the change of direction between the subject, which performs the analysis, and the analyzed object:

What does this Fauré language want to suggest *to us*? [...] What does [this music] do to act so powerfully *on* [our] imagination? [...] Some images are imperiously suggested *to us*, albeit on another level than the optical space. (Ibid. 237, 239; italics added—V.G.)

And the philosopher speaks about “*our* disappointment” (Ibid. 236). In fact, to try to understand the Charm, the mystery of the work that remains unsolved after his analysis, Jankélévitch turns toward himself, to his own emotions, because once the analysis—as complete as possible—is exhausted, he cannot go further in this direction, since it does not answer the question: “What does this Fauré language want to suggest *to us*?” Jankélévitch starts looking elsewhere than in the work itself. He will say later in *Music and the Ineffable*:

He who seeks music *somewhere* will not find it; our curiosity will be disappointed if we ask some sort of revelation from the anatomy of the musical discourse. (Jankélévitch 1961: 138; italics added—V.G.)

He concludes his book on Fauré's music by evoking the “secret”, for lack of better:

Fauré's music, like modesty itself is a kind of secret: it discourages louts, deaf people and tourists, but it whispers to the ear of those who deserve to hear. (Jankélévitch 1938: 250)

Therefore, at the end of his analysis of Fauré, Jankélévitch finds himself on a threshold between his insufficient musicological discourse and nascent thought on *musicalness* (*le musical*), which incites him to go further, towards the ineffable, towards what he could not tell—although it would have been essential!—about Fauré. Moreover, he finds himself on the same level as Fauré, whom he describes in these words:

Fauré, here as everywhere, stands “on the threshold”, on this indistinct threshold where a barcarolle becomes a lullaby, where the rocking of the waves merges gradually with the heart beat; where the dilemmas separating the spiritual and the physical melt. (Ibid. 210)

23.3 Aesthetical Fusion: From Musicological to Musical

If the structures of music objectify themselves into analyzable and measurable properties, thus giving matter to musicological explanation, they tell us nothing about the essence of music. (Dufourt 2003: 255)

How many researchers, once they have reached the end of their analysis have posed the same question as Jankélévitch in the beginning of his book *Music and the Ineffable*: “What is music?” He poses it by quoting Gabriel Fauré, who was also seeking the “untranslatable point”, an unreal chimera, one that raises us “above that which is” (Jankélévitch 1961: 5).

For Jankélévitch this question actually encompasses several other questions: how to describe posteriorly the emotion that the work aroused while we were listening to it? How to bridge the distance that separates the work as an analyzable structure from the impression that the work leaves in us? How to summarize and freeze by words the changing emotion that was experienced gradually, over time? The philosopher becomes aware of the offset and the abyss between the ipseity of a work and the awareness of an existing but invisible, or rather inaudible, reality. His cult book, *Le Je-ne-sais-quoi et le presque-rien* (*The I-do-not know what and the Almost nothing*), written four years before *Music and the Ineffable*, begins with this concern:

There is something that [...] protests and “remurmurs” in us against the success of reductionist enterprises. [...] There is something unobvious and unprovable to which the inexhaustible, the atmospheric side of spiritual wholes is connected, something the invisible presence of which fills us, the inexplicable absence of which leaves us curiously worried, something which does not exist and yet is the most important thing of all the important things, the only one worthy of being said and the only one in fact that we can’t say! (Jankélévitch 1980: 11)

For Jankélévitch, an analysis can say almost all, but this almost-all is not important, since “who knows “almost-all” knows nothing and less than nothing”, yet “this almost-all is not nothing at all”. Speaking about Fauré, Jankélévitch explains:

What is important in the *Ballad* in F sharp, is not these three motifs that can be analyzed and disassembled [...], what is important is the winged mystery, the “arcanum maximum”, the almost-nothing without which the themes would not be what they are. (Jankélévitch 1961: 133)

The search for this almost-nothing, without which music would not be what it is, becomes the only one prism through which he tries to understand any musical experience, to intellectually accede to its essence, and to find the means that would allow us to speak of what is ineffable. The search for this almost-nothing becomes the path of thought that the philosopher follows from the “analyzed and disassembled”

structures, through the truth of experience that perception delivers, to the extreme border of what is inaudible in music, namely, silence.

In *Music and the Ineffable* Jankélévitch first attempts to define the contours of the object of his thoughts: he speaks of the power that music has over us (“Music acts upon human beings, on their nervous system and their vital processes”; *Ibid.* 7), and he develops its ethics (which “is a verbal mirage”), and its metaphysics (which “is closer to being a mere rhetorical figure”; *Ibid.* 23). He wonders whether music is a language; what it says and why it reiterates. For him “literally incapable of development, music, [...] despite appearances, is incapable of expression” (*Ibid.* 36).

He attempts to identify what the musical idea is, and summarizes that “music means something in general, without implying anything in particular” (*Ibid.* 75). That it is “neither a “language” nor an instrument for communicating concepts, nor a utilitarian means of expression”; it “moves us only because it is in movement” (*Ibid.* 81). And “before sonorous music, an acoustic phenomenon to which the human ear is sensitive, there would be a “supra-sensitive music”, a “prior” music, “perfectly silent and indifferent to any determined expression” (*Ibid.* 37).

Trying to circumscribe by thought the “meaning of meaning” and capture with words the “almost-nothing”, he realizes that hearing alone is insufficient:

By the way, what to listen to? What to watch? The listener thinks he understands something where there is really nothing to understand. The precisely musical object of this attention without matter or application point is unattainable, impalpable, and one might even say non-existent. [...] the attention to music never falls onto the intangible and unattainable centre of musical reality, but deviates more or less to the circumstantial side-lines of this reality. (*Ibid.* 126–127)

The change of direction in Jankélévitch’s text—turning to the observation of his own perception, to the affects that music provokes in him—is accompanied by the search for the perfect distance with the musical work in order to *penetrate* its mystery. To explore this aesthetic space entirely, Jankélévitch therefore moves simultaneously in two opposite directions: on the one hand, he distances himself from what can be “analyzed and disassembled” in the musical work to find analogies with other art forms, to compare it with other experiences. On the other hand, he approaches it to observe it closely as a biologist would (see Fig. 23.1). Since there are no limits in this rapprochement, the philosopher ends up espousing the musical flow, merges with it, empathizes with it, and he realizes that the music belongs to the same temporality that his own existence has.

The musical world does not remain exposed to the mind or proposed to it: music, objective though it wants to be, inhabits our intimacy; we live music, as much as we live time. (*Ibid.* 120)

He realizes that the act of understanding is infinite, is itself a temporal process, that the meaning of meaning, which is the whole, which is Charm, can be received only in the *movement* of listening. That the almost-nothing, the missing part of the almost-all that would allow us to understand the musical work, reaches our perception progressively, along with our own experience of temporality. It is in the frame of the

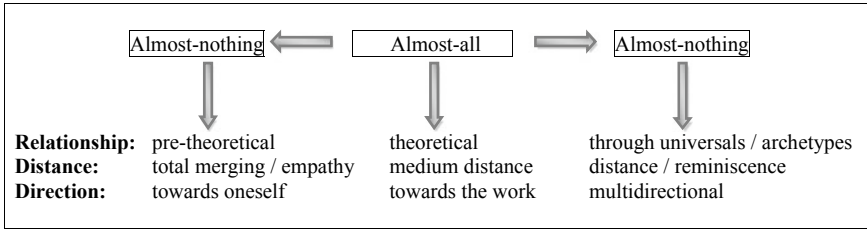


Fig. 23.1 Graphical expression of Jankélévitch's theory

existence of the musical work and of our own experience that the true, changing, continuous and not objectified meaning appears.

23.4 Distance and Direction

There is something strange in the infinite seriousness with which listeners apply themselves to this harmonious meaningless stammering; there is something comical, when we know the frivolity of man and the futile nature of his concerns, in this religious silence they observe in a concert and in this manic fear of being distracted. Distracted from what, please? (Jankélévitch 1961: 126)

Since listening is a distance that one travels *towards* the work, each temporal instant opens up a space in which the meaning of meaning can appear. Jankélévitch tries to capture it in this space, in which lie the close and the distant, in which occur the fusion between the sound material and the previous experiences of the listener; he tries to capture it as a whole encompassing both the most personal and the most universal experiences. His relationship with the music evolves in this minimal space and he realizes that he can just accompany by words this inaudible reality which is revealed not only through hearing, but also through memory, as “a condensed form of our lived time” (Ibid. 123).

The experience of the work becomes his own experience, its analysis the analysis of his own emotions. With the danger, however, to quote Eric Dufour, “that aesthetics might become an aesthetics of the aesthetic subject and not of the aesthetic object” (Dufour 2003: 202). Indeed the difficulty specific to musical aesthetic problems is to base a judgment of aesthetic value on an analysis of the “thing itself” (Ibid. 195). Jankélévitch managed to avoid that danger, since, prior to his philosophical discourse, he always took care to analyze the musical works he spoke about down to the smallest details.

Jankélévitch goes through the music to his own interiority and realizes that behind the sounds hidden structures exist:

Fauré's sixth Nocturne [...] concludes dreamily like sometimes a life ends, emerging from storms and trials in the meditative serenity of a long night. (Jankélévitch 1961: 123)

Behind each of these hidden structures lies what philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, speaking of Marcel Proust, called “an internal act”, since one recognizes an emotion only if it already exists internally (for example, the movement of the waves in Claude Debussy’s *The Sea*, or the entomological whispers in Béla Bartók’s *The Night’s Music*). Here the intimate perception is related to a common experience. Jankélévitch said:

It is not forbidden to hope that by appealing to all the arts and all the analogies taken from all sensations, we will suggest to our mind some intuition of this musical almost-nothing. (Pagani 2013: 122)

From this perspective, coming closer to and moving away from the musical work, become, somehow, two movements of the same act, since the latter reduces the perception of the present and the memory of the past to the same interiority. Distance here plays the main role, since its presence allows an analytical approach, and its absence, an empathic experience.

The structure of the work, the only objectified thing, and the real sounds heard during a performance, form just one part of an indivisible entity, of a whole, of Charm. The act of listening becomes a search for the invisible reality within oneself, and the analysis of the work becomes, to some extent, self-analysis. Jankélévitch says:

In truth—the musical message is not a metaphysical message: at least, it is so only metaphorically [...]. This voice of another order does not come from another world [...]. It comes from the inner time of man, and also from external nature. Silence brings up the latent counterpoint of past and future voices blurred by the tumult of the present. (Jankélévitch 1961: 186)

The more profoundly music affects us, the more mysteriously happens in us that junction between our inner self and the musical *Je-ne-sais-quoi*. We are constantly in the process of customization and appropriation of the musical flow, as if music was a door through which we returned to our own emotional world, as if its structure that can be “analyzed and disassembled” served as a scaffolding for our own experience of this invisible world.

Why does Jankélévitch consider that composers are the best musicologists? Probably because, by composing, they set in motion their own inner experiences condensed in the internal structures. They are more capable of recognizing them in the composition processes of others. French composer Hugues Dufourt has rightly observed that:

Music expresses the dynamism of the constructing subject for which movement is a mental synthesis, a “synthesis of apprehension”. (Dufourt 2003: 254)

For Jankélévitch listening is at each moment a process of reminiscence, which brings memories back to the present moment, and at the same time, it is a prophecy, since it opens up other experiences. In other words, a permanent ebb and flow. For him, “the sense of music applies only to retrospective prophecies; music means something only in the future perfect” (Jankélévitch 1961: 81).

The present is brought into the past by a milligram of nostalgia [...] which makes of all perception a memory of the present [...] a present almost past! (Ibid. 53)

The Charm can be felt right in the moment of this *present almost past*, but the feeling itself can be described indefinitely. Jankélévitch said:

Therefore there is nothing to say, and yet there is much to say, until the end of time, about musical emotion, about this almost-nothing which one's personal past, moral refraction, arts education color with unpredictable nuances. This is why we can say at will that music expresses nothing or expresses the inexpressible at will. (Jankélévitch 1980: 52–53)

Music is ineffable, since it refers to something it is not, but is definable to infinity, since what it refers to is infinite. One cannot understand the wholeness of the musical work, which to Jankélévitch is “neither a language [...] nor an instrument [...] nor a means [...]” (Jankélévitch 1961: 81). The wholeness can be seen only as a Charm. One could say that the musical work each time reveals a different facet according to one's perspective and direction. If you look with a critical distance, the work is an analyzable structure; if it is viewed as an artefact of historical continuity, it is also a social phenomenon; if we observe our own emotions, it is a personal experience; when compared with other experiences, it is an archetype, etc. We can observe it from a distance, or close up, look towards it or from inside it. One could also say that all those points of view are neither a homogeneous nor isotropic aesthetical field in which the musical work exists simultaneously in all its aspects. It is in this multitude of meanings that contemporary musicology has since progressed.

23.5 From Description to Co-creation

Even though one did not know that Vladimir Jankélévitch was a musician, one would be certain of it only by hearing him speak; simply by the way his sentences are linked to one another, as are interlinked and intertwined the themes in a sonata. (Madaule 1978: 7)

What Jankélévitch applies to musical analysis is not the rules of “finished things”, but those of living organisms, which never cease developing:

It is not about defining or palpating with one's fingers that musical almost-nothing, but rather remaking it with the one who made it [...]. (Jankélévitch 1961: 148)

In his interview with Béatrice Berlowitz, the philosopher explains this idea more in detail:

Writing books on music is possibly to give oneself the presence of the process by which we recreate this emotion at all times [...]. That is why one should find a musical way of writing about music. If one criticizes me for an abuse of metaphors, for the analogies or correspondences borrowed from other arts and other sensory registers, it is may be for want of understanding this: we should not write ‘on’ music, but ‘with’ music and musically, remain complicit of its mystery. (Jankélévitch and Berlowitz 1987: 292–293)

Temporality—the main philosopher’s tool of thinking about music—allowed him to appropriate the creative act: as well as the interpretation, the analysis of the musical work becomes an act of creation. Jankélévitch said:

The creator, the performer, who is an active re-creator, the auditor, who is a fictional re-creator, all three participate in a kind of magical operation: the performer interacts with the first operator by making the work actually exist [...] and the auditor, the tertiary re-creator, cooperates in his imagination [...] with the first two. (Jankélévitch 1961: 99)

For the composer the meaning in music forms itself in the process of creation, for the performer and the listener, during the performance: here and there, it emanates from ‘self-making’, that is to say, from a work evolving over time (Ibid. 41). Jankélévitch emphasizes here the importance of active participation that is also found in the thoughts of philosopher Philippe Fauré-Fremiet, a nephew of Gabriel Fauré, who also largely influenced Jankélévitch. For example, Fauré-Fremiet writes:

We could, in fact, define all knowledge as recreating a participation. (Fauré-Fremiet 1948: 18)

For Jankélévitch, the musical work is like a meeting point between creation and perception, where perception is also creation, and therefore, by an imaginary symmetry, one could say that creation is also perception. The “analyzed and disassembled” structure of the musical work becomes a bridge between two banks, and must be considered as a means for its crossing. It is probably for this reason that Jankélévitch who, as already mentioned, analyzed all the musical works he spoke about, gradually ceased to evoke this objectivity, since the two subjectivities that it brings up (creation and perception) became in his eyes more important, more real, more present. Therefore, the analysis is no longer an analysis of the *work*, neither is it an “analysis” at all, but just a reflection about music itself, a reflection “on the wonderful language that Fauré gave himself, and of which we have just completed the story” (Jankélévitch 1938: 231).

Since the process of understanding music espouses the temporality of the musical work, it must also, like music, be born from the original silence and end with the final one. And since, according to the philosopher, “before sonorous music” there is supposedly a “supra-sensitive music”, a “prior” music, “perfectly silent and indifferent to any determined expression”, there is also therefore a “pre-theoretical” relationship with the musical work. Starting from a purely musicological analysis Jankélévitch somehow turns back up to the original act, the one which gives birth to the work, and therefore, to the genesis of the meaning of meaning. Does the philosopher try by means of thought to reach the origin of the creative act, to unravel the mystery that music is in general and in particular as a work of art? Anyway, starting from the “analyzed and disassembled” structure he arrives at the extremities, to the ineffable, where theoretical tools no longer function.

23.6 Conclusions. The *Almost-Nothing*

In the last chapter of *Music and the Ineffable*, Jankélévitch describes all forms of silence, all cases of its existence. He tries to awaken in us, the readers, the memory of something similar that we may have experienced ourselves. With this thorough description, he evokes not only the different facets of musical silence experienced by himself, but also its analogies described by other authors. The list is long: silence here is the “backdrop”, the “tabula rasa of original nescience”, “the vacuum of chora and of homogeneous space” (Jankélévitch 1961: 161), “the living oasis of music and poetry” (Ibid. 163). “an antecedent silence and a consequent silence that are the one to the other as alpha and omega are” (Ibid. 164). “the initial silence as a promise and the terminal silence as a nothing” (Ibid. 165), “the double silence” (Ibid. 164), the silence that penetrates music from everywhere: “from silence to silence, through silence” (Ibid. 164). “the silence quieter than the soul” (Ibid. 165), “the insular silence” (Ibid. 167), “the music that breathes in the oxygen of silence” (Ibid. 168), “the micro-silences, the silences timed inside silence that ventilate the continuous melody” (Ibid. 168). “the silence which is the fermentation of thought” (Ibid. 169); “silence as the relative or partial non-being, and not absolute nothingness” (Ibid. 170), “the midday silence” (Ibid. 170), “the panic silence” (Ibid. 171). “the silence that relieves us from deafening chatter, as words relieve us from overwhelming silence” (Ibid. 171). “the silence that allows us to listen to the melodious silence” (Ibid. 172), “silence no longer tacit but merely taciturn” (Ibid. 174), “the liminal instant from which silence becomes music” (Ibid. 177). “the silence that prepares us if not to know the truth, at least to receive it” (Ibid. 179), “the silence that allows us to hear another voice, a voice speaking another language, a voice coming from elsewhere” (Ibid. 185). “the conducting silence, the transmitter of innuendo hidden in the heard thing” (Ibid. 188), the silence “that is not a non-being, but something other than being” (Ibid. 190).

We have the impression that Jankélévitch develops by words all his experiences, musical and not musical, just to be sure that among them there will be those that we, the readers will recognize as our own experiences, find in our memory and relive while reading the text. Indeed, his writing has musical features: there is a theme (silence) and variations; there are patterns, repetitions, remakes and new aesthetic territories, which, as in a musical work, awaken our curiosity. In other words, there is reminiscence and prophecy. In *Music and the Ineffable* Jankélévitch’s thinking is composed as a continuous variation, in which the most important sentence of all this text goes almost unnoticed. The one, precisely, that relates to Garbiel Fauré:

Muted in its entirety, Fauré’s music is itself a silence and an interrupted noise, a silence interrupting noise: silence is no longer like nothingness, an object of anxiety; it is a haven for meditation and quietude. (Ibid. 167)

This sentence is presented here not just as the result of a long reflection, but as a fleeting appearance, presented as a contrast with Debussy’s music in which, conversely, “music emerges from silence” (Ibid. 167). This sentence comes a little by surprise, but it carries in itself all the weight of a long path of the philosopher’s

thought, beginning with his first analyses of Fauré's music. This sentence summarizes what Jankélévitch the musicologist was unable to say at the end of his first book on Fauré. Just by brushing against our attention, it gives us a glimpse of the "secret", of the "winged mystery". What Fauré's music is in its indivisible wholeness, of what is its Charm. It also reveals the long distance that the philosopher has travelled from the "analyzed and disassembled" structures to reach this imperceptible almost-nothing lying just at the extreme limit of the perceptible.

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Chapter 24

Mikhail Gnessin on the Essence of Music and Russian Music



Maria Karachevskaya

Abstract The article focuses on a little-known piece of research *On the Essence of Music and Russian Music* written by composer and musicologist Mikhail Gnessin in 1915. The ideas expressed in this research have never been the subject of serious scientific discussion. Gnessin presents his views on the nature and content of music, examines concepts of “musical time” and “musical space”, “movement” in music, whilst also investigating the connection between the way a composer thinks and musical form, and finally, musical and “nonmusical” properties.

24.1 Introduction

Mikhail Fabianovich Gnessin (1887–1957) was a composer, musicologist, professor at the Moscow and Leningrad¹ conservatories and the Gnessin Institute, and a public figure. He mainly wrote chamber vocal and chamber instrumental compositions (the vocal collections *From Contemporary Poetry*, Op. 5, 16 and 22; *Jewish Songs*, Op. 32 and 37; music to *The Story of Red-Headed Mottele*, Op. 44; *Trio In Memory of Our Perished Children*, Op. 63; *Sonata-Fantasia* for piano quartet, Op. 64, and others), orchestral pieces (*From Shelley*, Op. 4; *Vrubel*, Op. 8; and *Symphonic Monument of 1905–1917*, Op. 40), incidental and film music. He was a Doctor of Art History and the author of approximately 200 academic articles and treatises.

Mikhail Gnessin is one of the outstanding representatives of Russian art of the first half of the 20th century. His academic works capture many of the trends in early 20th century music life, addressing the most diverse aspects of culture, aesthetics, music history and theory, education, philosophy and psychology. Many of Gnessin’s thoughts were original and innovative. For example, he, along with Leo Mazel’ and

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Viktor Zuckerman, founded the Soviet school of holistic analysis.² Gnessin also created the original theory of musical reading—a special type of recitation to music similar to Arnold Schoenberg’s *Sprechgesang*.³

Gnessin placed special emphasis on studying the phenomenon of Russian music, in particular the oeuvre of the *Mighty Handful* group of Russian composers—Mily Balakirev, Modest Mussorgsky, Alexander Borodin, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and César Cui. In his numerous articles, Gnessin examined the stylistic characteristics of the works of the Russian school composers, as well as various aspects of Russian musical culture of the 19th–20th centuries.⁴ Many of them, directly or indirectly, address the art of music. However, his article “On the Essence of Music and Russian Music”, published in the journal *Musical Contemporary* in 1915, affords the most detailed analysis of this topic.

The article (Gnessin 1915) is not only one of Gnessin’s outstanding treatises. It also predates many achievements in musicology, aesthetics and philosophy of the following decades. In it, he addresses important issues about the place of music in

²Mazel’ and Zuckerman described their ideas in the following studies:

- Mazel’, Leo. 1937. *Фантазия f-moll Шопена: Опыт анализа* [Chopin’s F minor Fantasy: An Experiment in Analysis]. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo;
- Zuckerman, Viktor. 1965. Целостный анализ музыкальных произведений и его методика [The Holistic Analysis of Musical Works and Its Methodology]. In *Интонация и музыкальный образ* [Intonation and Musical Image], Boris Iarustovskii (ed.): 264–320, Moscow: Muzyka;
- Mazel’, Leo. 1966. Эстетика и анализ [Aesthetics and Analysis]. In *Советская музыка* [Soviet Music] 12: 20–30, Moscow;
- Mazel’, Leo & Zuckerman, Viktor. 1967. *Анализ музыкальных произведений: элементы музыки и методика анализа малых форм* [Analysis of Musical Works: Elements of Music and a Methodology of Analysis of Small Forms]. Moscow: Muzyka; and others.

³Gnessin’s writings on the theory of musical reading, for example:

- Gnessin, Mikhail. 1921. *Предисловие к “Сочинениям для голоса (музыкальное чтение и пение) и фортепиано”* [Preface to “Music for Voice (Musical Reading and Singing) and Piano”]. Moscow: Proizvodstvenny Podotdel Muzykal’nogo Otdela N.K.P.;
- Gnessin, Mikhail. 2008. Теория музыкального чтения. (8 мая 1922 г.) [The Theory of Musical Reading (May 8, 1922)]. In *Вс. Мейерхольд и Мих. Гнесин. Собрание документов* [Vsevolod Meyerhold and Mikhail Gnessin. Collection of Documents], Irina Krivosheeva & Sergei Konaev (eds.): 62–63. Moscow: GITIS;
- Gnessin, Mikhail. 2008. О музыкальном чтении в драме (Сводная копия текстов М.Ф. Гнесина, составленная Е.Ю. Кистьяковской) [On the Musical Reading. A Summary of Gnessin’s Texts Compiled by E. Kistiakovskaya]. In *Вс. Мейерхольд и Мих. Гнесин. Собрание документов* [Vsevolod Meyerhold and Mikhail Gnessin. Collection of Documents], Irina Krivosheeva & Sergei Konaev (eds.): 116–137, Moscow: GITIS; and others.

⁴Gnessin wrote about Russian music in the following studies:

- Gnessin, Mikhail. 1918. *Интернационализм и русская музыка* [Internationalism and Russian Music]. In *Искусство* [The Art] 1: 11–12; 3: 12–14. Rostov-on-Don;
- Gnessin, Mikhail. 1919. Скрибин и колокольный звон в России [Scriabin and the Bell-Ringing in Russia]. In *Лучи Солнца* [The Rays of the Sun] 7: 39–47, Novocheerkassk;

the classification of the arts, its characteristics and tasks, concepts of musical time and space, categories of movement and rest, and many more.

24.2 Gnessin’s Article “On the Essence of Music and Russian Music”

The author wrote this article to defend the right to exist of the Russian composer school from the second half of the 19th century and protect it from the attacks of Herman Laroche, one of the best known Russian critics at that time.⁵

Laroche was a follower of the eminent German Bohemian music critic, Eduard Hanslick, and shared his ideas of “absolute music” expressed in Hanslick’s well-known book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (*On the Musically Beautiful*, 1854). Laroche accused Russian music (and the symphonic oeuvre of the *Mighty Handful* composers in particular) of being program music. He considered this to be the “wrong” path of development. According to the critic, the orchestral works of the *Mighty Handful* suffered from a whole series of so-called shortcomings, that is, qualities that were supposedly not inherent in “true” and “absolute” music—emphasis on a literary theme (program), quotations of folk songs, the composers’ inability to write their own original themes, too much attention to detail, lack of integrity of musical form, and so on.

In his article, Gnessin set out to analyze the art of music to find out if the characteristics Laroche listed are indeed alien to the art of music, that is, are not the true tasks of music.

24.2.1 The Key Aspects of the Article

The key aspects of Gnessin’s article are as follows:

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- Gnessin, Mikhail. 1948; 1949; 1950. О русском симфонизме (Эпический симфонизм и эпическая музыкально-сценическая драматургия) [On Russian Symphonism (Epic Symphonism and Epic Musical-Theatrical Drama)]. In *Советская музыка* [*Soviet Music*] 6: 44–50; 3: 50–54; 1: 78–82, Moscow;
 - Gnessin, Mikhail. 1956. *Мысли и воспоминания о Н.А. Римском-Корсакове* [Thoughts and Memories About N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov]. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Muzykal’noe Izdatel’stvo;
 - Gnessin, Mikhail. 2005. Анатолий Константинович Лядов. Публикация и комментарии М.А. Карачевской [Anatolii Konstantinovich Liadov. Publication and comments by Mariya Karachevskaya]. In *Из личных архивов профессоров Московской консерватории*, вып. 2 [From the Personal Archives of Professors of the Moscow Conservatory. Vol. 2], Galina Grigorieva (ed.): 132–164, Moscow; and others.

⁵See Laroche (1913).

- music as a temporal and spatial art;
- “musical time” and “musical space”;
- “movement” in music;
- image in music and image in the plastic arts;
- “constructive” composers and “emotional” composers;
- musical and “nonmusical” properties.

First, Gnessin addresses the fundamentals—the place of music among the other arts and its characteristic properties. He examines music in four classifications of the arts according to their different characteristics:

- (1) spatial-temporal;
- (2) visual-audial;
- (3) impressionable-emotional;
- (4) figurative-constructive (or mimetic-nonmimetic).

According to Gnessin, music, which is usually contrasted with the visual and spatial arts in all the classifications, in fact has a much broader range of properties. The author calls these properties “the boundaries of musical art”. When examining each of these classifications, Gnessin refutes the precepts developed about the properties of music, from which, in his opinion, “[arises an] incorrect assessment of compositions regarding whether they correspond or do not correspond to the art of music” (Gnessin 1915: 18).

Gnessin primarily refutes the claim that music is a temporal art. The author distinguishes between ontological time and musical time, which are not identical. Units of time in real life and in music are different. Time is a measurement of minutes and hours (it is a *quantitative* attribute). While music is a combination of strong and weak beats (it is a *qualitative* attribute). Gnessin notes that the measurement of time in music is provisional:

It could just as accurately be called a measurement of space. [...] music abides neither in time nor in space, but in something *in between*. (Ibid. 18)

24.2.2 *Of Musical Time, Space and Movement*

It is worth noting that Gnessin designates the very important concepts of *musical time* and *musical space* in his article. The study of these categories in Russian science is primarily associated with Aleksei Losev (1893–1988), a prominent philosopher and culturologist. Nevertheless, Gnessin addresses this issue twelve years prior to the publication of Losev’s well-known work *Музыка как предмет логики* (*Music as a Subject of Logic*, 1927), in which the author gives his interpretation of musical time and space. Thus, Gnessin can be called one of the first in Russian musicology to address this topic.

Gnessin goes on to elaborate on what “movement” is in music. He notes that “movement” usually implies a shift in the parts of musical form, which is incorrect.

He compares a musical composition with a certain entity that moves in a very strange way:

First a body part appears—say, the head (*da capo*), then the neck and back appear, while the head disappears; and then the neck and back disappear, and, finally, we see the tail (*coda*), and then everything disappears. What were we seeing—an entity or movement? [...] [Essentially] there was no movement, but we saw now one, now a second, now a third body part of this entire entity. (Gnessin 1915: 19)

In this way, the idea of music as a temporal art is primarily based on the *performed reproduction* of a musical piece. However, according to Gnessin, movement cannot be considered only a shift in the parts of a musical composition (he illustrates this thought with another example—he compares a musical composition with railway tracks, and the performer with a train moving along these tracks). Gnessin believes that this only creates an *illusion* of movement, while in fact:

The musical piece is not the railway tracks, but the place where the train ('the performer') is moving, and this place exists irrelevant of us [the listeners and performers—M.K.]. (Ibid. 19–20)

Thus, Gnessin concludes that a musical composition exists beyond time, space, the performer's interpretation and the listener's perception. It is worth noting that he essentially distinguishes between the *object* of art (the musical composition), which in and of itself is not going anywhere, and the *artistic image* of this object of art, i.e. the emotional impression the music being listened to makes on the viewer or listener, which takes time to emerge.

Gnessin goes on to draw an interesting analogy between music and the plastic arts (sculpture, painting, architecture, and so on). He notes that in aesthetics it is customary to think of musical images being "unclear", "indeterminate" and "vague", in contrast to the clear, precise, and embossed images in sculpture and painting. According to Gnessin, musical "material" (that is, sound) in no way differs from the material used in sculpture (for example, clay). Both of these materials have the same qualities—"malleability" and the ability to be shaped. Musical material is malleable because a musical theme can be modified—lengthened, shortened, transposed, varied, and so on. The ability of musical material to be shaped is confirmed by the very existence of musical forms. Thus, Gnessin comes to the conclusion that musical images are *a special kind of plastic image*.

The main thrust behind the article being examined is whether music is an "absolute", pure art, or whether it is a mimetic art. In other words, is music capable of portraying any kind of vital process or depicting different human emotions, or is music simply a sound construction? Gnessin's opinion on this is very interesting. He does not claim the priority of one or the other opinion, but tries to ascertain the advantages of both. According to Gnessin, there are two different types of composers:

- (1) "constructive" composers; and
- (2) "emotional" composers.

These two types differ in their basic technique of creative thinking.

- (1) “Constructive” composers are primarily interested in building musical form; they have a good idea of the entire structure of the future composition (from beginning to end) even before they notate it on music paper. The musical themes and images of this type of composer, according to Gnessin, are often inexpressive, schematic, and bland.
- (2) “Emotional” composers, on the other hand, first create separate vibrant and expressive melodies, which are very interesting musically in themselves (Gnessin calls them “emotional outbursts”). However, this type of composer finds it difficult to build an integrated musical construction and incorporate their musical images into a specific form.

Based on the example of the two types of composers, Gnessin essentially shows how a musical composition emerges in a composer’s mind. He comes to the conclusion that every artist has his own idea of the nature, essence and aim of musical art. For some, music is primarily an “absolute”, pure and “constructive” (or even “formal”) art that has no emotions or inner turmoil. For others, music is primarily a way of expressing human feelings and portraying natural phenomena and true-life situations. Thus, the nature of music is *ambiguous*—it can equally be both an absolute and a mimetic art.

Based on the claim that music is of an ambiguous nature, Gnessin defines the so-called boundaries of musical art mentioned at the beginning of his article. According to the author, music has “primary” and “secondary” properties. A “primary” property of music is its musical form. A secondary (or “nonmusical”) property is its ability to express different human emotions and states of mind. Thus, music goes beyond the boundaries of musical art as such and comes closer to other types of art (poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture). Examples of this synthesis of the arts can also be found in Gnessin’s own oeuvre. In the 1910s, he wrote a whole series of compositions in the technique of so-called musical reading, a type of recitation to music where singing comes as close as possible to the spoken word.

So, according to Gnessin, the art of music does not imply only primary or only secondary properties predominating in a musical composition, but their *essential combination*. Some composers place primary properties in the foreground, while others put the emphasis on secondary properties.

The main conclusion Gnessin comes to is that:

By recognizing the existence of primary and secondary properties in music (which are equally inherent in the art of music), it is possible to eliminate several misunderstandings regarding the ‘authenticity’ of a particular work of art. (Ibid. 26)

Thus, Gnessin returns to the dispute with Hanslick and Laroche and refutes their opinion that all program music (and primarily the compositions of Russian composers of the second half of the 19th century) is “untenable” and does not correspond to the essence and nature of music as an “absolute” art. According to Gnessin, Hanslick and Laroche’s arguments about the “authenticity” of a musical composition based solely on an analysis of its primary properties are unjustified.

24.3 Conclusions

Gnessin's article "On the Essence of Music and Russian Music" addresses a wide range of questions and issues relating to musicology, aesthetics, philosophy, and psychology that have subsequently been examined by many scientists. For example, the concepts of time and space in music and other forms of art, as well as their interconnection and interpenetration, were the topic of lively discussions throughout the 20th century and are still pertinent today. Gnessin's article is an outstanding example of the first scientific musical and philosophical treatises of this kind in Russian musicology.

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Chapter 25

Reflections About the Essence of Music in a Special Context: Music Reviews by Yuri Ofrosimov and Ludmila Landau in Berlin in the 1920s



Anna Fortunova

Abstract In this paper, some reviews about music theater published in Berlin in the 1920s and 1930s, are explored from the point of their topicality for contemporary humanities. They were written by Russian émigrés of the first wave Yuri Ofrosimov (1894–1967) and Ludmila Landau (1878–after 1936), published in a Russian newspaper called *Rul* and show their disappointment and indignation about the ‘mechanical’ connection between the essence of Russian culture and context in which it was set in particular performances. The author concentrates on ideas of these texts, as well as on their time and cultural context.

25.1 Introduction

Although they were not professional philosophers, Yuri Ofrosimov, a writer born in 1894 in Moscow, and Ludmila Landau, a singer born in 1878 in St. Petersburg, both wrote about philosophical questions. For example, they wrote about the essence of music being such an integral part of mankind’s life. They came as Russian émigrés of the first wave at the beginning of the 1920s to Berlin and both wrote music reviews in *Rul*—one of the most important newspapers of the so called Russia abroad.

Before analyzing articles by Ofrosimov and Landau it is necessary important to state the context in which they were living and writing. At the beginning of the 1920s, about 350 thousand Russian emigrants sought shelter in Berlin making up about one sixth of the amount of the Russian emigration of the first wave and almost one tenth of the population of the city. A real “city within a city” formed in Berlin. It had its own schools, libraries, restaurants, salons, conflicting political groups and intense cultural life. In 1922, in his review of a concert by conductor Sergey Kusevitsky, Paul Schwers, a German journalist and copy editor of one of the leading musical newspapers, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, called Berlin angrily and, ironically, “the second capital of Russia”.

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Berlin ist halt die zweite Hauptstadt von Russland geworden!

[“Berlin has become the second capital of Russia, it just has”!] (Schwers 1922: 832)

As we can see, the critic was displeased about the amount of Russians in Berlin—and he was far from being the only person who had such feelings. From their side, Russian critics were displeased as well, and one of the main reasons was, in their opinion, a misunderstanding of the essence of Russian culture and Russian music in particular. In this paper, three examples are explored—*New Cranberry* (1927) and *Cranberry Culture* (1932) by Ofrosimov and *Boris Godunov* (1924) by Landau.

25.2 Yuri Ofrosimov’s Reviews *New Cranberry* (1927) and *Cranberry Culture* (1932)

Example 1: Yuri Ofrosimov: New Cranberry (1927) (Ofrosimov 1927: 5–6), English translation¹

A good, old acquaintance of mine once intended to write a little operetta about Polynesian life. It happened in old Russia, my acquaintance was Russian—and he had no hope that his little operetta would become known beyond the borders of his hometown, let alone abroad. He was not a professional composer of operettas, but merely a good musician. Nonetheless, he studied Polynesian geography, customs, and traditions before he proceeded to write. He did not do this because he feared that some Polynesian viewer within the audience would be offended by it, but merely because his diligence and sense of self-worth demanded it.

The famous composer of operettas Kálmán, whose little operettas are well-known in our far-off backwater province, has written a new play—*Die Zirkusprinzessin* (*The Circus Princess*). The first two acts are set in Petersburg,² prior to the revolution, and most of the little operetta’s protagonists are Russian; here are their names: Grand Duke Sergius Vladimir³; Count Zakuskin⁴; Countess Fedora⁵—naturally, there’s some progress in comparison to Fall’s little operetta that was staged three years ago starring three sisters: Petrushka, Verushka and the youngest, Babushka, all with emphasis on the second syllable; apparently, we have to take comfort from this little bit of progress. The Grand Duke [Sergius Vladimir] habitually drinks vodka and [...] washes it down with champagne. This happens as follows: twelve lackeys stand in rank and file, one bears a cup of vodka, another a glass of champagne and so forth. The Grand Duke is only content when he reaches the end of the row of lackeys. Of course, even his friend, an outspoken Viennese man—since Vienna is Europe!—cannot stand this procedure and stealthily disposes of his drinks, sometimes in his collar, sometimes in his shirt breast [...].

¹Russian texts were translated by Anna Fortunova and Jan-Erik Ella.

²Now St. Petersburg.

³There is no such name as “Sergius” in Russian, and no double names, either. A correct variation would be: “Sergey Vladimirovich”.

⁴Approximately: Count “Nibbles”.

⁵A very rare, in this context funny-sounding, and for a countess almost impossible name.

Let's assume it's intended as poetic hyperbole, but there are also the couplets, a Charleston with a distinctly Russian coloration: "Danya, Vanya, Vanyushka",⁶ and the Balalaika. Apparently, the author intended to introduce Russian names. What follows is a vast plethora of words, including harmonica and "Ural", not without the poetic rhyme on "plural"⁷ [...]. Much more amenable than the Charleston is the following aria: "Oh my dearly beloved Ivan, lying all day on the divan..." [...] The little operetta's subject is relentlessly romantic [...].

Even if we ignore the ill-fitting "Russian-ness", the newest operetta is not one of Kálmán's better creations; the first two acts are musically repetitive in terms of their melody and their devices, seizing upon earlier [operettas of his]. He plainly plagiarizes himself. Even worse, the plot is drawn out—the three-act structure consumes three and a half hours!

[...] Everything said about Kálmán's operetta as such must not be applied to the actual production in the Metropol-Theater as such. The theatre supplied the operetta with excellent actors and musicians [...] Shortly summed up, the production can be called brilliant—in sharp contrast to the operetta itself. Maybe this is the reason why it prompts obvious discontentment: how can the same city that stages Chekhov's drama with such detailed nuances present such nonsense about "Russian life"—even if only in the form of an operetta?

Example 1: Yuri Ofrosimov: New Cranberry (1927), Russian original

Один мой добрый знакомый задумал как-то написать оперетку из полинезийской жизни. Дело происходило в старой России, знакомый был русский—он не надеялся, что оперетка выйдет за границу; даже больше того[,] что она выйдет за черту родного города. Не был он опереточным профессионалом—был просто хорошим музыкантом. Однако, перед тем, как приступить к работе—основательно проштудировал географию и быт полинезийцев. Не потому, конечно, что боялся ударить лицом в грязь перед каким-нибудь неожиданно зашедшим на спектакль гостем из Полинезии, а просто из врожденной добросовестности, деликатности перед самим собой.—

—Знаменитый опереточный композитор Кальман, чьи оперетки известны и глухой нашей провинции, написал новое произведение—"Цирковая принцесса". Два первых действия протекают в Петербурге, в дореволюционное время, большинство героев оперетки—русские; вот их имена: великий князь Sergius Wladimir; граф Закускин; графиня Федора—правда, есть прогресс по сравнению с шедшей года три назад опереткой Фалля, где фигурировали три сестры: Петрушка, Верушка и младшая—Бабушка, все с ударением на втором слоге; очевидно, этим прогрессом приходится пока утешаться...

Великий князь Sergius Wladimir имеет привычку пить водку, а закусывать... шампанским. Делается это таким образом: выстраиваются в ряд двенадцать лакеев, у одного на подносе—чарка водки, у другого—бокал шампанского и т. д. Великий князь не успокаивается, пока не кончается вся вереница лакеев. Конечно, даже его приятель, разбитной венец—ведь Вена Европа!—не в состоянии вынести подобной экзекуции и выливает свои порции потихоньку то себе за ворот, то—за манишку...

Предположим, что это—поэтическая гипербола; но вот куплеты—чарльстон на мотив с русским оттенком: "Danja, Wanja, Wanjuschka—Und die Balalaika ..."—в первой строке автор, по-видимому, захотел запечатлеть русские имена. Далее следует совершенно невообразимый набор слов, среди которых и гармоника, и "Ural" не без поэтического шика рифмуемый с "Plural"... Гораздо приятнее

⁶"Danya" is a diminutive of "Daniil", "Vanya" and "Vanyushka" derive from "Ivan".

⁷The rhyme necessitates a mispronunciation of "Ural", since it won't fit with the following "plural", otherwise.

чарльстона следующая ария: “Ach du, mein heißgeliebter Iwan—Den ganzen Tag du liegst auf Diwan” ... для остроты с ударением на первом слоге...

Сюжет оперетки безжалостно романтичен [...].

Даже отбросив не совсем удачную “русскость”—последняя оперетта Кальмана не принадлежит к числу его шедевров; два первых—музыкальных—акта[—]повторение прежнего в смысле мелодии и в смысле приемов—например, рассказ под музыку, которым здесь Кальман положительно злоупотребляет. К тому же действие неимоверно растянуто—трехактное представление длится три с половиной часа! [...] Впрочем, и все сказанное о произведении Кальмана отнюдь не относится к его постановке в Метрополь-театре. Театр обставил оперетку первоклассными силами [...] Одним словом, постановку—в противоположность самой оперетке—можно назвать блестящей. Может быть, поэтому и естественное недоумение: как может в том же городе, где с такими нюансами показывается чеховская драма, преподноситься подобная галиматья из “русской жизни”—хотя бы и в опереточном виде.

Example 2: Yuri Ofrosimov: Cranberry Culture (1932) (Ofrosimov 1932: 3), English translation

How naive are we if we think, that our ten-year-exile could serve as a protection against further attempts at cultivating cranberries? As a never before seen, rare flower, it unfolded in Berlin’s centre, in the “Admiralspalast”, and it gathered thousands of viewers who enjoyed seeing Peter [the Great],⁸ a drunken, savage beast, and Menshikov,⁹ a lover of the female sex, throwing dice in order to win Katharina,¹⁰ dressed in some half-Hungarian, half-Ukrainian costume.

Katharina first falls for Peter, then for Menshikov, who is sitting in a bar in St. Petersburg and planning a conspiracy against Peter with Masepa¹¹ and his Cossacks. Katharina joins the conspiracy, which turns out to be so successful that Peter flees to unknown parts; the people, freed from tyranny, offer the crown to Menshikov, who in turn passes it on to Katharina in a noble gesture... This “historical excursion” is called a “Russian ballad” (to call it an operetta, which would have been half as bad, was apparently beneath the composer’s dignity), and is gifted with a thoughtful essay in the playbill, which reflects upon the solution to some problems ...

Yes, what we see on the stage at the “Admiralspalast” is genuinely abominable; abominable not only because of the lurid fantasy of its author, but also because of the poor music accompanying the “ballad”; horrid, because the set pieces for this nonsense were created by the highly talented Ernst Stern, and because it stars one of the great miracles of the stage in our age, Gitta Alpár, that rarest, extraordinary presence on the stage: this superlative praise applies both to her singing and to her dramatic presentation, her physical presence and even to her dancing. It seems that Alpár excels in all areas of scenic creation, and is destined to dominate the stage and the audience alike; she replaced play-acting with genuine life, and her art is the epitome of naturalness.

And this miracle is brought into contact with this mindless gaudiness in the shape of “Katharina”. There’s nothing left to say for the critic, and it is utterly unbearable, from a human perspective.

⁸Peter I, the Great (1672–1725), Russian Czar (1682) and Emperor (1721).

⁹Aleksandr Menshikov (1673–1729), statesman and field commander.

¹⁰Catherine I (1684–1727), wife of Peter the Great (1712), Russian Empress (1724–1727).

¹¹Ivan Mazepa (1687–1708), hetman of the Ukrainian Cossacks.

Example 2: Yuri Ofrosimov: Cranberry Culture (1932), Russian original

Как мы бываем наивны, когда думаем, что десятилетнее наше пребывание в эмиграции может служить гарантией от дальнейших попыток культивирования клюквы. Совершенно небывалым, махрово-редкостным цветком распустилась она в центре Берлина, в Адмиральс-Паласт, собирая тысячи зрителей, любующихся тем, как Петр—пьяный, дикий зверь—разыгрывает с Меньшиковым—любовником женственного типа—в кости Екатерину в каком-то полувенгерском, полуукраинском костюме. Екатерина достается Петру, и тогда Меньшиков, сидя в петербургском трактире с Мазепой и его казаками—учиняют заговор против Петра. К заговору присоединяется и Екатерина и протекает он до того успешно, что Петр исчезает неизвестно куда и ликующий народ, освобожденный от тирана, предлагает Меньшикову корону, которую тот благородным жестом возлагает на Екатерину... Этот “исторический экскурс” называется “русской балладой” (до оперетты, что было бы еще с полбеды, автор, очевидно, считал снизиться весьма недостойным) и снабжен в программе глубокомысленной статьей, где говорится о разрешении как-то проблем...

Да, поистине ужасно то, что показано на сцене Адмиральс-Паласта; ужасно не только по бурной фантазии автора, но и по убогонькой музычке, сопровождающей “балладу”; ужасно потому, что к этой белиберде делает декорации талантливый Эрнст Штерн и выступает в ней—сценическое чудо наших дней Гита Альпар, явление на подмостках редчайшее, исключительное: превосходная степень одинаково применима и к пению Альпар, и к ее драматической игре, к ее сценическому, исполненному обаяния, облику, и даже—к ее танцам. Кажется, что Альпар соединила в себе воедино все виды сценического творчества и призвана целиком заполнять собой сцену и владеть зрителем; игру на сцене она заменила жизнью и ее искусство—верх безыскусственности.

И вот это чудо соприкасается в “Екатерине” с безвкусицей самого неразборчивого свойства. Критику здесь сказать нечего, а по-человечески все это просто невнятно.

Ofrosimov’s two reviews are dedicated to a shared topic, and thereby invite comparison. This shared topic is named specifically in the title of both texts, so readers can immediately deduce the author’s position in relation to the matter in question: *New Cranberry* and *Cranberry Culture*, respectively. Ofrosimov uses the term “cranberry” to describe a shallow, unprincipled, vulgar distortion of culture and Russian history, a distortion of meaning and divergence between essence and context in non-Russian performances. These reviews are of different length, but share the same structure (see Table 25.1).

In the introduction of the first review, the composer Emmerich Kálmán’s perception of Russia is compared to the perception of Polynesia in the eyes of a (most likely entirely fictitious) fellow Russian composer of his. This comparison serves to illustrate how alien Russia seems to the Hungarian-born Viennese composer—and, by extension, to most of the people in Western Europe. Russians could hardly feel more out of touch with Polynesian culture than Europeans are with Russia, according to Ofrosimov’s interpretation. But, as the context of the *New Cranberry* suggests, Ofrosimov feels that Kálmán and the operetta’s librettists Julius Brammer and Alfred Grünwald did not sufficiently familiarize themselves with Russian culture—unlike the critic’s imaginary friend, and in relation to Polynesia.

Table 25.1 A comparison of reviews from Ofrosimov

	<i>New Cranberry</i> (original text: 614 words)	<i>Cranberry Culture</i> (original text: 269 words)
	Number of words in the original text	
Introduction	1–85	1–20
Elaboration	86–302	21–39, 110–142, 153–159
Synopsis	303–437	40–109
Characterizing the music (and in the first case, also the dramaturgy)	438–510	160–166
Characterizing the production	511–584	167–247
Conclusion	584–614	143–152; 248–269

In the introduction of the second review, Ofrosimov states bitterly and clearly that the presence of Russian expatriates in theatrical or musical productions are no guarantee of cranberries, and it would be “naïve” to hope differently.

The reviews enumerate the production’s ‘quasi-Russian’ stereotypes, among others, Russia’s “exoticism” (established in the *New Cranberry* by the comparison to Polynesia). A detailed description of these stereotypical elements also characterize the elaboration and synopsis in these reviews.

‘Quasi-Russian’ clichés as named in *New Cranberry* and *Cranberry Culture* include:

- (1) Alcoholism.
Review 1: The Grand Duke Sergius Vladimir is used to drinking vodka and washing it down with champagne etc.;
Review 2: Peter the Great is drunk;
- (2) Savagery.
R 1: “Because Vienna is Europe!” (Thus, Russia is not and—in context—savage and uncultured);
R 2: Peter the Great is not ‘merely’ drunk, he is described as a “drunken, wild beast”;
- (3) Lethargy/Sloth: *R 1*.
- (4) ‘Quasi-Russian’ language that is basically inconceivable and incomprehensible to people who actually speak Russian: *R 1*.
- (5) ‘Quasi-Russian’ history that does not match reality, as well as ‘quasi-Russian’ clothing: *R 2*.

Of course, the reviews put terms like “Russianness”, “Russian life” (*R 1*), “historical excursus”, “ballad” (*R 2*) in parentheses. And it is not a coincidence that the critic refers to the production not as an operetta, but adds a further diminutive to belittle it even more. His estimate of the drama’s quality (both musical and dramaturgical) is quite manifest: he finds it severely lacking. His verdict on the second drama in the other article is even harsher. He calls it “abominable”, “nonsense”, and refers to the

“poor music” as “pathetic” (Ofrosimov 1932: 3). He considers it “horrid” (Ibid.) that highly talented people like Ernst Stern or Gitta Alpár, whom he regards with high favor, are involved in such productions, as it damages their reputation. Ofrosimov characteristically differentiates between the play and the particular details of the production. Thus, he successfully creates the impression that he is most interested in creating a fair and even-handed review, without ever hiding his personal opinion or lapsing into boring details. For example, the earlier review lauds the musical performance—in sharp contrast to the operetta as such—as “brilliant” (Ofrosimov 1927: 5–6).

In both conclusions, Ofrosimov honestly and directly summarizes his own position. Comparing the review from 1932 to earlier such texts by the author, it is noticeable that his criticism has grown sharper, due to his extended contact with expatriate life in Berlin and repeated exposition to “cranberry culture” (Ofrosimov 1932: 3).

It is no longer a “misunderstanding” (Ofrosimov 1921: 5), he no longer uses phrases like, “it would be preferable” (Ofrosimov 1922: 5), nor does he include statements like, “often, the Germans find ‘the Russian soul’ where Russians themselves would never see it” (Ofrosimov 1925: 4). His reaction is no longer characterized by “understandable disconcertment” (Ofrosimov 1927: 5–6), but instead, it is beneath the critic’s dignity to engage these matters, and is “utterly unbearable from a human perspective” (Ofrosimov 1932: 3).

25.3 Ludmila Landau’s Review *Boris Godunov* (1924)

Example 3: Ludmila Landau: *Boris Godunov* (1924) (Landau 1924: 5), English translation

The difficult task of adapting such a demanding play as “Boris Godunov” on the humble stage of the *Volksooper* was on the whole crowned with success, solidifying with each subsequent performance, and this task¹² must be credited to the theater’s directorial board as an achievement.

For Germans, it is an in-depth look at Russian history and Russian art, highlighting many alien, “exotic” elements in the spirit, way of life and psyche of another people. From our perspective, we must watch the performance with some reservation—everything’s very good, but only from a certain point of view. It’s not what we are used to, nor is it true to Mussorgsky on an objective level. The orchestra interprets the music very aptly, conducted by E. Szenkar (as before in Dresden), but either due to the acoustics or to the orchestra’s placing, it often drowns out the singing, especially the brass ensemble. Also, the drums are too noticeable in intense passages. The choirs, which play a dominant part in “Boris”, sing beautifully, precisely and diligent in lively, harmonious and freely staged ensembles. But, of course, it is not a Russian group in the basic, physical character of their movements, tempi, intonation, and pronunciation. The evenness, the measuredness of the cumbersome boyars and the czar’s grandezza are especially difficult for the Germans (the procession into the Kremlin was over before the music stopped, and even their walk did not fit the heavy costumes). [...]

¹²Probably a printing error: probably meant to say “success” instead of “task”.

Mr Schützendorf as Boris sings well and plays consummately, and very intensely in some instances. Unfortunately, his stature and poise are not majestic enough. He is apparently weighed down by the unusual costume which does not fit the exaggerated movements of his body and extremities: his suffering resembles physical yearning, a struggle, and his endeavors do not look vivid.

[...] but Xenia and the nurse sing horribly (with an unbelievable headdress). [...] All in all, the exaggeration that's so typical of German actors in terms of dramatic pathos and comedic exaggeration hurts the Russian eye, which is accustomed to the scenic "truth" and subtlety. [...] Mrs Malkina as Marina (of Russian descent) manages to convey the spirit and style of the play more aptly than the rest. But her mellow, luscious soprano is not strong and passionate enough in the mezzo-soprano part. The tastelessly colorful costume ruins it altogether.

[...] All in all, the Polish images appear to be more appropriate on account of being more European. [...] The village pub is nicely constructed, the hostess is pretty but pale, and the vagrants—especially Varlaam—overdo their parts mercilessly (even if their makeup is well done); the drunkenness with hiccups clash with any serious claim to art. [...] However, there are no lapses in the production, even if there are exaggerations in the costumes, an over-abundance of red decoration and "historical" frescoes that need to be tolerated.

Example 3: Ludmila Landau: Boris Godunov (1924), Russian original

Трудная задача поставить на скромной сцене Народной Оперы такую во всех отношениях сложную вещь, как "Борис Годунов", увенчалась в общем полным успехом, закрепляющимся с каждым спектаклем, и должна быть поставлена в заслугу руководителям театра. Для немцев это яркое ознакомление с русской историей и русским искусством, всячески приоткрывающее многое столь чуждое, "экзотическое" в духе, быте, психике другого народа. С нашей точки зрения, конечно, надо всю постановку воспринимать условно—все здесь в общем очень хорошо, но в известном ключе. Это не то, к чему мы привыкли или что объективно преподносится как воплощение Мусоргского. Очень хорошо передает музыку оркестр под дирижерством того же, что и в Дрездене, Е. Szenkar, но по причине ли акустических условий или высокого расположения оркестра, он часто заглушает пение, особенно медь и ударные в сильных местах слишком резко выделяются. Хоры, играющие такую преобладающую роль в "Борисе", поют прекрасно, точно, и старательно играют в живых стройно и свободно поставленных ансамблях (А. Арнальс). Но все же это, конечно, не русская толпа в элементарно-физическом характере движений, темпах, интонациях и дикции. Особенно не дается немцам плавность, медлительность грузных бояр, царственная величавость (шествие в Кремль кончалось раньше музыки, даже и походка не соответствовала тяжелым костюмам). [...]

Сам Борис г. Шюцендорф поет хорошо и играет законченно и местами очень сильно. К сожалению, фигура и осанка его недостаточно величественны, затрудняют видимо непривычный костюм, которому не соответствуют преувеличенные движения всего тела, ног; страдание его слишком похоже на физическое томление, борьбу, усилия выглядят непластично.

[...] но дурно поют Ксения и Мамка (в какой-то невероятной повязке на голове). [...] В общем свойственная немецким актерам преувеличенная игра как в пафосе драматическом, так и в шарже комического режет русский глаз, привыкший к сценической "правде" и тонкости. [...] Г-жа Малкина—Марина (русского происхождения) лучше других передает дух и стиль вещи. Ее полное густое сопрано все же недостаточно сильно и темпераментно звучит в mezzo-сопрановой партии. Портит безвкусно пестрый костюм.

В общем польские картины выходят адекватнее как более европейские.[...] Корчма внешне приятно построена, хозяйка красива, но бледна, а

бродяги,—особенно Варлаам—переигрывают немилосердно (грим хорош); опьянение с икотой антихудожественно. [...] Никаких lapsus'ов в постановке нет, хотя допущена преувеличенность в костюмах, обилии красной декорации и в “исторических” фресках в царском тереме.

Landau uses a more cautious language than Ofrosimov, but she also writes about the timeless foundations of music. For example, she writes about the relationship between essence and context; the relationship between an opera and its actual production, as it is illustrated by the third example. Landau's review contains self-contradictory elements, possibly owing to her sheer thankfulness of seeing *Boris Godunov* on a German stage at all. Her desire to be fair and balanced might have caused her to overemphasize supposedly positive aspects.

In the very first sentence, she notes correctly that staging an opera like *Boris Godunov* is a “challenging task”, especially on such a “humble” stage: it is apparent that she saw more than one production and was a professional opera critic. This is followed by Landau calling the presence of this opera on a German stage an “in-depth look at Russian history and Russian art”, enabling German audiences to familiarize themselves with Russian culture and Russian people. Notice that she specifically claims that many aspects of Russian culture are “foreign” and “exotic” to the Germans. From a Russian point of view, however, she calls the production only “partially successful”, as “everything's very good, but only from a certain point of view”. This reversal of opinion creates ambiguity as to whether or not the production was actually as good as previously suggested. This prompts the question: was *Boris Godunov* in Berlin's Volksoper, in 1924, an “in-depth look at Russian history and art” and “crowned with success” or was it only “partially successful”? It is impossible that both of these assessments are simultaneously true. Such contradictions also manifest in the rest of the review. For example, Landau praises the orchestra and the conductor, but then goes on to enumerate the most typical mistakes of a conductor. Immediately following, attention is drawn to the choirmaster's performance which is praised with very fine characterization (“lively, harmonious and freely staged ensemble”). The chorus members are described as “diligent” in their performances. This creates another instance of cognitive dissonance: are they “lively” or “diligent”—is it good or bad? Following this, Landau claims that the singers playing peasants and boyars are inept in their movements on stage.

This is followed by Landau's criticism which precisely observes the production's details, but how can it be called “lively, harmonious and freely staged” if the acting and music are so disharmoniously at odds with each other? (“the procession to the Kremlin was over before the music stopped”). How can it provide an “in-depth look at Russian history and Russian art” if she then points out: “But it is of course not a Russian group of people in the basic, physical character of their movements, tempi, intonation, or pronunciation” and “the boyar's walk did not match the heavy costumes”? She is basically stating that the singers on stage failed to capture their parts and, by extension, Russian culture, and that their performance could even be regarded as a parody (with heavily costumed boyars running across the stage).

She then highlights and criticizes the singers' overacting, stating that Russian audience members are accustomed to something else, namely “‘truth’ [and] subtlety”.

The next section names both positive and negative details within the production, so it comes as somewhat of a surprise when Landau then concludes the passage with: “There are no lapses in the production”, and her subsequent statement is that “even if there was some hyperbole in the costumes, an abundance of red decoration and ‘historical’ frescoes in the czar’s bower had to be tolerated”. It needs to be pointed out that, according to Landau, the set of the czar’s bower is historically incorrect as signified by the parentheses around the term “historical”.

One of Germany’s respected critics of that time Adolf Weißmann praised this production by exclaiming:

Gehet hin, sehet den ‘Boris’. Er erschließt euch die Seele Russlands. (Go, watch this ‘Boris’. He will reveal Russia’s soul to you.) (Weißmann 1924: 160)

If we assume that Landau’s critical assessment is correct (and there is little reason not to), this promise must have remained empty. There is no doubt that Mussorgsky’s opera touches upon the foundations of Russian culture (for example, the main protagonist can be interpreted as the embodiment of conscience), yet in such a production, such important details are obfuscated and rendered inaccessible to the audience.

25.4 Conclusions

Oscar Wilde declared in the preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

All art is at once surface and symbol.
Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.
Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. (Wilde 2014: 4)

Should we, like our colleagues Ofrosimov and Landau who lived approximately a century ago, reflecting upon music, take the risk to “go beneath the surface”, to the essence of music? Or does it suffice to simply stay on the surface? So, “To go, or not to go?” is still the question.

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Chapter 26

Essence, Context and Meaning in Versions of Wagner's *Wesendonck* *Lieder* by Wagner, Mottl and Henze



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Abstract Arrangements of classical music, like ‘covers’ in popular music, may be evaluated according to their degree of fidelity to the original, radical transformative quality and referentiality. Rather than focusing on a musical essence, distinct from its medium, carried through in each transformation, comparative analysis of arrangements may highlight relational contextual essence, the new meanings that arise from new contexts arising in each version. I illustrate the issue through an exploration of multiple versions of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*, composed in 1857–1858 originally for piano and voice and arranged for chamber ensemble by the composer, then recast within Acts II and III of *Tristan und Isolde*. The five songs were arranged in 1893 as an orchestral song cycle by Felix Mottl (1856–1911), and in 1976 the German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012) made a version for alto and chamber orchestra. Mottl's version reflects a post-Wagnerian aesthetic in a late 19th century social context; Henze's more radical 20th century approach to re-instrumentation intensifies the intimate response to Mathilde Wesendonck's poetry, imbued with new personal as well as historical meanings. I conclude that arrangements provide a useful crucible for the exploration of the intertwining of essence and context to generate musical and social meanings.

26.1 Introduction. Transcriptions and Relational Essence

Transcriptions play an important part in a living musical culture [...] they also promote our sense that harmony, melody and Movement belong to the essence of music—while instrumentation is accidental. (Scruton 1999: 453)

Roger Scruton's idea, expressed in his seminal work *The Aesthetics of Music*, seems on the surface logical and correct. If, as he continues, transcriptions of an original are “attempts to realize, in another medium, its musical essence”, it would appear that essence is separate and distinct from its medium.

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But as a musicologist this poses a question I would like to explore and challenge in this paper. Is instrumentation really, and merely, accidental? Is the medium necessarily distinct from the essence? Can one parcel off medium, which alongside timbre, includes texture and various contextual aspects of performance, in so clear-cut a way? The Viennese-British musicologist and writer Hans Keller argued in an article about arrangements that instrumentation is “stimulation, which makes possible the communication of musical thought” (Keller 1969: 24).

Yet, if appearing superficially to side with Scruton on the possibility of separating out ‘musical thought’, for Keller “there is no communication without stimulation” and often the two are inextricably linked, as when Keller asks:

What if the thought, Mozart’s prototypically, is so much one with its stimulation that no other equivalent possibility is conceivable? (Ibid.)

Thus, even in works (including those by Mozart) arranged for different media, the implication is that the versions are different in essence, even in quality; as Keller puts it, one version may be ‘second best’. In that sonority, defined as instrumentation, is often a major contributor to the expressive aspect of music, so the essence of a work is often embodied in its precise, distinctive handling. My thesis is that the identity and the essential quality of a work is the result of the combination of various musical elements which includes sonority, as well as the contextual aspects of performance. Both the aspects of sonority and performance context emerge in sharp focus through the filter of arrangements, which require some historical consideration to clarify the range of issues.

At some point in the history of music (for the purpose of this paper, Western art music) instrumentation was indeed, as Scruton puts it, ‘accidental’, unspecified in some cases due to social conditions of changing ensembles and forces. Equally, transcription was a primary method of musical dissemination and education and ‘originality’, the question of origin, was less at a premium than it later became, as shown in Renaissance lute intabulations or in Baroque transcriptions of violin concertante works for harpsichord, witness Bach’s adaptations of Vivaldi concertos. Yet even here there is an element of specificity to the medium that required translation: music-making determined demand. In the 19th century, the age of the orchestra, and of the piano, when composers were thinking coloristically, pianistically, orchestrally, the musical idea was intimately intertwined with its sonority, which in turn was deployed more structurally.

In the process of shifting medium a transcription also shifts to a new genre, with its concomitant range of expectations and new meanings. A Beethoven symphony reduced to a piano duet preserves some aspects of the original, but exchanges the large-scale public, professional quasi-religious musico-aesthetic experience for an intimate amateur domestic setting. Scruton uses the example of Brahms’ transcription of the Bach Chaconne for the left-hand to show that part of the ‘essence’ of the original is the aspect of technical challenge, which he refers to as “a striving to reproduce a similar musical experience using dissimilar sounds” (Scruton 1999: 453). He is correct here in emphasizing ‘sounds’: it is the idiomatic use of piano which Brahms brings into play that constitutes the essence of his version, yet ‘the

musical experience' is totally different to the 18th century original: a 19th century solo piano genre and sensibility.

There is a sense in which the essence of a string quartet is its string quartet-ness, shared by many string quartets: arrange it for string orchestra and that aspect of its essence changes; similarly for the German Lied, a piano and voice combination capable of subtle intimate expressive affect. In the 19th century to translate a Lied into a piano solo loses an element of dialogue essential to the medium: so Liszt's adaptations of Schubert for instance, in recognition of this, adds a fabric of invention and variation, and become almost paraphrases on the original. To orchestrate a Lied, as in the genre of orchestral song initiated in the 1890s (aside from a few isolated precursors), transforms the musical experience, allowing the intimacy of the small form to speak in a larger more public arena, assigning it a symphonic even operatic character.

In shifting genres, a new work is formed even though it is clearly related to the original. So also in Modernist arrangements when *Klangfarbenmelodie* brings timbral structure to the fore; a transcription can adapt and highlight new content. Indeed twentieth-century orchestration differs from nineteenth-century procedures to the extent that a wider timbral palette is available, and an increased focus on motivic and thematic processes. The restructuring may constitute an imposition of elements in a style different from the original with a resultant clash, or it may, rather, emphasize, underline elements that are implicit, but hidden within that original.

The distinction between a structure that is embryonic in the model, and one that is 'imposed' by the arranger is crucial to an evaluation of faithfulness to the original. Scruton writes:

We make an intuitive distinction between the transcription which is the same work of music as the original and the transcription which is another work, derived from but not identical with its parent. (Scruton 1999: 452)

The problem is that a transcription is never 'the same' but always different and what is important is the extent and the nature of the difference. A nuanced categorization of the types of differences was proposed in the article 'Judging Covers' (Magnus et al. 2013: 361–370) offering a distinction between types of cover versions of pop songs, which could usefully be applied to the range of arrangements and transcriptions. The 'mimic cover/transcription' aims to reproduce the original as closely as possible (as in tribute bands) and appears to constitute Scruton's 'same' category; a 'rendition cover/arrangement' transfers the original work to the artist's own style and may involve a change in genre. Where changes in instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, and to lyrics are substantial enough to represent a 'significant difference in content' that change the meaning of the song, yet the work is still 'sufficiently derivative' of the canonical original, it is a 'transformative cover/adaptation'. Finally, there is the 'referential cover/arrangement' which uses transformative content to comment on the original. The referential cover may be compared to an arrangement that acts as homage whilst asserting its individuality. Discussing mainly Modernist arrangements Joseph N. Straus, the American musicologist, explains how individuality in an arrangement may constitute 'deliberate misreading', a concept assimilated from the literary critic Harold Bloom, so that:

These recompositions (modernist) remain the scene of a struggle between styles, between types of pitch organization, and, ultimately, between composers. [...] The power of these pieces resides not so much in their integration of competing elements into an organic whole as in the very intensity of the conflict they embody. (Straus 1986: 327)

Like cover songs, such re-compositions, and arrangements may embody a dialectic between homage and struggle for dominance, reflecting their referential nature and position along the continuum of their mimicking, renditional and transformative characteristics.

26.2 Orchestrations of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*: Historical Context and Comparative Analysis

I illustrate the issues of misreading and referential arrangement through an exploration of multiple versions of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*, composed in 1857–1858 originally for piano and voice, one by one during the period of the composition of Act I of *Tristan und Isolde* in 1857–1858. The chronology is as follows:

<i>Der Engel</i>	30th November 1857 (1st version)
<i>Träume</i>	4th December 1857 (1st version) 5th December 1857 (2nd version)
<i>Schmerzen</i>	17 December 1857 (1st version, with 3 endings) (2nd version between December 1857 and October 1858, date unknown)
<i>Stehe Still!</i>	22 February 1858 (1st version)
<i>Im Treibhaus</i>	30th April 1st May 1858 (1st version) (2nd version between May and October 1858)

The cycle was premiered at Villa Schott (Laubenheim bei Mainz), the home of Wagner's publisher, on 30 July 1862 by Emilie Genast with Hans von Bülow at the piano; in October the songs were published under the title *Fünf Gedichte für eine Frauenstimme*. Each song was composed in a day as he received the poems; they were private, individual documents. As John Deathridge has written:

[Wagner] neither conceived the lieder as a cycle, nor did he at first want them printed and dragged into public view. (Deathridge 2008: 123)

December 1857 saw the first orchestration of the songs, a solo violin and ensemble version of *Träume* for Mathilde's 28th birthday, on the staircase of her villa, performed by local musicians (Fig. 26.1).

The next stage was Wagner's reworking of two songs, *Im Treibhaus* and *Träume*, within *Tristan* (Miller 2014), intermingling literal quotation with freer development of song material, the formal framework and sequence of events of the original songs both replicated yet also exploded outwards onto the larger canvas of entire scenes: it is a genre change in which the small scale songs were spun out into the broader weave of the music drama.

In so doing the piano-voice texture is recast for full orchestra. For instance, in the section “O Sink hernieder” of the Act II scene 2 love duet, which reworks the serenely flowing A-flat major chordal 8-bar piano introduction and epilogue of *Träume*, Wagner assigns the accompaniment to strings, with the appoggiatura motifs mainly woodwind. This follows the timbral contrasts used in the staircase version. Yet the texture is radically altered: the pulsating chords, a conventional pattern of the German Lied, are replaced by fluid syncopated triplets in divided strings (Fig. 26.2).

The transformation of *Träume* into the love duet (Act II) is somewhat downplayed by Wagner when he wrote to Mathilde from Venice on 22 December 1858, four months after their love-affair turned public and he had to leave Zurich:

For three days I have been plodding at the passage ‘Wen du umfangen wem du gelacht’ [...] when Koboldchen tapped and shewed its face to me as a gracious Muse and in an instant the passage was clear; I sat down to the piano and wrote it off as rapidly as if I had known it be heart for ever so long. A severe critic will find a touch of reminiscence in it: the *Träume* flit close by; but you’ll forgive me that, my sweetheart! Ne’er repent thy love of me: it’s heavenly! (Ellis 1911: 80)

The significance of the *Träume* motif is far-reaching in the love duet, and in its original form it signals the climactic moment in Act II where Tristan hallucinates of Isolde’s arrival, thus connecting those moments of high drama (Miller 2014). Rather than merely ‘a touch of reminiscence’, the re-use constituted structural reintegration on a large-scale, as implied by the subtitle ‘Studie für Tristan’ added to the two songs during the work on Acts II and III.

The four songs and Wagner’s arrangement of the fifth were arranged in 1893 as an orchestral song cycle by Felix Mottl (1856–1911), the conductor-arranger who worked with Wagner in Bayreuth.¹ In 1976 the German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012) made a version for alto and chamber orchestra. As we shall see Mottl’s version reflects a post-Wagnerian aesthetic in a late 19th century social context; Henze’s more radical 20th century approach to re-instrumentation intensifies the intimate response to Mathilde Wesendonck’s poetry. In the *Wesendonck Lieder* Henze creates a Wagnerian aura with sonority and effect, such as the use of harp or low strings, and unusual blends of woodwind such as alto flute, bass clarinet and contrabassoon. There are indeed many instances of sensitive responses to the music that go far beyond Mottl and even Wagner’s piano version in directly evoking the poem and its moods. Henze expressly transforms the elements of Mottl’s version, and employs many 20th century devices, for example the increased ‘motivization’ of textures, and more detailed highlighting of motives through timbre.² Indeed Wagner’s expressive change in the Act II duet is picked up in the texturizing of Henze’s arrangement of this song for chamber orchestra (Fig. 26.3).

Whilst the versions reflect the difference between a late nineteenth and late 20th century orchestral strategy, each is also stylistically related to the Wagnerian ‘ideal’. Both orchestrations create Wagnerian sonorities in different ways, and in each there

¹A discussion of the cyclic qualities of the songs forms the focus of a recent article see Miller (2015).

²A detailed comparative analysis of all five songs is giving in my doctoral thesis (Miller 1990).

The image displays a page of a musical score for Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, Act II. The score is organized into two main systems. The left system contains the piano accompaniment and woodwind parts, including Klavier (piano), Flöte (flute), Holz (woodwinds), Horn (horn), Trompete (trumpet), Violin (violin), Viola, and Bass. The right system contains the vocal parts, including Bass, Tenor, and Violoncello (cello). A red circle highlights a specific passage in the piano part of the left system. A blue box highlights a passage in the vocal parts of the right system. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *pp* (pianissimo) and *ppp* (pianississimo). The tempo marking *Mäßig langsam. B. ja nicht schlappern.* is visible at the beginning of the right system.

Fig. 26.2 Wagner's reworking of *Träume* in *Tristan* Act II

The image displays a page of a musical score for Wagner's *Träume*, arranged by Henze. The score is for a chamber orchestra and includes a vocal line. The tempo is marked '3/4 Sehr mäßig bewegt, aber nie schleppend' and the dynamics are 'un poco cresc.' with a dashed line indicating a gradual increase. The instruments listed on the left are: flöte, altflöte, oboe, englisch horn, klarinette, baßklarinette, fagott, kontrafagott, horn 1/2, harfe, singstimme, violine I (4 parts), violine II (4 parts), viola (4 parts), violoncello (4 parts), and kontrabaß (2 parts). The woodwinds and strings are marked with 'ppp' (pianissimo) and 'm. Dpfr.' (mezzo-dolcissimo). The harp part is marked 'ppp' and 'sempre'. The vocal line is marked 'ppp' and 'colossissimo'. The score is written in a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature.

Fig. 26.3 Henze's version of *Träume* (All Henze's score examples are © 1977 Schott Music. The author is grateful to Schott Music Ltd for granting permission to reproduce score examples from the edition ED7230 of Henze's instrumentation of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* for Alto and Chamber Orchestra)

is a balance of contemporary style with a response to the original. A comparison of versions shows many specific differences in the structural deployment of instrumentation, and in the poetic use of timbre. Especially significant are the references to Wagner's orchestration of the songs within *Tristan*, and the references between Henze and Mottl, which I illustrate here with reference to the first and third songs.

26.2.1 Der Engel

26.2.1.1 Mottl's Version of *Der Engel*

I start with a relatively simple and straightforward example of song orchestration, from the first song *Der Engel*. The piano version starts with conventional Lied textures: piano arpeggios in the major for the first verse; then a switch in phrase 2 to pulsating chords, depicting the languishing 'heart weighed down with care', and a return to the start for the climax of this modified ternary form (Fig. 26.4).

As shown in Example 5, Mottl's version is highlighted by a stark color contrast between phrases 1 and 2. Phrase 1 features strings for the flowing arpeggios, pointed delicately by sporadic double bass pizzicato (with only a few flute highlights at the cadence), then switches to woodwind for the pulsating chords of phrase 2. Mottl also adds new elements: a sustained horn pedal to enrich and bind the texture and an intensification of the woodwinds to match each rising sequence of the melody: at first pairs of clarinets and bassoons, then joined by first oboe, then a pair of flutes, together with an extra horn. This final sequence drives to a climactic cadence, which Mottl marks by introducing a new oboe inner voice (Fig. 26.5).

At "Da, der Engel nieder schwebt" ("The angel floats down"), a magical moment, Mottl introduces a solo violin: one might say a Wagnerian and Straussian device which dramatizes the figure of the angel, referential perhaps to the use of a solo violin in the *Träume* chamber orchestration, and also a conventional feature of orchestration style used in many works of the Romanticism epoch, for example in Brahms' Symphony No. 1, or Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*. But there is a more specific allusion here I believe: the addition of a turn to the solo violin foreshadows Wagner's turn in the final bars, which is so reminiscent of the turns in the Liebestod in *Tristan* (and eventually in the *Siegfried Idyll*) which, sounding in the violin's highest register just before the resolution of the entire music drama sounds almost like solo violins. Mottl's use in the song coincides with the voice's highest note and suggests a connection between the angel's love and Isolde's, each providing spiritual balm.

26.2.1.2 Henze's *Der Engel*

In contrast to Mottl's purely string arpeggios in phrase 1, Henze uses complex micro-segmentation shifting between wind and low strings—violins are introduced only near the end of the phrase. The chamber orchestration is distinctive in sonority—

The image displays a musical score for the opening of Wagner's opera *Der Engel*. It consists of two systems of staves, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *ppp*, *p*, and *pp*. There are also performance instructions such as *Sehr ruhig bewegt*, *(da er saet und weicht)*, *(gestigert, aber sacht)*, and *poco riten.*. The lyrics are written below the vocal lines. Several parts of the score are highlighted with colored boxes: a green box around the first system's piano accompaniment, a red oval around a specific piano accompaniment passage in the second system, and a yellow box around a vocal line passage in the third system.

Sehr ruhig bewegt
 In der Kindheit frü - hen
 - non - ne. Daß, wo bang ein Herz in Sor - gen schmachtet vor der Welt ver -
 bor - gen, daß, wo still es will ver - bla - ten, und vergehn in Trä - nen.
 - flü - ten, daß, wo brü - stig sein Ge - bet ein - zig um Er - lo - sung
 flüßt, da der Gott - geist nur wecket, und es
 Him - mels heh - re Won - ne tausch - ten mit der Er - den.

Fig. 26.4 Opening of Wagner's *Der Engel*

Mottl's orchestration: wind chords (rectangular box, top left), cello appoggiaturas (ovals); added violin solo (rectangular box, central); added strands (arrows)

The image displays two pages of a musical score for Wagner's opera *Der Engel*. The score is annotated to highlight Mottl's orchestration changes. On the left page, a green rectangular box encloses a woodwind section, and a red oval highlights a cello part. Blue arrows point to newly added strands in the woodwind and string sections. On the right page, a yellow rectangular box highlights a violin solo, and a red oval highlights a cello part. The score includes vocal lines with German lyrics and various musical markings such as *rit.*, *tempo rit.*, and *a tempo*.

Fig. 26.5 Mottl's version of *Der Engel* [shapes correspond with Fig. 26.4]

71 3

fi. *pp*

alffl. *pp*

ob. *pp*

e.h. *pp*

klar. *pp*

baßkl. *pp*

fag. *pp*

kfg. *pp*

hr. 1 2 *pp* *bouché sempre* *p*

hfe.

singst. *pp*
 - schen mit der Er - - den - son - ne, daß, wo bang ein Herz in Sor -

1 2 *pp* *unifi*

viol. I 3 4 *pp* *unifi* *pp*

5 6 *pp* *unifi* *pp*

1 2 *pp* *div.* *unifi* *pp*

viol. II 3 4 *pp* *unifi* *div.* *pp*

1 2 *pp* *div.* *unite* *pp*

vla. 3 4 *pp* *div.* *unite* *pp*

1 *pp* *unifi* *pp*

vcl. 2 3 4 *pp* *pp* *pp*

1 2 *pp* *pp*

kb. *pp*

Fig. 26.6 Henze's version of *Der Engel*

15

altfl. *espr.*

e.h. *espr.*

baßkl. *espr.*

1 hr. *marcato*

2

hfe.

singst.
- gen schmachtet vor der Welt ver-bor-gen, daß, wo still es will verblu-ten, und vergehn in Trä-nen

1 unifi

4 viol.I. (unifi)

5

2 unifi

3 (div)

4 viol.II.

1 unife

4 vla.

1 unifi

4 vcl.

Fig. 26.6 (continued)

pairing conventional winds with alto flutes, cor anglais, bass clarinet and contrabassoon, and dividing the strings. In contrast to Mottl's delicate double bass pizzicato, Henze adds a sustained double bass, adding a lower octave to the original version. But the main contrast is the timbral reversal of phrase 2, the pulsating chords given to string (no double bass), and the appoggiaturas to cor anglais (mm. 16 and 19). Moreover the 3rd segment radically transforms the chords to a syncopated texture mixing strings and wind (Fig. 26.6).

The song's climax is the phrase "Und auf leuchtendem Gefieder" ("On radiant pinions"), which the angel lifts the poet's spirit heavenwards. Mottl marks it with a

forthright tutti, switching the arpeggios to woodwind and horns, bolstered by sustained strings. Henze maintains his flickering mix of strings and wind but adds in a flamboyant flourish for the harp (a not un-Wagnerian touch) that extends the registral space over sustained wind, an effect that led the critic Hilary Finch to remark that “woodwind and harp lift the wings of the angel” (Finch 2012) (Fig. 26.7).

The image shows a page of a musical score for the piece 'leuchtendem Gefieder' from the opera 'Der Engel'. The score is written for a full orchestra and a vocal soloist. The instruments listed on the left are: fl. (flute), altfl. (alto flute), baßkl. (bassoon), kfg. (contrabassoon), hr. 1/2 (horns), hfe. (harp), singst. (singer), Viol. I (Violins I), Viol. II (Violins II), Vla. 1 (Viola), Vcl. 1/2/3/4 (Violas), and kb. 1/2 (Cellos). The score is in 2/4 time and the key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The vocal line has the lyrics: 'gel nie - der, und auf leuch - - - ten - dem Ge-'. The harp part features a prominent flourish starting in the third measure. Dynamics include *pp* *sehr zart* and *pp*. The harp part is marked *espr.* (espressivo).

Fig. 26.7 Henze’s scoring of ‘leuchtendem Gefieder’ from *Der Engel*

34

baßkl. *espr.*

fag. *espr.*

kfg.

hr. 1. 2. *1. N pp*

hfe. *mf*

singst. *(mit Enthusiasmus)*
- fie - - - der führt er fer - - ne je - dem

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. *unite p*

viol. I 1. 2. 3. 4. *unite p*

viol. II 1. 2. 3. 4. *unite p*

vla. 1. 2. 3. 4. *unite p*

vcl. 1. 2. 3. 4. *unite p*

kb. 1. 2.

Fig. 26.7 (continued)

26.2.2 *Im Treibhaus*

The reworking of *Im Treibhaus* in Act III is even more extensive than *Träume* in Act II, and stretches over two scenes, reflecting the close resonance between the poetic imagery of song and drama. Wagner's reworking (and orchestration) is an 'arrangement' of both text and music, not merely a lifting of pre-composed music to furnish some musical fodder for a new context.

In the song there are two distinct motifs—labeled in Fig. 26.8 as 'A' and 'B', their threefold repetitions and variation forming contrasted themes. Each appears three times throughout the song. Clearly A is a derivation of the Tristan motif, and in the course of the song is chromaticized, returning to its initial diatonic version at the very end. As can be seen, B is a more chromatic spiraling idea.

Act III of *Tristan* starts with a quote from the start of *Im Treibhaus* (varied with stretched rhythmic values); variants of motifs A and B recur during the course of the first scene. As shown in Fig. 2.9a, b, Wagner assigns theme A at every appearance, to violins: Mottl follows this, with a slight variation, moving from cellos, high in

Motif A x 2 + extension

Motif B x 2 + B'

Fig. 26.8 Wagner's *Im Treibhaus* (arr. solo piano—A. Stradhal): motivic elements

Dritter Aufzug.

(a)

Mäßig langsam.

Violinen I. II.

Bratschen.

Violoncelli I. (allein) die übrigen alle

Kontrabässe.

f *dim.* *p* *più p* *pp*

gedehnt

Wagner, *Tristan*, Prelude to Act III:
Motif A x 2 and extension – violins

(b)

Instrumentiert von Felix Mottl (Studie zu Tristan und Isolde)

Langsam und schwer

2 FLÖTEN.

2 HOBOKEN.

2 CLARINETTEN (B.)

2 FAGOTTE.

3 HÖRNER (F.)

SINGSTIMME.

1. VIOLINE

2. VIOLINE

BRATSCHEN.

Erste VIOLONCELLE.

geteilt

Zweite VIOLONCELLE.

CONTRABÄSSE

m. D. *p* *pp*

mit Dämpfer

più p

Langsam und schwer.

Mottl: 'Im Treibhaus': motif A x 2: cellos
extension of A: violins (thus referencing *Tristan*)

Fig. 26.9 a–c Three versions of the climbing 'A' motif: a Wagner, *Tristan*, Prelude to Act III: Motif A x 2 and extension—violins; b Mottl's version of *Im Treibhaus*, motif A x 2: cellos; extension of a: violins (referencing *Tristan*); c Henze's version of *Im Treibhaus*: micro-segmentation for motifs A and B (with referential use of timbre)

(c) $\frac{6}{8}$ *Langsam und schwer* $\frac{9}{8}$ $\frac{6}{8}$

flöte *p* *pp*

altflöte *p* *pp*

oboe

englischhorn *p* *p*

klarinette *p* *p*

baßklarinette *p* *p*

fagott *p* *p*

kontrafagott *p* *p*

horn 1 2

harfe

singsstimme

$\frac{6}{8}$ *Langsam und schwer* $\frac{9}{8}$ $\frac{6}{8}$

1 *m. Dpfr.* *p*

2 *m. Dpfr.* *p*

3 *p*

4

1 *m. Dpfr.* *p* *pp*

2 *m. Dpfr.* *pp*

3 *m. Dpfr.* *pp*

4 *m. Dpfr.* *pp*

1 *(o. Dpfr.)* *p* *pp*

2 *(o. Dpfr.)* *p* *pp*

Fig. 26.9 (continued)

The image displays a page of a musical score, likely for Wagner's opera. It features multiple staves for various instruments and a vocal line. The instruments listed on the left include fl. (flute), altfl. (alto flute), ob. (oboe), e.h. (English horn), klar. (clarinet), baßkl. (bassoon), fag. (bassoon), kfg. (contrabassoon), hr. 2 (horn 2), singst. (singer), 1. (violin 1), 2. (violin 2), 3. (violin 3), vcl. (viola), 1. (cello 1), 2. (cello 2), 3. (cello 3), 4. (cello 4), and Kb. (double bass). The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *pp*, *p*, and *ausdrucksvoll*. There are also tempo or performance markings like *m. Dpfr.* and *p*. The lyrics for the singer are: "Hoch-ge-wölb-te Blät-ter-kro-nen, Baldach-ine von Smaragd, Kin-der ihr aus fer-nen". The score is numbered 44250 at the bottom.

Fig. 26.9 (continued)

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral format. At the top, measures 10, 9, 6, and 9 are indicated. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- Flutes (fi.):** Part 1 and 2, both playing *mp* with accents.
- Oboe (ob.):** Playing *mp* with accents.
- Clarinet (klar.):** Playing *mp* with accents, marked *ausdrucksvoll* and *(f)*.
- Bassoon (baßkl.):** Playing *p*.
- Trumpet (tag.):** Playing *p*.
- Trombone (kfg.):** Playing *p*.
- Horns (hr.):** Parts 1 and 2, playing *mp* with accents, marked *(f)*.
- Timpani (tufe.):** Playing *sfmp*.
- Singer (singt.):** Singing the lyrics: "Zo - nen, sa - get mir warum ihr klagt? — Schweigend nei - get ihr die". Dynamics include *p* and *sfmp*.
- Violins (vln.):** Parts 1 and 2, playing *sfmp* and *pp*.
- Violas (vln.):** Parts 3 and 4, playing *sfmp* and *pp*. Part 4 is marked *m. Dpfr.*
- Contra Bass (kb.):** Playing *p*.

Fig. 26.9 (continued)

Table 26.1 Wagner's orchestration of Motif B in *Tristan* Act III

Wagner— <i>Tristan</i>	
Act III: 1st statement of B	Cellos + horns (F-E-F)
2nd statement (segmentations of b)	Viola + Clarinet, oboe, horn
3rd B: Kurwenal "erschein zuvor die Aerztin nicht/die einz'ge, die uns hilft"	Horns (F-E-F)
Kurwenal: 'Paean of praise' B' 1	Fl + ob + cl + vn1
'Paean of praise' B' 2	Fl + ob + hn F + vn2 + vc
'Paean of praise' B' 3	Fl + ob + cl + vn + vc
Isolde arrival (segmentation of b)	Oboe + clar, oboe, violin

Table 26.2 The contrast of Mottl and Henze's instrumentation of the melody (with accompaniment in brackets)

	Mottl	Henze
B: 8–12	Viola (clar)	Viola, oboe, clarinet (fg, c.a) (vas) (hn)
B: 16–20	Flute (oboe)	Oboe, clarinet, flute (cl/fg), (ca, fg), (va)
B: 54–57	Viola (bassoon)	Viola + oboe, viola + bassoon (fl, alt fl, vc), (vc)

their range, to rising violins. Henze is more radical, using contrasts to segment the theme into its motifs: cor anglais, viola, and flute with alto flute; the final statement of theme A sets up an evocative fragmentation that evokes the mood of the poem, the weeping of the exotic hothouse plant. There is a sense that the cor anglais is an explicit reference to the drama of *Tristan*, evoking the 'alte Weise' that signals the desolate reality that greets Tristan's hallucinations of Isolde's arrival by ship (Fig. 26.9c).

There is more variety in the coloring of the spiraling motif B in *Tristan*, leading Henze here to take *Tristan* as a reference point. Table 26.1 shows the orchestration of the melodic line in *Tristan*, focusing on mainly woodwind and horn with occasional viola, violin or cello. Table 26.2 illustrates the orchestrations. In Mottl's version, B is mainly assigned to a string melodic instrument, with the second appearance in the flute. Henze however, is closer to Wagner's original orchestration of *Tristan*, in the use of predominantly woodwind timbres. There are direct allusions in the use of viola, in combination with clarinet and oboe, and later, with bassoon, as well as the use of horns and cellos for the descending thirds accompaniment (for B), together with violas.

26.3 Context and Meaning

The *Wesendonck Lieder* orchestrations, like many other song arrangements, appear to have been made for performance by the soprano Henriette Standhartner (1866, Vienna–1933, Munich) who became Mottl's first wife in 1893, in the same year

as the orchestrations, and those of numerous well known *Lieder*.³ Mottl's aesthetic approach, aiming to emulate Wagner's style as far as possible, emerges in a letter of 1886 to Cosima regarding his orchestration of Wagner's Second Symphony in E major, composed in 1834. He writes:

Many thanks, Frau Meisterin, for the commission. [...] The orchestration appears to be exactly like that of the Symphony in C (of 1832), and I shall of course bring all my knowledge and efforts to bear on the work.

The "knowledge and efforts" were considerable: Mottl's immense musical talent was legendary from his early youth as boy-soprano at the Loewenberg Seminary, Vienna. Whilst a student in Bruckner's theory class Mottl became acquainted with all Wagner's operas performed at the time, and conducted several as founder-member of the Academic Wagner Society which Wagner visited. In 1876, thanks to Richter, Mottl became an assistant at the first Bayreuth Festival and published reminiscences of his walks and discussions with Wagner, deepening his understanding about performing Wagner's works. During his tenure as acclaimed conductor of the court opera and Philharmonic Society of Karlsruhe from 1881, Mottl conducted all the Wagner operas, as well as the 1886 productions of *Tristan und Isolde* and *Parsifal* at Bayreuth, where he became a regular guest conductor; he also conducted Wagner in London, including the Ring at Covent Garden in 1898–1890.

Thus certainly Mottl's personal and artistic allegiance to Wagner's cause as one of the foremost Wagnerian conductors, and a fervent Wagnerian all his life, is a logically compelling motivation for his making an arrangement of the *Wesendonck Lieder*.

By the same token, it seems astonishing that Henze should also do so, since for Henze, as Arnold Whittall relates, "Wagner, the anti-Semite and favorite composer of Hitler, was for long anathema" (Whittall 1977: 255). Henze himself wrote:

I had always avoided Wagner's work out of a certain antipathy. (Henze 1982: 227)

The strong antipathy resulted from several factors. Firstly, as Whittall also explains:

Henze's development has been determined by his revulsion against fascism [...] which had its origins in his father's total commitment to the Nazi cause, but also by his love-hate relationship with late-romantic music. (Whittall 1977: 255)⁴

³Henriette had made her Vienna opera debut in the same years as her Bayreuth debut as a flower maiden in *Parsifal* in 1889. The dedication was to Countess Marie von Wolkenstein, a well-known saloniere who had been married to Baron Julius von Schleinitz (1806–1865), Prussian public official and politician.

⁴Henze's parents had been reluctant to encourage his musical training; secondly, he had experienced chamber-music evenings at a partially Jewish household which was in direct threat because of the Nazi regime. Music thus held a double significance as clandestine and anti-authority and also provided a powerful means of affirming identity and individuality. Henze was ambiguously caught in various camps at this time: after serving in the German army he was for some time a British POW: his subsequent career in Germany led to the operas which express strong oppositions; between senses and reason, or in *Der Junge Lord*, between socialist values and the concept of the 19th century artist.

In 1953 Henze's move to Italy was decisive in its shift away from this background, and during the Italian period he shifted towards Marxism in 1967, with political works. Yet at the same time, there was the beginning of a *rapprochement* as far as the music of Wagner was concerned. It was whilst working with the librettists Kallman and Auden (in *Elegy for Young Lovers*, later *The Bassarids*), that Henze was encouraged to listen to Wagner. In his autobiographical book *Music and Politics* Henze recalls:

I yielded to him and sat through *Götterdämmerung*—quite joylessly. [...] I am well aware what Wagner signifies wherein its greatness lies; *Tristan*, which I have never seen although I have studied the score in detail, has subsequently become a kind of bible for me. (Henze 1982: 228)

The turning point came nearly a decade later, in 1972 with Henze's *Tristan*, which Lawrence Kramer considers "perhaps the most thoroughgoing musical confrontation with the figure of Wagner that we have" (Kramer 2004: 120).

Tristan, a further step along the path of electro-acoustic composition pursued in Henze's Second Violin Concerto (1971), is a piano concerto in six sections, where acoustic transformations of Wagnerian elements interplay with quotations from Brahms and Chopin, leading to a climactic outcry and a cathartic epilogue which superimposes a boy reading the medieval *Tristan* poem over a heart-beat and quotations from the Act III Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan* and the Wesendonck song *Im Treibhaus*. The overt message is as Henze describes it:

Weeping and silence [...] [for] the dead whose passing has impoverished mankind, while the fascists' goosestep resounds through buildings deserted by the people [...]. (Henze 1982: 228–229)

Kramer sees here an instance of ambiguity shared by many modernist composers, who grapple with Wagner as a 'cultural trope', as a sound object, rather than merely as a musical influence, since Wagner "both intrudes on modernity as a relic and haunts it with a piercing even dangerous nostalgia" (Kramer 2004: 111). Kramer delves into several works, including Debussy's *Gollywog's Cakewalk* (with its quote of the *Tristan* motif), Poulenc's 1932 Concerto for Two Pianos ('Magic Fire' music), Shostakovich's 15th Symphony (quoting the *Ring* and *Tristan*), yet finds in Henze's *Tristan* the starkest confrontation. Stephen Downes goes further in his powerful interpretation of the "The images of death and destruction in Henze's *Tristan*" as:

Portals to hope [...]. *Tristan*, *The Bassarids* and other works express a striving for memorial eloquence in the face of despair and disgust at the dark horrors of modern times. (Downes 2011: 240)

How then do we understand Henze's 1976 arrangement of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* for mezzo soprano and chamber orchestra?⁵ On one level it represents a further

⁵Henze's version was first performed on 25 March 1977 in Cologne, broadcast on Westdeutscher Rundfunk, by the Cologne Radio-Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Henze with Ortrun Wenkel, mezzo soprano. (Voss, E., 1983, *Die Musik*) It was later broadcast on BBC Radio 3, in 1986 with the BBCSO, conducted by the late Sir John Pritchard, with the mezzo-soprano Hannah Schwartz.

stage in Henze's confrontation with Wagner's music, yet there is little of the sense of 'destruction' of the earlier work, nor is there any sense of "memorial eloquence"; here the "sound object" is Henze's own appropriation of the original, pre-existing music.

A relevant context for the song arrangements is Henze's perennial interest in reworking of pre-existing music across his oeuvre, an expression of a post-modern aesthetic. His realizations of Cimarosa, Carissimi (*Jepthe*, 1976), Monteverdi (*Il Ritorno d'Ullisse*), and C.P.E. Bach (Flute Sonatas) aim both to 'transform' and to synthesize, resulting in expressive combinations of temporal frames, for example in the operas *The Bassarids* (1965) and *We come to the river* (1976), which make eclectic use of parody, quotation, pastiche and jazz, a dialectical symbiosis in which stylistic tension provides the main interest. In the case of his Monteverdi arrangement Henze, in a BBC radio interview (Henze 1988) defined his wish to "recreate the original sonority" in the context of twentieth-century acoustics and ways of listening. Such a concept of faithfulness implies interpretation, just as a performer might bring out certain features he perceives as essential to the music. Discussing the motivation for his version in the same radio interview, Henze emphasizes how the process of arrangement enables him to appreciate more deeply the value and quality of Monteverdi's composition. A similar attitude may be seen operative in the *Wesendonck Lieder*, where, as the foregoing analysis has aimed to show, Henze creates a Wagnerian aura with sonority and effect, such as the use of harp or low strings, and blends of woodwind.

Whilst on the surface the arrangement may seem to be an act of respect or homage, at a deeper level, the composer asserts his dominance, and thereby frees himself artistically from the shackles of the past. More than a volte-face, the arrangement acted as a means of 'coming to terms' with Wagnerian style, with the effect of freeing himself from its powerful influence. Yet whilst Henze's arrangement can be seen as a 'deliberate misreading', it nevertheless displays a thorough affinity with the spirit of the original, with its sensitive response to Wagnerian style and orchestration, and to the differences between the nineteenth century version by Mottl and Henze's own style and sonority. The composer may be seen to have used the process of transcription to appreciate Wagner's style more closely, indeed, to understand its 'essence'. Rather than simply an assertion of 'domination', the arrangement is an expression of a combination of motivations: an approach towards Wagner, whilst at the same time a redefinition of Henze's individual, personal, idiom. Through this dialectical symbiosis, Henze's arrangement is an expression of the post-modern aesthetic. As Arnold Whittall has observed:

There are many striking examples of twentieth century compositions that create extensive mosaics from the history of music, and the more meaningful the conjunctions between Mahler and Berio, for example, or Beethoven and Ives, or Tippett, the more poignant is the sense of hands reaching out from either side of the abyss of timelessness to achieve some brief, tenuous contact. (Whittall 1987: 14)

It is thus likely that Henze's strong attitude towards Wagner actually intensifies the significance of the arrangement.

It is remarkable that in 1999, some 23 years after, Henze revisited Wagner's music in *Richard Wagnersche Klavierlieder*, making a notably colorful orchestration of all Wagner's songs apart from the *Wesendonck Lieder*. Here his radically different and more interpretative approach, displays a more relaxed attitude to Wagner to the extent of virtually sending up the young ambitious 'Paris' Wagner, reveling in the flamboyant theatricality of his early style, in an arrangement which is referential and transformational, weaving the disparate songs into an impressively unified, if almost music theatrical, work.

26.4 Conclusions. Creative Origins and Essences

The analysis of the versions by Mottl and Henze indicate that the 'reference point' for their choices in two of the songs are Wagner's reworkings within *Tristan*. Therefore one might ask, to what extent are the versions for piano and voice 'originals'? Is it possible that those songs are versions of a Tristanesque essence which had yet to be fully articulated? Text and music both gestated in the aura of the genesis of *Tristan*. Mathilde's poems are clearly influenced by Wagner's *Tristan* poem, even to the point of using similar technical devices, words and phrases; the musical ideas of the songs similarly stemmed from both the *Ring* and *Tristan*. As Hans Keller observed, in relation to Mozart's String Quintet and Wind Serenade in C minor, "the chronological original need not always be the creative original" (Keller 1979: 25). Might the songs thus be both autonomous and still represent versions of ideas embryonic of an 'original' which had yet to fully evolve? Even if the answer were affirmative, even with the various versions, there is still a special essence in the songs that defies translation, an essence intimately linked to the Lied genre. It is because of that essence that the arranger can create a new essence whilst reinventing the song's context. As John Deathridge has written:

The serious exploration of the German Lied and its expressive possibilities in the *Wesendonck Lieder* served as a vessel through which essential parts of *Tristan* had to pass [...]. (Deathridge 2008: 124)

I hope I have shown that arrangements provide a useful crucible for the exploration of the intertwining of essence and context to generate musical and social meanings. Arrangements represent the striving to detect and convey new aspects of an original: they do not 'realize an essence', but rather the search for that essence leads the arranger to approximate the identity of a model by creating a new intersection of musical elements, creating new meanings in new contexts. As emerges in the comparison of Wagner arrangements, the work's 'relational essence' emanates from the focus on the relationship of the versions to each other, their intertextuality. The arranger draws attention to the issue of reinterpretation, questioning the notion of an original essence, adding new timbral colors that act, as in a period performance, to counteract allusions and formulas, enabling one to hear the original music with new immediacy and new meanings. Indeed it is the continuing allure of Wagner's

music to arrangers and interpreters, evidenced for instance by a brand new version by Francisco Coll, a protégé of Thomas Adès, premiered last year in Holland and France,⁶ which enables the songs to exert their spell in ever renewing contexts.

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⁶Francisco Coll's *Wesendonck Lieder* (2015) for mezzo-soprano and chamber orchestra was commissioned by the Ensemble intercontemporain, who gave the world premiere on 24 October 2015 at Het Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Netherlands with Christiane Iven, conducted by Matthias Pintscher.

University Press, 2016), "Music as Memory: Émigré Composers in Britain" (in: *The Impact of Nazism on Twentieth-Century Music*, Böhlau Verlag, Vienna, 2014) and "Peak Experience in the Razumovsky Quartets Op. 59" (in: *The String Quartets of Beethoven*, University of Illinois Press, 2006). He is currently working on a book about Wagner and Song.

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Chapter 27

***Leitfigur* Beethoven: Thoughts on the Development of German Musicology in Light of the 1968 Movement**



Helmut Loos

Abstract Overburdening music with philosophy is a very special phenomenon that has much to do with German history. The Enlightenment in the 18th century became the basis of the forthcoming bourgeois society, music was promoted to the status of a religion and took over all their ideals, this became known as modernity. So what we call serious music is the art as religion of modernity. How different directions of this movement are based on the same principles and how it tried to survive even when it came to an end, I'll show in the example of German musicology after the Second World War. In 1970, the International Musicological Congress in Bonn was hosted by the *Gesellschaft für Musikforschung* on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. The University of Bonn's Institute of Musicology intended to contribute to the world-wide commemoration from the composer's birthplace. It was to be a memorable year indeed—in the history of Beethoven reception, it marked the imminent end of the composer's status as an undisputed *Leitfigur* of society. In his TV production *Ludwig van*, Mauricio Kagel provoked a scandal, while Karlheinz Stockhausen snarkily combined Beethoven recordings with short waves. In doing so, both composers abstracted Beethoven's compositions in ways that would have been considered malicious and offensive at the time when faithfulness to the original work was the highest aim. During that time, art music in the emphatic sense rose to a societal position of art-as-religion in Modernity. In a thus unfinished chapter of music historiography, the academic study of art in the emphatic sense was assigned the role of protector of the truth that was to make decisions about good and evil, that is a congregation of faith.

27.1 Introduction

Notions of an untouchable *opus perfectum et absolutum* conceived by a *creator ex nihilo* are epithets of God rooted in religious history. Even before the Enlightenment, they alluded to the perfectible human being, the highest example of which

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was the ingenious artist. During the 19th century, these notions were combined with an evolutionary belief in progress (Loos 2014, 2015). Unsurprisingly, in 1970, Beethoven, or rather, the romantic Beethoven image (Schmitz 1978) still exuded the highest societal authority. Even as Germany's university students rose in revolt against authority in education—including the authority of revered leaders—this position was not questioned. Kagel's film, *Heinz-Klaus Metzger* offers a dialectic interpretation of Beethoven as part of an improvised preliminary talk to Werner Höfer's radio-broadcast discussion round *Internationaler Frühschoppen*. Metzger initiated a massive attack on traditional Beethoven reception with the aim of a "corrected" Beethoven image, as has been documented by various publications including a *Spiegel* issue titled *Beethoven. Abschied vom Mythos* (Loos 2003).¹

But instead of a demythologization having taken place, one master narrative—or rather, the Gospel of art-as-religion—was replaced with another: Beethoven as a vantage point for his only legitimate successor Arnold Schoenberg and his Second Viennese School (Loos 2012a).²

In order to provide a context for the controversial occurrences of the Beethoven Year 1970, it should suffice to briefly touch on the key demands of the political revolts of 1968 without venturing into details regarding the manifold implications of the uprising against old authorities.³

27.2 The 1970 Bonn Congress

In the case of (West) German musicology, the social change and the revolt against the "establishment" took place at the 1970 Bonn Congress. While Beethoven's work and personality were given ample space, the event's symposium on current questions in musicology added a special accent. The preface of the conference report states:

The report on the symposium [...] differs from other contributions insofar that its editorial responsibility lies solely with its director and that it was already published separately before the conference report was released in full. (*Bericht über den Internationalen 1971: V*)⁴

The signing director was Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, the opening contribution was written by Carl Dahlhaus. While Dahlhaus offers an intermediary juxtaposition of historic and systematic musicology and considers the ideographic and the

¹Also see Kutschke (2010).

²Also see Lanz (2009, 2013). In the entire discussion of a musical canon, the origin of the source, namely canon law, remains underrepresented.

³Beate Kutschke discusses New Music in light of the '68 movement:

We were supposed to be re-educated in New Music, in political thinking, in our attitude toward America... (Kutschke 2014).

⁴The symposium was also published separately as: *Reflexionen über Musikwissenschaft heute. Bericht über das Symposium im Rahmen des Internationalen Musikwissenschaftlichen Kongresses der Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Bonn 1970*. Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht (ed.), Kassel a. o., 1972.

nomothetic methods as interdependent, Eggebrecht openly attacks the humanities-oriented concept of musicology, calling it outdated. He wrote of “empty activity” and “bureaucracy”, of “blind busyness, omnipresence and programmed irrelevance” (Eggebrecht 1971: 649). Instead of a musicology for its own sake, Eggebrecht propagates a sociological musicology that:

[Reflects] its purpose from the definition and the necessities of contemporary society with a commitment to progress and [...] [seeks out] where in society (e.g. in school) it can become practical. (Ibid. 650)

Without outright saying so, Eggebrecht propagates an about-face turn of musicology, much like the one Karl Marx demanded from philosophy in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach:

[It has] hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it. (Oesch 1972: 508)

Eggebrecht is, however, painfully aware of the fact that the unavoidable restructuring that he demands and expects to happen as a natural result of the “continuation of musicology itself” would cause a rift mostly “recognized and dealt with by those who were still raised according to the old concept of the humanities” (Eggebrecht 1971: 651).

The Marxist approach was controversial at best considering the socio-political implications of the East-West conflict; however, it was briefly swept aside by the issue of coming to terms with the past. Clytus Gottwald’s contribution, which blames musicology for the desolate state of sacred music, caused a scandal with one sentence alone:

The kind of positivism that restricts itself to the collection and publication of facts left an ideological void that could all too easily be filled by a mass ideology coveted by musicologists such as Bessler, as it promised to fill the idleness of positivism with a meaning that it had thus far been denied. (Gottwald 1971: 664)⁵

However, this impetus was quickly stifled within the discipline and dealing with the topic of music during the “Third Reich” was left to academic outsiders such as Fred K. Prieberg, Josef Wulf, and Hartmut Zelinsky, who, in turn, were met with hostility.⁶ In light of recent revelations regarding the National Socialist Youth of Eggebrecht, the shyness of young, ambitious musicologists regarding this issue is becoming frighteningly understandable.⁷ A broader approval of the quickly silenced impetus to critically examine the history of the discipline would not be achieved until the turn of the millennium.⁸

⁵On the same topic, Anselm Gerhard writes that Clytus Gottwald’s insinuations “provoked an acrimonious outcry among his students and other renowned academics” (Gerhard 2002: 168).

⁶Ulrich J. Blomann speaks of a “second failure” of German musicology in his article “Wie der Teufel das Weihwasser...” (Blomann 2015: 12).

⁷In summary presented by Boris von Haken (2013a, b), further reading: Boris von Haken (2015).

⁸More see Karbusicky (1995), Potter (1998); *Musikwissenschaft—eine verspätete Disziplin?* (2000); *Deutsche Meister—böse Geister?* (2001); *Musikforschung. Faschismus. Nationalsozialismus* (2001); Custodis (2012).

In the meantime, Marxism was apparently regarded as an adequate remedy for a middle class that had been deformed by Nazi ideals. While musicology entertained a lively exchange with representatives of the communist Eastern Bloc, such as Zofia Lissa and Günter Mayer, young academics found their true leader in a proponent of the Frankfurt School, which had influenced the '68 movement to a great extent with its Critical Theory. As a student of Alban Berg, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno had received a proper musical education and his philosophy convincingly supported New Music. Adorno's writings on music hit the zeitgeist and his attempt to make amends with a previously ostracized music was met with keen interest not only by the alternative-seeking youth—as the concentration on this newly advancing type of music also afforded one to turn a blind eye to the Third Reich, meaning that “one who willingly succumbs to Adorno's theses could exhibit an ideologically clear conscience” (Walter 2001: 493).⁹

During the very first public lecture of the congress, “Attempt on Newness in Beethoven”, Kurt von Fischer clearly sets course towards Adorno as the last consulted Beethoven expert as he quotes a passage from the 1968 *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, in which Adorno takes a decided stance against the theory of false consciousness as propagated by György Lukács. Agreeing with Adorno, von Fischer states that:

[Beethoven's] movements follow their own law in becoming, negating, and verifying themselves and the whole. Without so much as a glance to the outside, they become similar to the world, a world the powers of which they move; not by imitating this world. (Fischer 1971: 11)

Von Fischer thus sees Adorno's writings as a verification of the romantic music perception that claims music to be an ideal counter world. The critical stance towards the romantic Beethoven image as taken by Arnold Schmitz is not mentioned by von Fischer.¹⁰

⁹Those claiming that the study of New Music could be seen as a sort of compensation for its rejection during the Third Reich were ostracized by West-German musicology as reactionary and right-extremist. Today, this has changed, see Thrun 2009. Christoph Flamm (2010: 132) argues that with the “burning desire for justice and compensation”, an “ostracized music of another kind” came about. While Giselher Schubert states:

The success of his work in post-war Germany apparently lead Hindemith to deduce a sort of moral compensation; in it, he soberly recognized the counter-image of his rejection in Nazi Germany. (Schubert 2014: 76).

¹⁰Around 1970, Eggebrecht's paper *Zur Geschichte der Beethoven-Rezeption. Beethoven 1970* was written. Eggebrecht criticized the book of Arnold Schmitz—despite all academic standing and value—as “obviously motivated” by a desire to cleanse, by the anti-romantic effect of the 1920ies and by the attempt “to place Beethoven in a world still rooted in Christianity” (Eggebrecht 1972: 13f.). Instead of applying a critical approach to history, Eggebrecht himself seems to side with the generalized claim of a Reader-response-criticism as employed by the Constance School (see Cadenbach 1991). Interestingly, in his table of semantic fields, Eggebrecht cloaks the term “nationalism” under 11 other terms while completely avoiding “National Socialism”.

27.3 Adorno's Influence on German Musicology

At this time, Adorno's influence on German musicology had already begun to shape the young generation. His dedication to the avant-garde composers of the Darmstadt School and his successful campaign for the "Second Viennese School" propelled him into an undisputed leadership position. Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music* prescribed the positions "Schoenberg and progress" and "Stravinsky and restoration"—these are the titles of the respective chapters. An objective, neutral position was rejected: "The middle road", Adorno quotes Schoenberg's foreword of *Three Satires* for mixed chorus, Op. 28, "is the only one which does not lead to Rome" (Adorno 1975: 13).¹¹ Apparently, the main aim of this rather extremist approach was to isolate the "reactionary".¹²

According to Adorno, Schoenberg realized progress through the "evolution of material". The extent to which Adorno subscribes to old, nationalist patterns of interpretation is revealed in a passage on "German evolution of musical material", the ideal of comprehensive motivic-thematic work, which, according to Adorno, is deeply rooted in the German tradition (Adorno 1984: 134f.).¹³ With this apotheosis, Adorno presumes and demands that Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School receive the same level of social recognition as the First. Furthermore, he presents Schoenberg as the only legitimate Beethoven successor while leaving the notion of absolute value and hierarchy in regard to German composers untouched. He merely adapts his reasoning and thus acts no differently than Marx did with regard to Hegel: He turns one thing around (flipping the head to the toes) without changing the core presumptions.¹⁴

Adorno's philosophy of music has been extensively discussed in Germany since the 1950s. In the 1970s, a broad media recognition followed, fueled in part by the 1977 publishing of the series *Musik-Konzepte* by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn. Carl Dahlhaus enforced Adorno's position as musicological doctrine. In his *Musikästhetik* (Esthetics of Music) of 1967, he judges symphonic poems based on the categories "progressive—regressive" (Dahlhaus 1967a: 96). He also published the article *Über musikalischen Kitsch* (*On Musical Kitsch*; Dahlhaus 1967b), adopting the assessments of Adorno's *Musikalische Warenanalysen* from the 1930s, to which he adds a bit of analysis (amounting to rudimentary notes, at best) in order to prove their scientific validity.¹⁵ With Dahlhaus as editor, this doctrine became the prescribed standard of the *Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft*, the 19th century volume

¹¹ Younger generations of musicologists have lost understanding about the basis of musicological work of that time, rightfully demanding "a middle path between moral blindness and ideological paranoia" (Flamm 2010: 135). Also see Tischer (2010).

¹² Also see the critique of Dirk von Petersdorff (2001: 33).

¹³ For general information on the topic also see a study by Friederike Wißmann (2015).

¹⁴ A similar tendency can be observed in the student movement: After a massive protest against the arbitrary powers of professors, the corresponding aims were met—in turn, the situation was flipped, and, following a change of prefix, a similar level of arbitrariness was displayed by the students.

¹⁵ Also see Loos 1998a.

of which was published in 1980 and written by Dahlhaus himself. The discussions of French and Eastern European composers (Gounod, Rachmaninoff, Dvořák, and Tchaikovsky) are largely biased, continuing an inglorious tradition of German music historiography that extends beyond the dictatorship regimes of the 20th century. In her 2005 dissertation, Ute Lemm outlined the handbook's position on the part of music history that deals with early writings:

In regard to the topic of the Sociology of Music, the texts [congress report] 'Bonn 1970' and 'NHbMW'¹⁶ are particularly well-suited, especially given the fact that the first (earlier) text represents a direct discourse, while the handbook text that was printed more than 10 years later shows clear signs of a newly standardized discourse. (Lemm 2005: 24)¹⁷

27.4 Music of the 20th Century: Progressive—Reactionary?

Volume 7 of the *Handbuch*, written by Hermann Danuser, deals with music of the 20th century and clearly displays the dichotomy *progress—reactionary*. However, the volume's publication in 1984 was met with resounding criticism from the "Post-modernity" spectrum, making it necessary for Danuser to critically reflect the issue by legitimizing his stance while largely avoiding tangible terminology. While Danuser argues that it is necessary to consider "general tendencies of compositional, social, and institutional history" (Danuser 1984: 3) in order to present a proper assessment of composers and national music, he excludes the category of musical genre, claiming that it had already dissolved itself, having been replaced by the category of musical art. He deems it completely unacceptable to deny the "categories of newness and progress their status of groundbreaking importance", which "they undoubtedly held during the 20th century" (Ibid. 1).

Danuser then considers "artifizielle Musik" (purposely avoiding the term "Kunstmusik"), in which he includes "certain types of functional music"—excluding those "in which esthetics are degraded as means to other ends". Such "functional types—having gradually been expanded to a sort of ever-present nuisance" are excluded from his analysis.

Only with great reluctance and up to a personal "pain threshold" does Danuser put the paradigm of autonomy in the sense of absolute music into perspective. While he briefly mentions specific forms of historicism in musical life, new standards of improvisation, groundbreaking technological advancements, and the cultural industry in 20th century music history, he chooses to bypass them "to facilitate a compact

¹⁶The mentioned texts were published in *Systematische Musikwissenschaft* in 1982 (Neues Handbuch der Musikwissenschaft, Vol. 10, Carl Dahlhaus & Helga de la Motte-Haber [eds.], Laaber).

¹⁷Completely ignored by Manfred Vetter (see Vetter 1977; many thanks to Martin Thrun for pointing this out). I have thus far been unable to view Carl Dahlhaus' lecture "Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte" (Tobias Janz and Friedrich Geiger [eds.], Paderborn, 2015). Also see a study by Melanie Unseld (2014), especially pages 407–418.

description of the history of contemporary music” (Ibid. 9).¹⁸ Furthermore, he omits the phenomenon of reception history, which was articulated by Arnold Schmitz and is of relevance to any discussion of music history.

The core principles of progress and autonomy are not just stressed by Danuser—they are part of the thought structure of Modernity, to which Danuser remains loyal despite all reflexive statements. The same can be said for the lion’s share of musicological publications of the ’68 generation, especially in regard to musicological discourse, which became a sort of “quotation cartel”—and in turn impacted the outside perception of German musicology.

The question of how such uniformity of opinion could take shape in a free society was addressed after the Peaceful Revolution, as the discipline attempted to come to terms with its history in both German states. Autonomy and control were the paradigms under which the examination of the academic cultures of the Federal Republic and the GDR was conducted. As a result, remarkable phenomena were revealed: In the free West, tendencies were similar to those that developed under the state-prescribed control of academics by the Socialist Unity Party.¹⁹

In this context, questions of power were of great importance. In university politics, power positions were utilized to form “schools” and to enforce specific academic positions via a selective appointment policy. For the young academic generation, this resulted in increased conformity, as one was not keen on risking one’s career prospects. During the course of study, immense pressure was applied—taking advantage of young human beings’ natural desire of belonging in order to shape opinions. This process of “community building” extended beyond the time spent at university and into the academic routine of conferences and publications.

27.5 Disgression: Tonality

To give an example, consider the discussion on the music historic relevance of the modes during the time of vocal polyphony. In 1966, Carl Dahlhaus published his habilitation thesis on the origin of harmonic tonality. As the title suggests, Dahlhaus considered the Western tonal system to be the peak of historic development—an accomplishment that composers were striving for as early as the 16th century (Dahlhaus 1966). Eight years later, Bernhard Meier published his book on the scale systems of classical vocal polyphony, which, to a large extent, reads as a critical counterstatement (Meier 1974). Using a wealth of sources, Meier demonstrates that the modes and their inherent logical system have influenced the harmonic structure of vocal polyphony well past the year 1600.

¹⁸For a critique of Danuser’s *Handbuch* also see Scherliess 2014: 11.

¹⁹Regarding the impact of the Cold War on the issue, see the volume *Kultur und Musik nach 1945* (2015), especially an article by Anne C. Shreffler (2015). Also see a dissertation by Ulrich J. Blomann (2008).

The controversy was deepened through the span of several issues of the journal *Die Musikforschung*—as is common practice in cases of academic dispute—until the discussion lost momentum. Meier’s book was soon out of print; a new edition was not planned. Ludwig Finscher’s handbook on music of the 15th and 16th centuries merely contains two Meier references. Meier himself continued to publish his writings, but mostly abroad. The English translation of Dahlhaus’ book was published in the US posthumously in 1990 (Dahlhaus 1990)²⁰ despite the fact that Meier’s writings were already considered to be the more accurate account.²¹ This example shows that even in a free society, an outdated doctrine can temporarily be enforced by insistent silence and by suppressing opposing positions. In 1992, Meier’s work was finally published as a Bärenreiter study edition on modes²²; the fifth volume was released in 2014.

The teleological view of history Dahlhaus constructed with regard to tonality in the 16th century would shape his entire body of writings, especially those focused on Beethoven reception.²³ Once again, we are confronted with “progress” and “autonomy”, the core principles of Modernity as applied by Dahlhaus. Any examples of Beethoven’s use of the Baroque tradition, such as the one presented by Warren Kirkendale for the *Missa solemnis* were not accepted by Dahlhaus—in this sense, he remains faithful to Adorno and his assessment of the “alienated masterpiece” (Loos 1998b). Dahlhaus simply ignores the issue of reception history that was raised by Arnold Schmitz. In his essay *Das romantische Beethovenbild* (The romantic Beethoven image), he merely acknowledges the will to destroy the myth, failing to understand the approach seeking historic evaluation of different reception histories (Dahlhaus 1980: 62). What follows is a general dismissal of Schmitz’ book by Dahlhaus, who calls its position on the romantic definition “undifferentiated” (Dahlhaus 1987: 314).

27.6 Conclusions

The notions of secularization of sacred music on the one hand and sacralization of instrumental music on the other are closely connected with Modernity and represent constants in the Beethoven image that were not questioned in principle by the

²⁰Also see Krones (1994).

²¹More see Gissel (1994). While Franz Sautter calls Dahlhaus’ “theories on tonality [...] a guideline for the arbitrary interpretation of historical facts” (Sautter 2010: 215).

²²Bernhard Meier, *Alte Tonarten, dargestellt an der Instrumentalmusik des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Kassel a. o. 1992, 1994, 2000, 2005, 2014. The fact that the coverage is limited to instrumental music makes this publication a mere addition to—not a replacement of—the out-of-print volume of 1974.

²³This also applies to “post-Beethoven” music history (see Keym 2013). Keym’ criticism in regard to Dahlhaus’ normative approach was already voiced by Siegfried Kross (1990). While Kross was largely ignored, this criticism is widespread today, also see and article by Frank Hentschel, calling Dahlhaus’ method “manipulative” (Hentschel 2013: 72).

movement of '68.²⁴ Another stumbling block, however, was Schmitz' publication *Die Bildlichkeit der wortgebundenen Musik Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Mainz 1950), which covers musical rhetoric and its figurations. Dahlhaus reacts with disdain, claiming that the “venerably absurd techniques of allegories” (Dahlhaus 1965: 31) do not conform to the principle of autonomy.

Apparently, there was no true interest in the endeavor of a critical survey of the discipline's history and National Socialist entanglements. In a seemingly humble gesture, Carl Dahlhaus liked to speak of his generation as “dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants who can thus see farther”.²⁵ He was fascinated by the academic grandeur of the exceptional personalities and leaders of the discipline, whose prestigious publications would become standard academic texts. It was convenient to overlook the fact that nearly all professors who were appointed during the Third Reich were closely connected to the system²⁶; academic consequences were persistently ignored.²⁷ It should have been a logical step to look for academics who had not compromised themselves. One such example was Arnold Schmitz, who had received a negative report from the position of *Reichsleiter Rosenberg* in 1944 by Herbert Gerigk, an infamous National Socialist and author of the *Lexikon der Juden in der Musik* (Prieberg 2004: 9128). Not only was Schmitz dismissed by von Fischer, Dahlhaus, and Danuser, Albrecht Riethmüller even pushed him—along with Gustav Becking and Ernst Bücken—into the outermost (far-right) corner of a chauvinist Beethoven cult.²⁸

There are no factual reasons supporting this rejection—rather, it was the result of a political bias toward someone who was deemed a “reactionary”. This verdict was also applied to Schmitz' students, one example being Günther Massenkeil, who had organized the Beethoven congress in 1970.²⁹

Eggebrecht's 1970 demand for a musicology that would become “practical in society” (Eggebrecht 1971: 650) was apparently aimed toward a position of power in society rather than representing an attempt to escape self-inflicted isolation. While it is possible to denounce the “self-serving” humanities as empty, bureaucratic, and irrelevant, this view does not reflect the core of the humanities' social function as an informative and neutral entity amid the controversies of contemporary discourse. However, this role is a humble one—and thus hardly satisfactory for those seeking a

²⁴Examples of controversies of German musicology are given in two separate works that were published around the same time: in a follow-up on emphatic studies of the arts by Bernd Schirpenbach (2006), and in a general criticism that takes away its (historic) basis by Frank Hentschel (2006). For a recent stance on the discussion, see *Historische Musikwissenschaft. Grundlagen und Perspektiven* (Michele Calella [ed.], Stuttgart a. o., 2013).

²⁵An analogy by Bernhard von Chartres dating back to the early 12th century.

²⁶See Malkiewicz (2013). Also, for an example, see Schipperges (2006); *Musikwissenschaft und Vergangenheitspolitik* (2015).

²⁷In fact, Adorno even entertained a sort of strategic partnership with Joseph Müller-Blattau. More see Custodis (2009).

²⁸More see Loos (2012b, 2013).

²⁹It did not help his case that Massenkeil's preferred topics of research were sacred music and oratorios—genres that did not conform to the Modernist principles of autonomy and secularization.

triumphing claim for interpretation *ex cathedra*, along with a position of power and status in society.

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Summaries of the Articles

Part I

Interrogating Essence

Chapter 1

Richard Taruskin

Essence or Context?

Keywords: Hanslick, Burke, Kant, Meyer, the beautiful, the sublime, form versus content, essence versus context, nature versus culture, time versus space, metaphor, musical structure

My title indicates my skepticism of the word “essence” as applied to music, and the article consists of a gloss, in response to Nick Zangwill’s writings on Hanslick, of the passage on that important figure from my *Oxford History of Western Music*. In every case my take contrasts with Nick’s, so that a comparison of my discussion with his contribution to this volume (plus the five footnotes I added in response to it) will amount to a veritable survey of esthetic issues on which philosophers and musicologists frequently disagree. They include the relationship between the beautiful and the sublime (the one founded, in Burke’s formulation, on pleasure, the other on pain); the relationship between musical form and musical content (with the attendant issue, so important to Hanslick, of absolute music); the distinction between nature and culture and the place of musical studies among the sciences; the necessity and the possible abuse of metaphor in the perception and description of music; and, finally, the ontological status of “structure” in a temporally unfolding art form, and the question of spatialization. The concluding section proposes that Leonard B. Meyer’s aesthetics propound a more useful model for musical discussion than does Hanslick’s.

Chapter 2

Nick Zangwill**Music, Essence and Context****Keywords:** Hanslick, Taruskin, essence, history, artefact, culture, absolute music, beauty, sublime

I defend the application of the notion of essence to music. In the first part, I explain how the notion of essence might apply to events rather than objects, which would be the relevant category for thinking about music. Furthermore, I point out that the idea of essence does not exclude context, instead essence would be part of the explanation of context. In the second part, I introduce the functionality of biological things and events, and human artifacts, whether objects or events. I show how artifactual events, such as handshakes, have historical essences. On this basis, I then respond to some of Richard Taruskin's objections to thinking about music in terms of essence. I then move on to Eduard Hanslick's idea that musical-beauty should be taken to be a central function of much music. I make some points about the interpretation of Hanslick. He is often taken (by critics) to make claims that are foreign to him. Pleasure in musical beauty is his central basis for explaining what music does for us. I then defend the appeal to pleasure in beauty against Taruskin's skepticism, which invokes the sublime, as something that involves pain. I argue that this does not make sense of most musical listening, which is not an irrational activity. In part four I turn to the notion of absolute music and characterize it in a certain way. I show how Hanslick can and does allow much non-absolute music. Nevertheless, absolute music retains a certain explanatory priority with respect to the other things that music does for us. Part five address political criticisms of formalism about music. These are easily dispatched. It is not culturally parochial and the criticisms usually make problematic assertions about those of non-Western cultures. Lastly, in section six, I diagnose Taruskin's worry about nature and culture, that talking about essence gets something wrong about the cultural dimensions of human life. In reply I show how essence is essential for understanding human action, and thus also for understanding cultural human action.

Chapter 3

Jonas Lundblad**Essence Facilitating Plurality: Theorizing Art with Schelling****Keywords:** Schelling, idealism, essence, non-essentialism, the Absolute, imagination, construction, historicity, music, significance of art

For more than half a century, conceptions of essentialism have become notorious for their tendency towards static and normative one-sidedness. An anti-essentialist ethos has been prominent also within analytic aesthetics, in the wake of some instrumental studies' preference for second-order reflection on concrete criticism. This paper suggests that the classic conception of essence in art found in Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*—while seemingly steeped in unitary theories of art and questioned “mentalism”—fruitfully corresponds with more recent analytic articulations of art's essence, not least as regards aspirations to accommodate art's historicity.

In this outline, a terminology of art as a unitary and self-contained whole is employed in a manner that nevertheless recognizes plurality and historical development within art. The notion of essence is here not situated on the level of empirical properties, and eschews attempts to define a set of necessary or sufficient conditions for an object to count as art. Rather, in contrast to traditional metaphysical conceptions of intelligible essence as determinant of existence, Schelling's philosophy conceives of a dynamic interplay between ideality and reality as coeval and reciprocal dimensions. Art plays a central role in his system of thought, as an activity in which human imagination perceives a perfected unity of creative ideality and empirical reality that philosophy thematizes as essence (or absolute reality), but is itself incapable to articulate. The coincidence of essence and existence that lies at the heart of these claims entails a far-reaching flexibility, in regard to historical and empirical dimensions of art. When essence in art in this way is turned into an aspect of appreciation by synthetic imagination, Schelling's conception can facilitate unlimited empirical plurality in art, and could in principle accommodate e.g. recent conceptual or sound art.

The outlined determination of essence is in itself empirically vacuous, but is still historically substantiated. A characteristic claim of the *Philosophy of Art* is indeed that a distinct non-difference between ideality and reality amounts to the consistent content of art throughout history. In a retrospective, Schelling discusses mythology in ancient Greek tragedy as cultural presentations of such absolute reality. The social and political dimensions of art come afore in his aspiration for a novel and corresponding public art, albeit in the modern conditions of a more fragile and dynamic understanding of the interplay between human freedom and nature.

Schelling's *Philosophy of Art* provides no exhaustive definition of art, but rather primarily theorizes the significance of art within human culture as a whole. At the heart of his aesthetic thought stands the imagination's ability to perceive the material dimension of the work as an expression of a creative idea.

Chapter 4

John MacAuslan

Aristotle Meets Schumann: Essence and Geist

Keywords: music, essence, Geist, Aristotle, Plotinus, Schumann, theory, explanation, form, material

What makes something one thing, and what it is? Aristotle developed intertwined concepts of explanation, definition and unity which guide his answers. We understand a thing through explaining how its particular nature is pinpointed and its complex, evolving, interactive features are integrated. Hence his concept of "psuchē", an essence that shapes, animates, explains and unifies a living being. Schumann probably paid little attention to Aristotle, but the echo of psuchē in his notion of the "Geist" that makes a musical work one, and what it is, is less a coincidence than a link between ancient metaphysical problems and modern aesthetic concerns.

Aristotle's essences are not entities, nor about the minimal set of properties necessary and sufficient for identifying something specified; essential properties are

not the same as necessary properties. Instead one specification of something should give what it primarily is, an essence tied down, single and prior enough to pinpoint, unify and explain its nature. He uses these metaphysical ambitions as stars to navigate by in actual enquiries, for instance biological, exploring how far they can be met and aiming to come “as close as possible”. They guide the understanding of what it is to be something, whether house, human or musical work. Thus human essence or *psuchē* should explain a human’s modes of being (feeding, breathing, sensing, feeling, breeding, thinking, imagining, willing, etc.) and actualize human “matter” as a living human being. But what is it? Can it be both single and explanatorily powerful? How close can we get? Even if not fully realized, Aristotle’s requirements—for independently specifiable determinate nature in a conceptual structure, integration including of the material and temporal, and explicability through theory—can serve not as failed constraints but as guides.

Following his lead, we could ask what pinpoints, unifies and explains a musical work as seen in an aesthetic framework. We could look for an essence or Geist that could explain how a work’s manifold features are sufficiently integrated. When a musical work lives in performance, its Geist, or aesthetic nature, actualizes *as* that work a certain kind of musical “matter”. This “matter” can be read as what Schumann glossed as “musical composition”: potential sounds arranged by a composer in certain patterns (necessarily involving the material and temporal) ready to be so actualized. These include features implied by the work’s different generic levels, or by evolving interaction with its material, performance, reception and cultural environments over time. The Geist imports all of these, and is prior as a formal explanation of their integration; it is independently specifiable and not reducible to them, but it is not a separate entity existing alongside the work. It depends on conceptual structure and on explanatory theory.

How close can we then get to defining such a “matter” and a Geist for a particular work? Perhaps Geist is better suggested or implied than stated, and to some extent contextual, evolving and indefinite. The later Platonist, Plotinus, illuminates how the indeterminate can be approached. It generates new thinking because it remains an object of aspiration, beyond reach, an asymptotic limit.

The upshot is a new look at what it is to select, describe and connect a work’s musical patterns as we do, and to see a work as defined, integrated and explained, in part through what musicology may rightly leave only implicit.

Chapter 5

Kamilė Rupeikaitė

Musical Images in the Tanakh: Between their Essence, Context and Interpretation

Keywords: Tanakh, voice, sound, musical image, essence, context, interpretation, translation

In the context of the great civilizations of the Near East, ancient Hebrews, though unique in their monotheistic world outlook, followed the same principles: religion had a decisive influence on all spheres of life; Temple singers and instrumentalists enjoyed an exceptional status as the Temple was under the direct patronage of kings and priests;

academies of professional singers and instrumentalists used to be founded on the premises of the Temple. Music was part and parcel of religious and family rituals, political ceremonies, and during battles, victory celebrations and folk festivities. Use was made of all types of instruments—strings, winds, and percussion. However, being of voice and sound, the ancient Hebrew culture implemented an exceptional function of music, including instruments, and their timbres. Analysis of musical images in this article is based on the perception of the Tanakh as *a theological comment on history* (a definition by Umberto Cassuto), and takes into consideration the intangible and diverse aspects of biblical meanings. The rich world of musical imagery, recorded in the Tanakh, is of great importance because it expresses the many facets of biblical thought. One of the most significant symbols, the *shofar*—an instrument, made from the horn of a ram or goat, which is still in use today—expresses the strongest spiritual experience and signifies voice of God Himself.

In the case of most musical instruments, the *context* of their use—religious rituals, political events, folk or family festivals, etc.—modifies the semantic essence, and as a result, allows it to be flexible. *Context becomes the Essence of moral meaning of the sound*. It can be illustrated by the symbolism of the *halil* which was a folk instrument presumably of the double clarinet type. Due to its nasal, emotional timbre it was used to create a specific sentimental atmosphere, an ecstasy, and has been widely used to express both joy and mourning. The ambiguity of the *halil*'s symbolism is defined by the context. In the book of Isaiah (30: 29–32), sounds of the *halil* are compared to the joyous hearts of the pilgrims who ascend to the Temple in Jerusalem. In the book of Jeremiah (48: 36, 38) the *halil* is depicted as a sign of deep sorrow. The prophet laments about a dramatic fate of pagan nations, which he sees in his vision. The image of wailing pipes providing strong and sensuous sounds, including the emotionally strong timbre, creates a poignant, atmospheric situation.

The final canonization of the Tanakh in the 1st–2nd century CE brought to light two main problems that resulted in its dynamic interpretation—the complexity of inner thought of the original text, and specifics of conveying it into other languages. The latter problem serves as an illustration of a paradoxical phenomenon: though translations are enemies of the original thought, by reflecting *linguistic exegesis* (Tov 2001: 119), they encourage biblical texts to preserve the character of a living and ever-widening tradition.

From the perspective of musical terminology, different semantic interpretations in most of translations reveal the picturesque essence of the biblical images and possibility to extend it in a delicate way. Though the original semantics and essential characteristics of biblical musical phenomena gets lost, the interpretations get expanded by the knowledge of musical terminology that the translators possess and by their individual creativity, influenced by historical context and development of local languages. In many Lithuanian translations there would emerge new names of instruments that had not been employed in the previous versions. Some names of Lithuanian instruments and those used in Europe were recorded for the first time in the interpretations by Jonas Bretkūnas (1590) and Motiejus Valančius (1869). They testify to the intercultural importance of biblical translations as written sources of the Lithuanian musical terminology and contribute to the versatility of biblical thought.

Chapter 6

Mei-Yen Lee

Xi Kang's Reflection on the Essence of Music: "Hesheng"

Keywords: Xi Kang, "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun", *hesheng*, musical aesthetics, essence of music, *yue jiao*, Confucianism

As Confucianism considered music a tool of moral education, it only recognized music that had a positive educational effect on people was conducive to the stabilization of society and country (known as "yayue" [雅樂, the ceremonial music]), and argued that any form of music that could stimulate indulgence and desire (known as "mimizhiyin" [靡靡之音, the obscene music]) should be banned. However, after the Wei and Jin dynasties, Hsi Kang put forward a new perspective of the Confucian theory of musical art in his article "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun" (聲無哀樂論, "Music Has in it Neither Grief nor Joy"), which argued that music has its own artistic value and should be free from utilitarian purposes. He also proposed that, as the essence of music, "*hesheng*" (和聲) could only produce a sense of agitation or relaxation, and would not produce sad or happy emotions. However, there was no clear definition of "*hesheng*" presented in Hsi Kang's article "Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun".

Hsi's intention of writing the article was to reflect on Confucianism's statement of music being an educational tool for ethics and morality, rather than put forward the concept based on pure speculation. Hsi argued human emotions that resonate with music are already in existence; music merely serves as a medium that stimulates the expression of these emotions. The property of "*hesheng*" does not have physical shape or form, and exists in a purely objective state, which acts as a facilitator in the expression of human emotion. However, it is worth mentioning that Hsi Kang did not provide evidence to support the argument of his version of "*he*" being the essence of sound. If Hsi Kang's argument is true, and sound is objective and "*hesheng*" is an abstract property, more exploration is needed to explain the essence of sound having the ability to trigger human emotion. In addition, the statement that all types of music are different manifestations of "*he*" needs verifying, as well as the likelihood that certain types of music may not share the common principle of "*he*".

In fact, if a sound is created by humans, such as music, it is likely that the creator's emotions and ideas would be embedded into the creation of the sound. Since Hsi's definition of "*hesheng*" is unclear, his interpretation of the relationship between "*hesheng*" and human emotions becomes questionable. According to Hsi Kang, music being either "*yayue*" or "*zhengsheng*" has a little impact on the shifting of customs and traditions, as both types of music share the same nature of "*hesheng*". The key factor that affects the transformation of customs and traditions is the human mind, rather than music. If a person does not have internal peace that can be exhibited externally, he/she is highly unlikely to resonate with peaceful music, hence why Hsi advocated music has in it neither grief nor Joy.

Part II

Genesis and Structure

Chapter 7

Audronė Žukauskaitė

Deleuze, Ruyer, and Musical Morphogenesis

Keywords: Deleuze, Guattari, Uexküll, Ruyer, music, refrain, melody, morphogenesis, equipotentiality

The essay discusses Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the refrain, which is understood as a rhythmic pattern found both in musical compositions and natural phenomena, such as birdsongs. Following the theory of Uexküll, Deleuze and Guattari explain the refrain as an assemblage between a biological being, for example, a fish or a bird, and its milieu, and the appropriation of this milieu by specific practices of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. These practices follow a specific sonic or rhythmic pattern, which reveals the interconnections between the biological and the musical milieus. Deleuze and Guattari discover such a rhythmic pattern in Olivier Messiaen's music. Deleuze and Guattari interpret Messiaen's use of birdsongs as a practice of deterritorialization of the refrain: the artist takes a birdsong, a refrain, closely related to a specific territory, and transforms it into something else, into some sonoric quality, which can express different intensity or haecceity. In this sense Messiaen's musical compositions can be interpreted as sonic assemblages, creating the continuum between the artist, the animal and its milieu, and in this sense transforming the cosmic forces.

Deleuze and Guattari also refer to Raymond Ruyer's notion of morphogenesis, which explains the development of every living being in terms of formative melody or theme. Ruyer distinguishes between aggregates, which were formed by external forces, such as rocks or clouds, and living forms, which are defined by self-shaping, self-sustaining, and self-enjoyment. Ruyer defines the living forms or organisms in terms of a melodic line which explains the coherence and continuity of their development. In other words, a musical pattern becomes the organizing principal of morphogenetic development. However, Deleuze and Guattari do not argue that nature and culture, biology and music are one and the same thing; rather they argue that biology and music can be explained according to analogous patterns. Ruyer explains that every living being contains a certain form of consciousness which differs in its extent of development. However, it is important to note that Ruyer's theory of consciousness does not represent a certain form of panpsychism, asserting that human consciousness is present in every atom; rather it is a posthumanist claim that human consciousness is a form of self-forming activity, which defines every living being.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that culture and nature are in a state of becoming which forms heterogeneous and non-linear assemblages. This idea wouldn't be possible without Ruyer's discovery of equipotentiality which means that in the early stage of their organization the embryonic cells are capable of developing in multiple forms. Equipotentiality can be thought of as a certain melodic theme, which, though existing virtually, can be actualized and performed in many different

ways. Even after being grafted on to the other organism, the grafted cells still retain their potentiality and develop according to the specific site where they are grafted on. In other words, both the host and the graft have to interrelate with each other and form a certain chimera, or assemblage. This is a good example to prove that a biological being is not necessarily “organic” or “natural”; rather it is “assemblage-like” and “artistic”. Thus Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas, following the insights of Ruyer and Simondon, incite us to think about different forms of art, which would be based not exclusively on human activity but could also include non-human art. These alternative forms of art can be found in specific examples of bioart, such as the project by Robertina Šebjanič, *Aurelia 1 + Hz/proto viva sonification*. The project investigates the sound produced by marine animals, which is later performed by the artist. In other words, the rhythmic sonification here acts as a medium of becoming, which merges the becoming-animal of the performer and becoming-music of an animal. In this sense the project creates a scene where the virtual melody of life can actualize itself and make its development audio-perceivable.

Chapter 8

Piotr Podlipniak

The Biological Constraints on Musical Structure as the Foundations of Musical Essence

Keywords: musical structure, musical essence, tonal music, musical pulse, human nature, adaptation, acoustical phenomena, cognitive phenomena

The diversity of musical phenomena across cultures and throughout history seems to prove that the answer to the question, “what is music?” depends solely on cultural choice. In other words, music can be anything that a particular group of people decide it to be. Such an open definition of music stands in stark contrast to the fact that all known cultures use sounds, either as the building blocks of natural speech or music, depending on the interpretation of these sounds by the human nervous system. However, this interpretation does not just seem to be an arbitrary choice.

As some research suggests, newborn babies’ brains show right hemispheric dominance in the processing of simple tonal melodies but not in the processing of structurally distorted versions of these same melodies. These results suggest that humans are predisposed to interpret some sounds in a ‘music’ specific way from the very beginning of life. Although musical structure is influenced by the culture-specific characteristics of musical idioms, it seems that certain properties of human experience such as pitch classes or musical pulse are music specific phenomena. Moreover, these properties are perceptually organized into cognitive categories which differ from other perceptive interpretations of sounds such as speech or environmental noise. It is proposed that musical essence is based on a kind of perceptive bias that is a result of the evolution of *Homo sapiens*. Just like songbirds that are unquestionably tied to their songs, humans love music and spare no effort listening to it. However, the specificity of bird songs and human music differ

because of differences in the brains of bird and humans. Therefore, musical essence lies in the specific organization of human brains rather than any physical substance independent of human perception.

At the beginning the problem of the intersubjective character of musical structure was discussed. Then it was argued that music has its roots in human nature. Finally musical essence was interpreted from the biological perspective outlined previously, indicating that there is a need to divide music into two categories: ‘music as art’ and ‘music as a tool of communication’.

Chapter 9

Tijana Popović Mladjenović

‘In-between’ the Autonomous and Contingent Worlds of Music

Keywords: purely musical, musically meaningful, purely existential, contingently, contextually realized, metaphoric truth, the emotions *in* music, musical formal structure and syntax, sound sensual energy, self and sense

“What do we enjoy in our apprehension of musical structure?” or “What is it we enjoy in listening to the formal and sensual properties of absolute music unfold in our listening space?” (Kivy 2002: 69). “Why do we like music—or rather, what is the nature of liking itself?” (Minsky 1981: 28). Why do we need music at all, and why do we allow it (or leave to it) to occupy our lives without any apparent reason? (Zuckermandl 1969, 1973). Why do we need music as a way to express emotions, or why the understanding of dynamic sound pattern must move and unfold so deeply? (Storr 1975, 1992). “When music moves us, to what are we moved? What is at stake in what we come to feel? And just who do we become, who do we recognize in ourselves as being, when music addresses us?” (Kramer 2006: x, 2010).

Within the scope of this question the concepts of Mary Louise Serafine (1988) and Lawrence Kramer (1990, 1992, 2002), cross each other—the concept of *strong* or extreme cognitivism on one side, and the concept of *new* critical musicology on the other.

Serafine searches for *style* as a neutral concept (in terms of the essentialist determination of the *lower limit*), for the set of the most elementary factors of musical expression, that is, for some kind of “musical thinking *degree zero*” (Popović Mladjenović 2009: 236–237). On the other hand, “musical thinking *degree zero*”, according to Kramer, provides a basis for the reconstruction of some basic *discourse about music*, which has relieved itself of the semantic and ideological baggage of positivism, burden of formalism and all those theories which do not establish the mutual relations of music and expression, sense, meaning and its *cultural context*.

The ‘dual’ character of music, or its *a priori* ambiguity—purely musical and musically meaningful, purely existential and contingently, contextually realized—has prompted Serafine to shift the focus of her research to the disguised and overlooked generic, panstylistic processes, in full awareness of the contingency of music, which she primarily relates to the variety of stylistically specific processes of musical thinking and their affiliation with a certain world, participation in a certain “*life form*” (analogous to Wittgenstein’s term *Lebensform*).

At the same time, Kramer shifts his attention to the “opposite” side, to a neglected and excommunicated contingency of music, which he primarily links to its historical, ideological, cultural and functional imprint in the network of the contingent requirements of “*worldlife*” (analogous to the philosophy and theory of *lifeworld* expounded by Bernhard Waldenfels in his *In den Netzen der Lebenswelt*). In a word, he links the *a priori* ambiguity of music to the articulation of one of the *substantive states of subjectivity*.

In my text, an answer is now sought in the area of intersection between the autonomous and contingent worlds of music. The search for meaning takes place *in-between* such a dilemma, whereby it is emphasized that every act of music creation, performance, listening, understanding and interpretation determines itself, embodying a personal realization of mutual action of autonomy and contingency. Consequently, an analysis of the multi-layered contexture of non-musical, symbolic and musical settings, their multiplied and networked meanings of something before, during and after music in the *lifeworld*, unfolds as the *interpretation of a work* which, according to Paul Ricoeur (1975), means to discover the world to which this work refers. In fact, against the illusory search for the intention *behind a work*, Ricoeur pits the search directed to the world, which reveals itself *in front of the work*. And the work will expand the world in front of us only if its interpretation causes the second-order denotation, which is distinctly metaphoric as tension, dynamism, expression, ambiguous reference—*split reference*, and metaphoric truth.

Thus, “the search for the truth and *desire for the truth* are directed to the world which reveals itself *in front of the work*”, such as Debussy’s prelude *La Puerta del Vino* in the processes of condensation, splitting and ambivalence, as well as in the phenomena of echo, silence, pulses of life and death, and phantasm of time or, in other words, in the process of rendering specific musical expressiveness and emotional climate of this unique Debussian music unfolding in time.

Chapter 10

Nicolas Royer-Artuso

Formulating the Essence All Together

Keywords: heterophony, orality, orally transmitted musical traditions, ontology, social heterophony, memory, music

Heterophony and *heterophonic textures* present puzzles at many levels of analysis. In all works dealing with heterophony, it is explicitly or implicitly mentioned that the musical traditions in which it appears are orally transmitted. But strangely, when it comes to analyzing the heterophonic qualities of these musical traditions, their oral character does not occupy a place in the account, as if the fact that heterophony precisely appears in this type of traditions was random. If we suppose that these musicians make errors; interpret and add to their stored representations according to their algorithms; present these interpretations to their students (and audiences); and that these students copy (a better analogy would be to *transcribe*) these interpretations and that they do not have any *archive* (written, recorded, etc.) to compare. Is it realistic to suppose that these students have the

power to separate what is added from what is/was originally in the melody? Do they have the power to see what is/was the underlying representation of the teacher; and the power to understand which algorithms were added, and erase them and thus create for themselves representations that are identical to their teacher's? It is in fact quite easy to show that for different musicians, representations are not (exactly) the same: we only have to look at different written (transcribed) versions of the 'same' pieces (e.g. of Ottoman music) to see that this cannot be a realistic scenario. All this supposes that not only *one*, but a certain number of circulating similar representations of the 'same' melody(ies), co-exist at the same time in a musical community (and probably, as well, inside one musician/listener). When musicians start playing together, the different representations (plus the algorithms that are added, because it is true that musicians ornament) 'happen' together *with all that exceed*, so to speak. There is therefore no such thing as a melodic essence in heterophonic practices (of course until archival methods develop), at least not in the sense philosophers who have written on the subject of musical essences have used this term. Heterophony and the related heterophonic practices that it implies are, I claim, a forum where essence and truth are to be found *together*, collectively, in an infinite (and maybe impossible) search for essences, this forum being at the same time a negotiation on the product of the co-creation or re-creation of this essence, each time anew, because depending on the configuration of the members of the community present at the time of the performance, each member embodying a special relation with the original musical material. Of course, this picture of the forum represents an ideal situation. In the last section, I deal with non-ideal situations, i.e. situations where the processes bringing variation are impeached and by the same token the communal forum from where negotiations, new potentialities and change can emerge. This, as we will briefly see, when some people or some institutions create tools to master diversity and tools to impose on everyone what they consider as being the true essence or what they consider should be regarded as the true essence. At the moment when some notational system or recording technique starts to appear in the context of a musical tradition, everything changes dramatically: the tradition becomes anchored historically. Transcriptions from recordings (formally or metaphorically, i.e. as mnemonic traces) become, by repetition (listening), stable representations of musical events (i.e. archives). The notion of a 'true' version suddenly becomes a possibility with the help of a potential proof (recording and/or score). After the transcription process, playing the score and/or re-record what is taken from recordings, identically (if possible), is the only role attributed to the musician (with the exception of composition and improvisation). But at the same moment, many different recordings appear that propose other versions, e.g. different phrasing, slightly or abundantly ornamented versions, etc., of the same thing. Some musicians might memorize the surface details of the performance. And this is where heterophony takes back its rights.

Chapter 11

Rima Povilionienė***Mathesis as the Source of Beauty in Music***

Keywords: music and mathematics interaction, *mathesis universalis*, quadrivium, mathematical music composing

The approach to a mathematically, or rationally and proportionally substantiated world was developed far back in antiquity, and the Pythagoreans were the first to discuss the issue of uniting music and mathematics, sound and number, considering the universal harmony of numerical proportions. The Book of Wisdom obviously testifies that the Christian worldview took over and elaborated the Pythagorean concept of a mathematically based world. Later, the mathematically based theological mind manifested as the *mathesis universalis* phenomena, raised by the Renaissance philosopher and Catholic Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa.

The ancient worldview provided the mathematical basis to music, thus providing a scientific approach to the subject of music and offering a rich system of mathematical formulas, proportions and complex expressions for certain musical operations. Archytas is said to be the first person to have distinguished four related studies generalized as *mathēmata*—logistic (i.e. arithmetic), astronomy, geometry and music. But only in the 6th century it was Boethius, who merged these mathematical sciences into the so-called quadrivium. Furthermore, the development of the quadrivium concept and its impact on Christian thinking manifested in the texts by Nicholas of Cusa, describing the process of world's creation in his *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440). Attributing music to the sphere of mathematics was particularly characteristic of the Baroque epoch as well. The type of music found at that time, *musica scientia* (also *musica contemplativa/speculativa/theorica/theoretica*), was called by Gottfried Leibniz, Johannes Lippius, Jakob Adlung or Andreas Werckmeister “sounding mathematics”, “mathematical knowledge”, “the daughter of mathematics” or “the science of mathematics creating harmonious singing” (Lobanova 1994: 128). The first dictionary of music written in the German language, *Musicalisches Lexicon Oder Musicalische Bibliothec* (1732) by Johann Gottfried Walther, indicates *musica arithmetica* among different types of music. That is, arranging the sounds in proportions and numbers.

The idea of an interaction between music and mathematics has left its mark in every epoch and is of great importance in the contemporary world. In the realm of contemporary music, the constructive manipulation of the interaction between music and mathematics has become especially active and diverse. However, it is possible to systematize and generalize the renewal of mathematical techniques in 20th–21st century music by making use of the dichotomy of constructivism and semantics. Therefore, the spread of the traditions of earlier epochs can be divided into two categories: the first, formal-constructive, and the second, semantic-symbolic ways of introducing numeration into musical scores. The third aspect of mathematically composed music in the 20th–21st centuries is related to the innovations of mathematical processes, which considerably broadened the space of creative possibilities. The principles taken over from more advanced mathematics,

fast developing spheres of information technologies, began to be transformed into a practice of musical composition in the middle of the 20th century. The innovative phenomenon inspired musicological literature of a new kind that investigated algorithms and their procedures in music, application of recursive models, and chaos theory or probability theory in creating computer music as well.

Chapter 12

Svetlana Savenko

Some Remarks on Verbal Models in Music

Keywords: musical and verbal languages, verse structure, musical prose

The musical discourse as such does not use words, even in cases when the word itself is a component of the work. However, the phrase “musical *language*” is generally accepted in the European tradition. The two art forms lived for centuries in close interaction, not only in vocal but also in instrumental music. In its time vocal music borrowed directly from poetry; respectively, the verse forms determined largely the musicological terminology. This “cross-pollination” undoubtedly enriches the conceptual range of the two sciences, due to the expansion of the context fields. We see here the influence of comparison principle, of a simile, that is, a metaphor, which is based on a correlation of partial features, but does not relate to the essential characteristics of the musical and verbal phenomena. Nevertheless, there are examples of a different kind, which demonstrate the profound meaning of this problem. We can find them in the statements of the composers themselves. These are the ideas of Arnold Schoenberg of the period 1900–1910, which are closely associated with his composer practice. We can judge them from Schoenberg’s own words, that is, from his book *Style and Idea*.

The ideal, which goes back to Brahms and to the late classical tradition, Schoenberg embodied in the new syntax of works created in the beginning of the 1910s.

Many of them are vocal works, and the first to be called here is *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Op. 15. This cycle for voice and piano on poems by Stefan George is one of the key works in the history of new music of the 1st half of the 20th century.

The deeper meaning of the composition, its true-musical “words” and “phrases” are formed however not so much by the expression of the vocal part, unsurpassed in its kind, but to an even greater degree, by a real comprehension of the meaning and form of the poem. We heard a free interchange of replicas in the piece; this is the idea of musical prose in practice.

Schoenberg’s judgments have something in common with the ideas of the poet himself. At the same time, it seems to be that Schoenberg ignores the very structure of George’s verses. Each of the fifteen poems represents a single stanza metrically strictly organized with refined rhymes which are reminiscent of sonnets and other poetic solid forms. The composer interprets the verse as a free *prose* monologue.

The following example borrowed from the legacy of Modest Mussorgsky, from the cycle for voice and piano *Without Sun*, or *Sunless* (1873). The vast majority of

Mussorgsky's works is operas and songs, that is, vocal music. The composer was a creator of the original vocal style based on speech intonations. However, in the song *Within Four Walls* we hear a very restrained, almost a monotonous recitation, which slightly deviates from the steady dactylic rhythm only in the last phrase. The singularity of this music is not a coincidence; as usual with Mussorgsky, his musical solution is a direct expression of the content of a poetic source. In the verses, there is an important purely grammatical feature, namely, *the absence of verbs*. The poem entirely consists of nominative sentences, which indicate a series of moods and feelings, but not actions. We can hear in the music something analogical, videlicet the absence of a dominant harmony. Mussorgsky's "apophatic" musical interpretation is undoubtedly a fruit of pure intuition. It is a spontaneous response to the essence of the poetic source.

Finally, we might assume that our comparison of poetry and music arises at the same grammatical level of these art forms. We can see the future perspectives in studies of such kind.

Chapter 13

Diana Baigina

On the Role of Intonation in Music and Communication Practices

Keywords: intonation, music, communication, non-verbal communication, symbolism in music

A person's holistic perception of the world develops via generalization and comprehension of data coming from the sensory system. Substantial amounts of information are received by a person through communication. While the communication is often assumed to mean verbal, a significant part of communicative interaction is non-verbal. One of the most important ways of communication is vocal and sound communication, which is performed through both speech and music.

To find the communicative aspect in music and speech, I turn to *intonation*. Intonation is present in music and in speech, and it seems to be the basis on which they could form. To clarify the concept of intonation, I juxtapose the definitions proposed by the linguists Irina Torsueva (1990) and Ditmar Rosenthal (1976), with the concept of intonation developed in the works of musicologists Boleslav Yavorsky (1908, 1911–1913) and Boris Asafiev (1971). This allowed me to consider intonation *as a mechanism of sonic representation of feelings, emotions and thoughts, used by people in the process of communication*. In this vein, intonation is an instrument of semantic division in music and verbal speech. Intonation is characterized by its semantic fullness. It has the ability to perform emotionally expressive and communicative functions. Intonation is socially conditioned and may contain features of particular social group. At the same time, the origins of intonation, found in the pre-linguistic communication of our ancestors, determine its universal character.

Sound communication and music played a key role in daily routines of pre-historic people. Works of Steven Mithen (2006) and Josef Jordania (2005) show that through sound and musical communication the organization of social life of our

ancestors was carried out, social ties were strengthened, emotional self-expression and emotional synchronization with the entire group took place, which ensured the protection and preservation of the group. The first approaches to naming objects and phenomena of the surrounding world were onomatopoeia and sound synaesthesia.

With the development of language, holistic sonic communication has freed itself from the function of transmitting information, but has survived and continued its development in music (Mithen 2006: 266). Music has become an important means of communication with the higher forces, as well as a practice that provides emotional liberation and unites people.

Despite the significant differences between modern man and his prehistoric ancestor, the need and aspiration for music seem to have been preserved.

Music is able to involve the listener entirely. It has unique communicative capabilities, which are implemented through intonation. Intonation, being the semantic basis of music (Yavorsky 1908, 1911–1913; Asafiev 1971), conveys meaning directly. Rather than representing a meaning, music itself is a meaning. The process of perceiving this meaning assumes the process of experiencing the music, involving listener's self-identification with it (Orlov 1992: 334–335).

Music is always aimed at the listener, and its goal is always the expression of some idea (Bonfeld 1991: 32). While there are no fixed meanings attributed to its elements, all kinds of communicative interaction can be implemented via music.

Human ability to express abstractions existing in culture and to convey emotions and feelings in their dynamics and completeness through musical images, the similarity of responses to sound and rhythm by representatives of different cultures, characterize music as a kind of universal code that, in the course of its development, absorbed the vast experience of mankind.

Part III

Musical Work and Performance

Chapter 14

Jerrold Levinson

In Defense of “Authentic” Performance: Adjust Your Ears, Not the Music

Keywords: historically authentic performance, contextually conditioned, historically embedded, Peter Kivy

The notion of authentic, or historically informed, performance seems to have become rather suspect beginning in the 90's and continuing into the present, especially in some musicological circles. Historically authentic performance, properly construed, is a reasonable and desirable form of musical activity, and achieves a kind of value that no other mode of performance can. However this is not to deny that there are other values achieved by other modes of performance, nor that historical authenticity has to be understood in a flexible manner, nor that our epistemic access to it is in many cases highly circumscribed. What do we hope to achieve by performing music in such a way, guided by some ideal of historical authenticity?

Therefore, the article reviews some conceivable goals of authentic, or historically informed, performance with respect to composers, performers, or listeners:

Goal 1: Performing so as to achieve the most satisfying musical experience for listeners.

Goal 2: Exactly reproducing the performing sounds heard and the performing conditions prevailing at the time a work was composed.

Goal 3: Producing the same effect on contemporary listeners as performances of the composer's time did on listeners of that time.

Goal 4: Performing music as its composer would have wanted it to be performed, given present capacities and circumstances rather than those of the composer's time.

Goal 5: Establishing real contact, to the extent possible, with a past culture and past musical tradition, by making available to listeners a composer's work, or if one is allergic to talk of musical works, to the music the composer has composed, with the least distortion possible and in the technically best performance achievable.

Based on these goals, the article provides a critique of Peter Kivy on the subject of authentic performance, as contained in his stimulating and admirably clear 1995 book *Authenticities*, seeking to establish both the coherence of the *concept* of historically authentic performance and the value of the *practice* of historically authentic performance.

Chapter 15

Per Dahl

Where is the Essence of a Musical Work?

Keywords: ontology, epistemology and communication in music, artistic expression, essence of music

We predict a coherent world of symbols, meanings, and ideas from single impressions. The exchange of ideas has dominated the discourse on musical experiences, but the double ontological status of music (as both a cognitive activity and an observable object) makes it necessary to incorporate the most important non-human elements (objects) into the chain of musical communication. I present a model where the composer's idea of the musical work is restricted by its actual notational practice. The notated musical work is then given (musical) meaning by the performer through the addition of properties that consequently open potential meanings that are different from those intended by the composer. The performance as a sounded musical work is then thinner (includes fewer properties) than the performer's concept of the interpreted musical work. The listener will interpret the performance according to his/her expectations and horizon of knowledge. The utterances in a discourse of music will be thinner than the musical experience. The performer, using his/her practitioner knowledge, must be able to include both of these perspectives in constructing (building up) the interpretation (or thickening the score), and in his/her performance, he/she must react to the responses from the intersubjective context of venue and

audience as well. Taking the listener's perspective, a performance that is both reliable and valid can be said to release the essence of music through artistic expression as a personal reflection based on the cultural context.

The epistemological dimension is fundamental in all musical contexts. There is a triangular relation between the person (performer/receiver), the performance/action, and the product. What makes this an interesting communication model is its insistence on the necessity of reflecting upon the difference between the sign as an observable element in the performance, and the expression as an element in the intersubjective context of understanding the performance. This intersubjective context of operationalization forms the basis for the establishment of code recognition, interpretive communities, and good taste. In a search for the essence of music, I point to four developments in the period 1750–1800 that are of great importance to our concept of musical essence. First, aesthetics was established as a distinct discipline in philosophy. Second, the first textbooks on playing an instrument arrived. Third, when combined with music's disclosiveness, these two developments (aesthetics and work division) generated the musical "work of art" concept by the end of the eighteenth century. And fourth, the listener's perspective became relevant in philosophical discussions.

In any process of knowledge acquisition (experience), the establishment of the primary interpretative elements becomes the fundamental source of knowledge. These interpretative elements, developed through differentiation, can be non-conceptual and non-linguistic as long as they are differentiable. As listeners, we can identify an impression as an artistic expression in music without any identifiable property (ontological element) in our awareness of the aural sound. Artistic expressions might, therefore, bring new perspectives to already existing knowledge and challenge propositional knowledge.

Positioning communication as ultimately perfected in the addressee, we must extend "understanding" to the construal of a communicative event where there was none intended, or where one was intended as an entirely different thing. However, this freedom is restricted to the intersubjective social/cultural systems that are active in the context of performances. A successful performance of classical music will supply the audience with possibilities for reflection upon the essence of music as a relational dimension within a cultural context and contextualized by the idea of a musical work.

Chapter 16

Anna Chęćka

Performance as Understanding in Action: Re-thinking the Concept of Musical Experience

Keywords: performance, aesthetic/artistic values, experience, interpretation, idiosyncratic values, immersion

In my article I seek to rethink the very nature of the intimate dialogue between Orpheus (music) and the Thracian girl (a person experiencing the music). That is why I use the Gustave Moreau's painting as a metaphor of musical experience.

I aim to demonstrate that performance of Western classical music exemplifies the total coexistence of the learned *culture of meaning* and the spontaneous *culture of experience*. The performer's perspective can serve the listener as an important lesson in 'interacting intensely with sounds'. What is most important to performers, however, varies with their personal experience as members of an orchestra, chamber musicians or soloists. My own professional life is founded on intimate acts of playing the piano that is why I am inclined to approach music as affording solitary intimacy and private encounters with the musical work. I admit that the unique set of my personal experiences as a pianist (who has almost exclusively played solo) may cause me to underestimate the social dimension of experiencing music. My less objectivist approach does not aspire to be universal, although I would anticipate some agreement among receptive listeners and musicians. Though this essay falls into two parts, its structure is not strictly linear. In the first part, I focus on Stan Godlovitch's model of musical performance and try to elaborate a counterpoint to his radical personalism. My model is value-centered and focused on the intimate dialogue between the musical work and its performer. Originality—which distinguishes performances singled out from the perspective of moderate personalism—reminds us of the 'source that beats in the distance'. It reminds us, as George Steiner writes in *Real Presences*, about the 'dur désir de durer' of a work of art. After all, interpretation is a personal statement in *favor of values*; it is standing between them, *inter-pretium*. Listeners discover *the essence of music* when experience and compare different performances of the same musical work. According to George Steiner, no musicology can tell us as much as the action of meaning which is performance. Interpretation is 'experiencing the essence' in action. This is the task of my paper to spell out the implication of the musical experience remembering that, as Steiner put it, 'our master intelligencers are the performers'. The process of negotiating the meaning and discovering the essence of music is rooted in the dialectic of freedom and necessity, determined by the musical text, but also unpredictable.

The performer's efforts sometimes unite pragmatic, purposeful activity (performances are deliberate, skillful sound sequences, intentionally and humanly caused) with a 'suspension of reality' and 'hiatus' in serious living. The experience of being *in music*—an experience accessible to performers—distills the essence of humanity. Generally, a performer intends to play well and even to exceed certain standards of proficiency. Whatever the notion about the desired effect, the performer can never be sure of achieving the highest level of execution and experiencing a 'suspension of reality'. In other words, one cannot have a perfect plan for a miraculous meeting between Orpheus and the Thracian girl. Time and circumstance may frustrate the performer's desires. Part 2 considers the mysterious ways in which the idealized 'suspension of reality' can be fully realized. The axiological perspective from Part I is complemented by an idiosyncratic one.

Chapter 17

Roberto Zanetti**What Is a Musical Act? Understanding Improvisation Through Artefact and Performance****Keywords:** ontology, music, aesthetics, improvisation, artefact, performance, act

Since its birth in the mid-fifties of the 20th century, musical ontology faced serious difficulties in articulating the relationship between the artistic process of giving rise to a work of music and the final product of such an activity. This could be explained if we consider that musical ontology always aimed at investigating what kind of properties we need to identify works of music, leaving aside—or, at least, putting in background—the modes of reception and production that influence and determine the emergence of such properties. The so called “practice turn” in music analysis played a great role in highlighting these aspects, but committed the mistake of neglecting the product again.

With this article I would like to move from the process/product dichotomy to provide a general outline of improvisational phenomena, in which most of musical ontology’s assumptions—the duality between work and performance, creation and rendition, essence and context—seem to be flawed. To do this, I will focus on the notions of artefact and performance, seeing them as complementary counterparts in what I would call musical act.

If we intend artefact as “an object that has been intentionally made or produced for a certain purpose” (Hilpinen 2011), and performance as an action that implies some kind of achievement, we can argue that artefacts have been conceived for being recognized into a public—i.e. performative—sphere. Consequently, improvisation could be seen as the ideal paradigm in which performance conditions enter directly into the constitution of an aesthetic artefact, and, hence, a musical act takes place.

This could significantly reorient the contemporary debate about ontology of music towards a detailed analysis of artefacts as “social objects” (Ferraris 2009) acquiring their status not through abstract metaphysical properties, rather through publicly performed acts of inscription.

Chapter 18

Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska**The Experience of Music as a Process of [Self]Development****Keywords:** musical process, music aesthetics, aesthetics experience, listening, music perception

The text presents music as essentially processual. Author claims that music is a process, a continuation, following through. Musical works and music experience is perceived as development, succession, dialogical reaching out and harmonizing. Many different, complex and surprising processes. To explain music’s processual nature author turns to phenomenology and phenomenological writing on music. Roman Ingarden and Mikel Dufrenne seem both to be the best examples of seeing music as most worthy object of phenomenological research and in their studies on

music, they explain and describe music as experience, as process, as development. In describing musical processes that occur either in creation, performance or listening experiences the author underlines that among many varied processes that appear as music and that music appear as, the process of self-development, of growing and evolving seems the most interesting and most worthwhile. Thus the author focuses on a specific process of human development, which occurs during listening as much as during performing music. This is a process of growing and self-realization, of bettering oneself and overcoming one's weaknesses. In the course of the paper to follow the processual character of music the author turns also to Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Arnold Berleant in their descriptions of the phenomenologically understood experience and perception of music but also to Jerrold Levinson and his understanding of music through a process of listening from moment to moment and even to Theodor Adorno and his way of explaining music as a process of dialectical development. In the text the musical processes are divided into those belonging to creation phase with example of Steve Reich and his minimalistic piece *Piano Phase*, the performing phase with example of Leszek Możdżer as a performer for Reich's work and the listening phase. However those processes and experiences overlap very strongly and phases themselves change one into the other. Further on author turns to Stan Godlovitch, who explains the work of art as a performance and to Naomi Cumming, whose account of personal struggle and development through musical training in her *The Sonic Self* has been very instructive in describing subtle processes of stylistic and more profoundly individual changes that happen during many years of learning to play an instrument. Finally author turns to Roman Ingarden and his understanding of aesthetic experience as including many phases and developing towards a culminating phase of realizing an aesthetic value. In conclusions author underlines the phenomenological understanding of the world and its experience as a process and the musical process, which are not just continuous and developmental in nature, but which in composition, performance or listening experience are helping and working through in developing of self—the most important growing process of all.

Chapter 19

Temina Cadi Sulumuna

Essence and Context: Exploring the Links Between Music and Philosophy in the Light of Henriette Renié's Reflections

Keywords: essence, cultural context, Christian philosophy, intimate writings, composing music, musical performance, Henriette Renié, Plato, Saint Augustine, Paul Ricœur

Henriette Renié (1875–1956), a French virtuoso harpist and composer, was engrossed in the question of essence in music. This is evidenced by her prolific intimate writings in which she developed her reflections by drawing on the teachings of recognized philosophers and theologians, among others, Plato, Saint Augustine, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, Auguste Joseph Alphonse Gratry, and Charles Louis Gay. She would immortalize

her thoughts in the form of diaries, separately entitled notebooks as well as on loose tiny, inconspicuous sheets of paper. On several occasions, she tried to define the essence of music in letters to her eminent harp students or to her goddaughter Françoise des Varennes, a recognized poet and playwright.

The first part of the article outlines Renié's process of defining the elements by which the essence of music is determined. The composer thoroughly examines this issue from the point of view of a devout Christian. It is not therefore astonishing that among the constitutive elements of essence in music she enumerated Christian values because of their immutability. She was inspired by Saint Augustine's teachings that only God's existence, knowledge and will are unchangeable (Saint Augustine 1996: 147). Due attention is given to another essential element conditioning the essence—a relentless striving for perfection, and at the same time to explaining the terms of “perfection”, which in Renié's understanding meant “beauty coming from God”. For this reason, striving for perfection equals seeking for beauty in both spiritual and artistic spheres; it encompasses the process of improving one's own soul, and the process of improving one's own art. From this flows another determinant of essence in music: conveying beauty. While considering this question in a letter (1937) to her goddaughter, Renié drew on the teachings of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, a 17th century French theologian. Among other elements creating essence in music are: preparing oneself for an act of composing a musical work, Divine inspiration, and the artist's adequate attitude consisting in acknowledging that artistic talents are God's gift. Thus, Renié evoked the teachings of Saint Augustine (1996: 11) and St. Matthew's Gospel (22, 21). In the second part of the article, the focus is placed upon Renié's reflections on the relationship between essence in music and its contexts. Cultural context is touched upon by presenting the composer's thoughts on the Malagasy religious music, immortalized in a short letter dated 1 April 1918 to her brother François Renié. Unfortunately, in her writings, the issue of contexts is far less developed than the one discussed in the first part of the present article. The same must be said for the issue of feeling to which is devoted the last part. However, considering an extreme importance attributed by Renié to feeling in the process of trying to fathom out the essence of music, this question is discussed in a separate part. The issue is presented at the background of Renié's explanations in a letter (1910) to her harp student as to how to grasp the essence of Beethoven's music.

Chapter 20

Sheryl Man-ying Chow

Redefining Essence: Tuning and Temperament of Chinese Traditional Music

Keywords: Chinese traditional music, equal temperament, essentialism, microtonal intonations, Zhu Zaiyu, intangible heritage, preservation of tradition, aesthetics of Chinese music, linear progressivism, science and music

Since the 20th century, the circulation of Western music has elicited different reactions in the non-Western world. The ways in which people in the non-Western world handle Western music are not only conditioned by the nature of their musical

systems but also by their attitudes toward their own musical traditions under the influence of Western culture and ideology. In the 20th century, Chinese music reformers saw Western music as scientific in its use of harmony, technologically advanced instruments, mathematically rational temperament, and its association with scientifically advanced societies. They saw the absence of harmony and standardized tuning in their music as a sign of inferiority, and hence advocated the incorporation of tonal harmony and equal temperament into their music (Kraus, Mittler). Many fretted or fixed-pitch traditional Chinese instruments, such as the *pipa* and the *yangqin*, were modified for equal temperament. The determination of which features or parameters of traditional music are to be incorporated or dismissed inevitably leads to an essentialization of Chineseness in that some musical parameters (e.g. pentatonic mode) are selected at the expense of others (e.g. microtonal intonation). Their attitude toward the musical tuning or microtonal intonation of Chinese traditional music in the face of equal temperament reflected their conception about the essence of Chinese musical culture. For instance, although both Chinese and Egyptian modernizers saw the piano as a vehicle of musical progress for its mechanical technology and standardized tuning, the Egyptians were more inclined to retune the piano to play microtonal intonation, albeit standardized, for Arab music, whereas the Chinese maintained the equal temperament. However, in the twentieth-first century, more and more Chinese music scholars and musicians advocated the use of microtonal intonations an essential feature of traditional Chinese music. Isolating the little-studied parameter of tuning and temperament, this paper explores the changing view of the essence of Chinese music in the context of the globalization of Western music.

Part IV

Musical Aesthetics of Modernity

Chapter 21

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman

The Final Radicalism of the Avant-Garde and Its Postmodernist Consequences

Keywords: avant-garde, avant-garde's self-destruction, postmodernism, institution of art, immanent/suspensive/postmodernist avant-garde

The current postmodernist position of the avant-garde, which is the subject of this paper, is considered as the consequence of the final radical step of the avant-garde. This step is comprehended here as the avant-garde's decision to compromise with the institution of art, that is, tradition. The decision was caused for complex reasons—psychological, artistic and cultural, and occurred in that “moment”/“phase” of the existence of an avant-garde movement, which I explain and name as an *interspace* between the avant-garde agony understood by Poggioli as the last “moment” of the avant-garde's life, and the avant-garde's integration into tradition. Namely, I claim that the avant-garde's agony as the way in which the avant-garde experienced its own failure, was followed by two additional “phases” in its life: first, the said interspace, and second, the mentioned avant-garde's integration into tradition, which directly originated from this interspace. The reason

why is that the interspace referred to the point of the unstable rank of the avant-garde, in which it was neither positioned as avant-garde, nor had it yet been included in the institutional hierarchy of art, meaning, of artistic tradition. Hence, the decision of the avant-garde to “unravel” that interspace by effecting a turn towards the past/tradition/institution, the rejection and destruction of which was once the avant-garde’s central goal, was essentially radical and far-reaching. In fact, it was then that the avant-garde for the last time acted as the avant-garde, by bringing its final nihilistic decision and carrying out its last destructive execution: of itself. The consequence of that was a radical change of its own construct due to the sort of its compromise with tradition, through which the avant-garde established postmodernism and determined its own position within it.

In the first stage of postmodernism, which, at least in music, lasted from the end of the 1960s till around the mid-80s, that position showed the “death” of the avant-garde as a typical movement known from the constellations of the historical avant-gardes, now involving the avant-garde as pulled apart to its own fragments which, in newly produced works, can be freely combined with the fragments of any other musical streams or movements or styles from the entire musical heritage (professional and indigenous), which in postmodernism had the same fate as the avant-garde: being decentralized and disassembled.

By losing its axle and integrity, the avant-garde provoked its reconceptualization, because in new societal and artistic conditions it can no longer be treated as a radical phenomenon of modernism. Here, I mentioned two of these reconceptualizations. One, by Walter Adamson, who proposed the term *immanent avant-gardism*, and the other, conducted by John Roberts, who chose the term *suspensive avant-garde*.

No matter how acceptable the cited constructs are, each from the perspective of its argumentation, these actually refer only to the position of the particularized avant-garde as its new ontology in postmodernism. But there is also another consequence of the avant-garde’s self-destruction, which occurred in the form of a new transformation of the avant-garde. I pinpoint it in specific “regroupings” of its “traces”, produced by postmodernist methodology. It is characteristic of the mature and the late phase of postmodernism, and I consider it here under the term *post-modernist avant-garde*. I find the term appropriate to indicate both the non-avant-garde nature of the current “avant-garde”, and the very method through which the faces of the contemporary “avant-garde” have been shaped.

Chapter 22

Hyun Höchsmann

Essence and Context: Process of Becoming and Dialectical Temporality in Adorno and Nono

Keywords: process of becoming, truth content, musical progress of time, modes of listening, sonic reality, autonomy and social significance of music

Adorno’s conception of the work of art as a process of becoming and his emphasis on the simultaneity of the autonomy and social significance of art present a possibility of bridging the gulf between essence and context. Adorno emphasizes

the processual nature of art in contrast to notions of essences as static formal structures or a composite of discrete attributes. When situated or “objectified” in the context of historical, social, and cultural settings, music “produces itself” in accordance with its essence, “the tendencies at work within it”. At the same time Adorno recognizes that musical composition is clearly a fixed entity. But insofar as in seeking to understand the meaning of a musical work in terms of its formal structure, thematic core, and the relations and development of musical ideas, a musical work is processual and becoming.

Adorno’s understanding of dialectical temporality as the interweaving of subjective and objective dimensions of temporality illuminates the intersection of essence and context. The essence of music consists in its development of musical ideas and elements in the internal organization, which is identified as the continuous process of transformation among the constituent parts. Insofar as the internal organization of works of art is governed by the parameters pertaining to specific field of art, the works are autonomous. The internal features establish the “autonomy” of music. But at the same time, as Adorno emphasizes, to the extent that works of art exist in the external contexts of historical, political, cultural, and social spheres of interpenetration, they can be meaningful in presenting alternative ways of being in the world. Because of the independence of art, it can clarify or illuminate social reality as a mirror or a lamp and can have objective social significance.

Adorno’s aesthetics of music comes to life in Nono’s compositions. Seeking to discover “a new way of thinking music” and “a transformation of thinking”, Luigi Nono (1924–1990) explored the possibilities of new modes of listening and re-awakening active listening. The central concepts of Adorno’s aesthetics (works of art as processes of becoming, the autonomy and social significance of music, the fragmentary nature of truth content) are at the foundation of Nono’s exploration of musical material and his compositional methods. Nono’s openness to the context and the compositional methods of quotation and montage extend Adorno’s conception of works of art as a process of becoming.

Nono understood the development of serialism as not only a revolutionary departure but “the result of a historical evolution of music, conditioned by the human and musical necessities of our time”. Nono affirms the simultaneity of musical invention and moral and political insight and action. Emphasizing the necessity for contemporary music to “intervene in the sonic reality of our time”, Nono’s critical composition resonates with active moral and political engagement in the historical conditions of the present.

Adorno affirms that music encompasses intimations of utopian possibilities for a better world related to the task of philosophical activity as a transformation of society: “The real social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevailing” (Adorno 1967: 122). Adorno’s thinking on the autonomy and the truth content of art elucidates the epistemological and social importance of music: the development of theoretical and practical understanding of music expands the freedom of creative process as a significant form of knowledge. On the horizon of anticipation, Adorno points to the possibility affirmation of freedom in art in unity

with society. As a musical composition compresses time, and as painting folds spaces into another, so the possibility is concretized that the world could be other than it is (from *Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 138). Phillips has observed that Adorno is “less skeptical about utopian promise in his aesthetic theory” (Phillips 2009: 169).

Adorno affirms the hope for musical listening to “leave the road of the always identical” and to align itself with the idea of “progress in the consciousness of freedom”. This hope resonates in Nono’s music.

Chapter 23

Vita Gruodytė

The Distance of *Presque-rien* Between the Musicology and the Philosophy of Music

Keywords: Jankélévitch, Fauré, philosophy of music, analytical distance, *Presque-rien*, ineffable, aesthetical fusion

Jankélévitch begins his musical approach with quite traditional analyses. So, the first stimulus for this text was the curiosity to understand the deviation from the musicological discourse (*Gabriel Fauré and his songs*, 1938), and its progression towards the philosophical one (*Music and the Ineffable*, 1961).

Throughout his study about Fauré, Jankélévitch the musicologist keeps a perfect analytical distance—neither too far nor too close—in order to understand and describe the intellectual mechanisms of the composer, and preserves the direction of his analysis: it is *to* the work that he turns, he gives his point of view on the music he deciphers, plays or listens to. Thus, it is at the end of his book on Fauré that appear the first glimpses of the upcoming changes. In fact, to try to understand the Charm, the mystery of the work that remains unsolved after his analysis, Jankélévitch turns toward himself, to his own emotions. The philosopher becomes aware of the offset and the abyss between the ipseity of a work and the awareness of an existing but invisible, or rather inaudible, reality.

The search for this *almost-nothing*, without which music would not be what it is, becomes the only one prism through which he tries to understand any musical experience. The search for this *almost-nothing* becomes the path of thought that the philosopher follows from the ‘analyzed and disassembled’ structures, through the truth of experience that perception delivers, to the extreme border of what is inaudible in music, namely, silence.

The change of direction in Jankélévitch’s text—turning to the affects that music provokes in him—is accompanied by the search for the perfect distance with the musical work in order to *penetrate* its mystery. To explore this aesthetic space entirely, Jankélévitch therefore moves simultaneously in two opposite directions: on the one hand he *distances* himself from what can be ‘analyzed and disassembled’ in the musical work to find analogies with other art forms, to compare it with other experiences, and on the other hand he *approaches* it to observe it closely as a biologist would. And since there are no limits in this rapprochement, the philosopher ends up espousing the musical flow, empathizes with it, and he realizes that the music belongs to the same temporality that its own existence has.

The experience of the work becomes his own experience, the analysis of his own emotions. Jankélévitch goes through the music to his own interiority and realizes that behind the sounds hidden structures exist. Behind each of these hidden structures lies what philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, speaking of Marcel Proust, called ‘an internal act’, since one recognizes an emotion only if it already exists. Here the intimate perception is related to a common experience.

From this perspective, coming closer to and moving away from the musical work, become, somehow, two movements of the same act, since the latter reduces the perception of the present and the memory of the past to the same interiority. Distance here plays the main role, since its presence allows an analytical approach, and its absence, an empathic experience.

Since the process of understanding music espouses the temporality of the musical work, it must also, like music, be born from the original silence and end with the final one.

Indeed, his writing has musical features. In *Music and the Ineffable* Jankélévitch’s thinking is composed as a continuous variation, in which the most important sentence of all this text goes almost unnoticed. This sentence is presented not as the result of a long reflection, but just as a fleeting appearance. This sentence summarizes what Jankélévitch the musicologist was unable to say at the end of his first book on Fauré. Just by brushing against our attention, it gives us a glimpse of the secret, of the ‘winged mystery’, what Fauré’s music is in its indivisible wholeness, in what it is Charm. It also reveals the long distance that the philosopher has travelled from the ‘analyzed and disassembled’ structures to reach this imperceptible *almost-nothing* lying just at the extreme limit of the perceptible.

Chapter 24

Maria Karachevskaya

Mikhail Gnessin on the Essence of Music and Russian Music

Keywords: Mikhail Gnessin, Russian music, Russian musicology, Silver Age, essence of music, programed music, musical time, musical space

Gnessin’s article *On the Essence of Music and Russian Music* is one of the outstanding treatises in Russian musicology of the early 20th century. The main problem of the article is whether music is an “absolute”, pure art, or whether it is a mimetic art. Gnessin addresses the fundamentals—the place of music among the other arts and its characteristic properties. He examines music in four classifications of the arts according to their different characteristics: (1) spatial-temporal, (2) visual-audial, (3) impressionable-emotional, (4) figurative-constructive (or mimetic-nonmimetic). Gnessin primarily refutes the claim that music is a temporal art. He designates the very important concepts of musical time and musical space. According to Gnessin the measurement of time in music is provisional: “It could just as accurately be called a measurement of space. [...] music abides neither in time nor in space, but in something in between.” (Gnessin 1915: 18).

Next aspect is what “movement” is in music. Gnessin notes that the idea of music as a temporal art is primarily based on the performed reproduction of a

musical piece. However, movement cannot be considered only a shift in the parts of a musical composition. Gnessin believes that this only creates an *illusion* of movement, while in fact a musical composition exists beyond time, space, the performer's interpretation and the listener's perception. He essentially distinguishes between the *object* of art (the musical composition) and its *artistic image*, i.e. the emotional impression the music being listened to makes on the listener, which takes time to emerge.

Gnessin also draw an interesting analogy between music and the plastic arts. According to him, musical "material" (sound) in no way differs from the material used in sculpture (for example, clay). Both of these materials have the same qualities: "malleability" (musical theme can be modified—lengthened, shortened, transposed or varied) and the ability to be shaped. Gnessin comes to the conclusion that musical images are a special kind of plastic image.

The key question of Gnessin's article is: what is the essence of music? Is music capable of portraying any kind of vital process or depicting different human emotions, or is music simply a sound construction? Based on the example of the two types of composers ("constructive" and "emotional"), Gnessin essentially shows how a musical composition emerges in a composer's mind. He comes to the conclusion that every artist has his own idea of the nature, essence and aim of musical art. For some, music is primarily an "absolute", "pure" and "constructive" art that has no emotions or inner turmoil. For others, music is primarily a way of expressing human feelings and portraying natural phenomena and true-life situations. Thus, the nature of music is *ambiguous*—it can equally be both an absolute and a mimetic art.

Chapter 25

Anna Fortunova

Reflections About the Essence of Music in a Special Context: Music Reviews by Yuri Ofrosimov and Ludmila Landau in Berlin in the 1920s

Keywords: Essence of music, music criticism, Russian music, Russian émigrés, Berlin, 1920s

Even with all the internal inconsistencies and contradictions, Landau's texts—like those of Yuri Ofrosimov—were of great worth to readers in the 1920s. They reveal themselves as intelligent, gifted critics who were well-versed in Russian culture. These sources reflected upon Russian art: competently, thoroughly, sensitively, deeply, and with a desire to concentrate on substance. Such a communication with and reflection upon the culture of their home country was for the Russian emigrants of the first wave of enormous value.

But even today, these reviews have not lost their topicality: they not only reflect the personal feelings, perspectives, thoughts, and emotions of their authors, but also reveal much about the time and culture in which they were written. Thus, they can contribute to our understanding and aid in personal development. They help us to better understand the nature of art as a part of culture, allowing us to interact with it, and therefore convey meaning beyond their historical context.

Chapter 26

Malcolm Miller**Essence, Context and Meaning in Versions of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* by Wagner, Mottl and Henze**

Keywords: transcriptions, arrangements, orchestration, aesthetics, essence, Wagner, *Wesendonck Lieder*, Henze, Mottl, music analysis

Roger Scruton's claim in his *The Aesthetics of Music* that transcriptions of an original are "attempts to realize, in another medium, its musical essence" (Scruton 1999: 453) appears to affirm that essence is separate and distinct from its medium. But can one parcel off medium in so clear-cut a way? My thesis is that the identity and the essence of a work is the result of the combination of various musical elements which includes sonority, as well as the contextual aspects of performance.

At some point in the history of music instrumentation was indeed, as Scruton puts it, 'accidental', unspecified due to social conditions of changing ensembles and forces. Even in the Renaissance and Baroque, witness Bach's adaptations of Vivaldi, there is an element of specificity that required translation. In the 19th century when composers were thinking coloristically, the musical idea was intimately intertwined with its sonority.

Shifting medium also shifts genre, with its concomitant range of expectations and meanings. A Beethoven symphony reduced to a piano duet exchanges large-scale public, professional quasi-religious musico-aesthetic experience for an intimate amateur domestic setting. The essence of a string quartet is its string quartet-ness: expand it for string orchestra and that aspect of its essence changes. To orchestrate a Lied as an orchestral song transforms the musical experience. Twentieth-century orchestral restructuring may constitute imposition of elements with a resultant clash, or it may, rather, emphasize, underline elements that are implicit, but hidden within that original. The strategies of such arranging are usefully illuminated by the useful typology in 'Judging Covers' (Magnus et al. 2013: 361–370) about pop songs but applicable to classical arrangement. The covers range from mimicking, to 'rendition', transferring style and genre, 'transformative' adaptation, which may become canonical, and 'referential', commenting on the original. Similarly a referential arrangement is one that acts as homage whilst asserting individuality, and may express what Joseph N. Straus describes as 'deliberate misreading' in recomposition where a composer asserts dominance over precursors.

I explore those issues in multiple versions of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* of 1857–1858. Originally for piano and voice, one rescored by Wagner for solo violin and ensemble and then two songs reworked within *Tristan* (Miller 2014). I compare Wagner with orchestrations by Felix Mottl (1856–1911) in 1893, and in 1976 by the German composer Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012). Reflecting late-nineteenth and late 20th century strategies, both re-create Wagnerian sonorities in different ways, and in each there is a balance of contemporary style with a response to the original. Especially significant are the references to Wagner's orchestration of the

songs within *Tristan*, such as Henze's use of cor anglais in *Im Treibhaus* evoking the desolate 'alteweise' that greets Tristan's hallucinations of Isolde's arrival.

Mottl's aesthetic aim is to emulate Wagner's style based on first-hand experience of working at Bayreuth, whilst Henze's version represents a rapprochement to what was anathema to him, in the context of the post WWII Germany he spurned for Italy. Following his powerful electro-acoustic *Tristan* (1972), the song orchestrations reflect a further 'coming to terms' with Wagner's music, with the effect of freeing Henze from its powerful influence; indeed Henze's Wagner, like his numerous arrangements of past music, acts as an expression of the post-modern aesthetic. The works' intertextuality gives rise to fresh meanings and relational essences, as shown by the continuing allure of Wagner's songs, as in a new 2015 version by Francisco Coll Garcia, a protégée of Thomas Adès. I conclude that arrangements provide a useful crucible for the exploration of the intertwining of essence and context to generate musical and social meanings.

Chapter 27

Helmut Loos

***Leitfigur* Beethoven: Thoughts on the Development of German Musicology in Light of the 1968 Movement**

Keywords: Ludwig van Beethoven, modernity, art as religion, the 1968 movement, demythologization

In 1970, the International Musicological Congress in Bonn was hosted by the *Gesellschaft für Musikforschung* on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Beethoven's birth. The University of Bonn's Institute of Musicology intended to contribute to the world-wide commemoration from the composer's birthplace. It was to be a memorable year indeed—in the history of Beethoven reception, it marked the imminent end of the composer's status as an undisputed *Leitfigur* of society. In his TV production *Ludwig van*, Mauricio Kagel provoked a scandal, while Karlheinz Stockhausen snarkily combined Beethoven recordings with short waves. In doing so, both composers abstracted Beethoven's compositions in ways that would have been considered malicious and offensive at the time when faithfulness to the original work was the highest aim. During that time, art music in the emphatic sense rose to a societal position of Art-as-Religion in Modernity. In a thus unfinished chapter of music historiography, the academic study of art in the emphatic sense was assigned the role of protector of the truth that was to make decisions about good and evil, that is congregation of faith.

In order to provide a context for the controversial occurrences of the Beethoven Year 1970, it should suffice to briefly touch on the key demands of the political revolts of 1968 without venturing into details regarding the manifold implications of the uprising against old authorities. In the case of (West) German musicology, the social change and the revolt against the "establishment" took place at the 1970 Bonn Congress. While Beethoven's work and personality were given ample space, the event's symposium on current questions in musicology added a special accent. The signing director was Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, the opening contribution was

written by Carl Dahlhaus. While Dahlhaus offered an intermediary juxtaposition of historic and systematic musicology and considers the ideographic and the nomothetic methods as interdependent, Eggebrecht openly attacked the humanities-oriented concept of musicology, calling it outdated. At this time, Adorno's influence on German musicology had already begun to shape the young generation. His dedication to the avant-garde composers of the Darmstadt School and his successful campaign for the "Second Viennese School" propelled him into an undisputed leadership position.

The notions of secularization of sacred music on the one hand and sacralization of instrumental music on the other are closely connected with Modernity and represent constants in the Beethoven image that were not questioned in principle by the movement of '68. Another stumbling block, however, was Schmitz' publication *Die Bildlichkeit der wortgebundenen Musik Johann Sebastian Bachs* (Mainz 1950), which covers musical rhetoric and its figurations. Dahlhaus reacts with disdain, claiming that the "venerably absurd techniques of allegoreses" do not conform to the principle of autonomy. Apparently, there was no true interest in the endeavor of a critical survey of the discipline's history and National Socialist entanglements. In a seemingly humble gesture, Carl Dahlhaus liked to speak of his generation as "dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants who can thus see farther". Eggebrecht's 1970 demand for a musicology that would become "practical in society" was apparently aimed toward a position of power in society rather than representing an attempt to escape self-inflicted isolation. While it is possible to denounce the "self-serving" humanities as empty, bureaucratic, and irrelevant, this view does not reflect the core of the humanities' social function as an informative and neutral entity amid the controversies of contemporary discourse. However, this role is a humble one—and thus hardly satisfactory for those seeking a triumphant claim for interpretation *ex cathedra*, along with a position of power and status in society.

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