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Music and Time

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Music

Andrew Kania

In a survey of discussions of the idea, Philip Alperson (1980) compellingly argues that there is no coherent account of a metaphysically distinctive *musical time*. Music takes place in “ordinary” time, and our experience of it is ordinary temporal experience. Alperson argues that music is nonetheless distinctively an “art of time,” in that it exploits and thereby draws attention to certain aspects of (ordinary) temporal experience. It is no coincidence then, Alperson suggests, that philosophers have often drawn on musical experience in order to make points about the nature of temporal experience in general. In this essay, I survey some temporal features of music and the debates about the nature and value of musical experience that they have engendered. I restrict myself to consideration of Western music because it is the music with which I am most familiar and on which most of the literature I discuss is focused.

The definition of music

In the course of constructing a definition of music, Jerrold Levinson claims that “[m]usic as we conceive it seems as essentially an art of time as it is an art of sound” (1990: 273). His aim is to exclude from the realm of music, on grounds of intuitive adequacy, “colorful instantaneous combinations of sounds – i.e., chords of vanishingly brief duration” (1990: 273). Given Levinson’s own gloss here, together with the reasonable assumption that the notion of a literally instantaneous sound is incoherent, it seems charitable to take the sonic events in question as extremely short, though not of any particular duration. Such sounds are surely far from being paradigms of music for anyone. Yet there are actual candidates for the status of music that arguably violate the necessary condition that Levinson proposes on the basis of such considerations, namely that for sounds to count as music they must be “temporally organized” or developed (1990: 273). And these candidates vary significantly in length. One is La Monte Young’s *Composition 1960 #7*, which consists of a single open fifth “to be held for a long time” on the piano. It might be argued that there is temporal development in this piece, since one point of interest is how the inevitably “impure” sound changes over time, as a result of the decay of, and interference between, the sound waves produced by the various strings of the piano responsible for producing the two tones. But there are other pieces where such development is minimized, whether through the use of electronic sound sources or ensemble effects. For instance, Yves Klein’s *Monotone-Silence Symphony* (c. 1957) consists of a D-major chord played by a chamber instrumental and vocal ensemble for five to seven minutes (followed by 44 seconds of silence).

A different way to try to bring such pieces into the fold of music might begin with the fact that they are not even close to instantaneous, unlike the examples of near-music Levinson gives. Perhaps their mere duration – a significant feature of such minimalist works – could be argued to meet the temporal-organization condition. However, this would put the defender of the condition in an awkward position. If a chord held for five minutes counts as music, but a “vanishingly brief” chord does not, what is the minimum duration of a piece of music? Any answer specifying a particular length will be unacceptably arbitrary. One could appeal to audibility as the criterion, but only at the expense of classifying as music the examples that motivate Levinson in the first place. Besides, finally, there are extremely brief candidate musical performances. On July 16, 2007, for instance, the White Stripes played a show in St. John’s, Newfoundland, comprising a single note on the guitar and a cymbal crash (both stopped short). The band ostensibly took this to be a musical performance, since guitarist Jack White immediately announced that they had now performed in every province and territory in Canada.

A more likely strategy for anyone convinced of the necessity of temporal organization for music would surely be to *reject* these candidates for musical status on the grounds that they fail to meet the condition. Presumably what Levinson had in mind by “temporal organization” or “development” was, at the very least, two temporally distinct musical events, such as two notes or chords, constituting temporal parts of a larger musical whole. (If this is right, then the length of the events in question turns out to be a red herring.) Levinson is surely right that pieces violating this condition are non-paradigmatic at best, and perhaps borderline cases of music. This might suggest, however, that an adequate definition of music should not definitively rule them out, but rather explain why they are borderline cases (McKeown-Green 2014). One way to do so

would be to give a definition (or other kind of account) of music that appeals to “basic musical features” (Kania 2011a) or “salient features” of paradigmatic instances of music (Hamilton 2007: 46–59), without making any individual such feature necessary. Both Andrew Kania and Andy Hamilton give a prominent place to *rhythm*, the most obviously temporal such feature, in their respective accounts, in addition to other candidates such as melody, harmony, and tonality.

Kania suggests that music is

(1) any event intentionally produced or organized (2) to be heard, and (3) *either* (a) to have some basic musical feature, such as pitch or rhythm, *or* (b) to be listened to for such features. (2011a: 12)

As the phrasing of the definition suggests, Kania does not commit himself to a particular set of basic musical features, but he clearly takes pitch and rhythm to be promising candidates.

Unfortunately, he says very little about the nature of rhythm, doing little more than gesturing towards a distinction between the rhythms of language and musical rhythm, characterizing the latter in terms of “division into stricter units of time, such as ... measures of two or three beats” (8). Stephen Davies points out that this will not do in the context of Kania’s definition, since, on the one hand, Morse code will now count as music and, on the other, music “in free rhythm” may fail to qualify (2012: 538). At the very least, it is clear that more would have to be said about the nature of musical rhythm to defend Kania’s approach. Anyway, although rhythm is not a necessary condition of music for Kania, the disjunctive nature of his definition fails to account for the borderline nature of the kinds of cases that concern Levinson. If a vanishingly brief sonic

event is pitched (and meets all of Kania's other proposed necessary conditions), it will be as fully fledged an example of music as a Beethoven symphony.

Hamilton's approach, by contrast, is less vulnerable to the kinds of criticisms McKeown-Green and Davies raise against Kania's definition, since Hamilton denies that concepts of cultural products, such as music, can be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. He argues that the best we can hope for is a list of salient features of paradigms of music. However, the list he defends does not include rhythm, but only sound, intentionality, the disposition to elicit aesthetic experience, and tonal organization. Since Hamilton makes a distinction between music and non-musical sound art, *tonal organization* is clearly the distinctively musical feature on this list. (All other arts are intentionally designed to elicit aesthetic experiences, according to Hamilton.) But Hamilton also claims that "rhythm is essential" to music as well as poetry and dance (2007: 119), "the one indispensable element of all music" (122), and that "music could be defined as *the rhythmicization of sound*" (121). The most charitable way to understand this, it seems to me, is to consider rhythm, broadly construed, not a necessary feature of all music, as Hamilton claims here, but rather one of the "salient features" of paradigm instances of music, on a par with tonal organization in his account. On this account, the cases Levinson is concerned about are on the border of the concept of music because although they possess many of the salient features of paradigm instances of music, they lack one, namely rhythm.

Rhythm

So what is musical rhythm? We can begin with the idea that, in a broad sense, rhythm is the temporal organization of music – the timing and duration of musical events. But we will immediately want to distinguish between objective and subjective, or descriptive and phenomenological, construals of this idea. Consider, for instance, this musical “duck–rabbit” effect: One can hear the opening of the second movement of Saint-Saëns’s Organ Symphony in two different ways, as beginning on an upbeat (as notated by the composer) or on a downbeat (see ure 1). These are two quite different rhythmic experiences of one and the same musical passage (cf. Scruton 1983: 88–9). We can say that this music is rhythmically ambiguous, but there will be no way of explaining what that means without appealing to the phenomenology of our experiences of it. Thus, the concept of rhythm central to musical experience is essentially phenomenological or response-dependent. (It is also worth noting that there are at least two objective or descriptive concepts of rhythm. We can describe the music as conceived or notated (e.g. four sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note, etc.) or in all its sonic detail, which will not have the clean precision of its notation.)



Figure 1 Saint-Saëns, Symphony No. 3, second movement, mm. 1-3: (a) as written, (b) an alternative way of hearing the passage.

This example illustrates a further notable feature of rhythm: though it seems right to think of rhythm as primarily a *temporal* feature, the perceived *organization* essential to rhythm is not exclusively a matter of purely temporal features. For to hear the theme in one of the two ways is not to hear any of the notes as occurring at different points in time or as longer or shorter than in the other way of hearing it, nor to hear a different periodicity in the temporal organization; it is to hear the notes as *grouped* differently, to hear the “period” or group as beginning at one point or another in the musical manifold. And such grouping is often heavily influenced, if not determined, by non-temporal features. Perhaps most obviously, merely by *accenting* every third note (e.g. playing it more loudly), we can “group” a string of otherwise identical notes into threes beginning with the accented note. But tonal (harmonic or melodic) features also give rise to such grouping phenomena, as when the harmony begins to change at a rate at odds with the meter established up to that point (see ure 2). Our sensitivity to such cues for grouping musical events is somewhat ironically illustrated by our tendency to group temporal stimuli even in the absence of any differentiating features. That is, when played an identical series of tones at identical temporal (isochronous) intervals, people will hear them as grouped into twos or threes (see the references at London 2004: 14–15).

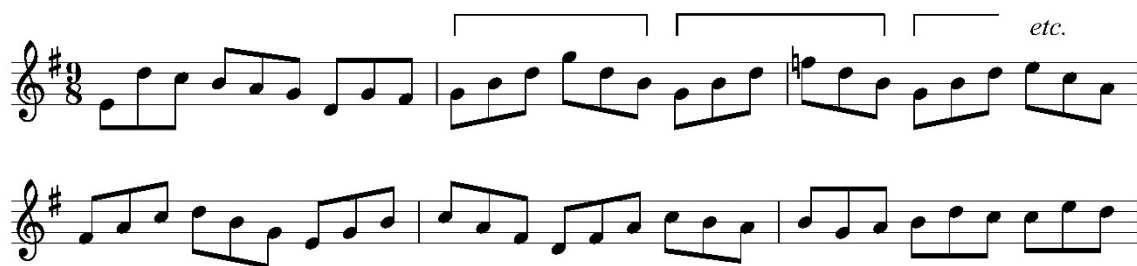


Figure 2 Bach, “Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.” A well-established meter of three groups of three notes is disrupted (in the second measure of this excerpt) by a repeated melodic shape with a periodicity of two groups of three

notes (indicated by the square brackets), reinforced by harmonic change with the same periodicity. The original meter is restored with the return of the main theme (in the last measure of this excerpt).

Most theorists have found a distinction between *rhythm* and *meter* to be essential for investigating such temporal musical phenomena (London n.d.: §I.1). Rhythm, in this narrower sense, is the temporal structure and patterning of the musical surface – the perceptible temporal properties of and relationships between various musical events – while meter is a more abstract hierarchical structure that emerges in our perception of the musical surface, allowing us to make sense of the rhythm (and other musical features) by, say, anticipating when certain musical events will occur. For instance, in the Saint-Saëns example given above, the rhythmic “feel” of the passage is quite different when heard in the two different ways (meters) mentioned. If the repeated tonic Cs are heard as falling on the downbeat (the first beat of the perceived measure) the melody has a heavier, more foursquare character, while if the single Ds and G – elements of the dominant harmony – are heard as falling on the downbeat, the melody is more forward-driven and less stable. We might speculate that the accents marked by Saint-Saëns are intended in part to promote hearing the melody in this second way.

It is not possible to have music with meter but no rhythm; the generation of meter requires *some* temporally distributed musical events, even if those events boringly occur with metronomic regularity on metrical beats. But it is possible to have music with rhythm but no meter, since the temporal intervals between the musical events may be such that no pulse can be heard in them. Justin London (2004: 24) gives an example from the opening of Milton Babbitt’s *Composition*

for 12 instruments where, even though the music is *notated* with metrical precision, the meter that is notated cannot be heard by a listener unfamiliar with the score (even if very familiar with avant-garde Western music). One might ask whether this is the relevant listener, however.

London acknowledges that the performers must keep track of a consistent quarter-note pulse and the changing time signatures in the score in order to perform the work accurately. Couldn't such a performer hear the meter in another group's performance of the piece? This question raises a fundamental issue about musical understanding, which I consider briefly below. But the point of the example for London is that metrical notation does not necessarily imply the existence of meter. A simpler example of music with rhythm but no meter would be an avant-garde work consisting entirely of a few notes spread so far apart in time that they are beyond the human capacity for perceiving a pulse.

Philosophers of music have disagreed about what is minimally required to account for our experience of rhythm and meter. Roger Scruton has argued that the experience of rhythm, like the experience of melody and harmony, is necessarily a form of *imaginative* perception. In earlier work, he describes the experience as "metaphorical," in that it involves the application to the sounds we hear of concepts that we know do not literally apply to them. In the case of rhythm, these concepts are concepts of *action*, particularly dance: "In hearing rhythm we hear the music as *active*; it seems to be doing something (namely, dancing) which no sounds can do. ... [W]e hear sounds joining to and diverging from each other At the same time, we do not believe that any such thing is happening in the realm of sound" (1983: 90).

Malcolm Budd takes issue with this account for three reasons (1985: 239–45). First, it is circular, since the relevant metaphorical concept of *dancing* cannot be understood without the concept of rhythm (or meter). Second, the crucial notion of an experience itself, as opposed to a description of it, being *metaphorical* stands in need of explanation. (For a summary of recent moves in this debate, see Kania 2015: 158–61.) Third, Budd claims that an account of rhythm can be given without appeal to any concepts that fail to apply literally to the musical sounds: “the experience of rhythm in a sequence of sounds and rests ... (i) ... does not require that the sounds should be heard as differing in pitch, timbre, duration or loudness, and (ii) the sequence must be heard as grouped into units in which one element is heard as accented (prominent, salient) relative to the others” (1985: 243).

Hamilton agrees with Budd that Scruton’s appeal to metaphorical experience is obscure, but he agrees with Scruton that reference to movement is ineliminable from an account of rhythm. Hamilton argues that physical spatial movement is not the only paradigm of motion; other temporal processes, such as the rise and fall of the price of fish, are literally described in terms of motion (2007: 142–8). (Stephen Davies makes a similar argument about pitch space and melodic motion (2011: 27–30).) But Hamilton makes the stronger claim that the movement essential to rhythm is *bodily* movement in some sense; where Scruton sees spatial concepts applied to non-spatial sonic phenomena, Hamilton sees bodily movement manifested in different ways – in musical sounds, dancing, marching, and some physical work. (He gives the example of the rhythmic pounding of rice in Bali.) Hamilton’s point that rhythm and meter are not exclusive to musical experience is plausible. But it’s not clear what the “manifestation” of bodily motion in music amounts to. One possibility is the strong view espoused by Tiger Roholt in a recent book

on musical *grooves* (Roholt 2014). A groove (or at least its “objective” aspect) is a repeated rhythmic nuance, such as playing the third (“back”) beat of a 4/4 rock drum pattern slightly early or late. Following the work of Diana Raffman (1993), Roholt argues that though we can perceive these temporal nuances, we cannot develop distinct concepts for all the nuances we can perceive, any more than we can develop concepts for every color difference we can perceive. Hence we appeal to metaphors, among other resources, to refer to these nuances, describing the groove with an early backbeat as “driving” and the one with a late backbeat as “laid back.” But, drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s theory of perception, Roholt argues that one can only successfully employ such metaphors, since one can only perceive the groove, if one moves one’s body in sympathy with the temporal nuances. In short, “[t]he feel of a groove is the affective dimension of the relevant motor-intentional movements” (Roholt 2014: 105, italics removed). There seems to be no reason why we could not extend Roholt’s theory to other rhythmic aspects of music.

Ordinary experience and empirical research suggest that this view is implausibly strong, however. Though actual bodily movement may be essential for acquiring the ability to perceive grooves (and other rhythmic features), once that ability is established we are able to perceive a groove while engaging in bodily activities that preclude moving in sympathy with it (e.g. operating machinery or sitting in a concert hall) or while unable to move at all (e.g. while being restrained or undergoing some form of paralysis). Justin London points to research that suggests that motor representations, if not actual bodily movements, are essential to the perception of such rhythmic features (2016: 102–3). This may be the most plausible way for theorists such as Hamilton to argue that bodily movement is essential to rhythm.

Musical works, performances, and recordings

I have thus far discussed ways in which temporal experience is fundamental to music considered as an artistic medium or material. But when we experience this medium or material, it is usually parceled out in the form of works, performances, or recordings. I now turn to ways in which our temporal experience of these items gives rise to philosophical questions.

Levinson and Alperson (1991) discuss 14 distinct senses in which an art could be considered a “temporal” art, which they classify into object-, experience-, and content-based senses. For instance, novels are not temporal in one object-based sense, while dance performances are, since an entire novel is present simultaneously, while a dance performance, being an event, is stretched out over a period of time, with only one temporal slice available at any given moment. Both novels and dance performances, however, are temporal in the experience-based sense that their elements must be appreciated in a particular order over a period of time. As for the content-based senses, there is at least one according to which different novels will be more or less *about* time or temporal experience; Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) is an obvious example at one end of the spectrum, while at the other are the many novels that do not take time as a theme at all. Levinson and Alperson point out, however, that certain features of some media automatically make time or temporal experience part of the content of works in those media. For instance, the temporal distinction between the process of narration and the events narrated makes time part of the content of all narrative works, albeit in a recessive way in many cases. To the extent that music is essentially temporal due to the centrality of rhythm, it too will be a temporal art in this content-based sense.

When Levinson and Alperson discuss music, they typically discuss musical *performances*. They point out that, like other artistic performances, musical performances must be presented over a period of time (as opposed to, say, paintings), and their temporal parts must be appreciated over that same time period, in the order in which they are presented. But often when one attends a musical performance, one apparently hears not just that performance, but a musical work which the performance is a performance *of*. There has been much discussion of the ontology of musical works. For instance, one popular theory has been that musical works are abstract objects, with performances their instantiations. (Levinson 1980 is the *locus classicus*.) But if Beethoven's First Symphony is an abstract object, how can it be true that it begins with a slow introduction? Abstracta are traditionally taken to exist "outside time," and nothing outside time can have a temporal property such as slowness (let alone begin or end). Serious consideration of such matters would take us too far afield. (For an introduction to the issues and literature, see Matheson and Caplan 2011 and D. Davies 2011: 23–70.) But whatever view we take of the fundamental ontology of musical works and their relationships to performance, there are "higher-order" questions about these things that seem to be independent of those answers. For instance: Though any given performance will have completely determinate temporal properties, is a particular tempo – the pace at which a performance proceeds – an essential part of a musical work?

Considering typical works of classical music, there seem to be sensible "yes" and "no" answers to this question: No *precise* tempo is essential to a given work; part of the value of works for performance is their potential for performative interpretation. One cellist may take the Prelude to

Bach's first unaccompanied cello suite to be a melancholy meditation while another plays it as a dance. On the other hand, not just anything goes. To choose a tempo that would make the Prelude last for two hours would seem to be to engage in a conceptual- or performance-art event, rather than a performance of Bach's work. However, some have questioned these sensible answers.

On the one hand, Nelson Goodman argues that a musical score "has as a primary function the authoritative identification of a work from performance to performance" (1976: 128). This implies, according to Goodman, that a score must be a "character in a notational system," a technical notion with very strict requirements. Because verbal tempo indications such as "allegro" or "slow" do not meet these requirements (in short, they are not precise enough), they cannot be part of a score nor thus constitutive of a work: "No departure from the indicated tempo disqualifies a performance as an instance – however wretched – of the work defined by the score" (1976: 185). Goodman does allow that metronome markings could count as work-determinative, but this would require conditions that would strike the typical musician or listener as bizarre. (For instance, some deviation from an indication of 100 quarter-notes per minute would be allowed, but only if the range of deviation did not admit of overlap with that of another potential tempo marking, e.g. 96 quarter-notes per minute.) Goodman is explicit about his reasons for positing such an unintuitive theory: "I [am not] quibbling about the proper use of such words as 'notation,' 'score,' and 'work.' That matters little more than the proper use of a fork. What does matter is that [a score should provide a] means of identifying a work from performance to performance" (1976: 189). However, most philosophers of music have rejected his theory nonetheless, for reasons similar to what David Davies calls the "pragmatic constraint"

on the ontology of art: “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 ...” (2004: 18). There will, of course, be debate about what sorts of properties are *rightly* ascribed to works *upon reflection* on our musical practices, but Goodman’s theory seems so clearly to violate the pragmatic constraint that it could be said “to change the subject, rather than answer the questions that motivate philosophical aesthetics” (D. Davies 2004: 21).

On the other hand, some proponents and opponents of the “authentic performance practice” have taken the notion of an authentic performance of a musical work to amount to the replication of a particular (actual or ideal) performance of the work. (For a recent survey of the debate, see Thom 2011.) If this were the case, musical works, like performances, would have wholly determinate tempi (along with many other properties such as timbre, rhythm, dynamics, etc.). There would still be various performances of the work that differed with respect to tempo and other features, but to the extent that these performances departed from the ideal, they would be defective instances of the work. Though the value of authentic performance is still debated (e.g. Dodd 2015 and S. Davies 2013), the notion of authenticity as replication of a single, wholly determinate, ideal performance has been widely rejected in favor of the view that the work comprises those properties mandated by the composer. There is still some disagreement about which properties these include, but not about the fact that in many cases what is mandated admits of a range of possibilities, nor about the idea that such mandates can be implicit, as, for example, with tempi of baroque works. The essential argument for the inclusion of tempo as a constitutive property of musical works is that the perception of many other features of the work depend upon it (S. Davies 2001: 59). If an absurdly glacial tempo is adopted, audiences will be unable to

perceive rhythmic, melodic, expressive, and even harmonic and structural features that are essential to the work. In many cases, even timbral properties will be affected, due to physical limitations on the production of sound (e.g. the lung capacity of wind players or the length of a violin bow).

There are two quite common kinds of music-making that do not seem to fit the “classical paradigm” (D. Davies 2011: 23 *et passim*), in that they do not obviously result in instances of works for performance, and thereby offer no distinction between the particular, specific temporal properties of the musical event one experiences directly and the “determinable” temporal properties of the work the performance is of. One is musical improvisation, the other the creation of a musical “work for playback” (S. Davies 2001: 25). Improvisation is commonly understood to be the spontaneous creation of music as it is being performed. This gloss requires some clarification since, in one reasonable sense, even a very mechanical performer of a piano sonata, say, is creating the musical event of his performance *as he performs*, i.e. spontaneously. The difference between his case and that of the improviser is that the work-performer has made all the decisions about what he will (attempt to) do in his performance before the performance begins – perhaps far in advance of it. This is a simplification of actual musical practice, however. On the one hand, the work-performer may make interpretive decisions on the spot, without thereby ceasing to perform the work. These will range in significance, from the decision to emphasize one note a little more, through ornamenting a baroque melody in different ways, to an ensemble of various such choices amounting to a radically different interpretation from performance to performance. As long as the performer delivers everything essential to the work, he can improvise everything else. On the other hand, the instrumental jazz performer, widely

taken to be the paradigmatic improviser by philosophers of music, almost invariably takes a pre-existing musical structure (often a “standard”) as the basis or framework for her performance. This has led some to argue that the primary concept here is that of improvising, or improvisation in the mass-noun sense, and that there is no clear criterion for an entire performance, or section thereof, being *an* improvisation, as opposed to a work-performance (Kania 2011b: 396). But others have argued that such a criterion can be found in the overarching attitude the musician takes to the preexisting materials she draws on in her performance (e.g. S. Davies 2001: 16–17). Even if this correct, it is not obvious that we should think of the categories of improvisation and work-performance as mutually exclusive, since some works (e.g. jazz “heads”) are composed explicitly for use as the basis of improvisations (D. Davies 2011: 157).

Many have argued that much of the value of an improvisation depends on our appreciation of its being a creative musical action (Alperson 1984, Brown 1996, Hamilton 2000). When we attend to an improvisation, we perceive musical decisions being made, rather than simply the results of those decisions. These theorists have thus seen improvisation as resisting a general deep-seated tendency in artistic practice and art theory to valorize persisting entities as opposed to ephemeral events – what Lee B. Brown calls the “principle of continuity” (1996) – which we might see as an instance of the ancient dispute between Parmenidean theorists of being and Heraclitean theorists of becoming. Hamilton (2000), for instance, argues that the classical practice of creating musical works for performance and then stable, repeatable interpretations of them, reflect an “aesthetics of perfection,” while most jazz practice, with its emphasis on improvisation, reflects an “aesthetics of imperfection” – the missteps and stumbles in a jazz solo signifying in part the

authentic spontaneity of the music-making. (Hamilton acknowledges that things are not as simple as this suggests, no practice being a pure instance of either aesthetic.)

It may be true that improvisations collapse the temporal properties of work and performance, but the way that most improvisations – indeed most *music* – is now experienced introduces a further temporal distinction, that between (i) the time at (and during which) the musical sounds are made and (ii) the time at (and during which) they are experienced. Since most people around the world now listen to music primarily as recordings, they do not experience the music as it is being created, whether they are listening to a free improvisation or a meticulously rehearsed work-performance. One might resist this claim by arguing that there is one important sense in which we *do* hear recorded music as it is being created: Since recordings are mechanical, in the sense that what we hear is unmediated by anyone’s beliefs or other intentional states, they are *transparent*, in the sense in which Kendall Walton argues that photographs are transparent. We literally, if indirectly, hear the musicians performing when we listen to a recording, just as we literally, if indirectly, see someone through a photograph (Walton 1984; Kania 2009). This is not to deny the temporal difference between the creation and the experience of the music, but it might be thought to transform it from a shortcoming to a benefit. Recording technology temporally shears the experience of the music from its creation, but in doing so, it enables a much wider audience to hear that music (Gracyk 1997). If recordings are transparent in this sense, they allow us to “hear into” the past, just as photographs allow us to see into the past on Walton’s view. It is worth noting that this sense of transparency is independent of notions of accuracy or clarity, with which some may have confused it (e.g. Hamilton 2003, Glasgow 2007). One hears Pablo Casals on recordings, if the transparency thesis is true, in the same way that one

sees a friend in a fun-house mirror: One has an auditory experience as of Casals playing the cello (the recording must bear some minimal sonic resemblance to its source) that is mechanically counterfactually dependent on the sounds he produced when the recording was made, even if no one would confuse the experience of hearing the recording with the experience of hearing Casals play live. M. G. F. Martin (2012) has recently defended a variation on this claim. He argues that sounds are abstract particulars and thus that when we hear a Casals recording we hear the very sounds Casals made; they are quite literally reproduced when the recording is played back. However, though this puts us in causal contact with Casals's original production of these sounds, Martin does not think that in hearing the reproduced sounds we thus hear Casals playing his cello.

I noted above that improvisation is one kind of music-making that collapses the distinction between the specific temporal properties of the musical event one experiences directly and the determinable temporal properties of a work for performance. The other is the creation of works for playback, that is, works the instances of which are generated mechanically from some sort of template (S. Davies 2001: 25). Recordings are by far the most common kind of such template, though there are many others, e.g. player-piano rolls. Defenders of the notion of works for playback do not claim that all musical recordings (or other musical templates) are works for playback. Rather, they argue that not all musical recordings are the same kind of artistic entity. In particular, not all recordings are works in their own right. Such claims depend on a conception of a work of art as something like a primary focus of critical attention in an artistic practice (e.g. Gracyk 1996; S. Davies 2001; D. Davies 2004). "Live recordings" of classical works for performance, for instance, are certainly targets of critical attention in the classical music world,

but they are of interest mostly as vehicles for delivering instances of those works; they are not works in their own right. Then there is the messy middle ground of recordings that largely comprise chunks of recorded performance, but edited in ways that give people pause when considering their status. Aron Edidin suggests that in the world of classical music, at least, many of these recordings belong to a new category he calls “recordings of compositions” (Edidin 1999: 30–6). Works for playback are unlike either of these kinds of recording in that they are not presented as proxies for live performances in any way; their soundscapes are to be appreciated in their own right. The clearest examples are works of “electronic music” in the classical tradition.

Works for playback may be constructed entirely electronically, rather than by “recording” any actual sounds. But this is not essential; works for playback may incorporate recorded sounds. Theodore Gracyk (1996) has influentially argued that rock music, broadly construed, is a tradition of works for playback in this sense. Thus, when one hears a rock recording one does not hear a recording of a performance of a song, in the sense in which one hears a performance of a Schubert song when listening to a classical recording. While singing and the playing of musical instruments often contribute to the construction of a rock track, and a song, in the sense of a “thin” musical structure, is manifested in the result, that result is an ontologically “thick” work for playback, replete with sonic properties. (“Thinness” and “thickness” in this sense are matters of the relative number of properties necessary for a proper instance of something (S. Davies 2001).) One cannot hear a different performance of such a rock work, since it is for playback rather than performance, though there could be a different such work that manifests the same song (i.e. a cover version), just as one cannot experience a different performance of a film, though one might see a remake, i.e. a different film that shares significant features with the

“original” (Kania 2006: 408-9). If Gracyk is right, then when you listen to a rock track, you experience the same detailed temporal (and other) properties of the work as anyone else who listens to that work, unlike the case of the audience member for a live performance of a work of classical music, say.

Musical understanding

Formalism – the view that understanding a musical work is primarily a matter of grasping relations between its far-flung parts – has dominated the study of “pure” musical works in the Western tradition for over a century. One puzzle the view raises is that, since performances of such works take place over an extended period of time, it is not obvious that we can *hear* such relations, as opposed to a succession of relata – whatever constituent chords and melodies, say, can be grasped in the “specious present.” An extreme formalist might respond that this is only a puzzle if one assumes that music is not only a sonic but also an aural art; perhaps music is properly appreciated not by being listened to, but rather by being thought about. No one seems to have actually defended such a position, however, since, at the very least, everyone agrees that the character of the elements of a musical work – the melodies, rhythms, etc. – must be appreciated at least in part on the basis of their aural appearance (Hamilton 2007: 66–94). But Levinson has argued that large-scale formal properties of musical works have been grossly over-valued by music theorists, and that the lion’s share of musical understanding, and thereby of the enjoyment and value of music, resides in our experience of “apprehending individual bits of music and immediate progressions from bit to bit” (Levinson 1997: 13). The upshot of the debate over Levinson’s theory seems to have been what he intended: A corrective to philosophers’ (and

perhaps some musicologists’) overemphasis on the importance of formalism in theories of musical experience and value (Kania 2007: §4; Huovinen 2011). Since even Levinson does not deny the relevance of large-scale structural relationships to a *complete* understanding of many musical works, any stance on this issue requires some explanation of what it is to “perceive” such relationships. Pursuing this question would involve grappling with quite general issues in the philosophy of temporal experience; I thus direct readers to other chapters in this volume. However, it is worth noting that a theory of *any* art will face a similar problem. Understanding any complex artwork requires not simply perception of its appearance but also reflection on the nature of that experience – reflection informed by “background” knowledge of the work. Though a painting is atemporal in the sense that it is entirely before one as one appreciates it, for any complex painting, one cannot appreciate all of its artistically and aesthetically relevant features at once. Temporal arts such as music and film, and even those temporal only in their experience, such as novels, merely throw this issue into sharper relief.

The value of music

In what ways does the temporal experience of music contribute to its value? Levinson and Alperson provide an argument schema they find fleshed out in different ways by a succession of philosophers from Hegel to Susanne Langer:

- (1) Identify some temporal aspect of music as the core of musical experience or significance.
- (2) Argue that no other art exhibits this temporal feature as purely or prominently as music.
- (3) Argue that this aspect of temporality is intimately associated

with consciousness. (4) Argue that music, the most temporal of the arts, is therefore best suited to the expression of consciousness. (5) Advance an expression theory of art. (6) Conclude that music, in virtue of its being the most temporal of the arts, is the purest or highest form of art. (Levinson & Alperson 1991: 448)

It would be fair to characterize each of these premises as highly controversial and thus the prospects of defending the conclusion dim. In the end, it may be that the best we can hope for is a kind of piecemeal theory in which we account for the various values of metrical complexity, improvisation, and so on. And while some of these aspects of music may foreground the temporality of musical experience, it is likely that others will not.

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