

Musical Expression?

An exploration of the relation between music and its content

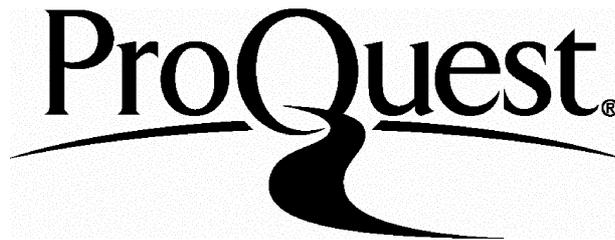
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Introduction

If we try and characterise the experience of music what are the components that we would list? We perceive the evolution of a sound structure over time, however, for many people this does not capture the whole of the experience. To offer this as a full characterisation is to leave out the meaning of the music. Considering an analogy with poetry will illustrate the difference. Suppose a master of calligraphy writes down a poem. Part of our interest in this example of the poem is in the purely formal properties of the stylised script used by the master of calligraphy; we delight in the beauty of the lettering. But of course we are also interested in the meaning of the words made up of those beautiful letters. In the same way, for many people the experience of music is both of the formal properties of the sound structure and the meaning of that sound structure. The analogy between music and poetry is useful but limited and can also show why the question of musical meaning is a philosophical problem. While poetry consists of words that are intrinsically meaningful music is generally considered an abstract art form. Given its abstractness the notion of musical meaning or content is puzzling. This thesis will critically discuss the various ways music might be said to have a meaning or content.

To clarify the contours of the debate we shall consider an example. Suppose three listeners hear Debussy's composition titled *Les Fleurs et Les Arbres*. The first is aware of the title while the second and third are not. Each of the following is a perfectly normal response:

1. The first listener hears the music as about flowers and trees. Perhaps a particular melody is heard as the blooming of a flower.
2. The second listener hears the music as expressive of joy.
3. The third listener hears no content in the music.

These responses reflect three possible positions one can take on the question of musical content. The first indicates that music can be representational. The second that music can be expressive. While the third corresponds to the position of the musical formalist that music cannot be about anything.

Although the first response might be thought evidence for the claim that music can be representational some writers, notably Roger Scruton (1997, p118-139), rely on the fact that we do not deem the third response to be a misunderstanding of the work to conclude that music is a non-representational art form. He asks us to compare our attitude to music and paradigms of representational art such as figurative painting and literature. If somebody engaged with Dali's *Swans Reflecting Elephants* but did not see the swans and the elephants we would say they had completely misunderstood the work of art. However, we probably would not say this about the third listener above and one might naturally think that with representational art awareness of the represented content would be necessary for understanding. One area of debate we will look at, therefore, is whether music can ever be representational?

The second response introduces us to the puzzle of musical meaning mentioned in the opening paragraph. Content of this form is not generally taken to sacrifice music's abstract nature. But in one sense 'abstract' simply means 'about nothing'. However, if we compare music to figurative painting and literature we will see that music can be considered abstract in a weaker sense such that its abstractness is compatible with its having content.

When one looks at a figurative painting, in order to describe what is seen one needs to use concepts that do not refer to the actual nature of the artwork. If I look at a painting of a skateboarder I must apply the concept 'skateboarder' although what are actually there are marks of paint on a canvas. The skateboarder is seen in the paint marks and it is in virtue of this that the picture represents a skateboarder. Likewise when one reads literature or poetry one needs to grasp not just that there are marks on the page but that those marks have particular meanings within a language. It is because music does not exhibit a relation to content analogous to these that we call it abstract. When we engage with music we do not perceive anything in the materials of the artwork, nor are the materials understood to have a meaning in the way words in a language do. Rather, when one listens to music one hears only what is actually there: sound patterns. The equivalent abstractness in painting is when one is required only to attend to the marks of paint as marks of paint e.g. *Summertime* by Jackson Pollock. And a case in poetry would be a nonsense poem where we attend only to the shape and sound of *meaningless* words. Of course while we can understand this weaker sense of 'abstract' the question remains: how is it that music comes to be talked about in terms of conveying an expressive content? We

will consider three theories that offer to account for this fact: the arousal theory, the resemblance theory and the life theory.

A successful theory must explain not only why we talk of music as being expressive in general but also why individual pieces have the particular expressive contents they do e.g. why the music is heard as expressive of sadness not happiness. This fact has an air of paradox. The expression of joy is unproblematic in figurative painting and literature. One need only make the represented content a situation in which joy is present e.g. a picture or description of a child's birthday party. However, with music there is no straightforward link between abstract sound patterns and joy as there is with representations of this kind. Despite this the history of music abounds with claims of its ability to be expressive of emotions. For example Budd writes:

“The minuet of Haydn's String Quartet Op. 20, No. 3 is characterized by fierce desolation, the Andantino of Mozart's Piano Concerto in E flat (K.271) is an expression of grief and despair, the Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* is permeated with yearning, the trio of Elgar's Funeral March Op. 42 is expressive of 'heroic melancholy' ... , and the Allegretto theme of his *Introduction and Allegro for Strings* is suffused with wistful regret.” (1995, p.134)

In its primary usage 'expression' refers to the behavioural manifestation of emotional states by human beings. My tears are an expression of sadness and my leap an expression

of joy, and it is generally held to be music's special ability to be expressive of emotions. However, if one argues as Scruton does that music cannot be representational then one might wish to talk of music being expressive of things other than emotions. Another area of debate concerns, therefore, the way 'expression' functions in the musical context. Does the phrase 'musical expression' only ever refer to musical content that is to be specified in terms of emotions?

We can summarise the preceding discussion with three questions that will guide the rest of our inquiry into the relation between music and its content:

1. Can music be representational?
2. How do we come to apply the concept 'expression' to abstract music?
3. Can we give an account of why a particular piece is heard as expressive of one emotion rather than another?

These questions indicate the topics that will be discussed in each of the three chapters of this thesis. In the first I will consider the issue of musical representation in terms of a debate between Kivy (1984) and Budd (1995) on the one hand and Scruton (1997) on the other. I will conclude that Scruton is correct to say that music is not a representational art form, although I will be critical of a number of his arguments. In the second I will consider and evaluate three theories that offer to explain the application of the concept 'expression' to music. The three theories are the arousal theory, the resemblance theory and the life theory. I will argue that only the life theory is able to account for the sense of

‘expression’ when it is used to describe music. In the third I will consider the proposals that Kivy (1980), Budd (1995) and Scruton (1997) make to account for a piece of music having one expressive content rather than another. I will argue that none of these theorists has put forward a successful account and that this aspect of musical expression remains mysterious.

In what follows, unless otherwise indicated, all references to Scruton are to *The Aesthetics of Music* (1997) and all references to Budd are to *Values of Art* (1995).

Chapter 1: Musical Representation

We will begin our inquiry into musical meaning with a discussion of a standard way an artwork is about something: by representing it. As the introduction suggested there is a debate in the philosophy of music as to whether music can ever be a representational art form. A quick glance at the repertoire might seem to answer immediately in the affirmative. Many pieces of music are given titles and on listening to them we perceive a resemblance between the music and the reference of the title. For example Scruton, discussing Debussy's *La Mer*, writes of "those vast heavings of bottomless sound which can ... be likened to the swell of the sea" (1997, p.131). Should we not say that the music represents the sea in virtue of this resemblance? Some philosophers, however, notably Roger Scruton, argue that this is not a case of representation, on the basis of a comparison of the relation between form and content in music and paradigms of representational art i.e. figurative painting and literature.

To start thinking about the possibility of musical representation we will first illustrate that there are varieties of representation. Consider these three examples:

- We look at a photograph and see that it is a picture of a bike. In cases of this kind, on perceiving X it is immediately apparent that it represents Y.
- In a demonstration a teacher uses a ball to represent the earth. Without extra information we wouldn't take the ball to be a

representation of the earth. However, given this information we understand in virtue of what X represents Y.

- Alternatively, the teacher might use his pen to represent the earth. Here there is no particular rationale for using the pen rather than anything else.

The first thing to note about these examples is that instantiating the second or third relation is not necessarily part of the meaning of a work of art as a work of art. This is because we might make use of a pre-existing work of art as a representation in one of these ways. Clearly to understand the work of art as a work of art it is not necessary to grasp these extra representational uses it has been put to.

The first and second kinds correspond to a distinction Peter Kivy draws in his book *Sound and Semblance* (1984) within the class of representations. He labels the first pictures and the second **representations** (to avoid confusion when this specific kind is meant bold case will be used). The difference lies in that we need extra information to grasp the content of a **representation**. The example Kivy offers of a **representation** in *Sound and Semblance* that forms the premise of his account is:

“In a delightfully kitsch film called *The Four Feathers* ... , a great old bore of a retired English general gives a highly exaggerated account of his role in the battle of Balaclava. “Here were the Russians,” his account begins: “Guns! Guns! Guns!” (Fruits and nuts are set in a row.) “Here

were the British,” he continues: “the thin red line.” (He dips his finger in claret and draws a line on the tablecloth.) The fruits and nuts represent the Russians, the ribbon of wine the British positions; and the whole arrangement, of course, represents the battle of Balaclava. But is it a *picture* of the battle? If ordinary language and intuition are any guide at all, then the answer, I think, must be no.” (1984, p.21)

The conclusions Kivy draws are uncontroversial. The arrangement on the table is not a picture of the battle. The waiter who brings the bill would think of the wine as a spillage not as the British position at the battle of Balaclava. On the other hand it makes perfect sense to talk of the arrangement as **representing** the battle. For Kivy music can be representational either by picturing its subject or **representing** its subject. Roger Scruton disputes the transfer of these terms to the musical context. Although there is such a thing as picturing and **representing**, as the discussion above demonstrates, he argues that what Kivy calls musical pictures are in fact imitations, and that Kivy’s musical **representations** are cases of expression. Although we will discuss these terms in greater detail we can here note the basic distinction Scruton wishes to draw. When we talk of X representing Y we understand X as Y. This feature is common to all the examples adduced above. It is Scruton’s contention that in the experience of music we do not understand the music as a Y but rather as music that is associated with Y.

The example Kivy offers of musical pictures is the birdsong heard in Beethoven’s sixth symphony. In this piece the music is designed to sound like the songs of a

nightingale, a quail and a cuckoo. Although one might miss the resemblance to the song of the first two birds it is reasonable to suppose that almost every listener would recognise the sound of the cuckoo. In general music can only picture other sounds. This is because there is no analogous ability in the sense modality of hearing for our capacity with figurative painting to immediately see a represented object in marks of paint. Nor is it the case that we understand musical sounds as we do the words in literature so we cannot immediately grasp a representation by knowing that the sounds mean certain things in a linguistic system. However, we might wish to say that the music is able to picture the cause of the sounds. This is because of the intimate relationship typical sounds have with their causes such that when we hear the sound we instinctively think of the object it is associated with. In the case of Beethoven then, when we hear that the music sounds like the song of a cuckoo we can talk of the music picturing a cuckoo, not just the song of a cuckoo. Or if I compose a piece using the sound of a roll of thunder then we can say that the music pictures the storm not just the sound of the thunder.

Here we need to dispose of one objection Scruton (1976) mounts against the possibility of representational music. He argues that when one thing represents another we must be able to distinguish between the medium and the subject of the representation: “Representation requires a medium, and is understood only when the distinction between subject and medium has been recognized” (p.273). If this is not the case then the subject is not represented but reproduced. Consider the difference between painting a picture of a chair and building a chair. In the former case the picture represents a chair, a chair is perceived in the marks of paint. While in the latter case we do not have a representation

of a chair but simply an actual chair. Scruton's idea is that musical pictures are analogous to the latter case. We do not have representations of the sounds but just the actual sounds themselves. Kivy (1984) responds to this by claiming that the medium of musical pictures is musical sound while the subject is natural sound. He points out that it is not possible to exactly reproduce the song of a cuckoo within the well-tempered scale. It is, therefore, simply false to claim that the sounds of Beethoven's symphony reproduce the song of a cuckoo. However, the distinction between musical sound and natural sound will not as it stands block Scruton's objection for all musical pictures. Consider again the use of the sound of a roll of thunder in a musical composition. Perhaps the sound used is a recording of an actual thunderstorm. There can, therefore, be no doubt that the reproduction is exact. Despite this the distinction between musical sound and natural sound still allows us to talk of the music representing the sound of the thunder. This is due to the fact that when the sound is used in a musical composition it functions as part of a larger musical object. The sound of the thunderstorm plays a role in the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic structure of the piece and, therefore, should not be thought of simply as another instance of that sound. When the recording is simply played back, as Scruton points out it would be odd to think of it as representing the sound of a thunderstorm because there is no difference between subject and medium. However, when used in a musical composition the sound is not simply the sound of thunder but a musical element with properties and relations that such a sound could never have.

Kivy (1984) argues that music is in general able to **represent** things by sharing a common description with them. He offers the example of the C major chord in Haydn's

Creation that **represents** the first light in virtue of the fact that both the chord and the light can be described as bright. Other possible kinds of common description that he discusses are: temporal descriptions e.g. notes of long or short duration (Kivy offers Handel's *Belshazzar* as an illustration where the duration of God's patience is **represented** with long notes); descriptions of harmony or discord; and structural descriptions e.g. a *rising* or *falling* melodic line. In all these cases an accompanying text is necessary to determine what the music **represents**. Without the text the music could be taken to **represent** anything that shared the common description e.g. the Handel piece might be taken to **represent** a long period of illness. Or, as is much more likely, the music would not be heard as representing anything at all.

In *Values of Art* Budd endorses Kivy's methodology and conclusions:

"Although music consists of sounds and silences, the properties of its sounds and their manners of combination and succession are such that experienced resemblances can obtain between music and non-audible perceptible objects ... , the sun, fire or water, for example." (1995, p.129)

"... a listener who experiences the music as representational undergoes an experience of resemblance, likeness or affinity." (1995, p.130)

Although Kivy talks of 'common descriptions' and Budd of 'perception of a resemblance' their positions are congruent because perceiving a resemblance consists in

understanding that the music and its subject share a common description. We can summarise the position of these two authors as: ‘a piece of music **represents** X if we perceive a resemblance between the music and the reference of its accompanying text.’

To see that Kivy and Budd are wrong we will consider some intuitive examples. To recap: they proceed by identifying musical **representations** with pieces where we perceive a resemblance between the music and the reference of the accompanying text. When we perceive the resemblance we understand in virtue of what the music represents X. A case that supports this claim is as follows. Suppose I put on a puppet show but instead of using accurate lifelike renderings for puppets I use stylised forms. If we were not told at the outset of the show what each puppet represented we would never make the connection. However, given the extra information it is apparent to us why each form has been chosen for that particular representation. Here we have an uncontroversial example of **representation**: in virtue of the nature of their forms we understand what they represent. To the extent that music approximates the puppets it is representational.

However, we can also offer examples which indicate that this kind of relation is not sufficient to make X a representation of Y. The first example is designed to show that perception of resemblances is not equivalent to understanding one thing as a representation of another. When watching a skier descend a mountain I am put in mind of a sidewinder snake. His path across the mountain resembles the movement of the snake over the desert sand. However, it would be an odd figure of speech to say that my experience is of the skier as a representation of the snake. To see this consider the

difference in my attitude when somebody says ‘let the skier represent the snake’. Now my thoughts are not of a skier that puts me in mind of a snake but rather of the skier as a snake or that stands for a snake. Being asked to treat the skier as a representation of a snake is equivalent to the case of the puppets: I understand one thing as another. Here we encounter again the distinction briefly mentioned above between understanding X as Y, and Y being associated with X. We can offer a similar example from the world of art. Suppose I paint an abstract painting and title it *Sky*. Suppose further that the predominant colour of the painting is sky-blue, perhaps it consists of an arrangement of sky-blue squiggles. What is the structure of my attitude to the painting? Do I think that it represents the sky? It doesn’t seem correct to say that I understand it as if the sky were before me (compare again a puppet that represents the sky). On the other hand I am guided by the title to connect my thoughts of the painting with the sky and the colours of the paint make this a natural thing to do. Again, it is more accurate to say that the painting is associated with the sky rather than the painting represents the sky. It is the aim of this chapter to spell out the difference between the skier and the abstract painting on the one hand and the puppets on the other. And to ask: can music be related to its content in the manner of the puppets or the skier; or does it tend towards one rather than the other?

Roger Scruton who believes that music cannot be representational and, therefore, that it only ever approximates the example of the skier, locates the salient difference between the cases in the way we understand them. He offers a double-barrelled argument to demonstrate this difference. The first half claims that when we have a case of

association as opposed to representation we are able to understand the artwork independent of knowledge of its content. The second half argues that when we do understand the artwork in terms of its content our manner of understanding is different in the two cases. I will argue that the first argument fails to establish a relevant difference, and that the second does, although its details require modification.

Scruton states the claim of the first strand thus:

“To understand a representational work of art, ... I must grasp the represented content. *In such a case the aesthetic interest lies in the representation, and cannot be detached from it. This is not true of music.*

[My italics] We can have a considerable, even perfect, understanding of a piece like *La Mer* while being ignorant of, or dismissive towards, its representational claims.” (1997, p. 131)

As it stands this quotation does not provide a clear statement of Scruton’s position. Is it the fact that we can have a considerable or perfect understanding that leads to the claim that music is non-representational; and does this conclusion follow in the same way when we are ignorant or dismissive of its representational claims? Let us first consider the possibility of considerable understanding independent of awareness of any represented content. One may have a considerable understanding of a work of art independent of any represented content if that content is only a minor part of the artwork. For example, perhaps only one chord in an entire symphony is intended to represent something. The

person who doesn't realise this certainly has a considerable understanding of the piece because the representation is virtually insignificant in terms of the whole work. However, this point applies equally if the chord does not represent something but is only associated with it or expressive of it. This way of stating Scruton's argument, therefore, does not allow us to distinguish between cases that are representational and those that are not.

Perhaps the point Scruton is trying to make will become clearer if we consider the example he offers as illustration. He asks us to imagine somebody engaging with a figurative painting. It is absurd, he says, to suppose that this individual has the slightest understanding of the work of art if he does not perceive the represented content but only the formal arrangement of the marks of paint. In fact there is another ambiguity in the notion of perceiving the formal properties of a figurative painting. With this phrase we might refer to the two-dimensional structure of paint marks or to the formal properties of the represented three-dimensional plane. By the latter I mean perceiving the three-dimensional representation but only in terms of coloured shapes, not those shapes seen as e.g. stars and buildings (consider the difference for Van Gogh's *The Starry Night*).

One way of interpreting Scruton's claim is that while with a figurative painting to perceive only the actual form of the artwork i.e. the two-dimensional structure is to completely misunderstand the work, the equivalent perception of only the actual form is not to misunderstand a piece of music. There is a sense in which he is correct. While the structure of the painting is the represented three-dimensional structure, the structure of the music is the actual nature of the sounds it is constructed from. This is because with

music we are considering the possibility of **representation** i.e. in the manner of the puppets discussed above. There is no suggestion by authors such as Kivy that understanding a musical representation of a train is equivalent to the way we see a train in a figurative painting. With music we do not perceive the representation in the structure but rather we understand it as X in virtue of that structure. In music then as opposed to figurative painting one can know what the structure of the artwork is independent of knowledge of any represented content.

However, this conclusion is of limited use with regard to Scruton's larger aim of demonstrating a significant difference between music and representational art. Although we do not perceive the structure of a piece of music *in* its actual form as we do with figurative painting, if the music is **representational** then, as Scruton says above, "the aesthetic interest lies *in* the representation and cannot be detached from it" (1997, p.131). We can draw the distinction in terms of understanding what the structure is as we did in the previous paragraph but this does not establish that music is not **representational** and if it is our interest in it is comparable to that of figurative painting. Notice also that these points apply in exactly the same fashion to music that does not **represent** X but expresses X. Consider the case of *Pacific 231* over which Scruton and Kivy disagree about the nature of its relation to its content. *Pacific 231* is a piece of music that is about the journey of a train. Kivy (1984) offers it as a paradigm of representational music whereas Scruton claims the music does not represent the journey of the train but rather is expressive of it. It is not necessary at this point to take a side in this debate to see that this case completely disarms the argument we are considering. Regardless of whether the

music **represents** or expresses the journey of the train it is possible because of the nature of music (as discussed above) to understand what the structure is independent of knowledge of the content. However, equally regardless of whether the music is **representational** or expressive the content is a major component of the piece. Most of the music is heard in relation to the journey of the train. To the extent that in the case of representational art the aesthetic interest lies in the representation the same applies for art that does not represent but expresses its subject. In both cases we are interested in the work as about X. It follows that one does not have much of an understanding of *Pacific 231* if one does not grasp the content, whether it be represented or expressed.

Pacific 231 shows that Scruton's argument demonstrates nothing significant about music. There is another way that mere knowledge of what the structure is may not suffice to be able to understand a piece of music. This is if the structural design is puzzling independent of awareness of any relation to content. Kivy discusses Weber's *Invitation to the Dance*. He says:

“It exhibits, to be sure, a perfect musical form: a slow introduction, a series of waltzes in the form of a rondo, and a brief return of the material of the introduction as a coda. But the musical material of the introduction and its return, are completely inexplicable in purely musical terms without Weber's program ... Anyone familiar with the Western musical tradition will immediately recognize the strangely disjointed thematic material of the introduction as characteristic not of an instrumental composition at all,

but of an operatic recitative. It simply does not make any musical sense, does not “hang together” until one knows the program, and can see the alternating melodic fragments of the left and right hands as the conversation of the male and female dancers.” (1984, p.149)

The difference between *Pacific 231* and *Invitation to the Dance* is that with the former the structure perceived alone is not puzzling as music whereas it is with the latter. In neither case would perception of the structure alone be classed as understanding the music because the content is a major part of both pieces. However, with *Pacific 231* such perception would not lead you to judge the music to be a failure as might be the case with *Invitation to the Dance* because independent of knowledge of the content the music does not make any sense to the ear of a listener brought up in the Western classical tradition. Note again that neither of these examples allows us to determine if music can ever be a representational art form. All that they demonstrate is that knowledge of music’s content is sometimes essential to understanding it without specifying if that content is represented or expressed.

We need to discuss one more point before moving onto the second half of Scruton’s attempt to establish a difference between music and representational art in terms of our manner of understanding them. When he offers the example of the person who engages with a figurative painting without seeing the representation to show the absurdity in supposing this sort of engagement constitutes an understanding of the painting he makes a further subsidiary point as follows:

“You could not perceive the balance that Giorgione [in his work *Tempest*] achieves between the figures in this painting if you did not perceive them as people. Try imagining the left-hand figure as a statue, or a cardboard cut-out, and the tension and force of the composition will at once disintegrate. Take away the representation and the formal perfection would dissolve.” (1997, p.131)

Scruton is claiming that the formal properties of a figurative painting depend on the represented content. In this he seems correct. Consider the difference between a static shape and that shape seen as a representation of a leopard ready to pounce. When the representation is perceived a new dynamic element is introduced into the formal construction. However, why should this effect be confined to figurative painting? Whatever formal balance is achieved in *Pacific 231* is in terms of a train at various stages of its journey. It seems very plausible for somebody to maintain that to grasp the formal relation between two sections of the music you have to hear it as a train coming to a halt. If this is true then we need to qualify the claim made above that one can understand what the structure of a piece of music is independent of knowledge of any represented content. This is true only to the extent that the represented content does not alter the formal properties of the piece as in the case of the leopard.

It will be useful to summarise the state of the argument so far. Scruton suggested that music should not be considered a representational art form because one can

understand music independent of knowledge of any represented content. We found that in a sense this was true: in terms of understanding what the structure of the artwork is. However, we further found that this does not mean that music is not **representational** and that we can offer examples where knowledge of the content is essential to a full understanding of the music. These examples only establish that knowledge of the content is necessary and do not address the question whether the content is represented or expressed. Scruton's second understanding argument should help us to clarify this issue. It maintains that the way we understand the content of music is not as a representation and develops the distinction mentioned above between understanding X as Y, or as associated with Y.

Scruton takes two approaches in his attempt to distil the essential nature of representation. The first asks us to contrast imitation with representation. To see the difference consider the difference in attitude we take towards the flower patterns on a dress and that same pattern presented in a frame in an art gallery. In the former case we think of them as patterns on a dress, in the latter as imaginary flowers. Scruton reserves the term representation for the latter. He is justified in doing so as the case of the flower in the gallery is an uncontroversial example of representation and to the extent that the flowers on the dress are conceived as differently related to their content then they are not representations. The difference between the dress and the gallery parallels that between the puppets and the skier. In imitation, as with the skier, the character of one thing is understood in terms of another but it is not understood as that thing. In representation as with the puppets one thing is understood as another.

His second approach is a consideration of paradigms of representational art, namely figurative painting and literature. The first thing he notes is that there must be a distinction between the route to representation and the representation itself. This is because both a painting and a book are able to represent e.g. London, but clearly they do so in different ways. In the one you perceive London in the marks of paint on a canvas, in the other you understand the meanings of words on a page. With this distinction in hand he marshals one bad argument against the possibility of musical representation. Again the discussion concerns the debate between Kivy and Scruton over the status of *Pacific 231*:

“Could the ‘sounds like’ relation suffice to provide the vehicle of representational meaning?”

One philosopher has suggested that it could. Peter Kivy argues at length that music *is* (at least sometimes) representational, on the basis of musical examples which manifestly *sound like* other things. He quotes at length from Honegger’s *Pacific 231*, a piece of music in which the sound and movement of a steam train is imitated. This, for Kivy, is a paradigm of musical representation.

Notice how different the case is from that of painting. How strange it would be to say that Mantegna’s Crucifixion *looks like* the crucifixion of Christ. It looks like nothing of the kind; indeed, it looks like nothing so much as a wooden board smeared with oil-paint. The resemblance that serves as a route to representation obtains between the crucifixion of

Christ and the scene that we *see in* the painting. Similarity of appearance is neither necessary nor sufficient for pictorial representation: so why should it be sufficient in the case of music?" (1997, p.124)

Scruton's key claim comes in the last sentence of the quotation. He denies that similarity of appearance is a possible route to representation in music because it is not a possible route to representation in figurative painting. Bearing in mind what has just gone his mistake should be easy to see. The discussion of painting and literature established that there was a distinction between the route to representation and the representation itself, and further that the route to representation was different in painting and literature. It follows, therefore, that what is a condition of representation in one art form does not necessarily transfer to another art form. An argument that shares the same logical form as Scruton's would run as follows: seeing a subject in a work of art is neither necessary nor sufficient for literary representation so why should it be the case in painting? This is obviously false. Painting and literature are both uncontroversial examples of representational art forms, and yet they have different routes to representation. The means of representation in one art form does not determine the means of representation of a different art form, therefore, nothing can be inferred about the conditions of representation in painting from those in literature. In similar fashion, as music is a radically different art form to figurative painting we should not be surprised if it makes use of an alternative route to representation (just as literature does). Scruton cannot infer that similarity of appearance is not sufficient for musical representation just because it is not sufficient for pictorial representation. Further, we can offer examples that do support

similarity of appearance as a possible route to representation. Consider a life-size sculpture of a man. Here it is in virtue of a similarity of appearance that I recognise the sculpture as a representation of a man. Or a case that is more directly analogous to that of music, because the representation is in virtue of one resemblance rather than an overall similarity of appearance, is the puppets mentioned above.

However, although Scruton's argument does not show that similarity of appearance cannot be a route to representation in music we have not yet established that it results in representational music because we have not yet determined the conditions of representation. From his discussion Scruton draws three conditions of representation. From the discussion of imitation he takes the condition that when we encounter a representation we are presented with an imaginary X; we understand one thing as another. From the discussion of painting and literature Scruton claims that what unites these two and representational art in general is that the artwork conveys a developed set of thoughts about a fictional world. The three proposed conditions of representation are, therefore:

1. Presentation of an imaginary X
2. Developed thoughts
3. A fictional world

We need to consider if these are individually or collectively necessary or sufficient conditions of representation and whether music can satisfy them?

Let us take the third condition first. The presence of ‘fictional’ in this condition might seem strange because you can clearly represent non-fictional entities. Consider a photograph of New York or a novel about Lincoln. We can understand Scruton’s idea if we notice that when we engage with these representations we do not perceive the actual New York or the actual Lincoln. The representations are fictional not in the sense that their subjects do not exist but in the sense that in engaging with them we do not engage with the actual entity. The fictional component of the third condition, therefore, collapses into the first condition. When we engage with a representation of something we are not presented with the thing itself but we take another thing to be it. We can also state this in terms of being presented with an imaginary X; we imagine that one thing is another.

What of the second component of the third claim: that with a representation we engage with a ‘world’? What does Scruton mean by this? We can draw out his idea by considering the difference between what he takes to be the expression of the journey of a train i.e. *Pacific 231* and an uncontroversial representation of the same thing i.e. a figurative painting of the journey of a train. In fact because figurative painting is a non-temporal art form, generally it only shows one moment in time, we will compare only the opening of *Pacific 231* which is titled ‘at rest in the station’ with a painting of the same thing. In what sense is the latter a world while the former isn’t? Consider the information conveyed by the two examples. The music tells us no more than what the title specifies i.e. the train is at rest in the station, whereas with the painting we receive a wealth of information. The train has six carriages; there is a woman in red on the platform; there

are storm clouds on the horizon etc... It is this wealth of extra information that constitutes the presentation of a world. This extra information also constitutes a developed set of thoughts so this example allows us to understand Scruton's distinction between developed and undeveloped thoughts. It follows that the third and second conditions are equivalent: the presentation of a world consists in the presentation of a developed set of thoughts. However, like music the puppets convey only minimal information and yet they are uncontroversial examples of representation. We must, therefore, reject developed thoughts about a world as a condition of representation.

We are left with the condition that when we think of one thing representing another we understand one thing as another; we are presented with an imaginary X. The question is, therefore: is this how we understand the relation of music to its content? We have already noted that there is no reason why music shouldn't be understood in this way. To see this consider that we might use a musical element e.g. a melody in the puppet show to represent e.g. a storm and in this setting it is a definite representation. We understand the melody as a storm. However, we can offer a number of considerations that indicate that generally we do not think of music in this way. In the first case consider the melody just mentioned in a pure musical setting. Perhaps the melody incorporates the sound of a roll of thunder and it was in virtue of this that we took it to represent a storm when it was used in the puppet show. In the pure musical setting it would be odd to say that we think of a storm in the middle of the music. Rather all we think of as before us is music, the character of one aspect of which we describe in terms of a roll of thunder. Compare the music that incorporates elements that sound like waves crashing against the

beach in *Balcony Beach* (track 1 on the tape). Again we don't think that there is the music and then the sea in the middle of it, we think that the character of the music is partially determined by its resemblance to the sound of waves. Evidence for the fact that this is an accurate description of the way we think of music is that even a proponent of representational music such as Budd does not refer to the experience of representation as understanding one thing as another but only as "an experience of resemblance, likeness or affinity" (1995, p.130). If this is the case and if, as the argument of this chapter has attempted to establish, there is a distinction between understanding one thing as another and understanding one thing as associated with another, then music experienced in this way is not representational. A final consideration is the way we think of music set to film. Suppose I set a piece with an energetic rhythm to a fight scene. The fight and the music share the common description 'energetic'. But it does not capture the way that we understand the film to say that we think of the music as representing the fight because we do not think of the music as the fight. Rather we think that the music matches the scene on the film. Why should the case with music set to content specified textually be any different to that specified visually? When I play Debussy's *La Mer* over footage of the sea we do not think that it represents the sea so why should we when we set the music to a title that says 'la mer'?

The discussion of this chapter has led us to the conclusion that although there is no a priori reason why music should not be representational it tends not to represent things but to be associated with them or expressive of them. We reached this conclusion by developing a distinction between X being understood as Y and X being associated with Y

and finding that music tends towards the latter relation. Scruton is right, therefore, to claim that music is not representational because that is not how we understand it i.e. we understand it in terms of the second of the distinctions above. However, it is only in a qualified form that either of his two arguments serve to establish this.

Chapter 2: Expression in General

The discussion of the preceding chapter has shown that while music can be representational, often this term does not accurately capture the way we understand music as related to an X in virtue of a perceived resemblance. The question, therefore, becomes what should we label, and how should we analyse this relation? A natural way to describe music as related to content in this way is in terms of the music wearing an expression. The character of the music is partially understood in terms of the X that it is related to. Here we see that as used in aesthetics the meaning of 'expression' is stretched from its primary connotations of the expression of a human being communicating his state of mind. This broader use of the term 'expression' requires more analysis, however, we will concentrate in the following in attempting to understand how it is that we come to apply the term 'expression' to music when we understand it as being expressive of an emotion. It is this capacity that is the more puzzling. Consider the example of the sound of a thunderstorm discussed in the previous section. Although we might debate whether this should be considered a case of musical representation it is clear that the relation to content is due to a sounds-like relation. It is not at all obvious why particular sound structures should bear one sort of emotional colour and not another, or none at all. Yet it is often held to be music's special capacity to express emotional states. Indeed, that music is able to communicate them in an especially subtle and revealing manner. In this chapter we will be concerned to give an account of why in general we talk of music expressing emotions.

Before we turn to music we will first need to partake of a brief discussion of the emotions. When we have completed this we will be in a better position to evaluate three kinds of theory that offer to account for the description of music as expressive. The three theories are the arousal theory, the resemblance theory, and the life theory. The arousal theory argues that we describe music as expressive of emotion when the experience of listening to music arouses the emotion in us. To evaluate this theory we need to understand what is necessary for particular emotions to be aroused. The resemblance theory argues that music is expressive when we perceive a resemblance between the music and an emotion. To evaluate this theory we need to know what aspects of emotion music can resemble and whether this is sufficient for music to express one emotion rather than any other. Life theories argue that expression is an extension of the life we hear in music. The nature of emotions is less relevant to the success of this theory; however, to evaluate the first two we need to answer: what constitutes an emotion, and what gives rise to the occurrence of an emotion?

What is an emotion?

The immediate response to the question what is an emotion would probably give an answer in terms of feelings. It is the experience of feelings that are especially pertinent to us when we undergo an emotion because they determine whether the emotion is a pleasant or distressing experience. However, recent work in the philosophy of mind has developed 'cognitive' theories of emotions. Although there are varieties of this kind of theory they have in common their opposition to affective theories of emotion. Affective

theories identify emotions with feelings or bodily sensations. Cognitive theories by contrast argue that types of thought are essential constitutive components of emotional states. To see the conflicting intuitions consider a case of jealousy. There are certainly affective components of the standard experience of jealousy: something like a discomforting feeling of a tightening in the area of the chest. However, if this occurred independently of thoughts such as 'he is going out with the girl I love' and desires such as 'I want her back' would we want to say that the subject is jealous? The answer is probably 'no'. This individual does not manifest the standard thoughts and behaviour of a jealous person so in what sense is he jealous?

One might reply in the sense that he feels jealousy. This response leads us into the strongest argument for some kind of cognitive theory of emotions. A cognitive theory of emotions maintains that we must include thoughts (or more generally mental representations) in our descriptions of emotional states (Robert Solomon forcefully presents the case for such a theory in his book *The Passions* (1976)). This argument will allow us to confirm the tentative conclusion just drawn in the proposed case of jealousy. The suggestion put forward is that we are only able to identify particular emotions by reference to the thoughts they involve. Consider again the case of jealousy mentioned above. A similar affect occurs in the case of embarrassment. With both emotions I experience a constriction in the chest area and yet they are not the same emotion. It seems we differentiate them according to the thoughts that accompany the affective component. The thoughts of the embarrassed individual concern some action he wishes he had not performed because he believes that others will think less of him because of it. Perhaps he

regrets his drunken antics at the pub the night before. While the jealous individual is thinking about somebody else who possesses the thing he desires. Maybe he is jealous of his colleague's promotion.

We can multiply examples of this kind. Consider coming across two women. Both are wailing and clearly in great distress. You are now informed that the first has just received news of her husband's death, and the second that she has failed her exams that would have allowed her to fulfil her lifelong dream of becoming a veterinarian. Despite the fact that their feelings and behaviour are the same I think it is clear that we only wish to describe the first woman as in a state of grief. The other would be better described as extremely upset. The reason for this is that what guides our judgement of somebody being in a state of grief is the presence of thoughts about the death of a loved one. At most we might wish to say that the second woman is behaving as if grief-stricken; which is only to confirm that we do not consider her to be in a true state of grief. Or another case from the positive side of the emotional spectrum concerns distinguishing admiration from love. I have the same warm feeling when I reflect on my admiration for my professor and my love for my wife. The emotional states are distinguished by their associated thoughts. With admiration the thoughts concern the impressive lifetime work of the professor. With love they concern my wanting to spend the rest of my life with this woman.

There is strong evidence, therefore, that we individuate emotional states by reference to the thoughts they involve. This is supported not just by thought experiments

like those above but also by the fact that empirical research has not been able to confirm the hypothesis of the affective theory that every emotional state brings about a distinct physiological change. However, the insight of the cognitive theory is not simply that we need reference to thoughts to individuate emotions but also that particular emotional responses are only triggered by particular kinds of thoughts. Even a proponent of a pure affective theory of emotion must accept this claim or for him emotions cease to function as they do in normal human life. To see this consider how odd these examples are:

1. I am looking at a tree in a park and suddenly I start manifesting the same behaviour as the women above.
2. I am brushing my teeth in the morning and suddenly I throw the toothpaste against the wall and yell: 'you can't have this brush'.

There are several things to say about these examples that help bring out important characteristics of human emotions. The first thing is to understand why the examples seem so bizarre: grief directed at the tree and the case of jealousy of the toothpaste. It is because our emotions are not randomly associated with the world but are appropriate responses to particular manifestations of it. In the case of the tree and the toothpaste there is simply nothing appropriate for me to feel grief or jealousy about. An emotional reaction constitutes an evaluation of the way we judge the world to be. In order for me to react with the massive negative evaluation that is grief I must have a thought that occasions that response. My thoughts about the tree e.g. 'the leaves are green' are not such that this evaluative response makes any sense. The same applies in the case of my

thoughts about the toothpaste e.g. 'it is made by Aquafresh' and the emotion of jealousy. The examples are bizarre, therefore, because the evaluation that the emotion constitutes does not match the element of the world it is directed at.

We need to qualify this last claim and so further refine our understanding of emotion. Although I have argued that emotions must be appropriate to their object there is an ambiguity in this use of object between the actual object in the world and the intentional object of my representation. Emotions may be inappropriate to the actual object if the thought they are a reaction to distorts the object it represents. In this way they are appropriate to one's representation of the object but not to the actual object itself. Consider the common case of somebody flying into a blind rage over a trivial matter e.g. the car keys have not been put back in their allotted place. My thought about the keys is that their misplacing constitutes a huge wrong directed at me. The content of this thought justifies my intense anger even though in a calmer moment I can see that the misplacing of the keys is a genuine oversight. This kind of distortion also allows us to understand phobias. These irrational fears are possible because despite the fact that the object I am afraid of e.g. spiders does not endanger me I represent it to myself as a large threat to my person.

We can apply this idea to the bizarre cases to make them understandable. If my thoughts of the leaf or toothpaste are not the typical ones we have in perceiving a tree or brushing ones teeth then the emotional response may be appropriate to the intentional object of my representation. Perhaps in both cases I am under the influence of

hallucinogenic drugs and I take the leaf to be my dead child and the toothpaste and toothbrush to be protagonists in a love triangle I am also involved with. In this case the thought makes the emotional response appropriate despite the fact that it is distorted from reality. It is important to realise, as it will be significant for what follows, that the point about emotions constituting an appropriate response applies even if one rejects a cognitive theory of emotions. The main criticism one can level at a cognitive theory of emotion is that it fails to distinguish an emotional from an unemotional evaluation of the world. A theory that identifies emotions with particular kinds of thoughts must account for the difference between the unemotional and emotional occurrence of that thought. My thoughts of my dead loved one or of my colleague who has received the promotion I wanted may occur independently of any experience of grief or jealousy. A pure affective theory is not plausible for the reasons given above, but such a theorist must take the point about appropriate response. If not our emotions would be randomly correlated with the world. I might feel the pain and distress of grief while walking through the park or upon receiving good news instead of reacting with joy I might spiral into a fit of depression.

The Arousal Theory

With this discussion in hand we can turn our attention to the various theories of musical expression. The alert reader will already have anticipated the objection mounted by Kivy (1989) against any arousal theory of musical expression. The arousal theory's claim is of this form:

‘A piece of music is expressive of emotion X if listening to the piece brings about the arousal of emotion X in the listener.’

However, on the surface at least, a reaction of grief or anger to listening to music is as bizarre as the emotional response to the tree and the toothpaste above. It seems in the normal case that the kind of thoughts one has when listening to music are not such so as to occasion an emotional response of these kinds. Possible thoughts are: ‘the melody is played on the flute,’ ‘the piece is in C major,’ ‘the piece is in 6/8 time’ etc... A response of grief or anger simply does not make any sense when presented with thoughts of this kind. And yet the repertoire of expressive music includes pieces that are expressive of grief and anger. It would seem that the arousal theory must fail as an account of musical expression because music is not such so as to arouse certain emotions yet it is able to express those same emotions.

There are cases where music is able to arouse such emotions but these are not such as to determine any expressive content. Firstly, music might arouse grief or anger in me by means of personal association. By this I mean that the piece of music serves as a link to some other occasion in my life and brings about an emotional response in virtue of that link. If a particular piece was played at my father’s funeral it may be the case that whenever I hear it subsequently I am moved to grief for the loss of my father. It is possible that the music serves to turn my thoughts to my father and that my emotion is directed at him. Or my emotions may be directed at the music itself because it was played at the funeral. In this case my thoughts are directed solely at the music, but as the music

of my father's funeral. Either way the response is subjective and independent of the music's actual expressive content. It is subjective because the arousal of the emotion is due to my connecting the music with the funeral and any other listener would not make this connection. It is independent of the music's actual expressive content because the association could be triggered by a piece that is expressive of joy. Even with this expressive content it can still serve to arouse grief in me either by directing my thoughts to my father or simply by being the music from my father's funeral. To sum up: in the case of music that arouses by association it is the relation to the association that accounts for the arousal such that it will not have the same effect in all listeners; and this position could potentially be filled by pieces with different expressive qualities.

A second uncontroversial route to the sort of thoughts that generate arousal of grief is what Kivy (1989) calls 'visual listening'. Remember the objection we are considering against the arousal theory is that the kind of thoughts one has in listening to music are not the sort of ones that occasion the response of grief i.e. thoughts about the death of a loved one. The visual listener imagines that the music represents a story. This activity allows music to encompass the sort of situation where the occurrence of grief is appropriate. Perhaps the listener imagines that the music represents the death of a character in a story and the mourning of that death by others. The death of the character makes grief an appropriate response. Or at least the response of the mourners is appropriate. The appropriate response of the listener is not grief; it is not his loved one who has died, but rather sympathy for the characters in the story. However, it might be

objected that if we truly identify with the dead character then it is possible that we would respond with grief and not just sympathy for the grief of others.

Even if we grant this it is not sufficient to save the arousal theory. This is for two reasons. In the first instance this example demonstrates that the arousal theory tends towards an account that makes music independently expressive of the emotions it arouses. If it didn't have this independent connection then engaging with music would not generate the kind of thoughts that make grief an appropriate response. This connection might take the form of imagining some represented content that constitutes a standard situation for the arousal of grief. Or it might be that the music is expressive of grief in some other way, possibly in the fashion of the theories to be discussed below, and that hearing the grief in the music induces not just a sympathetic response in me but also the experience of grief itself. The second reason is that visual listening of this kind mirrors the subjectivity of expression through personal association. Suppose I take a particular melody in the music to represent the death of the main character in the story represented by the music. It is this representational component that makes the music an appropriate object for grief. However, given that the represented content is an imaginative addition by me there is no reason why a different listener shouldn't imagine that it represents the wedding of two characters and thereby make the music a suitable object for joy not grief. The emotional arousal of each listener is subjective in that it is not constrained by the music. We saw in the previous chapter that almost all cases of musical representation require an accompanying text to determine the content. This is because the music represents its content in virtue of a common description, and many

other things will also share this description. The represented content would be constrained if the music was already expressive of grief as opposed to joy, perhaps in the manner of the resemblance or life theory, but then the arousal theory has collapsed into one of its competitor theories of musical expression.

The discussion and criticism of the arousal theory to date turns on the idea that emerged from our discussion of cognitive theories of emotions that only the consideration of particular kinds of thoughts lead to the arousal of particular emotions. Although this seems accurate for much of our emotional life it is not clear that it is universally true of emotional arousal. Consider the phenomenon of waking up in the morning and feeling sad. You do not know what caused this feeling, nor can you find any object to attach it to. It simply sits in your being for the day and eventually dissipates. Cases of this sort are offered as counter-examples to the suggestion that all emotions must be directed at particular kinds of objects. However, although such cases exist the preceding discussion indicates that we should not classify them as emotions. The component of any affective state of this kind i.e. a vague, undirected feeling might be a constituent part of multiple emotions depending on which thoughts accompanied it. The vague feeling of sadness I wake up with might be a constituent part of any of the emotions of sadness, loneliness, depression, despair etc... depending on which thoughts it was accompanied by. We can, therefore, block one potential move by the arousal theorist. He might suggest that the arousal of the emotions that lead us to describe music as expressive is not by the standard route of reaction to thoughts about the music, but by a different subliminal route to the arousal of these kind of objectless emotions. We can block this because such arousal still

does not allow music to be expressive of many emotions it is normally considered able to be expressive of because such vague feelings are not able to determine the expression of one particular emotion rather than another.

Before ending our discussion of the arousal theory we need to consider another objection to its coherence as an account of musical expression. This objection asks a more general question about our emotional responses to art. It is the traditional philosophical puzzle of tragedy: why do we seek artistic experiences that involve undergoing negative emotions? In terms of music: why do we find value in musical objects that are expressive of grief and sadness if this expression resides in the arousal of these emotions that are intrinsically negative and painful? Clearly any solution to this seeming paradox will in some sense have to convert the negative import of the intrinsic nature of the emotion into a positive to satisfy the positive value we place on the artistic experience. There are three options for achieving this conversion. One can argue that the negative emotion is in fact pleasurable (the no pain theory), that the negative emotion has an instrumental value in producing greater pleasure at a different point (the pain-pleasure theory), or that the negative emotion is intrinsically valuable (the no pleasure theory). Only the last theory could be a total solution to the problem. The first merely deepens the sense of paradox – how can it be the negative emotion if it is pleasurable? And the second theory cannot account for reports of intrinsic value found in the experience of negative emotions in artistic contexts.

The most promising answer approaches the issue of value via the question of behaviour. It is precisely because these experiences are removed from their standard practical contexts, with no demand for appropriate behaviour, that we are able to value them. Much of the negativity of the experience of grief or sadness concerns not the feeling but the awareness of the reality of the object the emotion is directed at. For example, my experience is negative because my dog really has died. In art this source of negativity is removed and we can explore our interest in and learn about the emotion or the negative situation that is its object. We would not seek to satisfy these desires of interest and understanding if we only had access to experiences of such emotions directed at genuine objects. There remains the problem that the feelings themselves are painful. Here we can talk of our ability to savour the experience of negative emotions. This is possible even when the emotions take actual not fictional objects. One need only introspect one's own emotional life to find that we are attracted to the experience of even negative emotions. It is in the artistic realm that we are able to satisfy this desire to savour our emotional experiences because the negativity of the reality of the situation is removed.

The preceding discussion takes as given and does not attempt to explain the fact that we do respond emotionally to fiction. It is perhaps a moot point whether we wish to call such experiences emotions or quasi-emotions (because they do not result in appropriate behaviour). Either way there is enough in common to say that we can savour and learn from them. Kivy (1989) discusses a number of possible instrumental benefits of negative emotions in art. One might value the resolution of a negative situation into a

positive, or the presence of negative emotions may contribute to a storyline that overall is more thrilling and interesting. No doubt such suggestions contain truth but only an account in terms of savouring the experience of negative emotions can capture the fact that we find intrinsic not instrumental value in the experiences.

The Resemblance Theory

We will now turn our attention to the resemblance theory of musical expression. First I will make two preliminary comments. Firstly, to note that again our discussion will make reference to the account given above of the nature of the emotions. Remember that the central claims adduced were: firstly, that emotions mark appropriate responses to the way the world is taken to be, and secondly, that particular emotions are distinguished by the kind of thoughts that are intrinsic to them. And secondly, to clarify that by a resemblance theory I understand a theory that accounts for the expression of music in terms of a perceived resemblance between the music and the experience of an emotion. The resemblance, therefore, lies with elements of emotions that are accessible only from the first person perspective. Emotions are states of mind and as such are only directly accessible to the consciousness that is that mind. However, emotions are often revealed in public behaviour. There is a distinction, therefore, between the public manifestation of an emotion and the emotion itself. Consider the difference between a cry of pain and the feeling of pain. I am aware of the feeling of pain only indirectly through your cry whereas you are directly aware of the feeling from your first person perspective by experiencing it. It follows that I do not include Kivy's (1989) theory in this category

because it incorporates resemblances to the public manifestation of emotions, not the first person experience of an emotion.

The basic claim of such a resemblance theory is of this form:

‘A piece of music is expressive of emotion X if we perceive a resemblance between the music and the experience of X.’

The primary example of a resemblance theory that we will consider is that put forward by Malcolm Budd in his book *Values of Art*. In the book Budd summarises his position thus:

“So the sense in which you hear the emotion *in* the music – the sense in which it is an audible property of the music – is that you perceive a likeness between the music and the experience of the emotion.” (1995, p.136)

Budd subscribes to a version of the cognitive theory of emotions outlined above:

“An emotion in its experiential form is a casual structure composed of a representation and a felt evaluative reaction to the representation’s content: for an emotion to be experienced, the positive or negative attitude integral to the emotion must be felt; it must be caused by the representation

intrinsic to the emotion; and it must be directed at what the representation is about.” (1995, p.139)

This quotation demonstrates that Budd concurs with the central conclusions concerning emotions reiterated above. Emotions for Budd are, therefore, composite states. They have a conceptual component that constitutes the representation intrinsic to them, and a feeling component that makes the evaluative reaction an emotional reaction. Budd goes on to argue that the resemblances that lead us to describe music as expressive only ever relate to the second of these constituent parts. The first aspect of Budd’s theory we must understand is why expressive music should be constrained to resembling just these aspects of emotional states. One idea might be that because the occurrence of the representation intrinsic to an emotion alone does not constitute the occurrence of an emotion, resemblance to only this element would not constitute the expression of emotion. However, although occurrence of the representational content alone in my mind does not constitute an emotion, the presence of this in a work of art might be sufficient to make that work expressive of the associated emotion. To see this, consider that a painting might be expressive of grief by depicting a funeral. Here the content of the work is only the conceptual components of the state of grief not the feeling components and although the thought of my father’s funeral would not constitute my undergoing grief the depiction of the funeral is sufficient for a painting to be expressive of grief. Budd might object that such music would be representational and we are interested in abstract music expressing emotions. However, I will argue below that he cannot maintain his distinction between abstract and representational music. What is correct is that music could not have a

content of this kind without an accompanying text to specify it and we are interested in music that is expressive without any accompanying text. And, as will be discussed below, the resemblance theorist can offer an account of why resemblance to the feeling component of emotions should be pertinent even without an accompanying text.

We first need to consider whether Budd's theory is internally sound? In *Values of Art* Budd is concerned to account for the value we find in abstract music and he argues that the expression of emotion is one of these values. It is, therefore, crucial that his account of expression preserves the abstractness of music. I will show that there are tensions within his theory such that he must give up his one of his central claims: either that music can be representational, or that abstract music can be expressive.

Budd opposes abstraction to representation:

“... abstraction in art is not usually understood in such a way that abstract art must display nothing of the outside world that the audience needs to appreciate; in particular, it is usually understood to rule out not ‘expression’ of the ‘inner world’ of psychological states ... but ‘representation’ of the ‘external world’ of physical objects and events.”

(1995, p.128)

Now consider again the first quotation from *Values of Art* given above. The description of the experience of hearing music as expressive is identical to that he offers for the

experience of hearing music as representational (compare the discussion in the previous chapter). In both cases he tells us that the listener undergoes an experience of likeness. We are, therefore, entitled to ask: what is the relevant difference between the two cases such that one sacrifices and one preserves musical abstraction?

Budd has two potential answers. The first salient difference he suggests is that the subject matter of expressive music is elements of the 'inner world' while the subject matter of representational music is the 'external world'. In clarifying why abstraction does not rule out expression of the inner world he writes: 'the 'inner world', as such, is not perceivable, and hence not picturable' (1995, p.128). It is implied that when we represent something we picture it and that this is impossible when we are dealing with aspects of the inner world. The first question we need to ask then, is if all representation is picturing? If by a picture we have in mind the class of representation highlighted by Peter Kivy and discussed in the previous chapter then clearly the answer is no. Kivy's pictures are only one kind of representation. If Budd means by picturing a relation of the form that we find in figurative painting, where the subject that is seen in the picture looks like the thing it represents, then it is correct to say that you cannot represent aspects of the inner world in this fashion. This is because emotions do not look like anything. The sense modality of vision receives information only from objects in the external world and has no access to our inner life. It follows that no subject of a figurative painting can look like an emotion and that emotions cannot be represented in this way. This would seem to be the idea Budd has in mind in the quotation given above.

However, not all representation is of this form. The puppets from the previous chapter, which were an uncontroversial example of representation, do not look like the things they represent. Nor are most of the examples of musical representation discussed by Kivy and Budd comparable to figurative painting. In all these cases representation is secured by the sharing of a common description. But this is exactly the same as those cases Budd wishes to deny are representational i.e. cases of musical expression through resemblance. Nor will it suffice to establish a distinction for Budd to point out that the resemblance perceived in cases of expression is, in his terms, ‘cross-categorical likeness’ perception. For this occurs also in many cases of musical representation. Consider again a case from the first chapter: Haydn’s use of ‘light’ chords to represent the light of the sun. Here we clearly have a case of cross-categorical likeness perception. The resemblance is perceived because both objects are ‘light’. But in the case of the music the lightness is a property of a sound and perceivable only via the sense of hearing, whereas the light of the sun is perceivable only via the sense modality of vision. The resemblance is perceived across the categories of different sense modalities.

Perhaps Budd’s second suggestion will be more successful. Budd claims that the relation of music to emotion does not sacrifice its abstractness because the emotion expressed by music is itself abstract:

“Furthermore, the inclusion of the expression of emotion within the scope of abstract music does not compromise music’s abstractness, for the

musical expression of emotion is ... the expression of *abstract* emotion.”

(1995, p.128)

What does Budd mean by an abstract emotion? He cannot mean it is abstract in the same sense as an abstract painting is. This sense is applicable only to works of art and is understood in opposition to representational art. Emotions are simply one sort of thing that occur in the world and are neither abstract nor representational as the terms are used to describe works of art. What does he mean then by ‘abstract emotion’? He takes his lead from Schopenhauer who says:

“... music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, or peace of mind, but joy, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories, and so also without the motives for them.” (1995, p.136)

Budd’s thought, following on from Schopenhauer, is that the emotion we hear in music has neither a subject nor an object and is, therefore, not the expression of any particular emotion but of emotion in general. We first need to consider if the first half of the preceding sentence is true before judging its claim to preserve the abstractness of music. We saw above that music alone could not have as its content the representational component of emotional states so it is correct to say that the emotion heard in expressive

music generally has no object. What are the potential candidates for the subject of musical emotion? The only real candidate is the composer. Ordinarily nothing else could stand in the correct relation because when we listen to music we observe from the third person perspective. We perceive the emotion in the music as something distinct from ourselves. If we hear the emotion in music as the emotion of the composer we suppose that he has chosen to express some emotion he experienced via the music. While this is possible and no doubt does happen occasionally it is much more common that any emotional content of a piece is not related to the composer's emotional state. This is because expressing one's own emotional state is only one motivation amongst many for writing a piece of music and only one motivation amongst many for imbuing a piece of music with emotional content.

It seems correct then that the emotion heard in music is generally without object and subject. Budd's claim is, therefore, that because music does not relate to any particular emotion it remains abstract. But again this does not establish a salient difference between Budd's examples of representation and expression. Consider Debussy's *La Mer*. This piece of music is not related to any particular sea but only to the sea in general. If Budd cannot demonstrate a salient difference between music he claims is representational and music he claims is expressive yet abstract then he must give up his claim to one or the other. On the basis of the argument of the preceding chapter it is clear that he should give up the claim to representational music. The account given there coheres well with the strong intuitions we have that expressive music remains abstract. The perception of a resemblance to an emotion does not sacrifice music's abstract nature

for the same reasons that the previous chapter argued that in general music was not representational i.e. we do not understand the music as an emotion but rather as music whose character is partially determined by the fact that it resembles an emotion.

Let us now turn our attention to Scruton's critique of the resemblance theory. Scruton's first strand of attack on the resemblance theory consists of two arguments that purport to show that the resemblance claim is fundamentally flawed. Scruton thinks there are two problems with any claim along the line of Budd's that music sounds like how an emotion feels. He asks 'how do states of mind sound?' Certainly it is true that states of mind do not sound like anything, but this objection is a caricature of the resemblance claim. Reference to a sounds-like relation is ambiguous. Firstly it can have the meaning Scruton attributes to the resemblance theorist where two things literally sound the same e.g. the car horn sounds like the boat horn. Or secondly it can refer to two things sharing a common description with one of them being a sound. To say that X sounds like Y in this sense means that Y shares a common description with the sound that is X.

Although Scruton denies the possibility of representational music he accepts that music can be expressive of non-musical things in virtue of a common description. Sometimes musical expression is of the first kind of sounds-like relation. This is the case with the example in the previous chapter where the sound of a roll of thunder was incorporated into a musical object. However, often musical expression is of the second variety of sounds-like relation. This is the case with Haydn's use of light chords to express the light of the sun. Given that Scruton endorses this kind of relation in his

chapter discussing the possibility of musical representation, it is strange that he should deny the legitimacy of the same relation when discussing the resemblance theory in the subsequent chapter. To the extent that music and emotions can share a common description then it is possible for music to sound like emotions in the second of the senses outlined above.

Budd offers a number of examples of common descriptions music and emotions might share. We will consider one in particular to show that the resemblance theorist can rebut Scruton's second objection. Scruton asks why the resemblance to the emotion is the one that is highlighted when the music resembles other things more closely than it does the emotion? The common description we will consider this objection in terms of is that of musical sound moving between sounds that do stand in need of resolution to ones that do not. Budd says:

“... there is a natural correspondence between the transition, integral to tonal music, from those musical sounds that do to those that do not stand in need of resolution and the transition from states of desire to states of satisfaction or from states of tension to states of release.” (1995, p.142)

The first point to make is that in terms of this property of the shift from tension to release it is only if we interpret 'sounds like' in the first of the ways outlined above that music would resemble other things more closely than the emotions. However, it is true that this property is shared by things other than emotions so Scruton's question about why this

resemblance is still pertinent. The activity of opening a tight jam-jar involves a transition from states of tension to states of release so why isn't the music heard as resembling this or something else with this property? Although many things instantiate this transition the most common and pertinent example in human life is our experience of our own emotional states. It is natural, therefore, that when presented with something that involves the transition between states of tension and states of release, as we are in music then the resemblance that will suggest itself to us is to our own emotions not to anything else such as jam-jars. In general, the resemblance theorist can block Scruton's challenge and offer an account of the pre-eminence of resemblance to emotions in terms of our emotional states playing a role of great significance in our lives such that we tend to notice the resemblance to them rather than anything else.

Scruton has a further objection to the resemblance theory in which he attacks what he takes to be its misconception of the nature of emotions. Appealing to the arguments of Wittgenstein, Hegel and Brentano he rejects the view that emotions are constituted from two distinct parts: the feeling and their represented object. Rather he claims they are parts of the same primitive whole. For him any theory that appealed to such a conception of the emotions would automatically be false. However, it does not follow that because Budd believes music can only resemble the feeling components of emotions that he believes the feeling components are a separate part of emotional states. Even if the feeling is just one aspect of a primitive whole there is no reason why music should not resemble just this aspect.

The second strand of Scruton's attack on the resemblance theory argues that such a theory fails to pass three key tests Scruton deems necessary for a successful theory of musical expression. The first two of these are the understanding test and the value test. Scruton states that it is a consequence of the resemblance theory that one can:

“... notice the expression while being aesthetically unaffected, and that a successful expression may be an uninteresting piece of music. But if that were so, what remains of the idea that the expressive properties of a piece are part of its meaning as music?” (1997, p.149)

The first clause of the quotation pertains to Scruton's understanding test and the second to the value test. The understanding test makes it a condition of any theory of musical expression that the expression be part of what we understand when we understand the music as music. The idea of this test is uncontroversial: the expression of music must be part of the meaning of music as music and so must be understood in the musical experience. Music is an art form so when we understand music as music we must be aesthetically affected. Scruton's claim is, therefore, that on a resemblance theory account the expression is not part of the meaning of music as music because we can understand the expression independent of being aesthetically affected.

We first need to understand what it is to be aesthetically unaffected in order to evaluate Scruton's claim. Clearly if one is aesthetically affected one is able to make judgements of the value of a work of art as a work of art. I am able to say, for example,

that this is a particularly beautiful piece of music. If one is aesthetically affected, therefore, one's experience is such that one can make an aesthetic evaluation of the piece of music. Scruton is correct to say that one can notice elements of a work of art while being unable to form judgements of this kind. This might happen if one's attention is not fully focussed on the music. For example, if I overhear the sound of my friend playing a CD in his room I might notice that the music is being played on a piano but not attend sufficiently to evaluate the value of the piece as music. I would not be able to say if I thought it was good or bad, original or clichéd, played with skill or incompetence, or any other sort of evaluation of its aesthetic worth.

In the same way as I can notice the instrument a piece of music is played on independently of being able to make any aesthetic evaluation of the piece I can also notice some aspect of the music through the resemblance of which to an emotion the music could be said, according to Budd's theory, to express that emotion. One resemblance Budd refers to is music being expressive of the feeling of floating by consisting of a lightened musical texture such as a single highly pitched melodic strand. Again, I might overhear a piece and notice nothing else about it than that it is expressive of the feeling of floating. Scruton seems correct, therefore, to say that it is a feature of the resemblance theory that one can notice the expression while being aesthetically unaffected. But it does not follow from this that the expression is not relevant to the meaning of the music as music. This is because it is the nature of the mode of attention that enables me to perceive the expression independent of an aesthetic evaluation of the music and when I change my mode of attention and fully attend to the music as music

such that I can make an aesthetic evaluation of the piece the expression is part of what I attend to.

To see this, consider that I can notice the represented subject of a representational painting independent of an aesthetic evaluation of that painting yet this is certainly a central component of any meaning that it has as this is what the painting is of. Suppose I am an art historian and I am cataloguing the appearance of a certain figure in the work of a renaissance painter. In this case the manner of my interest means that I might notice the presence of the figure in the painting and yet be aesthetically unaffected. However, when I do attend to the work of art in order to make an aesthetic evaluation the figure is a central part of what I evaluate. This case parallels the example outlined above where I overhear music coming from my friend's room. When I take the time to go into the room and give my full attention to the music the resemblance that accounts for the musical expression is part of what I attend to. The resemblance theory can pass the understanding test providing that when we listen to music as music noticing that resemblance is part of our experience. This is regardless of the fact that one can notice it without being aesthetically affected. And as we have seen none of Scruton's arguments have yet established that noticing this resemblance is not part of our musical experience.

The condition of Scruton's second test, the value test, is less obviously uncontroversial than the condition of the understanding test. It requires that all expressive music have positive value. For Scruton, if a piece of music is expressive of X then this makes the music an aesthetic success. And it is true that it is a feature of the resemblance

theory that not only good music can be expressive. Even the most inept of composers has access to musical materials that resemble emotions and can construct a musical object using them even if it demonstrates no ability for melody, rhythm or harmony. But why should it be the case that all expressive music is good music? Scruton offers an argument of the following form. He first makes these two claims:

1. Listening to music is an expression of aesthetic interest, and music is understood through the aesthetic experience.
2. The expressive qualities of a work of music form the most important part of its content.

And then draws this conclusion: “It follows [from the above] ... that expressive qualities are also objects of aesthetic interest to the person who grasps them” (1997, p.344). This argument is certainly valid, but it does not establish that all music that is expressive is good music. This is because experience of good or bad music can be an expression of aesthetic interest. This is a form of interest that we take in the music and consequent to this interest we make evaluations of the music’s worth. When I listen to a piece by a composer and judge it negatively this is an expression of aesthetic interest. Therefore, although expressive qualities are objects of aesthetic interest this does not establish that possession of expressive qualities is always an aesthetic success. Only after taking an aesthetic interest in the music do we evaluate its expressive components. With no argument to support the value test the resemblance theorist can take the following plausible position: the expressive aspects of music are no different from any of its other

components, they can both be an aesthetic success and an aesthetic failure and it depends upon the individual composer and the individual piece which of these evaluations is the case.

The third test Scruton argues any resemblance theory must fail is the structure test. I will argue that this is Scruton's strongest objection to the resemblance theory. This test requires that any theory of musical expression must account for the sense in which the musical expression of emotion constitutes an articulation and rumination on its theme. Scruton writes:

“... the use of the term ‘express’ seems to imply human agency of some kind, and also the attempt to *articulate* something. ... An expressive work does not merely possess a certain atmosphere: it has a content, upon which it meditates, and which it sets before us in articulate form.” (1997, p.155)

That is to say that when we listen to a piece that is expressive of love the experience of listening to the music brings us a greater understanding of the emotion. After listening to the music we are left with the sense that the nature of love has been explored and laid before us. And it is the structure of the music that constitutes this exploration.

Scruton thinks that the perception of resemblances cannot satisfy this condition because such resemblances are only passing elements of a whole musical object. If they are only minor elements of the overall composition they do not allow us to say that the

music as a whole was expressive of love. But it is clearly not the case that such resemblances can only ever be passing elements of a whole piece of music. There is no reason why a composer should not construct a piece mostly from musical elements that bear a resemblance to emotions. This is shown by the fact that one form of resemblance emphasised by Budd is a tonal melody that moves between points of repose and is, he says, analogous to striving via intermediate goals to a final desired end. With this resemblance the total melodic structure of a piece can be expressive.

However, it seems correct to say that no resemblance could ever constitute an expression in this sense. The fact that A resembles B does not generally lead to a furthering of our understanding of the nature of B. It would do so only if we were already in possession of an exploration of the nature of A and B resembled it in this respect. However, this is not the case with music and emotions. We do not already have an exploration of the nature of music when we engage with it. Furthermore, whatever an articulation of the nature of music consists in it is not in this respect that emotions resemble it. Rather they share one minor property resemblance. Knowledge of this resemblance does not further our understanding of the emotion; it simply gives us the trivial extra piece of knowledge that e.g. both the emotion and the music are light.

Scruton is correct, therefore, to say that the resemblance theory fails the structure test. But should we accept the test? It is dependent on a particular understanding of the term 'expression' in the phrase 'musical expression'. This meaning is only one of the cognates of 'expression' and if the resemblance theorist rejects it Scruton simply begs the

question against the resemblance theory. However, following Scruton we can offer a powerful reason for supposing that this is how 'expression' should be understood when applied to music. The sense of expression we are dealing with refers to an expression as a vehicle that allows us to grasp all the subtleties and complexities of an emotional state. Without the expression the emotion remains obscure to us. As Scruton emphasises, it is one of the major functions of art to act as expression in this sense. Whether it be poetry, literature, film or abstract painting when we talk of the expression of the artwork we refer to its giving form to an otherwise obscure and inchoate state of mind. Given that this sense of expression is primarily reserved for works of art and this is one of the main things that we value in art it would be strange if it did not apply also to music. It is this sense of expression that lies at the heart of the value test also. Although the argument considered above did not establish that expressive properties must constitute an aesthetic success if we mean 'expression' in the sense currently under consideration then such expression is a kind of success because it implies the achievement of bringing a greater understanding to a previously obscure emotion. We can conclude our discussion of the resemblance theory, therefore, by noting that although most of Scruton's objections to the resemblance theory fail, the weight of the structure test allows us to rule out such a theory as a successful theory of musical expression.

The Life Theory

The third and final kind of theory of musical expression we will scrutinise is the life theory. Theories of this sort maintain that the expression we hear in music is a

function of and dependent on the life that we hear in the music. It is a function of it in the sense that it is because we hear the music as alive that we interpret it as an expression; in the same way as we interpret the actions of our fellow human beings as expressions because they are alive. We will consider two rival theories that account for the application of the concept of life and in turn of expression to music: those of Roger Scruton (1997) and Peter Kivy (1989).

It is a central contention of Scruton's theory that music exists only as an object of metaphorical perception and that it cannot be reduced to the sounds that underlie it. He, therefore, challenges a natural answer to the question 'what is music?' namely that it consists in the sounds that we hear when we listen to it. For Scruton the perception of music requires an act of the imagination whereby a set of sounds are subsumed under three necessary metaphors that transforms them into music. The three metaphors Scruton claims are necessary for the perception of a musical object are movement, space and life. The three metaphors apply respectively to the musical elements of melody, pitch and rhythm. Most listeners to music will be accustomed to describing music in these terms. However, it remains to be seen whether any of them, and in particular that of life because it is this that expression is connected to, are necessary conditions of music as Scruton believes.

Musical sound, which is sound heard under these metaphors, Scruton labels 'tones'. He believes there is a distinction to be drawn, therefore, between sound and tone, between the acoustic and the musical experience. Although he denies that music consists

simply of sounds he does think that an analysis of the metaphysics of sound informs us of some of the properties of music. The first question he addresses, therefore, in his account of the nature of music is ‘what is a sound?’

Scruton argues that sounds are secondary objects. They are not, therefore, to be identified with physical sound waves. Sound waves consist in a pattern of disturbances in the air and can be perceived by sense modalities other than that of hearing. It follows that a deaf person, for whom it is a physical impossibility that he should perceive a sound, can perceive the sound waves. The notion of a secondary object is intended to distinguish the nature of sounds from colours which Scruton claims are secondary qualities. In the ordinary case objects possess colours and emit sounds. Consider a trumpet. It is bronze, but it emits a certain sound when you blow on it. It is the fact that sounds are distinct from the objects that cause them that makes them secondary objects not qualities. Scruton thinks this fact has important consequences. Firstly, it means that we can consider sounds distinct from any physical causes. Scruton labels this kind of experience acousmatic. The acousmatic realm consists only of the secondary objects that are sounds. The musical experience is acousmatic. To see this, consider listening to an orchestra in a concert hall. Although the sounds come from e.g. the violins over there and the piano over here the music is not heard as distinct sound from distinct locations but as a unified object consisting only of sounds not their causes.

Scruton also thinks that the acousmatic realm consists of pure events and that it follows from this that its basic order is temporal. A pure event is one in which there is no

distinction to be drawn between the event and the substances that underwent the event. Generally an event happens to substances and they persist after the event. Consider the event of my turning on the television. This involves two substances, the television and myself, which persist after the original event to undergo further events e.g. the television being turned off by me after the program has finished. However, after the occurrence of an event of a sound there is no further substance that persists. The event of the sound ends and nothing persists after it. But why should we talk of a pure event and not of a substance that ceases to exist? If a cat appears and then disappears on the desk before me this was an event after which no substances persist. But it clearly involved a substance i.e. the cat. The occurrence of a sound is directly analogous to this example. If something happens there must be something that it happens to even if what happens is that thing coming into and out of existence. Nor is it clear why the notion of pure events should lead to the basic order of the acousmatic realm being temporal. Both events and substances can be arrayed across space and time. A group of events might all occur at the same time but at different positions in space. On the other hand a group of substances might exist in sequence at the same point in space. It follows that it is not because music consists of pure events that its basic order is temporal. It is conceivable that music might consist of a number of sound events all presented at a single point in time. The basic order of music is temporal because it happens to be sound arranged in this way that interests and pleases us.

The discussion of sound has established that the musical experience is an acousmatic experience. However, not only tones can be heard in this fashion. We now need to consider Scruton's account of the difference between tone and sound. He says:

“So what distinguishes the sound of music? The simple answer is ‘organization’. But it is no answer at all if we cannot say what kind of organization we have in mind. Poetry too is organized sound.” (1997, p.16)

And he goes on to specify the kind of organisation as:

“A tone is a sound which exists within a musical ‘field of force’. This field of force is something that *we* hear, when hearing tones.” (1997, p.17)

As Denham (2000, p.414) points out this definition would appear to be circular. A tone, which is a *musical* sound, is defined in terms of a *musical* field of force. It would seem that we could only understand either of these terms if we have a prior definition of music. Yet it is precisely the particular character of music that this definition is supposed to clarify. Although the definition is circular and it, therefore, cannot allow us to distinguish an example of musical sound from non-musical sound it does allow us to capture an important characteristic of music given that we do have a repertoire of unobjectionable examples of music. This is that its relation to the whole determines the character of any particular element of a musical object. The difference between a sound

and a tone is that while a sound is heard in isolation, a tone is heard in relation to the entirety of a musical object. Consider the ‘light’ musical phrase that enters halfway through *Knitevision* (track 2 on the tape). The character of this phrase is unique to this setting and determined by the fact that it follows the previous ‘dark’ section of music. In general its relation to the whole determines the character of any musical element.

It follows that to hear music the listener must unify the disparate sounds that are its raw material into a single perceptual gestalt. If I do not hear the ‘light’ phrase in relation to the ‘dark’ beginning of *Knitevision* then I do not hear the piece of music that is *Knitevision*. It is this unifying activity that leads Scruton to argue that music is an object of imaginative construction and not reducible to the sounds that underlie it because, he argues, the activity involves subsuming sounds under certain irreducible metaphors. Scruton asks:

“What happens when I hear a melody in a sequence of sounds? By ‘melody’ I do not mean tunes, but the musical kind of which tunes are an instance. I have in mind the experience of a musical unity across time, in which something begins, and then moves on through changes in pitch – perhaps to an audible conclusion. A melody has temporal boundaries, and a musical movement between them. It is a special kind of musical *Gestalt*, perceived as a unity.” (1997, p.40)

The term 'melody' as Scruton is using it applies to all musical unities across time. This includes relatively short unities such as phrases and motifs and extends all the way up to total musical objects. The entirety of a piece of music is a melody in this sense and, therefore, whatever is a condition of this is a condition of all music. We need to inquire into how this unity comes into being. Scruton writes:

“This unity ... in a temporal process ... [has] puzzled philosophers. Husserl asks the question: ‘How does the unity of a process of change that continues for an extended period of time, a unity that comes to pass or develops in succession – the unity of a melody, for example – come to be represented?’ And he refutes the suggestion made by Brentano, that the components of such a process are retained in consciousness, so being united with their successors – a suggestion that would imply that our experience of a melody is indistinguishable from that of a chord.” (1997, p.40)

The point Scruton is making is that the unity of a melody is not like that of a chord. Even if a melody and a chord have the same component elements the experience of their respective unities is different. In a melody the elements follow on from each other, in a chord they are heard simultaneously. It follows that we do not unify a melody by bringing its elements into a chord-like relation. What then, is the answer to the question of how the unity of the melody is brought into being? Scruton makes the following claims:

“In hearing a melody, we hear a beginning and an end, but also a *movement* between them.” (1997, p. 47)

and

“We should be clear that what we hear in melody is not just change but *movement*.” (1997, p.49)

and

“... musical movement ... [is] not even *analogous* to the ... movement of the physical world.” (1997, p.51)

It is Scruton’s contention, therefore, that the activity of hearing a melody involves the perception of a metaphorical movement from the beginning to the end of the melody. To hear a piece of music, which is the largest scale melody, one must hear in the sequence of sounds a metaphorical movement from beginning to end.

The reader might well wonder where the argument for this claim is when the description of the melody as changing would satisfy the required kind of unification i.e. a unity in which the elements follow each other over time and are not simultaneous. There is no argument in the quotations above nor is there one to be found in the second chapter

of *The Aesthetics of Music* from which they are taken. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the argument takes the form of rhetorical claims about the experience of music. Scruton makes many of these claims in the course of his book. For example:

“Imagine what it would be like, to hear the opening theme of Bruckner’s Seventh Symphony (Ex. 2.2) as falling, or as moving from left to right or right to left in a horizontal plane, or as not moving at all. Surely, you could not understand the musical sense of this melody, if you did not hear the force which bears it aloft, and then allows it to subside to a brief quietus.”
(1997, p.21)

and

“For suppose someone said that, for him, there *is* no up and down in music, no movement, no soaring, rising, falling, no running or walking from place to place. Could we really think that he experienced music as we do, that it was, indeed, *music* for him, rather than some other art predicated upon the interest in sounds? Surely, the temptation is to say that we *must* hear the movement in music, if we are to hear it as music.” (1997, p.52)

What weight should we give to these claims? Clearly they are not the ravings of a lunatic. Any listener will be able to make sense of the descriptions of music Scruton is

emphasising. As he himself points out even a celebrated formalist such as Hanslick describes music as *moving* forms. However, we should be sceptical that these descriptions are as vital to the musical experience as Scruton suggests. The musical formalist essentially claims that what we are interested in with music is abstract forms. He uses abstract in the strongest possible sense to mean that the music is about nothing. This, therefore, rules out the kind of content that Budd takes to be compatible with abstractness. And it would appear that the description of movement is not essential to the perception of musical forms in this sense. Although we may naturally describe the unity of melody in terms of movement we can choose to describe it as changing with no loss to the perception of the abstract forms of music that consist in unities across time. Such a description does not give up any of the subtle variations possible in musical forms, but instead of describing the music as running or walking we describe it as changing quickly or slowly. On this basis we might also reject Scruton's claim that the metaphor of space is essential to music. 'Space' comes into play with music in terms of our descriptions of the pitch spectrum. We naturally describe different points on the pitch spectrum as higher or lower than others. But again, we can preserve the formalists conception of music as abstract forms without hearing music in this way. We need only to hear the different points on the pitch spectrum as different to each other not as above or below.

We have considered and rejected Scruton's claim that 'space' and 'movement' are necessary metaphors for the perception of a musical object. We now need to turn our attention to the metaphor of 'life'. Scruton claims that to hear rhythm we must hear life in music. If this is true then clearly the application of the metaphor of 'life' is essential to

the perception of music. But why should we think that rhythm has anything to do with life? Scruton says:

“... our experience of rhythm is an instance of, or runs parallel to, our experience of bodily life.” (1997, p.30)

and

“To hear rhythm is to hear a kind of animation.” (1997, p.35)

Scruton’s idea is that to perceive a regular sequence of sounds is not to perceive a rhythm. To do this we must animate that sequence. And the reason is that our primary understanding of rhythm is such animated sequences that we find in our own living form. One might well be tempted to ask again: ‘what has rhythm got to do with life?’ It is true that there is such a phrase as ‘the rhythms of life’. But this applies to phenomena such as the regular change of the seasons, or the regular change of breathing. On the basis of this phrase we would conclude that a rhythm is a regularly repeating sequence that need not have anything to do with life.

None of Scruton’s other points offer any reason to alter this conception of rhythm. He points out that although the clicking of the wheels of a train exhibits a regular sequence it requires a special act of attention to hear the rhythm in them. This is true because in our ordinary engagement with the world we do not attend to sounds such that

we unify them into a perceptual gestalt and notice any rhythms. Rather in passing we simply take note of them as the sound of X. But this kind of attention does not constitute animating the sequence, only unifying it. Scruton also points out that when we watch dancing without music the rhythm of the dance constitutes a display of life. Again this is true; but if the dancer is in fact a robot and not alive we are still able to perceive the rhythm of the movement. And a final conclusive point against Scruton's conception of rhythm is that many writers such as Budd do not describe their experience of music in terms of life heard in it. And there can be no doubt that they hear the rhythms of music because they do experience music, which is made from rhythmically arranged sound.

If we reject Scruton's account of the life we hear in music how should we explain it? Peter Kivy (1989) puts the most plausible alternative forward. He argues that our perception of life in music is a result of a hardwired evolutionary tendency to animate our perceptions. We do not need to evaluate the status of this claim about evolutionary psychology to note that human beings do indeed have such a natural tendency. Examples are seeing figures in cloud formations and talking of the expression of natural landscapes and buildings. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose that the same tendency is active in our perception of music. Our discussion has, therefore, led us to the conclusion not, as Scruton supposes, that our perception of rhythm is a perception of life, but that we have a natural tendency to animate the rhythms of music and thus hear them as alive.

We need to discuss two more arguments of Scruton's before concluding this chapter. They are both designed to reinforce the distinction he attempts to draw between

sound and tone. The first consideration he puts forward is that musical experience can include silences whereas the acoustic experience does not. It is true that a silence is not a sound; but it is a special kind of non-sound. This is because it is the direct negation of sound and still a modification of the sense modality of hearing. It is not unreasonable to suppose that if music was an art of sound not tones, that silences would be part of that art form as possible components of abstract forms that can be presented to the sense modality of hearing. The second consideration is that while animals can engage with sounds they cannot appreciate music. Scruton takes this to be because animals do not have the imaginative capacity to create the musical object by applying the metaphors of life, movement and space. But the fact that animals cannot appreciate music indicates nothing about whether music is an imaginatively constructed object. Animals cannot appreciate music because they have no capacity for aesthetic appreciation. Just as they cannot appreciate music they cannot appreciate abstract paintings, but abstract paintings are not imaginatively constructed objects.

It is important to note that the life theory is able to pass the structure test and thus account for the sense of musical 'expression' as an articulation of its expressive theme. The life in music subsumes the totality of a musical object such that the whole structure is heard as a set of deliberate and meaningful gestures. When we hear the music as alive we interpret the totality of the musical object as if it were deliberately chosen to convey a particular meaning to us. Scruton suggests an analogy between the musical experience and watching a dancer that is apt. In the same way as we interpret the dance of a living

human being as an expression so we interpret the evolution of the music as an expression of the life we hear in it.

We can now evaluate the status of the three proposed theories of musical expression. On the basis of our discussion we can reject the arousal and resemblance theories. Proceeding from an account of emotions as associated with particular kinds of thoughts we found that the arousal theory cannot explain the expression of a variety of emotions by music because the music is not a suitable object for the arousal of such emotions. A further heavy blow for the arousal theory is that such expression would not pass Scruton's structure test. The arousal of the emotion in the listener does not constitute an exploration of the nature of that emotion by the music. The resemblance theory was found to be resilient to all of Scruton's objections except for its failure to pass the structure test. However, this is sufficient for us to reject it. As the only theory that can pass the structure test the 'life' theory is the only possible explanation of musical expression that we have considered.

Chapter 3: The Expression of Particular Emotions

In the preceding chapter we discussed three theories that purported to explain the application of the concept 'expression' to music. That discussion concerned the application of the concept 'expression' in general. The aim of this chapter is to evaluate the three kinds of theory in terms of their ability to account for the particular expressions of particular pieces. Again the term 'expression' is ambiguous. If we mean 'expression' in the sense of articulation on a theme then as we have seen both the arousal and resemblance theory fail to account for this. However, we might also refer to 'particular expression' in terms of the broad emotional colour of a piece of music. The question then becomes: can we account for the fact that some music is heard as sad and some as happy etc...? And here the ideas of the arousal and resemblance theory seem better suited to offer a solution to this problem. Throughout the course of this chapter we will be looking for a solution to one of the great puzzles of music aesthetics, the different expressive import of the major and minor keys.

There is a further clarification to the question that a theory that is successful in this regard must answer. The 'particular' in particular expression is also ambiguous. In the first instance we might mean by this the ability to account for the fact that a piece of music is heard as expressive of grief rather than joy. Particular expression here refers to the particular emotional character of the music. It is the major aim of this chapter to see if an answer can be given to the question of particular expression in this sense. The particular expression of a piece of music might also be interpreted as the question what is

it for two pieces to share the same expression, where expression is here used intransitively. It is the minor aim of this chapter to explain this fact.

Budd's Account

The first theory we will consider is the resemblance theory, and in particular the version put forward by Budd. Budd argues that music is expressive through the perception of a resemblance between the music and the feeling components of our emotions. With regard to the question of particular expressions Budd comments:

“The belief or thought, if any, that forms an emotion’s core (how the world is represented as being); the content of any component desire (how the world is represented as desired) or of any affect (what is found distressing, dispiriting or reason for joy); the nature and location of that in which a movement or some other bodily change is felt; these are all features that music cannot mirror. If they are subtracted from the experience of an emotion or feeling, the respects in which episodes of emotion or feeling can differ from one another are greatly reduced, and so, accordingly, is music’s ability to mirror one kind of episode rather than another. The fact that this is in accordance with the normally recognized severe limitations of music’s capacity to express our highly variegated inner lives is one confirmation of the accuracy of the account of the musical expression of emotion ... as founded on a form of likeness perception.” (1995, p.141)

Budd, therefore, considers it to be an advantage of his theory that the range of possible resemblances restricts the particular emotions music can be expressive of. But is it true to say that this restricted expressive capacity of music is ‘normally recognised’?

How should we answer this question? We need a survey of the sorts of expression standardly attributed to music. The following are all expressive contents mentioned by Budd in his discussion of music in his book *Values of Art*: grief, despair, yearning, heroic melancholy, wistful regret, sombre, melancholy, cheerful, blissful. If music can be expressive of this range of emotions then it is not true to say that music has only a restricted expressive capacity. These examples raise a significant problem for Budd’s theory. On a cognitive theory of emotions, endorsed by this thesis and Budd himself, we can only distinguish certain of those emotional states by reference to their representational component. The contrast between grief, melancholy, despair and regret is another case that might be presented as evidence for the cognitive theory of emotions. All these three states share the same kind of negative feelings and can only be differentiated by the thoughts that accompany them. But it then follows that on Budd’s theory music cannot be expressive of all these emotions because he constrains the possible resemblances to only the feeling components of emotional states. There is a contradiction, therefore, within the presentation of his theory. On the one hand he offers as examples of the expressive content of music states that cannot be distinguished solely by reference to their feeling components; and on the other he denies that the resemblance

relation that accounts for musical expression can be to anything other than those same feeling components.

There is a further problem with Budd's resemblance account. Consider again one of the central examples he gives of a resemblance between music and emotions:

“... there is a natural correspondence between the transition, integral to tonal music, from those sounds that do to those that do not stand in need of resolution and the transition from states of desire to states of satisfaction or from states of tension to states of release.” (1995, p.142)

Although this is not the only resemblance he gives as an example (and neither does he claim to have given an exhaustive list) we can consider it important, as it must account for a large proportion of expressive music. This is because it is a property that will be present in many pieces as it is a basic feature of tonal compositions, and because it will support many expressions. By the latter I mean that most emotional states involve the experience of tension and release and many the experience of a desire. On reflection, however, this is a difficulty for the theory. This is for two reasons. Firstly, a desire on its own does not constitute an emotion. Music cannot be expressive of emotion by resembling only a desire. Secondly, both desires (when they are part of an emotion) and the experience of tension and release underdetermine an emotional state. Both a strongly positive and a strongly negative emotion can include the experience of tension and release and both can include a desire. At most this resemblance can allow us to say that

music is expressive in an intransitive sense. We can say that the music is expressive but not that it is expressive of X. This in itself may not be too serious a problem. We can and do speak of music as expressive in this intransitive sense so it might even be considered an advantage of Budd's theory that it has the resources to account for this phenomenon.

However, working through the consequences of this fact undermines the theory as a whole. If this resemblance cannot serve to determine an expressive content for music where expression is understood in a transitive sense, then Budd has given us very little in the way of examples of possible resemblances that might be such as to determine the expressive content of music. Crucially, he has not suggested any musical element that might resemble pleasure or pain. This is crucial because it is this component that determines the basic hedonic tone of an emotion. If Budd could offer an account of this resemblance then the objection mentioned above, that tension and release underdetermines an emotional state, could be bypassed if the resemblance was not simply to a state of tension and release but a painful or pleasurable state of tension and release.

In order to respond to these questions Budd can appeal to his idea of a resemblance that lies below the level of consciousness. If the relevant resemblance is of this form then "no matter how well we reflect on how music sounds and how an emotion feels we might be unable to identify a common property that is responsible for the perception of likeness" (1995, p.142). This element of Budd's theory means that we cannot directly falsify it with the sorts of objections we have been considering. Whenever we challenge the theory because it has not identified a possible resemblance that can

account for a particular expression then Budd can retreat to saying that the resemblance must then lie below the level of consciousness. Here we encounter the first possible solution to the puzzle of the different expressive import of the major and minor key i.e. their different expressive imports are due to resemblances that lie below the level of consciousness.

What should we make of this idea? The first thing that is relevant is how much weight is put on resemblances of this form within the whole theory. We shall consider two possibilities. Firstly, if they are a minor element of the overall theory. In this case if there is a strong account given of the majority of the resemblances i.e. those where we can identify the common property, then the explanatory power of this section of the account might well induce us to give credence to those resemblances that are asserted to lie below the level of consciousness. If, on the other hand, resemblances below the level of consciousness form a majority within this theory this might well cause us to question the plausibility of the resemblance account entirely. This is because there can be no justificatory reason given for those resemblances that lie below the level of consciousness and the resemblance theory has several competitors to explain musical expression. If the majority of the resemblances lie below the level of consciousness then it is as if we are being asked to accept an ad hoc explanation of most of our talk of musical expression; and naturally we will be sceptical about such an explanation. The theory as a whole is undermined because we are being asked to take most of its explanation on faith and there are alternative accounts for the few elements it offers justificatory reasons for. This is significant, as our previous discussion has shown that Budd has to make use of the notion

of resemblances that lie below the level of consciousness for most explanations of musical expression.

There is a further problem with resemblances that lie below the level of consciousness. Budd clarifies this idea thus: “But the respect in which two items are alike that is responsible for the impression of likeness might lie below the level of consciousness, in which case its detection would be a matter for scientific investigation, rather than reflection on the appearances of the items” (1995, p.137). Given this clarification the relevant question becomes ‘is it plausible that scientific investigation can discover a common property shared by an emotion and music?’ Certainly scientific investigation can increase the number of properties of both emotion and music that we are aware of. However, a scientific investigation of one or the other of these phenomena will tend to discover properties that are specific to those phenomena not ones that could be shared. A scientific investigation of sound will tell us about the physical properties of sound waves. And a scientific investigation of emotion will tell us psychological features of emotions or physical properties of the brain that are correlated with certain emotions. Because music and emotion are such different phenomena a scientific investigation will reveal many extra properties but it is unlikely that they will share any, as these properties will be specific to their different natures. Scientific inquiry is into the structure and make-up of a thing, therefore, at this level it is unlikely that things as different as emotions and sounds will share properties. If there is a resemblance between music and emotion we should expect to find it at the surface level of appearance not at the level of scientific investigation where the properties are likely to be exclusive to the kinds of things they

are. Given these difficulties with the idea of resemblances below the level of consciousness we must reject it as a plausible solution to the problem of the expressive import of the major and minor keys.

Kivy's Account

The issue of particular expressions has shown further weaknesses in Budd's theory. We will now turn our attention to Kivy's theory of musical expression, which he terms 'the contour model'. In 'The Corded Shell' (1980) he develops this model by drawing on an insight he credits to the arousal theorists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although arousal theorists they believed music had this power in virtue of a resemblance to aspects of human emotive life. It is Kivy's contention that the resemblance element of this claim is true and that it is in virtue of this resemblance that we ascribe expressive properties to music.

Kivy discerns two relations that account for this resemblance. The first is literal resemblance via the sounds-like relation and the second is metaphorical resemblance via the moves-like relation. Part of the expression of music is, therefore, to be accounted for because it sounds like the human voice. Kivy does not intend the relation to be to the human voice in normal conversation but in its passionate manifestation. For example, if the music sounds like a cry of despair the music will be expressive of despair. Or if the music moves in ways that resemble human expressive movement then the music is expressive of the associated emotion. Kivy illustrates his theory thus:

“... funeral marches are slow and measured, as sadness slows and measures our expression of it; ... rapid rhythmic pulses in music are suggestive of rapid behavior under the influence of the lighter emotions; ... jagged and halting rhythms have their direct analogue in human expressive behavior.” (1980, p.55)

The central contention of Kivy’s theory is, therefore, that music is expressive by resembling human expressive behaviour (vocal and bodily). It follows that the criteria of musical expression are parasitic on the criteria of human expression. If there are public intersubjective criteria that determine the particular expression of some aspect of human behaviour and music is able to resemble those aspects then Kivy has succeeded in his aim of legitimising emotive descriptions of music.

We can press Kivy by first asking if resemblance is a necessary or sufficient condition of expressiveness. The question is pertinent because clearly music resembles many things – not just human expressive behaviour. The examples Kivy considers are the resemblance to waves and the rise and fall of the stock market. Why are these resemblances not heard in the music? Why do we not say the music is expressive of them? Kivy’s response is that resemblance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of expression. For expression to be achieved the resemblance must be perceived within a vehicle of expression. That is to say the resembling must be anthropomorphised. It must be animated and perceived as a human, or at least sentient being. The procedure works as

follows. Take a feature of the music e.g. slow movement. This feature resembles many things, such as a traffic jam, and one of these things is, Kivy maintains, the behaviour of a sad person. When the music is anthropomorphised the feature is subsumed under a vehicle of expression e.g. it is perceived as if human movement or part of a human face. The resemblance to the traffic jam is no longer applicable because this is not a sentient entity and we hear the slow movement as the movement of a human being. Which is to say, according to Kivy, that we hear the movement as the movement of a sad person.

It follows that if we do anthropomorphise music then the resemblance features become expressive features on Kivy's account. Kivy's argument for this element of his thesis is an appeal to an evolutionary hardwired tendency to animate our perceptions. This contention of Kivy's was endorsed in the previous chapter in our discussion of the life theory of musical expression. Certainly animation and anthropomorphism is common amongst human beings – we have all looked for figures in the clouds. We should also note here that this form of resemblance theory is immune to the challenge Scruton makes when he asks why this resemblance in particular is pertinent? It is so because the music has been subsumed under a vehicle of expression i.e. we have a natural tendency to animate our perception of music and here it as alive.

The questions we now need to consider are: 1) are there public intersubjective criteria of human expression, and 2) can we perceive the features that we use to determine expression in everyday life in music? Kivy's treatment of both these questions

is limited. He assumes that there are affirmative answers to both. I will show that this is not the case and that this causes severe difficulties for his theory.

The answer to the first question is clearly positive. We do not normally have problems in identifying the emotional states of others on the basis of their behaviour. However, the second question is more problematic. In our everyday lives we have access to a wealth of information that could not be perceived in a musical object. Music can present neither a facial expression nor complex representations that would allow us to infer a person's states of mind from their surrounding environment. But these are surely the most common routes to identification of another's emotional state of mind. I detect your happiness or sadness on the basis of your beaming smile or dejected countenance. Or consider what seems at first an uncontroversial expression: a person in tears. We might at first suppose this to be indicative of sadness but then we remember the not uncommon occurrence of tears of joy. How do we distinguish them? If I see a woman dressed in black leaving a funeral parlour in floods of tears I am entitled to infer that they are tears of sadness or grief. But when I see a footballer in tears after his team has just won the world cup I suppose them to be tears of joy. In these cases I infer the state of mind on the basis of background knowledge that indicates the character of the individuals beliefs and the intentional objects of their emotional state.

If music cannot resemble these elements of human expressive behaviour what are the intersubjective criteria Kivy thinks we can appeal to in support of a particular musical expression? They are the sounds-like' and moves-like resemblance relations discussed

above. Can these elements be said to be intersubjective criteria of expression? The first element to consider is the speed of movement. In the quoted passage above Kivy suggests that slow movement resembles sad behaviour and rapid movement behaviour under the influence of the lighter emotions. A moment's thought will reveal that such movements do not determinately correlate with particular emotions. To take the limiting case: consider a person curled up on their bed and not moving at all. For Kivy's intersubjective criteria to hold this must be an example of the expression of a negative emotion. Certainly a sufferer of depression might well be found in such a position. But might not this individual just as easily be lying there contemplating his new love experiencing all the exciting and pleasant feelings that would involve. In reality we could probably determine the individual's state of mind on the basis of his facial expression or knowledge of his beliefs or relevant intentional objects. But obviously music cannot convey such elements. Or consider a person moving slowly round their house. They might be moving slowly because they are sad or equally possible because they are in a pensive mood reflecting on their loved one. Speed of movement is not, therefore, a suitable candidate for intersubjective criteria of expression. We have rejected the first two of Kivy's expressive criteria quoted above. Perhaps his reference to only the analogues of jerky, halting movement is an indication that movement is not really a means of determining emotional state of mind.

To return to the case of sadness one might object that slow speed is too simple a characterisation of the movement indicative of this emotion. Maybe we get nearer to what we want if we refer to behaviour such as 'moping' around the house when sad and look

to the rhythm of music to resemble this. This position has more chance of success. You do not mope if you are happy and through rhythm the movement of music can be subtle and varied. What is involved in moping? It must involve such things as the shape of the body, dragged feet, hanging head and a particular facial expression. It is presumably this sort of resemblance that Kivy is trying to draw attention to when he says that sad music is languid and droops. Music can be languid and droop. However, one should be sceptical that resemblance to languid, droopy movement is sufficient for the expression of sadness. This is for two reasons. In the first place, the objection against speed of movement can be marshalled again here. Such resemblance does not capture enough of the features whereby we judge a person moping around the house to be sad. In particular, it does not capture his sad facial expression. As the cases discussed above demonstrate without this component languid droopy movement could just as easily be expressive of happiness as sadness. Secondly, there is a more general objection concerning the major-minor contrast that will be discussed below.

So far we have only discussed the moves-like relation to expressive behaviour. Perhaps the sounds-like relation will be more revealing. There are two types of sounds-like relation. The first is a literal resemblance and holds between the sound of the music and some cry of emotion. In this form it is immune to the formalist who rejects the anthropomorphism of music. The question is: can this relation secure the determinate emotive descriptions Kivy wants? Is there such a thing as a cry of pain, grief, sadness, love, joy, anger etc? We can make sense of these phrases but would we be able to individuate them outside of their normal context and all the background information that

provides? As with the moves-like relation it is not clear that we can do this. Consider walking down the street and hearing a passionate cry from around the corner. Until we turn the corner and see the situation that is the cause of the cry we could not say whether e.g. it was a cry of pain from somebody falling over, or a cry of infuriation by one person involved in an argument with another. Kivy can retreat to the second type of relation. This requires the anthropomorphism of music and involves hearing the sounds of music as if they were expressive cries. This would secure less than Kivy's original aim because we could only apply an intransitive concept of expression on the basis of the second relation alone.

Discussion of the sounds-like relation brings us to the most powerful objection to Kivy's theory. Certain sounds seem to have intrinsic expressive import. Kivy recognises that the major key/minor key contrast is a problem for him. It is not on the basis of resemblance to any human expressive behaviour that listeners will describe music written in the minor key as expressive of the darker emotions and that in the major key as expressive of the lighter ones. We can use this fact to bring out again the underdetermination of expression by musical movement. A piece of slow music written in the minor key will be deemed expressive of the darker emotions, while the same piece transposed to the major key will be heard as expressive of the lighter emotions. The solution Kivy offers to the question of the major/minor contrast is not very satisfactory. He suggests that the reason we hear the minor key as we do is that in the past the minor key had a syntactic function such that it did have a property resemblance to the darker emotions. Occurrences of the minor key used to be heard as an unresolved musical

element and hence, Kivy suggests, expressive of a restless unresolved emotion. Whatever one thinks of this resemblance claim it cannot account for the expressive nature of the minor key. Most people recognise the minor key as 'dark' with no knowledge of the technical history of this musical element.

Scruton's Account

Kivy's theory has failed to give a satisfactory account of the particular expressive content of a piece of music and failed to resolve the enigma of the major/minor contrast. Perhaps Scruton's theory will fare better. Before we proceed to the details of his theory of particular expressions we first need to consider an alternative suggestion Scruton makes at this point in his book for why it is that we hear music as alive and, therefore, expressive. Scruton says, "... [the] idea of musical movement ... is associated with other metaphors – and in particular with the metaphor of life" (1997, p.353). However, there is no necessary conceptual connection between movement and life. There are lots of moving things in the world that are not alive e.g. the pendulum of a grandfather clock, the planets etc... As before, in order to explain the life that we hear in music we have recourse to Kivy's account. We have a natural tendency to animate the musical movement; not, because the music moves we must hear it as alive.

Scruton looks for the answer to the question of the particular content of a piece of music in our response to expression. He first analyses such a response in ordinary human life. Scruton claims, "the response to expression is a sympathetic response" (1997,

p.354). The first clarification of his theory that we need to make, therefore, is to point out that not all responses to expression are sympathetic. Indeed they might be quite the opposite. If I come across you sulking because your girlfriend has broken up with you I might be infuriated to find you in this state. Perhaps she left you a long time ago and in my opinion your sulking is nothing more than wallowing in self-pity. In this case I respond to your expression but I am not sympathetic to your position and feelings. In any case, sympathy does not play a critical role in Scruton's account. All that he requires is that we be able to respond to music in a manner that is analogous to our response to the expressions of other human beings. And clearly whether my reaction is sympathetic or not there is recognition of expression that is common to both cases. In either case I interpret your sulk as indicative of your low state of mind. The question we need to ask is then: how is it that we come to take a similar attitude of recognising an expression to the experience of music? Scruton's answer depends on the fact that we hear music as alive. Because of this we hear the progress of a piece of music as deliberate gestures by a living thing; and just as I recognise and respond to your sulking face so I recognise and respond to the gestures of the music. Scruton offers a useful analogy that should dispel any sense that the experience of music and reacting to another's face are too different to comprise the same attitude. When we watch a dancer we interpret the movement of his body as an expression. It is very natural to conceive the progress of a piece of music as being led through a dance. The various rhythms can be compared to the many different ways a dancer can move his body. And the 'colour' of the sounds the music is constructed from, e.g. using dark or light sounds, can be compared to the costume of the dancer (consider the different effect on the audience when a dancer chooses to wear all black or all white).

To respond to music as an expression is to interpret it as a set of deliberate expressive gestures. Given this can we answer our original question of what is it for a piece of music to be sad rather than happy? If we consider again our response to the facial expression of another human being then we respond to the face as an expression of sadness if it manifests behaviour that is standardly expressive of sadness e.g. if it sulks. However, our consideration of Kivy's 'contour model' of musical expression has shown that music does not have the resources to resemble the elements of behaviour that constitute a standard expression of sadness in human beings. If music could resemble a sulking face then the fact that we tend to animate our perception of it and respond to it as an expression would allow this fact to account for music being heard as expressive of sadness.

These points bring out an important feature of an account built on our response to expression. Although not all responses to expression are sympathetic, if the expression is non-standard then a special act is required to grasp its meaning and for the fact that it is an expression to be relevant. If the expression is standard we can recognise its content just by perceiving it. I see that you are sulking and know that you are sad. However, if I watch a dancer his actions are not standardly expressive of any particular emotion. How is it then that I come to interpret them as an expression of something and not merely as an aesthetically pleasing set of movements? We need an answer to these questions because the response to music is comparable to the dancer's non-standard expressive behaviour, not recognising the sulk on somebody's face. Scruton's answer appeals to the activity of

empathy. When we empathise with somebody we don't simply perceive his behaviour but we imaginatively take on his first person perspective on that behaviour. It is through this act of empathy that we recuperate the expressive meaning of the dancer's actions. And in an analogous manner when I listen to music I interpret it as meaningful through an act of empathy. When we describe the music as sad or happy we are using words that capture our experience of empathetically responding to the music.

Scruton appeals to the fact that the response to music is empathetic to account for the ineffability of musical meaning. To say that the meaning of the music is ineffable is to say that I cannot communicate it to you otherwise than by ostension i.e. I cannot tell you what the music means except by playing you the piece. Scruton's theory accounts for this commonly noted feature of musical meaning because the first person perspective we take on board in an act of empathy is a form of knowledge by acquaintance. The particular meaning of a piece of music can only be conveyed by the experience of the music because it requires you to gain the knowledge by acquaintance of the first person perspective through an empathetic response to the music. However, while it is true that the specific meaning of a piece of music is often considered ineffable this is not the case with the broad emotional colour of a piece. Generally, I cannot tell you the exact meaning of the piece but I can tell you if it is broadly sad or happy. It follows that we still do not have an answer to our original question of what makes some music sad and some happy. Scruton has offered useful clarifications of the nature of our response to music but why certain musical elements e.g. the minor key are associated with dark as opposed to light emotions remains mysterious. On Scruton's account we can say that the description of

music written in the minor key as sad is a term used to capture our experience of empathy with that music. But naturally what we want to know is why our empathetic response to the minor key and not the major key is such as to result in the description of the music as sad. We might think that a promising approach would be to combine the accounts of Kivy and Scruton. From Scruton we take the emphasis on life in music and the notion of empathetic response and from Kivy the idea of resemblances that determine particular emotional colour. However, as we have seen Kivy's theory has insurmountable difficulties and cannot help us answer the question of why this music has a particular emotional colour. Note also that if an account of the form of Kivy's is correct then the role of empathy can be jettisoned. This is because Kivy's account appeals to standard expressive behaviour and there is no need for an empathetic response to grasp the expressive import of a standard expression.

Our discussion in this chapter has been largely unfruitful. We are still unable to offer an answer to the question why are certain pieces heard as sad rather than happy? We have clarified the nature of this response. When I say that the music is sad I am reporting the nature of my empathetic response to the life I hear in music. However, this does not resolve our puzzlement because given the role of life and empathy we want to know why is it that e.g. the minor key is always heard as expressive of sadness. Although we have no answer to this question we have achieved a lesser aim. We can account for what it is for two pieces to share an expression, where expression is used intransitively. Two pieces share the same expression when the musical elements are such that when we animate the music they share the same expressive gestures. This fact accounts for examples from

particular genres of music all sharing the same broad expression. Consider the genre ‘drum and bass’. Any ‘drum and bass’ track (tracks 2 and 3 on the tape) has a similar expressive import because they all include rapid syncopated drum rhythms and prominent bass lines. When we respond to the music as expressive drum and bass tracks are made up of similar gestures and so share similar expressions. Returning to the questions we set out at the beginning of this chapter we have to rest content with a solution only to our minor aim of explaining what it is for two pieces to share the same expression (used intransitively). None of the theories considered here have been able to resolve our major aim and account for the broad emotional colour of different pieces of music. And the great puzzle of music aesthetics – the different expressive import of the major and minor keys – remains as puzzling as when we began.

Conclusion

The philosophical problem of the relation between music and its content is an issue that has been notoriously resistant to solution. Now that we have considered in detail three of the most recent theories put forward we need to assess what progress has been made in understanding this aspect of music.

The first question we looked at was whether music was ever a representational art form? Here there is a debate in the recent literature. After analysing the arguments from both sides of the debate we found that Scruton was correct to draw a distinction between X representing Y and X being associated with Y and that the latter relation was the one that applied to the musical experience. When we hear music as related to e.g. a thunderstorm because it sounds like a thunderstorm we do not understand it as a thunderstorm but rather as music whose character is specified in terms of a thunderstorm.

With regard to the larger question of musical content we have, therefore, successfully identified one way that music can be related to its content. It does not represent anything but music can be expressive of things. This use of 'expression' has not been clearly defined in the course of this inquiry but it can be roughly yet adequately captured in terms of the music putting the listener in mind of the thing it is expressive of. When I hear the musical element that sounds like a thunderstorm I am briefly put in mind of a thunderstorm and this is part of the musical experience.

Unfortunately, this conception will not suffice to account for the way music is related to emotions. It is this relation that is the most important to understand when thinking about music because it is the capacity to express emotions that is generally considered to be the special ability of music as an art form. The reason this conception will not suffice is latent in the preceding sentence. The special capacity of music is considered special not simply because music can be related to an emotion but because music is able to provide an articulation on the nature of emotions. In our discussion of the application of the term expression in general to music we found that we had to reject the arousal and resemblance theories on the basis that they did not satisfy this requirement that the musical expression of emotion constituted an articulation of the nature of that emotion. This too marks progress in our understanding of the way music can be expressive of emotions. We can rule out a traditional account in terms of arousal and a natural suggestion i.e. that music resembles the experience of emotions. The progress is not merely negative as there is a strong positive theory of musical expression in recent discussions. This is the theory that accounts for the expression in terms of the life that we hear in music. As we hear the music as alive it is natural to understand it as a series of expressive gestures the totality of which constitute an articulation upon a particular emotion. We considered the accounts of Kivy and Scruton of the origin of the life we hear in music and found that Kivy's account in terms of our natural tendency to animate our perceptions was the stronger.

However, when we turn our attention to the question of the particular expressive content of particular pieces of music we find that this progress in our understanding halts.

None of the theories we have considered have yet managed to give a satisfactory account of why certain musical elements have one particular emotional colour rather than another. And accordingly none have succeeded in resolving the puzzle of the different expressive imports of the major and minor keys. The most promising approach which combines an account of expression as a function of the life we hear in music with a resemblance account that determines the particular content fails because music does not have the resources to resemble standard expressions and so any resemblance underdetermines the emotional content. We must, therefore, conclude our investigation into the relation between music and its content by saying that although recent work has made substantial progress in our understanding of this issue the central problem of particular expressions remains unresolved.

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