

Formalism and Expressivism in the Aesthetics of Music

Ciaran Kamp

University College London

MPhil Stud



UMI Number: U593722

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U593722

Published by ProQuest LLC 2013. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own and the work of other persons is appropriately acknowledged.

Signed:

Abstract

The claim of this thesis is that both formal and expressive qualities are equally relevant to our judgements concerning the aesthetic value of music. I limit my enquiry to the case of instrumental music. This is principally because, instrumental music seems to represent the “hard case” for my thesis, as while it appears uncontroversial that instrumental music has a specifiable form, it is less clear that it has expressive content, due to its abstract nature. Although the formalist would have us accept that the aesthetic value of instrumental music is to be found in its form alone, I believe that to exclude the expressive qualities of music from our aesthetic evaluation of it is misguided. Accordingly, I provide accounts of both the nature and value of the experiences of form and expression in music. I argue that formal, as well as expressive qualities, are subjectively determined features of our aesthetic experience, and that it is these features, manifested in our experience, that are the objects of our aesthetic judgements. I maintain that it is our musical understanding that determines the perceived formal and expressive qualities, which are the contents of that experience. This view departs from traditional approaches to aesthetics in that it admits to a degree of subjectivity, not only in our ascriptions of expressive content but also of form.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
1. Aesthetic Value and Aesthetic Experience	9
1.1. The Affect-Orientated Approach	9
1.2. The Epistemic Approach	12
1.3. The Axiological Approach	15
1.4. The Content-Orientated Approach	19
Conclusion	20
2. Form	21
2.1. What is Form?	22
2.2. Form and Value	24
2.3. Hanslick's Argument for Musical Formalism	34
Conclusion	44
3. Expression	45
3.1. Theories of Musical Expression	46
3.2. Expression and Aesthetic Value	68
Conclusion	74
4. Musical Understanding	75
4.1. Music as a Product of Understanding	76
4.2. Understanding and the Aesthetic Value of Music	87
Conclusion	88
Overall Conclusion	89
Bibliography	92

Introduction

The principal aim of this work is to support the view that both formal and expressive qualities are equally relevant to our judgements concerning the aesthetic value of music. I will argue that formal as well as expressive qualities are subjectively determined features of our aesthetic experience, and that it is these features, manifested in our experience, that are the objects of our aesthetic judgements. I shall maintain that it is our musical understanding that transforms our experience of sound into an experience of music for example, and that this process also determines the perceived formal and expressive properties which are the contents of that experience. This view departs from traditional approaches to aesthetics in that it admits to a degree of subjectivity, not only in our ascriptions of expressive content but also of form.

Instrumental music is the most natural counter-example to the thesis. This is principally because, while it seems uncontroversial that instrumental music has a specifiable form, it can seem very difficult to understand how instrumental music has expressive content due to its abstract nature. Instrumental music thus represents the “hard case” for the idea that both form and content are relevant to the aesthetic value of music. So from now on, when I refer to music, I intend this to mean only instrumental music, by which I wish to exclude not just music which has vocal content, but also music set to a text.

Both in the world of music criticism, as well as in the philosophical literature on music, there is an on-going debate between what we may loosely term the “formalists” and the “expressivists”. Formalists claim that a true appreciation of the aesthetic value of music should be concerned principally with music’s so-called “formal” properties. I shall say more

about these in part two, but roughly speaking, they are the building blocks of a musical arrangement such as the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic structures. Part of the motivation for the formalist approach to aesthetic appreciation of music is that formal properties seem to enjoy an objective existence that expressive properties do not. They are thought to be part of the music independently of our experience of it, whereas music's expressiveness seems to depend on an individual hearing it as such.

The formalist thinks that they have the best chance of ascertaining an objective basis for determining the aesthetic value of music. They seek to narrow the definition of our aesthetic appreciation of music to pure form in part, also as a reaction to a certain kind of interpretation and content attribution that is popular in some music criticism. Much of this was felt to be quite unjustified, especially in cases where it was claimed that the music, purely in virtue of its timbres and arrangements for example, is expressive of complex thoughts and ideas.

Nonetheless, there is the lingering sense that by annexing off our understanding of music as an expressive medium, we are doing music, and ultimately ourselves, a great disservice. After all, music has been linked more strongly to the expression of the emotions than any other art form, sometimes referred to as the language of the emotions and even suppressed because of the fear that it carried undesirable emotional messages. In keeping with this kind of view, we can characterise expressivists as those who believe that it is certain of music's non-formal qualities, most significantly its "expressive" qualities, which are of paramount importance in respect to questions of aesthetic value. One example of the kind of underlying motivation here, would be the thought that music is a means of emotional communication and thus to ignore this aspect of it is to misunderstand music altogether.

Both of these two views in the kinds of caricatured forms I have just outlined are evidently fraught with difficulty. For example, in order to make a convincing case for expressivism, we must provide an account of *how* instrumental music might be expressive, that not only agrees with our experience of the phenomenon of expression, but also shows that there is a genuine link between the music and what it expresses. If the connection between the music and what it expresses is really an illusion, or purely in the mind of the listener, it might seem that the formalist has won the debate: music cannot be valued aesthetically for a property that it does not actually possess. However, the formalist faces the challenge of providing a convincing argument for us to believe that the experience of music as pure structure of sound is the only aesthetically relevant experience of music.

In what follows, I will argue that to restrict our aesthetic evaluation of music to form is misguided. However, I shall also argue that there is not at present a satisfactory account of expression that can show us either how music is in general experienced as expressive, or how there might be one correct application of emotion terms to a piece of music. What the discussion of expression does reveal is that it is an aspect of the listener's experience of music that is manifest when the listener is in the appropriate condition to perceive it.

The discussion will proceed in four parts. In part one I will investigate the nature of aesthetic experience. I shall assume that our judgements concerning the aesthetic value of music are grounded in our aesthetic experience of music. I will argue in favour of the so-called "content-orientated approach" to aesthetic experience, which holds that when we value music aesthetically, we value it as it is manifested to us in our aesthetic experience. Given this understanding of the nature of aesthetic experience, the remaining three parts of the discussion will be devoted to

making a case for the claim that both formal and expressive features of music can be justifiably included as contents of our aesthetic experience of music.

Part two will be devoted to the subject of musical form. I will begin with a look at what I take the experience of musical form to consist in. Following that, I shall explore how we could value the experience of music for its formal qualities. Finally, I will give an account of Hanslick's formalist argument for the claim that *only* the formal qualities of music are relevant to the aesthetic value of music. I will maintain that Hanslick's argument does not establish that the expressiveness of music should be excluded from our appreciation of it.

Part three will be devoted to the much discussed topic of expression in music. I shall conduct a survey of some of the theories of expression that I think are useful in building up an overall picture of what it might for music to be expressive. What I hope to make clear is that there is no single experience of expression, and no single cause of that experience. However, what I also hope to establish is that we *can* make sense of expressiveness experienced as a property of music. I will then show how expression can be considered an aesthetically valuable quality of music.

Finally, in part four, I will address the claim that expression only has a subjective existence, which therefore renders it inferior to form in terms of its relevance to the aesthetic value of music. In answer to this, I will provide an account of musical understanding, which claims that both our experience of expressive and formal qualities of music are products of our understanding and therefore have only a subjective existence.

1. Aesthetic Value and Aesthetic Experience

The aim of this part is to investigate whether an analysis of aesthetic experience can provide us with a reason to think that both formal and aesthetic properties are relevant to our aesthetic judgments. I will take it that when we judge something to have aesthetic value, the objects of such judgments are the properties revealed to us in our aesthetic experience. For example, musical works (at least in the vast majority of cases) are created to be heard and so it is natural to think that the aesthetic value of a piece of music must be somehow related to one's aesthetic experience of hearing it. However, the nature and content of aesthetic experience has been specified in a number of different ways.

In what follows I will consider four possible accounts of the nature of aesthetic experience. I will argue that three of them; the affect-orientated approach, the epistemic approach and the axiological approach (which connects aesthetic experience with a particular type of value), are incorrect accounts of aesthetic experience. I will concur with Noël Carroll (2006) that a content-based approach to defining aesthetic experience seems most promising.

1.1. The Affect-Orientated Approach

The affect-orientated approach claims that aesthetic experience is distinguished from other experiences by a particular type of felt effect. The idea is that we are experiencing a piece of music aesthetically for example, if and only if we are experiencing a certain distinctive type of feeling. Naturally, proponents of this view need to be more specific about the nature of this feeling if their theory is to do any work. One suggestion for the type of feeling involved is sensual pleasure.

However, it is obvious that pleasure is not sufficient for aesthetic experience. If this were the case, then many experiences would count as aesthetic, some of which are more commonly thought antithetical to aesthetic experience, such as the pleasurable effects of a good meal. But perhaps some notion of pleasure is a necessary condition of aesthetic experience, if not a sufficient one. However, this would seem to rule out the possibility of a negative aesthetic experience. Building an inherently positive notion such as pleasure into the definition of aesthetic experience seems to be unnecessarily conflating two notions. It is argued by Dickie (1989) for example, that the concept of a work of art should be neutral as to the value of the work. If we define the concept of a work of art as something that is inherently good, we rob ourselves of the right to condemn anything as a bad work of art. Furthermore, there are works of art that are intended to induce responses of disgust or horror, which seem to be counter-examples to the notion that pleasure is a necessary condition for aesthetic experience. However, the affective theorist might respond to this by maintaining that even though we experience feelings of disgust in response to these kinds of artworks, there is nonetheless a certain sense of pleasure that also accompanies the experience.

Another consideration that weighs against the idea that pleasure might be a necessary condition of aesthetic experience however, is that it is conceivable that one might have an aesthetic experience and yet feel nothing at all. In response, some appeal to something like disinterested or intellectual pleasure as what demarcates aesthetic experience. However, this would amount to an admission of defeat on behalf of the proponent of the affect-orientated approach as disinterested pleasure has no distinctive phenomenological effect; when one experiences disinterested pleasure, one experiences no felt effect. The distinctiveness of disinterested pleasure is in the intentional content of the pleasure. That is to say, one appreciates the

beauty of something with no regard to its possession or bearing to oneself for example (Carroll, 2006, pp.73-74).

A further possibility is that the distinctive kind of feeling involved in aesthetic experience is a sense of relief. Schopenhauer (1969, bk. 3) for example, was a pioneer of the thought that in aesthetic experience, one is temporarily liberated from the shackles of ordinary existence and one's consciousness lifted into an atemporal domain of pure contemplation in which the object of one's aesthetic experience is appreciated in isolation from its relations to all other objects in the world. For Schopenhauer then, there is a distinctive state that aesthetic experience offers us, which would (again) seem to be inherently positive. This can be so even if we grant that some aesthetic experiences may in fact be unpleasant. On Schopenhauer's account there is an inherent benefit of aesthetic experience which transcends the more prosaic kinds of pleasure or pain.

Schopenhauer is not alone in having linked the idea of aesthetic experience with a sense of relief from everyday reality. As Carroll points out, many other thinkers have suggested similar experiences. Carroll (2006, p. 75) writes:

“For Clive Bell, it is the experience of being lifted out of the quotidian; for Edward Bullough, it is a feeling of being distanced; Monroe C. Beardsley calls it felt freedom. In this way of thinking, aesthetic experience does come suffused with its own variety of affect, a specifiable modality of pleasure, namely a sense of release from mundane, human preoccupations with respect to oneself, one's tribe (both narrowly and broadly construed), and humanity at large.”

The problem for this kind of approach is that it has to be very specific about the kind of release from ordinary reality that it has in mind if this is to be considered a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience. Otherwise, the kind of relief that one has from a drug might qualify as being just as much of an aesthetic experience as say looking at a Rembrandt. What one needs to adopt is something like the sense of relief that Schopenhauer offered, a state in which we are uniquely liberated from what he regarded as the intolerable and incessant suffering of everyday existence. However, although Schopenhauer's notion of metaphysical solace in art is perhaps a distinctive enough one to separate the aesthetic experience from other kinds of relief, it again makes the debateable move of proclaiming that all aesthetic experience is inherently a good thing, and as aforementioned, intuitively, it seems that we must reserve the right to say that some aesthetic experiences are negative and indeed, in some cases, simply not worth having.

1.2. The Epistemic Approach

The epistemic view of aesthetic experience claims that aesthetic experience is characterised by a particular way of coming to know an object. Proponents of the view hold that it is a necessary condition that one has an unmediated, firsthand experience of an object in order to have an aesthetic experience of it. This kind of experience cannot be provided by the testimony of others. While there is a temptation to understand this approach to aesthetic experience as appealing to purely perceptual experience, doing so obviously gives rise to a problem, so long as we think that one can have aesthetic experiences of literature and poetry (when we are reading it to ourselves). So the claim is that aesthetic experience is the experience of only those properties of an object available through direct *inspection* (which presumably rules out instances of someone telling you about a poem or novel rather than reading it to you).

An intuitively appealing aspect of the epistemic approach is that one's aesthetic experience of an object must be determined by the experience of that object alone. However, the idea that the experience of an object must be direct for it to be an aesthetic experience seems questionable. If it not the case that the object must be present to us for us to be having an aesthetic experience of it, then the claim of the epistemic theorist is false.

Carroll suggests that conceptual art can serve as a counter-example to the idea that direct acquaintance with an object is required to have an aesthetic experience of it. He uses the example of Marcel Duchamp's famous work *Fountain*. The reason *Fountain* seems to be a counterexample to the epistemic approach, according to Carroll, is that one need not have direct acquaintance with it (i.e. see it displayed in an art gallery). One can simply visit a well preserved French lavatory in order to understand the piece and how it achieves its artistic goals (which presumably include challenging our preconceptions about the nature of art). But Carroll's point seems to be open to the charge of question-begging. In order for the indirect experience of conceptual art like *Fountain* to be a counter-example to the epistemic approach, we need some independent reason to think that indirect experience of *Fountain* is an aesthetic experience. Carroll (2006, p.78) contends that:

"...the identification and or/appreciation of the form of an artwork is perhaps the paradigmatic example of an aesthetic experience."

Carroll rightly assumes that the likelihood is that we can all agree on this last claim. However, by itself, this does not amount to much of a counter to the epistemic theorist. To make it so, Carroll supplements the uncontroversial claim that experiencing form is to have an aesthetic experience, with the more controversial claim that one need not experience

the work directly to have an experience of its form. Carroll (2006, p. 78) defines form in the following way:

“The form of an artwork is the ensemble of choices intended to realize the point of purpose of an artwork.”

Carroll (2006, p. 78) thinks that we can:

“...grasp the pertinent choice or ensemble of the choices and the corresponding interrelationships that enable an artwork to secure its point or purpose without inspecting the work directly.”

The idea is that from a photograph or even a reliable description, one is able to discern and presumably recreate the form of the artwork in one’s mind and in doing so, be the subject of a paradigmatically aesthetic experience. Evidently however, there is some aspect of what we would normally take to be an aesthetic experience that is not available via testimony. It is difficult to imagine a description rich and precise enough that would enable us to have indirectly and yet completely experienced the exact shades of colour in a Rothko painting, for example. However, all that is needed to undermine the epistemic account is that we accept that *some* part of the aesthetic experience of a piece of work is available indirectly.

Let us consider a musical example. It seems relatively uncontroversial to say that to experience music is to experience some sonic event; moreover the paradigmatic instance of experiencing music *directly* would be something like attending a concert. What then, do we say of the person who is handed the score of a newly composed piece of music and then proceeds to read it, imagining the music in their head as they do so? This kind of experience is of a fundamentally different kind to that of the concert goer.

There are no sound waves conveying the music to the score reader's ear. Nonetheless, it would surely be absurd to say that the score reader was unable to appreciate or at least have access to some of the total potential aesthetic experience the music has to offer. Would we say that Beethoven had never experienced the aesthetic qualities of any of his later compositions after he had lost his hearing? Not only do I think we would say that he did have such experiences, but I think it would be fair to say that with a musical imagination like his must have been, he would have been able to experience aesthetic qualities of his music that very few others can. The epistemic theorist might backtrack a little and suggest that in order to genuinely have had an aesthetic experience, the subject must *at some point* directly experience the work in order to validate their original indirect experience. However, once again the Beethoven example seems to refute such a suggestion.

Understood in this way, it seems uncontroversial that we are able to have at least a partial (if not considerable in the case of music) aesthetic experience, indirectly of an object. Therefore, the epistemic approach cannot be completely correct, even if it might be correct in respect to some kinds of aesthetic properties and is well motivated insofar as it makes the particular work of art essential to the experience.

1.3. The Axiological Approach

Proponents of the axiological approach to aesthetic experience maintain that one's experience is aesthetic if and only if one judges it to be valuable for its own sake. This approach to defining aesthetic experience allows for the possibility that one have an aesthetic experience that is not pleasurable, but that is nonetheless valuable. This enables the axiological approach (unlike the affect-orientated approach, as mentioned earlier) to account for the fact

that we apparently have unpleasant yet valuable aesthetic experiences from time to time.

However, it seems implausible to consider valuing an experience for its own sake a sufficient condition of aesthetic experience. If it were a sufficient condition for aesthetic experience, experiences such as playing a game (generally something done for its own sake) would count as aesthetic. For now, I will consider that although it may not be a sufficient condition of aesthetic experience, valuing the experience for its own sake might be a necessary condition of having an aesthetic experience. But it seems that even thinking of valuing for its own sake as a necessary condition of aesthetic experience results in the conflation of aesthetic experience with aesthetic judgement. Such a move is undesirable as it blocks the possibility for aesthetic experiences, which involve no judgement at all. And it does seem that we occasionally do have aesthetic experiences and yet make no value judgment about the experience, either through indifference or because we are simply experiencing in a comparatively unfocused manner. Carroll (2006, p. 82) suggests that this might happen when one listens to music for example. He writes:

“One may follow the formal permutations of a musical theme as it moves from one section of the orchestra to another and yet judge the experience as without value, either intrinsic or otherwise, because the artwork itself is unintentionally grating. Or perhaps the formal structure is respectable enough, but uninspired in a way that gives rise to indifference. In such cases where one’s attention is directed in the right way at the formal design of the work, it seems appropriate to call the aforesaid responses aesthetic experiences (how else could we categorise them), but they are not valued for their own sake, since they are not valued at all.”

In response, the defender of the axiological approach might contend that even if we are neutral (or indifferent) towards the form of a piece of music for example, that in itself is a value judgement regarding our experience of it. We have assigned it a value of zero. Indeed, it might be the case that we instinctively judge the contents of all our experiences. If this is so, the necessary condition of valuing something for its own sake might be a useful (and reasonable) way of distinguishing a subset of experiences, of which aesthetic experience is perhaps a further subset (through the addition of some other necessary condition(s) would be required to mark out aesthetic experience). On the other hand, if we do not think that all our experiences involve some kind of value judgment, or we think that the relevant value judgements must be conscious (it is surely uncontroversial that not all of our experiences involve *conscious* judgments), then there is room for the thought that we might have aesthetic experiences without making any kind of relevant value judgement. Consequently, the proponent of the axiological approach might want to weaken the connection between value and aesthetic experience even further to maintain that only *if* the experience is one that is valued (positively or negatively) then it must be so for its own sake to count as aesthetic. This allows that one may have an aesthetic experience that is not valued. However, it seems that even placing *this* restriction on aesthetic experience is too strict.

This brings me to the ambiguity in the idea of valuing something for its own sake. Something's being valued for its own sake could mean that it is valued objectively, i.e. from no particular point of view, or it could mean valuing it subjectively, ie. in the mind of the experiencing individual. If the claim is the former, it is quite hard to make sense of. What could it be to value something objectively for its own sake, from no particular perspective or value system (Carroll, 2006, p.83)? It seems that valuing something for its own sake must be a subjective (or at least intersubjective) activity.

However, in light of this distinction, aesthetic experiences seem to have only *instrumental* value objectively. As Carroll (2006, p. 84) points out:

“Aesthetic experiences are generally shared amongst audiences - theatre goers, filmgoers, concert goers, dance aficionados, and the like – who find themselves in congruent emotive states. This is clearly an advantage from an evolutionary point of view, since it nurtures a feeling of group cohesion. This suggests one way in which aesthetic experience is objectively valuable instrumentally and explains, at least in part, why societies cultivate it – why it appears to be a focus of important activity universally or nearly universally.”

Even if the axiological theorist admits that it is only subjectively that an aesthetic experience is valued for its own sake and that aesthetic experiences are valued instrumentally in the sense just highlighted, further problems arise for the axiological theorist. For example, consider a case in which there are two people who are both listening to the same piece of music. The first person is one who believes in the notion of intrinsic value, while the second is an evolutionary psychologist who believes that the kind of experience the aesthete and he are having is valuable in the objective instrumental sense. For example, he might believe that listening to music makes people in general more amicable with one another, and thus has a distinct social benefit. In any case, in this example, we must imagine that the evolutionary psychologist is aware and attentive to all the same features of the music that the aesthete is. He can point out the various formal structures and developments as well as being able to give an appropriate reading of the music's expressive properties. We can even assume that the evolutionary psychologist feels all that the other person feels in response to the music (Carroll, 2006, p.85). Nonetheless, according to the axiological theory of aesthetic experience, only the first person qualifies as having an

aesthetic experience. This conclusion seems to be open to objection. To say that one experience is aesthetic while the other isn't, purely on the basis of differing views of behalf of the people in question as to *why* one should want to have that experience does not seem to be an appropriate way of distinguishing between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic. It seems incorrect that the beliefs held by the two people in the example should be taken to distinguish between two experiences which are by hypothesis phenomenologically identical.

1.4. The Content-Orientated Approach

I take the content-orientated approach to be the most promising account of aesthetic experience. It aims to define aesthetic experience as being that which has a certain type of content, or is directed at particular kinds of properties. The typical constituents of an aesthetic experience include the form of the work and other properties such as the work's expressiveness. Carroll maintains that these are the least controversial of the supposed contents of aesthetic experience. He also says that aesthetic experience is typically directed at the way in which these kinds of elements are combined and how they influence our awareness of them. Thus the content-orientated approach can be defined disjunctively as Carroll (2006, p. 89) explains:

“The content-oriented theorist of aesthetic experience conjectures that if attention is directed with understanding to the form of the artwork, and/or to its expressive or aesthetic properties, and/or to the interaction between these features, and/or to the way in which the aforesaid factors modulate our response to the artwork, then the experience is aesthetic.”

Carroll accepts that both formal and expressive properties are candidates for being the content of an aesthetic experience. Regarding the status of such aesthetic properties in general, Carroll (2006, p. 91) explains that:

“These [aesthetic] properties supervene on the primary and secondary properties of the relevant objects of attention, as well as upon certain relational properties, including art-historical ones, such as genre or category membership. Aesthetic properties emerge from these lower order properties; they are dispositions to promote impressions or effects on appropriately backgrounded creatures with our perceptual and imaginative capabilities.”

Carroll’s account can be understood as deflationary in that it does not provide a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, but only an incomplete disjunction (Iseminger, 2006). Instead, Carroll’s account merely tells us what some of the sorts of things aesthetic experience might be an experience of. i.e. a list of what we take to be aesthetic properties such as formal and expressive properties. Carroll’s claim is that there is no conception of aesthetic experience that has as its essence, a distinctive phenomenology or structure.

Conclusion

To sum up, the affect-orientated and epistemic approaches to aesthetic experience have been shown to be flawed. The two main contenders for an account of aesthetic experience, as discussed, are the axiological and content-orientated approaches. The axiological approach holds that whenever we value an experience for its own sake, it is an aesthetic experience. As such, formal and expressive properties in music would be relevant to aesthetic value, as long as we valued the experience of them for its own sake. However, as it has been argued, accounting for the nature of

aesthetic experience in terms of valuing something for its own sake is problematic. Valuing an experience for its own sake cannot be a sufficient condition of aesthetic experience as this would render many experiences aesthetic, which do not seem to be of an aesthetic nature intuitively. It seems more plausible to say that our experience is an aesthetic one when it is of particular properties. Formal and expressive properties are typically regarded as paradigmatic examples of such properties. However, the question arises as to whether we are justified in taking this to be the case. It is to this question that I now turn.

2. Form

Form is typically considered to be a property of music that exists independently of our experience of it. It can be roughly characterised as the purely audible experience with regards to the music. Formalists argue that aesthetic value is to be found in the experience of form alone. However, the experience of music is often thought to be first and foremost an emotional one. To many, the thought that we might value the experience of a piece of music without any reference to emotion is quite counter-intuitive.

This part will be divided into three sections. In the first, I will give a cursory account of what exactly I shall understand by the formal qualities of music. In section two, I will then discuss how we might come to value a piece of music for its formal qualities. In the third section, I shall consider Hanslick's argument for a musical formalism. I will conclude by showing how Hanslick's arguments do not close the door on the possibility that we might justifiably locate the aesthetic value of music in more than just its formal qualities.

2.1. What is Form?

The term “form” is used in a variety of ways in different musicological contexts. Douglas Green (1979, ch.1) says that form, in its most broad sense, can be understood as having three main “sub-meanings”. These are musical genre, musical shape and musical form.

Musical genres are the terms we use to broadly categorise certain musical frameworks that have become popularised by composers. Examples include an aria (a sung piece consisting of an accompanied solo voice), or a cantata (a piece of music with narrative or descriptive content and involving vocal solos as well as a chorus and ensemble). However, as Green points out, the term genre might also be used in a broader sense, such as when we talk about the different genres of classical and rock music for example. This is not the sense of genre Green is referring to.

Green (1979, p. 3) describes musical shape as follows:

“The term “shape”, when applied to music, refers to the surface contour of a piece.”

The “surface contour” of a piece of music is intended to refer to the degree of fluctuation and intensity of dynamic elements, such as the rise and fall in general volume level. The use of the word shape with regards to music is a prominent example of how pervasive spatial metaphors are in our descriptions of music. We typically refer to notes as being higher or lower, and often use other visual or even tactile concepts for describing timbres of sound, such as brighter or softer. The dynamic differences between the two events provide points on an imaginary graph and the shape of a piece of

music is arrived at by tracing an imaginary line from the dynamic peak of one musical event to another.

According to Green, musical form is to be understood as made up of two distinct elements; design and tonal structure. Green (1979, p. 4) defines these elements in the following way:

“Design is the organisation of those elements of music called melody, rhythm, cadences, timbre, and tempo. The harmonic organisation of a piece is referred to as its tonal structure.”

An uncomplicated example of harmonic organisation would be the way in which a typical blues song, the harmonic development begins with the tonic (based on the root note), before moving up to fourth, then the fifth, and back again. Once the tune has returned home to the tonic, there is typically a sense of resolution that would not have been present had it finished, open-ended, on the fifth or fourth note of the scale.

It might be pointed out that there are a myriad other elements in our experience of music that, while seemingly relevant to our purely audible experience of music, don't fit into any of Green's three interpretations of the meaning of musical form. These include what can be described as elements of the construction, and would include aspects such as the tones and timbres of the instruments (or the sounds used) and individual chords (while these do have an internal structure of their own, in the formal context of a piece of music they are often regarded as in some sense “atomic”).

For the purposes of this thesis, I shall take musical form to include both what Green calls musical shape and musical form, as well the elements detailed above, which Green's categories make no room for. To reiterate, I

will understand form as equivalent to whatever is present in our purely audible experience, which does not seem to include Green's category of genre.

2.2. Form and Value

Instrumental music is typically regarded as an abstract art. That is to say, instrumental music is not thought to be representative of the world around us in the way that literature for example generally is. As a result, it has often been suggested that to understand and appreciate such music does not require our experience to have been informed by the concepts which typically apply to the world outside music, and which are essential if we are to understand a novel, poem or play. Thinking of instrumental music in this way has created something of a puzzle as regards its value; namely, why do people seem to find it profoundly rewarding to immerse themselves in the abstract sounds of instrumental music which as Malcolm Budd (1995, p.126) says is:

“...about as far removed from everything they value in their extra-musical lives as anything could be.”

This problem is closely related to what Peter Kivy (2001, p.156) has called the “problem of absolute music”. For Kivy, the term “absolute music” denotes a type of music for which only a structural, as opposed to a content interpretation is applicable. We might roughly characterise the difference between these in the following way: a structural interpretation of a piece of music is concerned only with the arrangement of the parts and their relations to one another. A content interpretation on the other hand, is one where the parts identified in the structural interpretation are taken to refer to, as

symbols for, or as being expressive of, something in the non-musical world.

With this in mind:

“...the *problem* of absolute music, briefly stated, is the problem of why and how such music is enjoyable and important for us, given that it lacks just those things that content interpretation deals with, and which seem to play so prominent a role in our enjoyment and appreciation, and which seems so vital to the value that the fine arts hold for us. Denuded of the things that content interpretation reveals, which is left but an empty structural shell? Yet that empty, structural shell is just what a piece of absolute music must be, if it is defined as music for which only structural interpretation is appropriate. That is the problem.” (Kivy, 2001, p.157)

But, in order for there to be such a problem of absolute music, then it must (as Kivy acknowledges) be true that there is music for which no content interpretation is appropriate. Is it true that we can and do listen to music purely for the experience of that “structural shell”? Kivy (2001, p. 167) certainly thinks that this is not only possible but a common practice. Kivy (2001) states that much of modern music criticism and interpretation, what he calls “the new musicology”, is now aimed at accounting for the greatness of pieces of music by providing an understanding of that music, which goes beyond its form. However, what Kivy wants us to remember is that there is another way of listening to music that involves nothing but our perception of the patterns and sounds of the music itself. This view of the appreciation of music is articulated in the work of Eduard Hanslick (1957). In his book *The Beautiful in Music*, Hanslick argued that any not specifically musical content that was ascribed to music, emotional or otherwise, was to be rejected as irrelevant to our aesthetic evaluation of the music. I shall consider Hanslick’s arguments for this claim in more detail in the next section of this part. In this section, I will only be concerned with

explanations as to what it is to appreciate music purely for its formal qualities.

The appreciation of music for Hanslick (1957, p. 11) is primarily an intellectual activity, one that aims:

“...above all, at producing something beautiful which affects not our feelings but the organ of pure contemplation, our *imagination*.”

It is this notion of intellectual contemplation or what Hanslick also calls “attentive hearing” that is the key to understanding how we might appreciate the value of music, independently of any feelings of sensual pleasure or other emotional effects. Hearing attentively involves performing a “... mental inspection of a succession of mental images” (Hanslick, 1957. p.11). This act of “pure” listening is one where we are engaged with the music and nothing else. Hanslick takes music to be a self-sufficient system and its aims are specifically musical rather than relating to anything extraneous. That is to say, he thinks that music “...consists wholly of sounds artistically combined” (Hanslick, 1957, p.47). The tools available to the composer are melody, harmony and rhythm which are used to express strictly musical ideas. These are ends in themselves and not means to anything else, according to Hanslick. He draws an insightful analogy to express this point where he likens a musical composition to an arabesque. He says:

“We see a plexus of flourishes, now bending into graceful curves, now rising in bold sweeps; moving now toward, and now away from each other; ... If, moreover, we conceive this living arabesque as the active emanation of inventive genius, the artistic fullness of whose imagination is incessantly flowing into the heart of these moving forms, the effect, we think will be not unlike that of music.” (Hanslick, 1957, p.48)

So the first point to note is that the appreciation of music's form is a kind of intellectual pleasure. It is interesting to note that Hanslick does endorse the use of non-formal terms for the description of our experience of music's form, so long as the use of such terms is recognised as purely figurative. Such terms are used only to point out what would otherwise be difficult (or perhaps impossible) to express in a purely musical vocabulary. This is a point which will be elaborated upon in the next section.

In his book *Music Alone*, Kivy (1990) provides an explanation of some of the how we might derive pleasure from the experience of musical structures. He identifies two main processes which he calls the "hypothesis game" and the "hide-and-seek game". The hypothesis game draws on Leonard Meyer's (1956) analysis of musical appreciation. The thought is that events can be rated in terms of their information value. The more informative an event is, the more unexpected and surprising it is, and the greater the sense of newness it presents. Events can be arranged on a scale with those that are completely unexpected and surprising at one end and those that are entirely predictable and anticipated at the other. Meyer applies this idea to the notion of musical events and this forms the basis for the hypothesis game described by Kivy. In terms of the musical events themselves, Kivy distinguishes between two kinds. On the one hand we have syntactical events and on the other there are formal events. Syntactical events are the small scale events that collectively make up the musical structure. These events are, at least in most cases, governed by the "rules" or conventions of musical theory or grammar. As Kivy (2002, p. 72) says:

"Some have to do with melodic lines: for example, when a melody goes up with a leap, from one note to another five steps above, it 'should,' 'normally,' then descend stepwise. And some have to do with the manner in

which the melodic lines can be combined in ‘counterpoint’: for example, when it is permissible for two melodic lines to move in parallel motion, when they must move in opposite directions, what intervals are permissible between them, and so on.”

Formal events are the larger scale events which are determined by the genre of the music in question. A good example is that of a symphony (during a particular historical phase of its development), which by design is in four movements, each one being a formal event. It is important to note that what I am calling “form” includes both Kivy’s syntactical and formal events. The listener will have expectations regarding the nature of forthcoming events, be they syntactical or formal. For instance, in what we would probably call a boring piece of music, the events will typically be on the low end of the expectation scale. They will be predictable and hold no surprises for the listener. To help explain the origin of these expectations, Kivy introduces a distinction between external and internal expectations. The external expectations are those that are already formed in the listener prior to their encounter with a particular piece of music. They are the expectations that one might acquire unknowingly through exposure to a particular culture, or perhaps through some kind of musical training. The internal expectations are those that are generated while listening to a particular piece of music. They are the expectations that we experience based on the actual musical events of the piece as we listen to it.

What makes a musical work interesting, and thus aesthetically valuable, on this account is when the level of expectation regarding events, does not stray too far towards either end of the scale. If all the events are too predictable then the music will be boring to most. On the other hand, if the events are all completely unexpected then the result will be an unstructured mass of

chaotic sound. Kivy (2002, p. 75) describes how the listener plays the “hypothesis game” in the following way:

“He or she is thinking about the musical events taking place, is framing hypotheses about what is going to happen, and is sometimes surprised, sometimes confirmed, in his or her expectations.”

Kivy denies that the appreciation of the aesthetic value of music is being over intellectualised. He argues that when we are having a genuine musical experience, when we are actively engaged with the music and nothing else, we must in some sense be cognising it. That is to say, we must be actively and mentally engaged with the music. The essence of this view is a response to what is known as the stimulus theory, whereby our aesthetic evaluation of music is determined by its ability to stimulate pleasure in us merely by a “tickling” of our nerve endings and where no deliberate conscious mental activity is required to achieve the effect. The stimulus view does not seem to be correct. For one thing, if we treat the pleasure gained from listening to music as we would the pleasure from a drug for example, this seems to obscure any difference in the musical experience of someone well versed in music theory as opposed to the average listener, which seems to be an unintuitive consequence. Kivy rejects the stimulus theory for this reason. He writes:

“If music merely stimulated pleasure the way drugs stimulate euphoria, it would be impossible to make any sense at all out of what Tibby is doing, “who is profoundly versed in counterpoint, and holds the full score open on his knee.” What would being profoundly versed in anything have to do with musical enjoyment if music were a sonic drug? The pharmacologist who is profoundly versed in the ways in which heroin affects the brain does not get a different or more enjoyable ‘high’ from it than does the neighbourhood

addict who knows nothing at all about how the substance works. But Tibby, we must suppose, is not profoundly versed in the way music gives us a high as the pharmacologist is profoundly versed in the way that heroin does. His knowledge of counterpoint and ability to read the score are enabling him to perceive *that* certain things are going on in the music, and his enjoyment of the music is the enjoyment *of* perceiving just those things under those descriptions.” (Kivy, 1990, p.40)

For Kivy, part of what distinguishes the experienced music theorist from the average listener is the type of concepts they each have to operate with when listening to music. Both employ those concepts within the framework of the “hypothesis game” outlined earlier and as a result, the experienced or trained listener can have significantly different expectations regarding the sequence events and so will assign different information values to those events.

If we accept that the hypothesis game explains what we find aesthetically valuable in the experience of musical form, then how do we explain the fact that the experience can retain its value once we have already heard it? If we know what events are in store then they can no longer be a surprise to us and thus it would seem that they begin to slide down toward the uninteresting, uninformative end of the scale. Kivy suggests that we can still engage in the expectation game with music we have already heard because of two reasons. The first is that in general, we are not able to remember precise details of the music we have heard. We usually manage to absorb some outlines and general themes, perhaps a melody, but, repeated listening will continue to provide fresh experiences of the events because our memory for such things is simply not that detailed. It is also worth pointing out that there seems a fundamental phenomenological difference between our ability to recall experiences in memory and the actual experience itself.

Arguably, no matter how good our memory, the direct experience of the music will always have a distinctive phenomenological impact, and it is this impact that drives us to seek out the experience again and again rather than simply recall it in our minds. The second reason that the hypothesis game can continue to be played according to Kivy (1990, p. 77), is due to what he calls the “persistence of illusion”. This is a phenomenon whereby even though one knows full well what is going to happen in the next part of the composition, one is nonetheless drawn into the structure as if it were for the first time. It is like watching a thriller or horror film you have seen many times before and even though you know when the villain is going to strike, it still makes you jump.

In addition to the hypothesis game, the other significant process that can contribute to an aesthetically valuable musical experience, according to Kivy, is what he calls the “hide-and-seek” game. Kivy (1990, p. 78) remarks that classical music is typically music which exhibits a comparatively complex structure, and as he says:

“...it is in appreciating this complicated, intriguing structure that musical enjoyment has been generated.”

The hide-and-seek game involves isolating the themes and melodies that are more or less embedded or concealed in the structure of the music. As Kivy (1990, p. 78) puts it:

“In the familiar forms that Western art music has taken, in the modern era, the fugue, sonata form, rondo, theme and variation, and so on, the formal principle involved has been one kind or another in which the listener’s task is to find, to recognize, the principal melodies out of which the musical structure is constituted. It is the composer’s task to vary these melodies,

hide them, alter them, dismember them, and generally give the listener puzzles to solve. Furthermore, the standard musical forms or patterns involve the recurrence of themes at various places. It is the experienced listener's task to recognize when the themes occur, and to orient herself within the musical forms or patterns. Finding one's way in a musical form is part of the hide-and-seek game, and gives part of the satisfaction one derives from such music, and from such musical listening."

According to Kivy, the hypothesis and the hide-and-seek games combine to provide us with a kind of intellectual pleasure when we listen to the form of music and this explains the aesthetic value we bestow on musical form. However, we might have some serious doubts as to whether this account is comprehensive enough to account for *all* of our experiences of music. Both processes, but particularly the hide-and-seek game, seem to imply that the more valuable music will be by and large the more complex music. But while more complex music certainly allows for more "puzzle solving", it is not generally accepted that this makes for more valuable music. It is perhaps more natural to see the hide-and-seek game as an activity that some listeners prefer more than others. It may be a process that all listeners engage in to a degree but it fails to explain what we find so valuable in our experiences of music, which are overtly simple.

An initial response might be to say that the hide-and-seek game is only half the story; there is still the hypothesis game. The problem is that the hypothesis game also seems disproportionately to favour formally complex music, which is especially prominent in relation to the problem of re-hearing music. The musical events that constitute a simple piece of music will become familiar much more quickly than those of even a relatively complex piece, but it seems undeniable that the experience of some simple pieces of music can retain its value even once they are known virtually by

heart. We cannot rely on the deficiencies of our musical memories in these cases. A slow melody played on a piano is significantly easier to remember than a piece of music which involves two or more instruments, but the piano piece is not necessarily much less interesting or pleasurable and hence valuable. All that is left is an appeal to “illusion”; namely, it could be claimed that we still place aesthetic value on simple music as even though we do know full well what is coming next, we may be so engrossed in the music that we fail to make any conscious predictions and in a sense, listen to the music as if it were new to us. It is certainly true that this sometimes happens, but the problem is that it need not always be the case and it is certainly possible for someone listening to a simple melody played on a solo piano, in full knowledge of what notes are to come (perhaps they know how to play the piece themselves) and yet still regard the experience as aesthetically valuable. It does seem that the actual experience of the music will always have an impact our imagination can never replicate.

The hypothesis and hide-and-seek games are fundamental (perhaps even necessary) aspects of our listening experience and they provide a good account of how we might value the experience of music’s form. However, either the experience of music as form is simply not sufficient to account for the way we value music, or the way in which we value our musical experience must include more than the hypothesis and hide-and-seek games. One problem with the latter contention is that it is difficult to suggest what this extra could be. Of course, it is always possible to say it is just a brute fact that some forms strike one as inherently aesthetically valuable. Apart from making discussion of the aesthetic value of music philosophically redundant, this kind of response is also awkward in that it is not clear that certain forms *are* just inherently valuable to us. A person might come to value negatively the experience of the formal qualities of a piece of music that he previously held in high regard, and the reverse is also equally

possible. Thus while we seem to be able to make sense of how one might come to value a piece of music for its formal qualities alone, it is less obvious that this accounts for all judgements concerning the aesthetic value of music. Nonetheless, one might object that whatever else we value about the music is in fact irrelevant to its *aesthetic* value. That we do sometimes attribute value to music for musically unrelated reasons is certainly true, but if we are to be at all accurate in our estimations of the aesthetic value of the music, we should be concerned with only those properties which we experience as belonging to the music itself. In the next part I shall consider some arguments to this effect.

2.3. Hanslick's Argument for Musical Formalism

The core idea of formalism in music is that the aesthetic value of music is to be found *only* in its form. However, the principal claim of formalism is sometimes understood as a negative one. The theory most confidently says what music does *not* do. As Andy Hamilton (2007, p. 71) puts it:

“*Formalism* says that form, as opposed to content, meaning, representation or extrinsic purpose, is the primary element of aesthetic value.”

Hanslick's attack on the view that to appreciate the aesthetic value of music requires attributing it content above and beyond its form, can be split into three lines of argument. The kind of content that I will be concerned with in this discussion is emotional content and ultimately the thought that music is aesthetically valuable in virtue of its being expressive of emotion. Each argument is concerned with a different way in which emotions are said to be integral to our experience of music. The first is in terms of the emotions or feelings aroused in the listener, the second is through music's being representative of emotion and the third is through music's ability to express

emotion. As I am mainly concerned with the relevance of expression to value, I shall devote most space to that argument. However, it is worthwhile to discuss Hanslick's treatment of arousal and representation, as the criticisms he raises against these possibilities will resurface in the discussion of expression in music in part three. In each case, Hanslick's claim is a strong one. He does not say simply that there are pieces of music for which no emotional element is relevant (as Kivy suggests there are). Rather, he argues that no emotional content is *ever* relevant to the aesthetic value of a piece of music. This is important, as few of us would be tempted to disagree with the former claim, but the latter, stronger claim, directly contradicts what we can safely assume to be the dominant view in music appreciation; namely, that great pieces of music are aesthetically valuable at least partly in virtue of their emotional power.

For Hanslick, the value or what he refers to as the "beauty" of music had nothing to do with the emotional states the composer, performer or audience might have been experiencing at the time when they were involved with the music. In any case, the first two possibilities are easy to reject as irrelevant to our aesthetic evaluation of the music. In the case of the composer, he might have created the same piece of music regardless of how he might have felt at the time. Therefore, the emotional significance of the piece, should it have any, is irrespective of that of the composer. The idea that our emotional ascriptions of the music correlate with the emotions felt by the composer is not an essential condition to our ascribing them to the music in the first place. Similarly, the emotions of the performer might tally with those we apply to the music, but need not. In both cases, we might infer the emotions of the composer or the performer, but this is a result of our prior experience and independent estimation of the qualities of the music. The third case, the arousal of emotion in the listener, is more significant. Hanslick is well aware that a typical feature of the experience of music is

that emotion is aroused in the listener. Firstly, Hanslick objects to the fact that the emotions aroused in us are so variable that they betray a hopelessly subjective nature. This is relevant in that what Hanslick aims to establish is an account of the value of music that admits of as little subject-related relativity as possible. To say that the aesthetic value of music is in part related to the way people feel when they hear it, would seem to make that value quite indefinite and fleeting as the same music can even excite different feelings at different times in the same person for example. As he says:

“[T]he effect of music on the emotions does not possess the attributes of inevitableness, exclusiveness and uniformity that a phenomenon from which aesthetic principles are to be deduced ought to have.” (Hanslick, 1957, p.15)

Hanslick is saying that the fact that our feelings become involved is a secondary feature of our experience and is extraneous to the initial contemplative activity, and it is this contemplative activity that in the previous section we saw to be central to Hanslick’s account of aesthetic appreciation. However, by itself, the fact that our responses to music vary is not sufficient to validate the claim that our emotional responses are irrelevant to our understanding and aesthetic appreciation of music. What Hanslick must show is that all such emotional responses can in principle be separated from the music. That is to say that the music is just one of potentially many stimuli that can arouse the emotion and could be substituted without remainder. For this view to be false, there must be examples of aroused emotions that would not in principle occur if one had not experienced the music. Malcolm Budd (1985, p.30) suggests that amusement is one such example. In this case, the object of one’s amusement would be the music, and the music would justifiably be termed amusing so long as it produced the appropriate response in us. One could not have had

that emotion without the object being present. But, as Budd also points out, there are some other emotions, such as grief, which both seems to be commonly applied to music and yet cannot take the music as its object; one would not be grieving about the music. It is in these kinds of cases that it becomes hard to see how the emotion could be a genuine property of the music, and thus how the aroused emotion could be essentially related to our aesthetic evaluation of the music.

It has been widely thought (by accomplished musicians as well as the average listener) that music could be in some way representative of emotion. This claim can be understood in a number of ways. One way is to conceive of music as a kind of language, where certain motifs and structures function as signs that refer to non-musical objects or thoughts. The arduous task of listing all the meanings of the “atomic” parts of music was famously undertaken by Deryck Cooke (1959) in his book *The Language of Music*. But, music, for Hanslick, can at best be described as a language in a very restricted sense. Musical sounds cannot have meaning in the way that the words of a natural language do. The only aspects that music and a language can be understood to share are dynamic properties.

This thought is captured by Hanslick in his idea of musical “motion”. There is an extent to which actions or feelings can be “painted musically” by the auditory production of impressions which are dynamically related to particular phenomena (Hanslick, 1957, p.37). For example, the rapid heart rate and loud abrasive utterances that typically accompany an episode of anger can be mimicked in music that is played at a high tempo and includes staccato and dissonant notes, as well as jarring harmonies. The problem is that while such music might seem apt for accompanying, say a scene of anger in a film or on stage, on their own, the properties exhibited by such a musical piece are not sufficient to individuate any particular emotion. The

dynamic properties such as loudness and fast tempo do not constitute an emotion. In fact, they are only one part of it and, as such, they may be found equally in an emotion of a quite different kind. For example the rapid heart rate that we might think essential to a genuine feeling of elation or positive anticipation may also be equally typical of some kinds of anger. The key problem for the idea that music can be representative of emotion is that music is unfit for communicating the often subtle and complicated thoughts and meanings, the intentional component, that along with their dynamic properties constitutes an emotion. It is this intentional component which, by contrast, seems to be communicable only verbally. Emotions incorporate a type of definite content that music by way of its dynamic properties alone is unsuited to conveying.

Hanslick does not deny that certain formal features of music such as the chords, keys or timbres might become *associated* with other extra-formal ideas. In fact, he accepts that this is a common practice. His objection is to the idea that, independently of association, the tones and the relations of those tones to each other that form a musical composition are in themselves directly representative of definite extra-formal entities. As he puts it:

“No instrumental composition can describe the ideas of love, wrath or fear, since there is no causal nexus between these ideas and certain combinations of sound.” (Hanslick, 1957, p.24)

A question we may raise in connection with this argument is whether Hanslick is right to claim that emotions always involve a thought as an essential and distinguishing component. Budd (1985) discusses the possibility that there may be emotions that are not always associated with a particular thought. For instance, Hanslick uses the example of cheerfulness

as an emotion that cannot be represented in music, but as Budd (1985, pp. 24-5) points out, cheerfulness:

“...seems rather to be either a quality or character of a mood, which in either case consists in being in good spirit, and which does not include a specific thought.”

If this is correct then there are perhaps some emotions/moods that escape Hanslick’s argument and could potentially be represented in music. If there are such emotions without definite thoughts, the dynamic properties of music could perhaps pick out or copy that part of the emotion, without which the experience would not be emotional, namely the particular sense of pleasure or displeasure. Budd suggests that consonance and dissonance in musical works might well be capable of sufficiently mimicking the features of satisfaction and discomfort. As he describes:

“For dissonance and consonance, understood in the sense of those musical sounds that do, and those that do not, stand in need of resolution, give to tonal music the movement from tension to resolution that is integral to it. And there is a natural correspondence between musical tension and resolution, on the one hand, and the experience of dissatisfaction and satisfaction, on the other.” (Budd, 1985, p.25)

In the recent literature on emotions it has been contended however, that feelings are not sufficient to distinguish between different emotions. Emotions are widely understood as being necessarily intentional mental states. For example, for it to be true that someone is experiencing grief there must be something or someone that they are grieving for. The emotion as such includes certain feelings that are directed towards some object or state of affairs. Thus when someone verbally expresses their grief at the recent

death of their dog they are not only trying to communicate how they feel but also, what it is their feelings are directed towards. To express an emotion seems to involve a communication of not only the nature of one's feelings but also where those feelings are directed.

Viewed another way, the idea that the connection between music and emotions should be representational seems rather strange. This becomes apparent if we consider the rather straightforward sense according to Budd (1995, p. 129) in which music can be representational, when:

“...music is successfully intended to sound like the sound of something extra-musical”.

However, Budd (1995, p. 129) also explains that:

“In this sense music can represent only sounds or things that make sounds, and when it does represent things that make sounds it represents them by imitating, more or less closely, in one or more respects, the sounds they make. If the listener experiences the music as being a representation, if he hears the music as representing the sound of a cuckoo, for example, he hears the music as sounding like a cuckoo's call.”

The idea that music should be understood as representing emotions in this sense, seems like the wrong kind of relation anyway. It seems very unlikely that we could explain the extremely prevalent and often strongly held commitment to music's being so closely linked to the emotions, simply through its loose imitation of them in this way. This also does not seem to tally with our actual experience of the emotional content of music, in which the emotion itself seems to be a property of the music in some more fundamental way than merely a perceived likeness.

A more promising explanation is that music is expressive of emotion rather than representative of it. In this case, the emotions would be *in* the music in some sense, or we would experience the music as having certain emotional qualities. Hanslick does in fact allow that we can use emotional terms to describe music, but only in a qualified sense. He says that these words are only applicable when used in a figurative sense. So, according to Hanslick, what we are doing when we use emotional terms with regards to music, is suggesting certain analogies between music and emotional states, simply in order to pick out certain audible features in it. Hanslick's point is that the emotional terms are replaceable by terms taken from another phenomenal scheme, so long as they can be used to indicate the same musical features. For example, where we use the terms happy or cheerful to describe a passage of music, we could just as well have used bright or bouncy, so long as there is some identifiable analogy between the term used and the aspect of the music being referred to. And, as Hanslick has made us aware in his discussion of representation in music, the only similarity that music and emotions can have in common is in their dynamic properties.

An initial worry with this is raised by Budd (1985, p.33). He says that if this is true, then our use of terms such as "gloomy" or "proud" must also be used to pick out dynamic features of the music. However, such terms are not normally used for this purpose. Budd suggests that perhaps the references of such terms when applied to music may become clearer when a set of terms from an analogous domain are used, allowing the relationships between the different uses to aid us in determining what dynamic properties of the music they are being used to isolate. It is certainly true that some of our application of non-musical terms is intended in this way, and that part of the motivation for such an application is to refer to things that do not have names in the relevant musical vocabulary. As mentioned above, one typical example is

the use of “higher” and “lower” to describe pitch relations between notes. Similarly, words such as “abrasive” or “silky” are often used to describe the timbres of tones. In both cases, there are analogies between the non-musical terms and the musical phenomena they are meant to refer to. Interestingly, in the case of “higher” and “lower”, the most significant analogy used, this is actually something we cannot directly perceive (at least not in normal circumstances). The frequency of a bass note does actually oscillate at a lower rate than that of a treble note and this phenomenon is just about audible if one is presented with an extremely low frequency tone, which is then slowly raised in pitch a number of octaves. The “ripples” of the bass will begin to merge into one solid tone as the pitch increases. Nonetheless, this is something that is more often felt than heard. On Hanslick’s account our use of terms such as “higher” or “lower” as well as “cheerful” or “sad”, is that we use them in such a way that they make no essential reference to what they would normally be used to pick out. For example, when we use the word “sad” to describe a piece of music, we are not using the word to pick anything like actual sadness, rather it is merely a musical feature that we are trying describe and one for which we might just as well have used another term such as for example “restrained”, in order to do so.

So for Hanslick, our use of emotion terms is either incorrect or it is entirely eliminable. It is inappropriate if we intend “sad” as referring to sadness, and it is eliminable if we could have used another term equally well, or dispensed altogether with figurative terms and used terms from our musical vocabulary that would provide a literal characterisation of the same phenomenon (Budd, 1985, p.33). There is, however, a way in which emotion terms might be applied in such a way that was ineliminable and yet still made no reference to the emotions themselves, and that is if the emotion term picks out the purely musical feature in such a way that no other term could do so in its place. This might be because there is no term in

the purely musical vocabulary that can be used literally to describe the phenomenon. This view, that emotional terms are always used to attribute a purely audible, musical quality, which otherwise lacks a name, is known as the “purely sensible description thesis”. Because the purely sensible description thesis does not provide us with any independent characterisation of the musical phenomenon in question (if they could be provided then the emotional terms would be eliminable), we are left with the simple claim that this is what we are doing, even if it doesn’t seem to be the case in our experience. As Budd acknowledges, there are doubtless times when we do use an emotional term just as a way of, perhaps for the sake of brevity, referring to some characteristic of the music. Budd suggests (1985, p. 35) that:

“...when someone says that a certain melody is anguished, for example, he might mean only that the melody contains extreme melodic leaps to dissonant intervals.”

But, as Budd also points out, it is often not the case that someone intends his emotional ascription to the music to be interpreted in this kind of figurative way. This becomes especially vivid if we consider our typical claims about expressiveness in music. When we describe a passage in a piece of music as expressive of sadness, it is not that we use the term “sad” for want of a better one. It may be that we can even specify what it is about the music that makes it appear sad to us, perhaps it is a slow moving passage in a minor key, but we nonetheless intend that the term makes an ineliminable reference to the property of sadness. It is in these cases, that the purely sensible description thesis does not present a correct account of our use of emotion terms when applied to music. As Budd (1985, p. 36) says:

“Moreover, an ineliminable use of an emotion term appears often to be justified: the word ‘sad’, for instance, seems sometimes to be the *mot juste*, rather than a makeshift, intimating, perhaps by analogy, something that has nothing specifically to do with sadness. And it is easy to give an indisputable example of a justified undeletable use of an emotion term: the characterisation of Mozart’s Masonic Funeral Music as mournful – no description of the music in purely audible terms can be substituted for the emotional characterisation without losing the point of the emotional characterisation.”

The idea that our emotional descriptions of music make an eliminable reference to the emotions themselves, does not provide an adequate framework for accounting for the nature of our experience of music as expressive.

Conclusion

If the purely sensible thesis were correct, and emotional terms are in principle (even if not in practice) dispensable, being used to denote what are fundamentally purely formal properties of music, then Hanslick’s view that the value of music lies solely in music’s form would be justified. There would be no genuine link between emotions themselves and the value of music. However, when we experience music as expressive, we experience the emotion in the music as a property of the music; something over and above the compositional arrangements and timbres of the tones themselves. Thus, two questions remain. The first is how it is possible to have such an experience. If no adequate account can be given, then perhaps we should regard the experience of expression as a property of the music as an illusion to be dismissed. This was in spirit Hanslick’s view. Assuming that we can provide some answer to this first question however, the next question is how

we should understand the value of our experience of expression in music. I will now address these questions.

3. Expression

The view that music is valuable in large part due to its expressive power is to be rejected if we can point to an established musical work that is not regarded as being expressive of emotion. One example, cited by both Budd (1995, p.134) and Kivy (2001, p.157) is Bach's *Art of Fugue*. In his discussion, Kivy alerts us to the fact that the *Art of Fugue* has in fact been given what he calls a "content interpretation", that is to say, an interpretation that ascribes intentional content. Hans Eggebrecht (1993, p.8) is quoted as saying of the *Art of Fugue* that:

"Because Bach connected the pitches B-A-C-H to this emphatic cadential process, I cannot believe that he only intended to say: 'I composed this.' Rather, appending the double discant clausula to the B-A-C-H motto seems to say, 'I am identified with the Tonic and it is my desire to reach it.' Interpreted more broadly, this statement could read: 'Like you I am human. I am need of salvation; I am certain in the hope of salvation, and have been saved by grace.'"

If such an interpretation is appropriate, then there seems no obvious reason why we should think that a rather more humble interpretation of the *The Art of Fugue* as expressive of emotion would not be possible. So it is not immediately clear that there are pieces of music that simply cannot be heard as expressive. Even the "minimalist drone music" of early electronic music pioneer Steve Reich has often been regarded as emotionally charged. Although I have already touched on the difficulties associated with justifying such ascriptions of meaning to music, in virtue of the fact that

music does not function like a natural language, the situation seems to be different when we describe music as expressive of emotion. There is some sense in which when we hear music as expressive of joy, we hear the emotion as a property of the music, and our use is not (at least not conspicuously) figurative. If we can provide an account of expression that makes this phenomenon comprehensible then this would also allow us to make sense of the idea that we might aesthetically value the music for its emotional expressiveness. On the other hand if no adequate account can be given of how the emotional aspect might be heard as a property of the music as we experience it, then we may feel compelled to relegate music's expressiveness as aesthetically irrelevant, in the way that Hanslick claimed we should.

In this part, I will begin by discussing the merits of a selection of views on what it could be for music to be expressive. I will then examine in what sense expression in music could be considered aesthetically valuable.

3.1. Theories of Musical Expression

In this section, I will consider a number of attempts to explain the phenomenon of expression in music. The material will be divided into roughly two halves. Firstly, I shall consider those accounts, which appeal to an element of resemblance between the music and our emotional states. The accounts discussed aim to go a step further than the resemblance account considered by Hanslick. I will show that our perceiving of a resemblance between an emotional state and music is best understood as part of the *cause* of our experience of that music as expressive, rather than a complete account of the experience as such. In the latter half of this section, I will turn to consider accounts, which focus on the structure of our experience of

expression in music, rather than looking to what musical properties could justify our having such an experience.

Malcolm Budd (1995), Stephen Davies (1980) and Peter Kivy (1990, 2002) have all argued in different ways that at the heart of the musical expression of emotion, is a perceived resemblance between the music and our emotional life. One advantage of such an account is that it appears to meet what Jerrold Levinson has called the “externality requirement” of musical expressiveness. He explains the externality requirement as follows:

“Musical expressiveness should be seen to belong unequivocally to the music – to be a property of aspect thereof – and not to the listener or performer or composer.” (Levinson, 1996, p.91)

The externality requirement requires that a correct analysis of expression in music is one which does *not* locate the emotion purely in the subjective experiences of the listener. The account should do justice to the idea that the emotions are a property of the music. Malcolm Budd’s theory of the musical expression of emotion is anchored around what he calls the “basic or minimal concept” of musical expression (1995, p.136). However, by itself the minimal concept is insufficient to account for all forms of experience that expression in music can take. Accordingly, Budd argues that we experience the expression of emotion in music in a number of different ways, which all have the minimal conception as their common ground. Budd (1995, p.137) defines the minimal concept in the following way:

“The basic and minimal concept of the musical expression of emotion comes to this: when you hear music as being expressive of emotion E – when you hear E in the music – you hear the music as sounding like the way E feels; the music *is* expressive of E if it is correct to hear it in this fashion

or a full appreciation of the music requires the listener to hear it this way. 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.”

The minimal concept thus rests on one’s perceiving, either consciously or unconsciously, a cross-categorical resemblance between the sounds that make up the music and the distinctive “feeling” component of an emotion. However, Budd’s concept of feeling in this instance does not refer simply to a bodily sensation. Budd is conscious of making sure that the aspect of the emotion being captured by the music is one that has an ineliminable connection to the emotion. Hence, the proposed resemblance is not between the music and a plain physical sensation, but rather to something more integral to a type of emotion; namely, the specific way the emotion *feels* to the person who experiences it. However, there is some difficulty in understanding exactly what this “feeling” is and where it should be located in the structure of an emotion. This is a problem as if we cannot articulate the nature of the two elements in the resemblance then the whole idea remains a mystery. In addition, the precise nature of the possible similarities will determine just which emotions can be expressed by music. If an emotion lacks a distinctive feeling then music will not be able to resemble it in any way that distinguishes it from another emotion resembled in music. Also, if an emotion contains a feeling component that music has no possible analogue for, then it cannot be expressed at all. Budd provides the following explanation of what he means by the way an emotion feels. He writes:

“The feelings intrinsic to the experience of the emotions are, by and large, types of felt desire and aversion (as with envy and disgust or shame), distress (as with fear or grief), pleasure (as with joy or, amusement or pride) and displeasure, especially displeasure at the frustration of a desire (as with

anger). The feeling of an emotion is often complex, consisting of more than one of these elements.” (Budd, 1995, p.140)

When the feelings Budd talks about are described in this way, as “types of felt desire and aversion”, Budd seems to be locating them somewhere in between the bodily sensations and the intentional or cognitive part of an emotion. The problem is that for the minimal conception to be of any use we need the resemblance between music and the emotion to extend from the music to something in the emotion that can serve to individuate at least the *kind* of emotion it is. This would be to express an as yet unspecified instance of an emotion, by which I mean something analogous to how we could recognise an angry face without knowing what the anger is directed at. That dynamic properties can to some degree resemble the dynamic properties of some plain bodily sensations such as rapid heart rate, everyone, including Hanslick, would be ready to admit. However, the bare audible properties of the music cannot resemble anything like the intentional content of the emotion and this Budd (1995, p.141) acknowledges when he says:

“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.”

So it is difficult to understand how music can resemble the kind of feeling component that Budd wants it to. The tension arises when we try to construe the feeling component as anything more than representative of bodily sensations. Budd seems to accept that this is the case. He also acknowledges that once the intentional content of an emotional experience is removed,



little is left by means of which different emotions can be individuated. This he claims is reflected in:

“...the severe limitation of music’s capacity to express our highly variegated inner lives.” (Budd, 1995, p.141)

The minimal concept may appear to allow little more, if anything, than Hanslick did in his concession of the dynamic properties of music being analogous to some characteristic aspects of emotional episodes. However, it does crucially appeal to a relation of resemblance that is closer to the essential nature of an emotion than just the bodily manifestations of emotion that Hanslick linked to the dynamic properties of music. It is the mirroring of the felt aversions and desires that might be distinctive of kinds of emotion, but this stops short of being able to provide an indication of what the object of the emotion might be. Budd claims that the minimal conception of expression undermines two claims that threaten the idea that emotional qualities are relevant to the aesthetic value of a piece of music. The first is that one is inevitably mistaken if one thinks there is any sense in which the emotion could be a property of the music. The second claim is that even if we concede that music’s expressive qualities are not just in the mind of the listener, nonetheless, no listener is in a position to know which emotion is actually being expressed (Budd, 1995, p.146). Budd argues that the minimal conception is enough to reject both kinds of objections. He writes:

“For although the heard resemblances do reside in the ear of the listener, the resemblances are there to be heard, open to anyone with cultivated ears; and the heard resemblances that constitute the musical expression of emotion are not fortuitous but are due to the composer’s understanding and manipulation of his musical resources. Furthermore, as I have indicated, the basis of these

resemblances is often accessible to consciousness, so that our judgements about the emotional qualities of music, which lay claim to intersubjective validity, are not free-floating but can be given a solid ground.” (Budd, 1995, p.146)

What is crucial is that we accept the claim that the way emotions feel is distinctive enough to link the way music sounds to at least *some* kinds of emotions, if perhaps not to any particular emotion. This as we have seen is where Budd thinks the expressive resources of music run dry, music can only express broad categories of emotions through its limited scope for resembling how they feel.

Saam Trivedi (2001) has raised doubts as to whether the basic and minimal concept can qualify as a concept of expression at all. Trivedi argues that an account of musical expressiveness in being a type of expressiveness in general, must relate intelligibly to our ordinary concept of expressiveness. In addition, Trivedi points out that a theory of musical expression should be consonant with what it ordinarily means to be expressive. Trivedi (2001, p.412) rightly describes our ordinary concept of expressiveness as involving:

“...the outward manifestation of inner mental states.”

However, the minimal concept, understood as the perceiving of a likeness between properties of the music and the way emotions feel, is not consonant with our everyday concept of expressiveness, and is as Trivedi (2001, p.412) says:

“...too minimal to be a basic concept of musical *expressiveness*.”

However, Budd did not intend the minimal conception to be an exhaustive account of the experience of expression; it was simply intended to be the one common factor among a variety of actual experiences, which differ in other ways. He suggests three accretions to the minimal concept. The first is when, in addition to perceiving the resemblance, one experiences an instance of the emotion being aroused in oneself. The second addition is that rather than undergoing the emotion, one *imagines* that one experiences the emotion. The difference between this and the first addition is analogous to seeing and visualising. The third accretion that Budd acknowledges is to imagine that the music actually *is* an instance of the feeling. We are not involved in this kind of experience, but imagine that it is the expression of the emotion had by the music itself; we experience the emotion as belonging to an imaginary musical persona. The overriding point is that there is no one correct account of the experience of expression in music and that the different conceptions available are not competitors.

It is by incorporating the three accretions to the minimal concept that we might bridge the gap between Budd's basic theory and our everyday understanding of expression. In these three cases, we do imagine that the music is the outward manifestation of either our own state or that of a fictitious musical persona. However, there is a problem in that the minimal concept is nonetheless intended to be the fundamental aspect of the experience and a point that Trivedi raises, is that resemblance is not part of our experience of expression. As Trivedi (2001, p.412) says:

“The mere fact that something cross-categorially resembles how emotions feel, and that these likenesses are perceived, does not show that the thing is thereby expressive, nor that it should be, or is, seen to be so.”

Trivedi illustrates this by pointing out that the fact that snails and turtles move slowly, which resembles how sad people move, is not enough to show that the slow movement of snails and turtles is expressive of sadness, neither their own, nor anyone else's. Trivedi's example can be accused of misrepresenting Budd's notion of resemblance involved in the minimal concept however. As Budd himself points out, the "...perception of a likeness is a matter of degree" (Budd, 1995, p.137), and this explains how pieces of music can be more or less expressive of emotion. A piece of music which resembles the way emotions feel only in virtue of its slowness would be unlikely to qualify as expressive and any connection between the slowness of the music and the emotion of sadness would probably not be perceived in any case. Surely, the kind of resemblance that Budd has in mind between the music and the way emotions feel is significantly closer than that. Nonetheless, the problem with the notion of resemblance as a sufficient base for expression can be pressed further. In his discussion of Kivy's (1989) account of resemblance, Derek Matravers (2003) raises an issue similar to that which Trivedi raises in relation to Budd's minimal account. The issue is that if one takes the hearing of a resemblance (to whatever degree of similarity) to be part of the content of one's experience of expression, then one is open to an objection such as Aaron Ridley's. (Note that by "melisma", Ridley (1995, p. 75) means "Intention-neutral resemblance that music may bear to the human voice".) Ridley (1995, p.121) describes how:

"Melisma itself isn't expressive – it only resembles something expressive. Thus while melisma may well be responsible for our experience of music as expressive, it cannot by itself explain what it is to experience music as expressive. To offer an account of musical expressiveness wholly in terms of melisma, then, would be like offering an account of pictorial space wholly in terms of the perspectival devices contained by a picture: it might

be true that we experience pictorial space *in virtue* of the pictorial devices that a picture contains; but the experience itself is not merely the experience of perceiving perspectival devices (which could be done without ever experiencing pictorial space.)”

The objection to the idea of resemblance explaining musical expression is that to whatever degree it occurs, resemblance alone is neither sufficient for defining what it means for something to be expressive, nor an elucidation of our experience of expression. It is not the case that something is expressive of something simply because it resembles (or represents) it, and when we experience music as expressive, we do not merely perceive it as the representation of something else that is expressive.

Stephen Davies’ (1980) account of expression also cites a type of resemblance as being central. Unlike Budd’s account which locates the resemblance to something internal to the experience of emotion, Davies’ account focuses on what he calls “emotion characteristics in appearance” (Davies, 1980, p.69). These are the visible features that we ordinarily associate with the paradigm cases of expression, such as facial expression, gait and other observable kinds of behaviour. However, if we take Davies’ account as one that attempts to provide a characterisation of our experience of expression as one that is exhausted by the perceiving of a resemblance, then this falls foul of Ridley’s objection above. But, in any case, as Matravers points out, the perceiving of a resemblance does not seem to be anything like what we typically experience. He says:

“The canonical description of the concert goer is surely not that of hearing resemblances between the music and the expressive demeanour of people, even if we assume it is possible to make sense of such a description.”

(Matravers, 2003, p.356)

Kivy (1989, p.258) wants us to understand the point about resemblance as one that is more aimed at explaining the cause or ground of our experience of expression, rather than the nature of experience itself. However, the resemblance itself is not exhaustive of the whole of the cause of our experience of expression. Kivy acknowledges that there must be more than just resemblance that causes us to recognise and experience the music as expressive rather than just as resembling something else. Part of the motivation for this claim is the difficulty that we face in accounting for the generally accepted “emotive” qualities of musical features that do not incorporate the kind of dynamic properties that are usually thought to be the basis of the heard resemblances; these include phenomena such as the major and minor keys (and in particular the chords), which are typically referred to as “happy” and “sad” respectively, but in themselves have no dynamic differences. For Kivy, these aspects of music carry a kind of emotive charge which, through a process of acculturation and association, we have invested in them. Thus it is the combination of resemblance and certain learned associations that result in our “animating” the music. This animation of the music:

“...leads us to perceive the expressive quality as a phenomenal property of the music”. (Matravers, 2003, p.354)

However, Kivy’s claim about our tendencies to animate the music doesn’t enlighten us as to the nature of our experience of this phenomenon. We also need a separate account of the “animation” itself if we are to make sense of how it is possible that the music itself can be experienced as expressive. Kivy attempts to shed light on this question by claiming that hearing music as expressive is analogous to two perceptual phenomena. The first is Wollheim’s notion of “seeing in” and the second is Wittgenstein’s of aspect perception. Seeing in is described by Matravers (2003, p.355) as the:

“...distinctive capacity such that an aspect of our experience of differentiated surface is a visual experience of an absent object in the surface.”

Seeing the face of Jesus in a cloud would be an example of “seeing in”. However, it does not seem that this gets us any nearer to our goal of understanding the experience of expression. In the context of expression, this would be understood as something like hearing the expression in the music and this is what needs explaining.

Matravers argues that the analogy with aspect perception is also unhelpful. The problem is that it is unclear exactly what it is about aspect perception in other cases that could be compared to expression in music. A standard example of aspect perception in pictorial representation is the duck/rabbit case. In this common example, the experienced object remains the same, but our experience of it changes between that of seeing a picture of a rabbit and that of a duck. The thought is that the phenomenology of the experience of expression is reflected in the paradigm cases of aspect perception and the duck/rabbit example is one such case. But, as Matravers points out in a more recent paper on the same topic, it is not obvious exactly how the comparison can be made. He writes:

“It cannot be the relation between the figure and what it is seen as: in both cases, that is the relation of pictorial representation, and all (including Kivy) agree that expression is not an instance of that. It must be, rather, that the way in which we process the figure (either as a duck picture or as a rabbit-picture) has a phenomenological upshot. Analogously, the way in which we process the music has a phenomenological upshot: we hear it as expressive. However, we hardly needed the analogy with aspect perception to tell us that.” (Matravers 2007, p.101)

One problem with the proposed analogy is that in the duck/rabbit example, the change in our experience occurs within only one phenomenal realm: that of pictorial representation. It is not that the example is illustrating the transition from a state of non-representation to a state of actual representation. Rather, the example illustrates how, when we are presented with an ambiguous figure, we are capable of seeing it one way and then another, but not both at the same time. Another such example would be that of the Necker cube. By recognising that the lines drawn on the page represent a three dimensional cube in space we are able alternately to imagine that the line we see in the middle of the diagram is the edge that marks the back of the cube or the one that marks the front. The appropriate analogy with the experience of expression in music would be to hear a piece of music as expressive of, say, first sadness and then subsequently anger. We might find the music ambiguous in regard to what it is expressive of and thus be able to hear it one way or another depending on how we focus our attention. In his description of the process of aspect perception, Barrie Faulk (1993, p.55-73) writes:

“To possess the concepts “duck” and “rabbit” is (among other things) for the terms to be elicited from one by a wide variety of visual presentations, which allows for differences in the animal’s posture, angle from which they are viewed and so on. When therefore the drawing activates one or the other concept, the effect will be to locate it within (and connect it to) different ranges of permissible variations. Furthermore, each concept is related to other concepts that apply to parts of an animal – “beak,” “floppy ears” and so on. The activation of these by component parts of the drawing will have the same variation-determining effect: seen as ears, for instance, the two protuberances can occupy a set of further positions relative to one another which is not possible if they are seen as a rigid beak.”

Faulk describes the process underlying aspect perception in pictorial representation as one in which certain concepts we possess are “activated” as a result of our seeing the picture. When we perceive certain groupings in our visual stimulus (which may be more or less obvious), we recognise that those groupings qualify as falling under the permissible variations of our concept “duck- picture”, for example. It should be kept in mind that exactly what it takes to qualify as a permissible instance of “duck-picture” is another question, the answer to which must to a significant extent depend on the condition of the subject. This process of concept activation through the recognition of a visual pattern or grouping is, it seems to me, straightforwardly analogous to the relevant experience of expression in music: the experience of hearing something as ambiguously expressive of two different things. On one hand, when we listen to a piece of music we find that it is expressive of sadness because the notes for whatever reason provide us with that experience, and on the other hand when we direct our attention in a different way towards those same notes, perhaps by recognising different groupings for example, we come to hear that same piece of music as being expressive of fear. Thus, there is no problem with understanding that there is something analogous to aspect perception in our experience of expression in music. Unfortunately the aim of the comparison was meant to be a clarification of the structure and nature of the experience of expression in general and not to show us that the expressive quality of the same piece of music may vary according to how we might manipulate and interpret our perceptual experience.

The thought that the state of the listener might play a significant part in their experience of music as expressive is explicitly incorporated in Levinson’s account. Levinson (1996, p.107) states his view of musical expressiveness as follows:

“A passage of music P is expressive of an emotion or other psychic condition E *iff* P, in context, is readily and aptly heard by an appropriately backgrounded listener as the expression of E, in a sui generis, “musical” manner, by an indefinite agent, the music’s persona.”

Some things that initially draw our attention with Levinson’s definition are that he, unlike some of the other theorists we have looked at, does not include an explicit reference to anything that could be understood to be the cause of our experience of expression. For instance, Levinson makes no mention of the idea of resemblance. Instead, he focuses on what we mean when say that a piece of music is expressive; what the structure of the experience is like. However, there are some terms in his definition that require elucidation before the overall theory can be evaluated. The persona in Levinson’s sense is an imaginary being, not to be confused with the various other genuine persons who might be involved with the production of the music, such as the composer, performer or the listener themselves. As Levinson (1996, p.107) says, the music’s persona is “...the subject of an imaginary act of expression we hear as going on then and there”. As regards the “sui generis musical manner”, by this Levinson means not a specifically musical emotion or other such psychological state that might be peculiar to music, but the expression of a standard emotion in a specifically musical way. Levinson wants to avoid once again the notion that it is some specific person such as the composer who might be expressing his own emotions by using his musical skill. For Levinson, the way we experience expression in music is natural and intuitive. The musical persona is expressing an emotional (or other psychological) state in the music and not as we might literally imagine a composer expressing himself musically while sitting at the piano, for example. Probably the most important aspect of Levinson’s view is the notion of the expressive content of a piece of

music being something that is heard by a *backgrounded listener in a particular context*. A backgrounded listener is someone who:

“...is conversant with the style of the music and its inherent range of expression, with the natures and potentialities of the instruments employed, with the general aims of the composers of the period, with the structural and aesthetic norms of the genre of music involved, and so on.” (Levinson, 1996, p.107)

Levinson’s definition of a backgrounded listener invites a number of questions. For instance, how would one determine the “inherent range of expression” of the style of music? Are styles restricted to expressing only certain emotions? Presumably, we would be in some sense mistaken if we heard an emotion in the music that was not part of this range, or is this range only a guideline? It would prove too much of a diversion to attempt to answer these questions here. However, one thing that does emerge from Levinson’s initial outline, is that he places significant weight not only on the conditions of the listener but also the context within which the music is heard. On Levinson’s view, the experience of the expressiveness of a piece of music is determined by much more than just the purely audible features of the music. This is reflected in Levinson’s understanding of musical context, which includes not just the “intra-musical” context, where this is understood in the sense that a particular musical passage may be located within the overall context of the piece as a whole, but also what he calls the “extra-musical” context, which Levinson (1996, p.107) describes as one that is:

“...constituted by the individual and general style in which the given work is embedded, as well as the surrounding environment of preceding musical works of that and other composers.”

Music's "ready-perceivability-as-expression" (Levinson, 1996, p.108) depends on our being psychologically prepared in the appropriate way. This is a topic that I shall return to in part four. The question that is of concern in this part is whether Levinson's account of the experience is correct. At first glance, there are some important points in its favour. The idea that the music is the expression of an unspecified persona fits well with our conventional understanding of expression in everyday cases. The music is expressive in a way that is analogous to the expressiveness of a physical gesture or vocal utterance. Also, by shifting the focus of the account from expression as dependent on perceived resemblances to the phenomenological nature of the experience, we are not lured into the difficult position of trying to imagine the causes of our experience as part of the content of our experience (although we should note that an appeal to resemblance may well figure in the explanation of the inherent range of expression of a style of music).

Both Trivedi (2001) and Matravers (2003) have criticised Levinson's view of musical expressiveness. However, both writers have also acknowledged that there is much to commend in Levinson's analysis. Trivedi, for example, criticises Levinson's theory only to the extent that while he feels that it encompasses some prominent instances of the experience of expression, it does not cover them all. In particular, Trivedi argues that there is another experience that Levinson does not cover and that this other experience is (at least in Trivedi's experience) the primary form that music as expression takes. This is that we make-believablely animate the music. When we listen to music, we make-believablely bring the music to life in our minds so that we hear the music both as the expression of emotion and that which has the emotion which is being expressed (as opposed to the music being the expressive medium of an imaginary persona). Trivedi argues that this instance of expression does not rule out the other kinds, such as Levinson's imaginary persona, but it is in fact the most common experience and allows

us to understand why we are disposed to say that the emotion is a property of the music, that it is “in” the music. In a similar way to Budd’s proposal, Trivedi suggests a disjunctive account of musical expressiveness that encompasses at least three types of experience.

The kind of experience that Trivedi (2001, p.415) envisages involves the following claims:

“(i) We imagine the music is the kind of thing that is alive; (ii) we imagine that it is the kind of thing that has psychological states; (iii) we imagine the music itself is sad or joyous (or whatever state it is appropriate to imagine the music as possessing); and (iv) we imagine that the music is an audible thing or an audible being that expresses its sadness or joy by presenting an aural appearance apprehended aurally. It should be noted that we make believe the music is sad without making believe, or without having to make believe, that the music has complex, functional organisational states of the sort that seem necessary, according to currently orthodox theories of mind, for it to have psychological states.”

For Trivedi, this kind of experience is a better example, than say Levinson’s theory, of how the expression of emotion, and moreover the emotion itself, can be understood as a property of the music itself. The idea is that this kind of making believe is the same sort of phenomenon that occurs when a child pretends that a piece of wood is a truck. Trivedi says that our animating of the music in this sense is similar to the way in which we animate other inanimate objects such as when we imagine that a cartoon picture of a car is something that both has psychological states and also expresses them. The key thought is that expressiveness is like a tertiary property of the music. Trivedi (2001, p.416) writes:

“A musical passage or piece is sad (or is expressive of sadness) if competent listeners (those who are musically sensitive, informed to some minimal degree, and so on) are disposed, under standard conditions (they are not bored or tired or distracted or satiated by the music, and so on), to hear it as make-believable sad (or as make-believable expressive of sadness).”

Trivedi considers a number of objections to this view but I shall consider only what I think is the most significant. The objection puts pressure on the analogy drawn between our typical instances of animation and the proposed animation of music. With the typical instances of our animating things, be they comic book cars, trees, blocks of wood, etc., all of these things are “stable substances”, things that can be frozen in time and captured in their entirety. Music, on the other hand, is a temporal art. It exists in its entirety only over a period of time. Thus it is more akin to a process than an independently specifiable object. Trivedi’s response to this criticism is to suggest something like a process ontology. He suggests that we can:

“...view the sun, trees, and indeed many other everyday things as processes that are subject to constant, even if slow and imperceptible, change”
(Trivedi, 2001, p.418).

It is unclear that recourse to this kind of view is enough to convince us that everyday objects and pieces of music can be understood as the same kind of entity. We do not understand the experience of the perception of a tree as something that is essentially temporal in the way we do a piece of music, and this fundamental difference remains whether or not we manage to convince ourselves to adopt certain other awkward metaphysical views. However, the discussion of the ontological status of music is in any case unnecessary. All that needs to be appealed to in this instance is the experience itself and it is here that I think Trivedi’s claim that we animate

the music is close to the mark. In a similar way to that in which we perceive a person and their behaviour at one and the same time, we hear the music and its behaviour simultaneously. The notable thing is that we never perceive the music as a static entity; it is always going somewhere and as soon as it arrives, it disappears. Thus, Trivedi's view does not seem implausible as an addition to Levinson's account of the experience of expression in music.

Matravers' (2003, p.357) complaint against Levinson is that there is:

"...a general worry as to whether we can really grasp what it is that we are being asked to imagine."

Matravers (2003, p.357) continues:

"Taking the worst case, we are being asked to identify in imagination the music and the expressing of an emotion by a persona. We have no experience of such an identification in the actual world, and no mechanism is imagined."

Matravers doubts that the imaginative experience we are being asked to compare with our own experiences of musical expression is difficult to evaluate. He puts this partly down to the lack of a theory of the imagination capable of clearly defining its role and limits. However, as is inevitably the case when we attempt to analyse certain kinds of experience, the only way in which it can be tested is by comparing them to those that we have experienced firsthand ourselves. It is here that most will find that the experience Levinson describes is not unlike those that they do, at least on occasion, have when listening to music. However, as we have seen, there is little reason to think that Levinson's theory is exhaustive.

Matravers wants to defend a dispositionalist account of expression in music, whereby the expressive content of a piece of music depends on what emotions or other psychological states are aroused in the listener when they hear the music. In particular, he wants to defend such an account from the typical objection that the dispositional account locates the expression and the emotion in the mind of the listener, a violation of Levinson's externality requirement.

There is no space to explore all elements of Matravers' theory here, but I do wish to explain how his account aims to do justice to the experience of expression. Matravers appeals to a theory by Kendal Walton. Walton thinks that the experience of expression in music can involve imaginative introspection coupled with an identification of one's own imagined feelings with the experience of the music. He writes:

"I propose that, although music does not in general call for imaginative hearing or imaginative perceiving, it often does call for imaginative *introspecting*. We mentioned the possibility that music is expressive by virtue of imitating behavioural expressions of feeling. Sometimes this is so, and sometimes a passage imitates or portrays vocal expressions of feelings. When it does, listeners probably imagine (not necessarily consciously and certainly not deliberately) themselves hearing someone's vocal expressions. But in other cases they may instead imagine themselves introspecting, being aware of their own feelings." (Walton, 1988, p.359)

Levinson criticises the idea that someone is having an experience of his own feelings of an emotion. Levinson thinks that this view is implausible because it is unlikely that a person is capable of introspection while listening to music. He says:

“First, it is implausible to suggest that a listener *introspects* his auditory sensations while listening; just attending to the musical substance of music of an complexity is enough of a task to preclude much in the way of simultaneous introspection on the side. Second, it is implausible to suggest that we imagine anything *about* such sensations, even were we to attend to them introspectively. Third, even if we did imagine something of them, it is implausible to suggest that it would be *that having such sensations was the experiencing of emotion*, because there is hardly more similarity between the experiencing of emotions and the introspecting of auditory sensations than between the experiencing of emotions and the hearing of music.”
(Levinson, 1996, p.94)

But Levinson’s (1996, p.94) main objection is that:

“...it casts the activity of perceiving musical expressiveness in too egocentric a light: it represents expression in music as in effect the expression of the listener’s own, albeit imaginary, feelings. But expressiveness in music, I would insist, is something we encounter fundamentally as residing “out there,” as existing exterior to our own minds.”

The point is that even if we have a strong empathetic response to the music, the expression of emotion is still meant to be understood, by all listeners, as something that is *in* the music first and foremost.

There are a number of points that we can draw from the preceding discussion of theories of musical expression. The first and most obvious is that from what we have seen, there is no one theory that covers all the possible experiences of expression in music. As Matravers (2007, p.113) says:

“Each of these [theories such as Levinson’s and Budd’s discussed above] could be an account of what it is for a listener to experience music as expressive. However, what they aspire to be is what it is for music to be expressive.”

While I think Levinson’s view captures much of how we perceive expression when we hear music, it nonetheless leaves out some experiences, which on reflection, seem too important to neglect. These would include the animation of the music as something that both has and expresses emotion (*à la* Kivy and Trivedi). The overriding sense is that expression in music cannot be captured in one kind of experience and we are left with the inevitable task of compiling a disjunctive list. However, there are some positive points that emerge from the discussion. One is that there are ways in which we *can* make sense of the idea that we perceive expression as a property of the music. This means that we can respond to the claim that because expression cannot be coherently conceived as a property of music, it is thus not admissible as an aesthetic quality. The other main point of interest is that expressiveness is akin to a tertiary property. Levinson and Kivy (and also to some extent Matravers, see 2007, p.113) stress that in order for a listener to hear music as expressing emotional states, they must, to use Levinson’s phrase, be “appropriately backgrounded”. The condition of the listener, in particular what I shall call their musical understanding, exerts an inescapable influence over the experience of music as expressive. I shall discuss this further in part four. The final point is that the experience of expression in music, at least in the vast majority of cases, makes significant use of our imaginative powers. I shall consider some of the effects of this aspect in the next section.

3.2. Expression and Aesthetic Value

The value of expression in art has typically been held in high regard. One notable example is Collingwood's (1947) theory according to which the defining characteristic of art is that it is the expression of emotion. On Collingwood's account, we express ourselves through the creation of art and are rewarded with a profoundly pleasurable sense of emotional release. For Tolstoy, where the aim of art is to express morally elevating thoughts, the expressive power of a work is directly linked to its value as a piece of art. The clearer the thought is presented to us or the more strongly the emotion is aroused, the more expressively powerful the work. One problem with any theory of the aesthetic value of expression that takes its cue from an arousal theory of expression is that of the value of art which expresses negative emotions like grief (although this is not a problem that Tolstoy's theory faces in that he deplored the expression of negative emotions outright). If the piece is only expressive of the emotion because it is aroused in ourselves then it can seem baffling as to why we should want to seek out such an experience. As Roger Scruton (1998, p.57) says:

“To describe a piece of music as expressive of melancholy is to give a reason for listening to it; to describe it as arousing or evoking melancholy is to give a reason for avoiding it.”

While the value of expression may seem clear from the point of view of the artist, it is less clear why we value the expressive properties as for example when we hear a passage of melancholy music. Nonetheless, there seems to be an undisputable sense that the expressive qualities of music are something to be valued by the listener. As Alan Goldman (1992, p.360) says:

“Romanticism aside, expression or expressiveness is indisputably a source of value to call a piece deeply poignant, powerful, or even vividly angry is, other things equal, to praise it. Even music that expresses primarily negative emotions, such as anger or sorrow, may be greatly prized for its effectiveness in conveying these feelings.”

We have already considered the idea that expression is to be accounted for in terms of representation (as resemblance) and found it to be unsatisfactory. However, representation, or at least *how* something is represented, would have seemed perhaps a likely source of aesthetic value. For example we regularly praise works of pictorial art for the way in which they represent their subject matter. Perhaps, then, one approach to making sense of why expressive qualities would be of interest to us, would be in relation to how we perceive them in the real world. The problem is that as we have also seen, the ability of music to express definite emotional states is restricted compared to other art forms or expressive mediums like language. Accordingly, Aaron Ridley (1995, p75) claims that if we focus on the idea of expression in music as resembling outward manifestations of emotion, such as we would in the theories of Kivy and Davies, the value of the experience is difficult to fathom. Kivy has suggested that we should understand the emotive qualities of music as playing a kind of structural role and adhering to a kind of syntax, in much the same way that musical events, which were discussed in reference to the hypothesis and hide-and-seek games, also follow certain rules, or a musical syntax. But, Kivy does claim that emotions in music are essentially valuable. He says:

“I take it as a truism that emotive properties of music, like other of its artistically relevant properties, are inherently *interesting* properties. That is to say, they are properties of music that add to its aesthetic character, and are inherently pleasurable to experience. But, furthermore, like other heard,

aesthetic properties of music, they help constitute the sonic pattern. Patterns whether sonic or visual, are a matter of repetition and contrast.” (Kivy, 1990, p.91)

If we turn our attention to the inward resemblance and the imaginative experience, as, for example, with Malcolm Budd’s view that music sounds the way emotions feel, then there is a sense in which the expressive quality of music can be identified with the kinds of mental states we value. The value of this experience is then inseparable from the value of the experience of the music. As Budd (1995, p.154) says:

“On the one hand, the mere perception of a likeness between the music and an emotion constitutes at most a minimal enhancement of the experience of hearing music, perhaps none at all. The basic and minimal sense of the musical expression of emotion does not in itself constitute an aesthetic value: it does not automatically endow music that accords with it an aesthetic value; the aesthetically sensitive listener can perceive an emotion in music (in the cross categorial likeness sense) and yet be aesthetically unaffected by the perception. On the other hand, the musically based imagination of emotion sometimes enables the listener to experience imaginatively (or really) the inner nature of emotional states in a peculiarly vivid, satisfying and poignant form. ”

If we value the experience of expression in music as Budd describes it, we once again incur the problem of how we could value the expression of negative emotions if they are something that we are actually made to feel. There have been many suggested solutions to this problem which go back as far as Aristotle, who suggested that the experience of tragic drama enabled us to vent our negative emotions through the experience of them in a controlled environment where they could be directed at fictitious objects.

The result would be that we would leave the auditorium emotionally better equipped to meet the demands of society. Other suggestions include the idea that we simply enjoy being emotionally excited, regardless of the nature of the emotion. There is also the claim that the experience of negative emotions provides a kind of learning experience where we come to understand their particular natures all the more intimately. This latter view, while perhaps true in many cases, does not seem to do justice to the majority of our experiences of the expression of emotion and there is little evidence to suggest that we value the experience of the expressive power of music because it helps with our emotional development; there would surely be much better means of doing that, if it really was what we valued.

One thing that does seem to be of significant value in both the experience of form as well as expression in music is the kind of imaginative exercise that it encourages. For example, Budd (1995, p.155) notes that the imaginative experience of emotion in music is also partly a surrendering of autonomy of the un-aided imagination which allows its course to be influenced by the creation of the composer. As the saying goes, the music takes you on an imaginative journey. The purely musical imaginative journey is different to the imaginative experience that one has with a work of literature for example. Because the musical experience is less defined in not being able to communicate any definite intentional content, the autonomy of the imagination is not surrendered to quite the same extent. As I think it is the case with all art-forms, as they veer more towards the abstract and become less reliant on the representational, more imaginative contribution is required from the listening or viewing subject. Works of abstract art, are often highly praised when they encourage profound imaginative experiences of the aesthetic qualities of the work. The imaginative experience is not distinct from the work, to forestall any objections to the effect that the work is somehow redundant; rather it is an imaginative experience of the work

itself. As the experience of expression is less definite in music than it is in other art forms, so correspondingly it requires more imaginative contribution, but at the same time allows more imaginative freedom, than other arts. Sometimes the effect of hearing a piece of expressive music, as it moves through time, is as of a mirror reflecting the temporal unfolding of our own emotional states. But, as Goldman (1992, p.37) points out, this does not happen in real-time:

“The map that unfolds through time in any musical piece cannot be very accurate, since the tempo of change in states expressed in music is much faster than real life transformations in emotional states.”

However, I think this unfolding of an emotional state in time is a large part of how we value expression as an aesthetic quality of music. The expressive qualities of the music are praised by us when we are able to hear a particular kind of emotion in the music and when our imagination can follow the development of that emotion. The same principles apply to our experience of expression in music as to the value of the experience of music as form, which I investigated in part two. How we perceive the expressive content as developing will hold our interest to a greater or lesser degree depending on the decisions made by the composer and our ability to understand and consequently perceive and anticipate those decisions. In addition to there being a sufficient interest generated by the way the emotion evolves, there must be sense of coherence in the expressive content of the music. By coherence, I mean that the emotional expressiveness of the piece of music is consistent, or if the emotional tone changes, it appears to do so in a comprehensible fashion. If the music impedes our imaginative faculty from forming a clear impression of the emotion, either by introducing elements that are incongruent with the experience of any recognisable emotion, or by unintelligibly changing the nature of the dominant expressed emotion, the

criterion of coherence will not be satisfied. It is this notion of coherence (as I have defined it) that allows us to see how much music that has little purely formal interest for us, can be of significant aesthetic value. This is because the emotions are expressed in the music are done so in a subtle, incisive and comprehensible way. Emotional expressiveness in any area of art is a particular sensitive property. There is a fine line between emotional content that seems contrived and superficial and that which appears sincere and appropriate. To create a piece of music that expresses feelings of love, for example, is notoriously difficult to do without it becoming sentimental or insipid. However, when it is achieved, there is a sense in the listener that the composer has achieved something special; they have created something that exhibits a certain emotional beauty. The emotion is expressed in such a way that our imagination can conceive of it clearly. As soon as the expression is compromised due to an incomprehensible development or an incongruous change of tone, the imaginative spell is broken.

Something that one might be tempted to forget when one considers the concepts of musical form and expression separately, is that form is a means of expression and conversely expression is a goal of form. This fact is sometimes obscured by the realisation that we can appreciate the formal qualities of a piece of music without paying any heed to expressive content. However, it is also the case that to truly appreciate certain aspects of form one must have some inclination as to the expressive aims of the passages of music in which those forms occur. Melodic patterns and harmonic shifts in music can be incomprehensible until one has come to understand the expressive goals of those changes. Once the broad emotional tone of the music has been understood, then the formal events within that piece can be better understood within that context. The result is that the aesthetic value we ascribe to the formal aspects of the music can be revised in light of a

greater understanding of the expressive content. Each aspect of the music can inform and ameliorate our experience of the other.

That the expressive nature of a piece of music can be informative when it comes to making judgments concerning the value of its form, should alert us to the thought that to isolate our experience of the music from its broader context is detrimental to our appreciation of it. In a similar vein, Budd thinks that the value of music as an artform is far less mysterious if we refrain from regarding it as purely disconnected from the rest of our lives. It is only when it is taken in complete isolation that it is mysterious as to what we find so attractive about it. Budd (1995, p.159) writes:

“I believe that the appearance of an insuperable or deep mystery arises only if music as an abstract art is regarded in a false way that isolates it from everything else: only by forgetting how much is involved in the experience of music and music’s manifold connections with extra-musical properties and values will music’s value as an art seem to pose a theoretical problem of unusual difficulty. What is needed to render intelligible, unmysterious, the fact that we value so highly music as an abstract art is, therefore, not only an account of what constitutes its artistic values but a vivid realisation of the manifold connections between these values and our extra-musical lives.”

Conclusion

In sum, I have argued that there is no one account that captures all possible experiences of music as expressive. However, as described, we can at least make sense of the idea that there are expressive musical properties.

Furthermore, I have argued that we can conceive of expressive properties as aesthetically valuable in terms of their coherence for example, as well as the imaginative endeavour involved in the experience of these properties.

Finally, I contended that expressive properties are also aesthetically valuable in terms of their mutually supportive relationship with music's formal properties.

4. Musical Understanding

In the preceding part, I hope to have shown how expressiveness can be experienced as a property of the music. In this respect, part of Hanslick's challenge has been met. There are ways of coherently explaining what we do seem to experience, namely how we might apply emotive terms to music in a way that goes beyond the figurative use that Hanslick endorsed. Nonetheless, one might still object to the inclusion of expressiveness as relevant to music's aesthetic value, even if it does occupy a seemingly appropriate place in our experience. The complaint may be that the experience of expression in music, unlike that of form, is entirely dependent on the experiencing subject. While we are all capable of experiencing the same formal qualities, the expressive nature of a piece of music seems determined by the condition of the listener and thus can only really be experienced by them alone. The formalist would contend that to admit aesthetic judgments based on one's experience of expression would seem to be to doom the notion of aesthetic value to either a strange duality (where music might be held to have subjective and objective values), or a hopeless relativity. However, if it can be shown that the whole experience of music, even in its most basic features, is dependent on the imaginative contribution of the listener, then the gap between formal and expressive properties can be bridged. It would no longer be possible to hold that the formal properties were objective properties of music while expressive properties were not. In what follows, I will argue that rather than believe that our experience of formal properties is simply a direct representation in our minds of our sensory intake of sound, we should conceive of music itself as an

imaginative construction and that what we hear when we hear sound as music is a function of our musical understanding.

This part will be divided into two sections. In the first, I will describe how we might begin to understand such a view. In the second, I will consider the impact of our musical understanding on our aesthetic evaluation of both formal and expressive qualities of music.

4.1. Music as a Product of Understanding

The experience of music can be reshaped and altered by augmenting, refining or even reducing the tools of our musical understanding. One preliminary way of making sense of the notion of understanding in music is to claim, as Kivy does, that music is understood under a description. For example, when one has a greater understanding of the theory behind the music, one is able to hear the music as falling under different descriptions that would not be available to the untrained listener. The kinds of descriptions a listener is able to construe the music as falling under, are (at least partly) constitutive of their “understanding” of music. While the untrained listener may not be able to provide the analysis of music in formal terms that a learned expert could, they nonetheless do hear the music under their own description. Kivy (1990 p.100) holds that these can be the more familiar layman’s descriptions, typically in emotive terms such as:

“...doubt, anxiety, groping, ambiguity, and eventually the resolution (in the ordinary sense of the word) of those psychological states”.

Kivy (1990 p.100) also adds that:

“...both will be describing the same sonic event.”

Kivy seems to be suggesting that when the less musically trained listener uses emotive terms to describe music, they describe the same aspects of the music that the trained listener does, just with a more limited terminology. This might often be the truth of the matter. For instance, if we lack a sophisticated musical vocabulary and we want to describe the audible behaviour of a particular passage of music, we are forced to use whatever terms we can, from whatever perceptual schemes, that may be roughly analogous to the properties of the music we are trying to describe. So we might describe the music as bright, boisterous or cheerful but, in doing so, we are simply trying to communicate some of the audible character of the music.

However, what this description of musical understanding seems to obscure is the potential difference in experience of the music between the trained and untrained listeners. We might be tempted to think that there is no phenomenological difference in the experiences of someone who perfectly understands, say, a style or passage of music and that of someone who has no understanding. If we take the notion of musical understanding as simply the ability to describe music in more or less complicated and subtle terms, then the temptation is quite natural. However, musical understanding is not just the ability to describe a particular style or passage of music, but the ability to hear certain sounds *as* music forming a particular passage or style. This distinction can be brought out if we consider the most basic type of musical understanding. To begin with, there must be some kind of prior understanding that one is listening to music as opposed to just miscellaneous audible sounds. Ridley describes this kind of understanding as a kind of meta-condition. He writes:

“One can say straight away that in order to hear music with understanding it is essential to understand that what one is hearing is music; to hear what one

hears, in other words, *as* music, and not merely as an auditory stimulus of some unspecified kind, or as noise. For the experience of hearing music is not the same as the experience of hearing sounds. A melody is not *merely* a series of pitched sounds, nor is a rhythm a mere succession of louder and quieter sounds. Rather, in each case, those who understand what they are hearing hear the sounds *as* a melody, or as a rhythm, so that their understanding is a *way* of hearing certain successions and clusters of pitched and unpitched sounds as tones, rhythms, melodies, harmonies, and so forth.” (Ridley, 1993, p.589)

Ridley (1993, p.590) characterises the difference between the musical and the non-musical experience as between the former involving only “sensory” properties while the latter, “perceptual” properties. This terminology might seem a little confusing, as surely we “perceive” sensory properties, whether musical or not? However, the distinction is intended to capture the sense that the perception of musical forms and musical expressive qualities, what I shall commonly refer to as “musical qualities”, is essentially imbued with a level of interpretation that the experience of mere sound is not. For example, as Nicolas Cook (1992, p.22) explains:

“Even in the simplest possible contexts, musical perception is not so literal as to be in one-to-one correspondence to the input signal.”

Thus sounds are not merely perceived, but are perceived or heard *as* rhythms or melodies. To hear a sequence of sounds as music is to have an experience involving certain perceptual qualities such as rhythm and melody. So the minimal sense of understanding music is that one should be able to have such experiences when listening to the sounds. Accordingly, Ridley describes the perceptual properties as sensory properties that are interpreted under a description. But, “under a description” here does not

refer to what we are able to articulate in the form of a verbal description. I think the best way to understand this claim is that when we hear sounds as music and thus experience the perceptual properties of rhythm, for example, we are interpreting the raw sounds we hear as being grouped in a certain way, or to put it slightly differently, we establish a mental specification as to how those sounds are related to one another. However, the way in which we do create these groupings is influenced by our condition as listening subject. For instance, to be able to understand most music requires that we perceive the music as in some way rhythmical. But, how we interpret that rhythm is at least partially a matter of how we interpret and specify the relations between the notes. The important point is that our ability to discern rhythms in sequences of sounds is not solely dependent on our ability to detect sounds. To hear the same sequence of sounds as on one occasion rhythmic, and on another not, are two fundamentally different experiences. But equally, one is able, depending on one's abilities, to hear the same sequence of notes as different rhythms. Ridley points out this aspect of our listening experience in the following passage. He writes:

“... the perceptual properties which the experience of a musical work may have will be shaped and constrained, not only by the nature of the object of experience (e.g., which sounds it contains), but also but the condition of the listener whose experience it is. Thus two listeners who hear a piece of music as music – and whose experiences therefore share a certain minimum set of perceptual properties - may nevertheless differ in what further perceptual properties their experiences have, according to their differing capacities and dispositions, and to the varying degrees in which their previous experiences are related to the object of their current experience. A tired or inattentive listener, or a listener whose rhythmic sense is relatively poor, may hear two passages as having the same rhythm where a more alert or gifted listener hears a rhythmic difference. So one *kind* of perceptual property (e.g.

rhythm) may be possessed by an experience to varying degrees. But in addition, it may be that one listener's experience altogether lacks a perceptual property which is possessed by a second listener's. " (Ridley, 1993, p.590)

Ridley does not think that we can give a necessary condition for the minimal musical experience. For instance, we might be tempted to say that all music is essentially rhythmical and that the perceptual property (in Ridley's sense) of rhythm is a necessary condition for a basic musical understanding. However, drone music, examples of which might include some avant-garde electronic music as well as some bagpipe music, is not rhythmical in any recognisable sense. It is very hard, if not impossible, to hear such music as rhythmical. In any case, even if it were possible, having the perceptual property of rhythm may simply be inappropriate. For example, Ridley (1993, p.591) suggests that to hear a drum solo as rhythmic is to have an appropriate musical experience in that the content of the experience includes a rhythmic perceptual property. However, were we to perceive the drum solo as melodic, this would be in most cases to include an inappropriate perceptual property. Which properties we take to be appropriate to the experience of a piece of music is also a function of our musical understanding; it is on the basis of what we have learnt about the music, either through prior information or trial and error that we are able to determine which properties we should perceive in order to have an appropriate (or perhaps just a rewarding) experience of the music. As Ridley (1993, p.591) describes:

"If the sounds comprise an unpitched series, then we will be interested in rhythm; if pitches sounded together, then in harmony; and so forth."

If these are the kinds of conditions for something to be music as opposed to noise, then what are the other features that must be present in order for us to be able to distinguish between and understand different pieces of music, for example? Ridley says that just the simple inclusion of perceptual properties cannot be all that there is to understanding a particular piece of music. He says:

“I suggest, therefore, that (truly) understanding listeners are listeners with the capacity and disposition to adjust the *way* they hear to what they hear, where such adjustment is not, or is not simply, a matter of accumulation and/or intensification of perceptual properties (in simple music after all such an accumulation may lead to an understanding which is pretentious). The perceptual properties need to be the right properties, and their intensities must be apt.” (Ridley, 1993, p.591)

What this highlights is that the listener can take an active part in the shaping of their experience of the music. In order to hear the music in the appropriate way, the listener can regulate which properties and to what degree they should figure in their experience. It may be that although this process is most often unconsciously performed in that we generally hear music in the ways in which we are accustomed, it is possible to a certain extent to consciously focus one’s attention in different ways, thus resulting in different properties becoming the content of one’s experience. In a way analogous to how we open or close our eyes to let more or less light in, we can try to consciously adjust our experience so that certain aspects of the music receive the right amount of attention (in some unusual cases perhaps none at all). The point is that we adjust the selection and intensity of the perceptual properties according to our preference for how we think the music should be heard.

At this point, it might be objected that all this may be true, we may be able to alter the nature of our experience through shifting our focus from rhythm to melody for example, nonetheless what we are focusing on; the music, is unchanged. All we are doing is turning a blind eye to some parts of it. The view that when we are hearing sound as music, we are “imaginatively perceiving”, counts against this contention. Roger Scruton (1998, ch.8) argues that music is an “intentional object” and that the descriptions we apply to music, be they of its formal or expressive qualities, are true of no material fact. For example, to hear a sequence of tones as a scale is to hear them not as a series of individuals, but as a single moving line. However, this cannot be literally true of anything outside of our own experience. As Scruton (1979, p.81) says:

“We may find ourselves at a loss for an answer to that question: for, literally speaking, nothing *does* move. There is one note, and then another; movement, however, demands *one* thing, which passes from place to place.”

Scruton (1998, pp. 92-97) argues at length that the idea of auditory space can only be construed metaphorically. When we hear the movement of a musical line, we are perceiving sound imaginatively. Musical lines have no material existence; they only exist in terms of the metaphor of space. Scruton considers the metaphor of space to be the most deeply entrenched in our experience of music. He thinks there is no way that we can make sense of the idea as occurring in the world independently of our experience. He maintains that:

“It seems that in our most basic apprehension of music there lies a complex system of metaphor, which is the true description of no material fact. And the metaphor cannot be eliminated from the description of music, because it is integral to the intentional object of musical experience. Take this

metaphor away and you take away the experience of music.”(Scruton, 1983, p.106)

Scruton considers the objection that all his argument shows is that musical properties are simply secondary properties of the objects, rather than primary properties of the sounds that possess them. He says:

“To think that they are therefore not part of the material world in some significant sense (some sense that does not merely reiterate the scientific realist’s commitment to the explanatory priority of primary qualities) is to repeat a mistake at least as old as Berkeley. It is to think that because the sense of a term (e.g. ‘red’) is to be specified in terms of certain experiences involved in its application, its reference must therefore be intentional rather than material.” (Scruton, 1998, p.99)

Scruton responds by saying that in a sense the objection stands up. The terms we use to describe music do *refer* to material sounds. However, they refer to them in a way that cannot be captured by a scientific description of the material sound itself. That is to say that the description under which our musical terms are understood, is only applicable within a metaphorical scheme. As Scruton (1998, p.99) says:

“Sounds do not move as music moves ... Nor are they organised in a spatial way ..., nor do they rise and fall. These are all metaphors, and one thing that distinguishes metaphors from scientific descriptions is that they are, when successful, false.”

The distinction between secondary qualities and even the basic musical qualities such as the experience of form can be made clearer. Scruton (1998, p.100) points out that

“...to perceive a secondary quality is a sensory capacity, and depends only upon the power of sensory discrimination”.

The ability to discriminate between such sensory qualities is possessed by other animals and does not depend on any kind of cognitive ability. Furthermore, the ability cannot be improved by any kind of intellectual training or education. It is this fact that Scruton says leads us to think that sensory qualities such as colour (what we would call secondary qualities) really do in fact inhere in the objects that display them. We cannot be educated into perceiving those that we are initially unable to, and vice versa into dispensing of those that we can. However, this doesn't seem to be the case with our experience of musical properties such as form and expression. In the case of form and expression, changes in one's intellectual capacities and general psychological disposition can influence changes in the nature of the musical properties that one experiences. As Scruton (1998, p.100) says:

“[Musical qualities] are more closely analogous to aspects – the man in the moon, the face in the cloud, the child in the picture – which are sometimes called ‘tertiary’ qualities, in order to emphasise the peculiar nature of their dependence upon our capacities to observe them. ‘Tertiary’ qualities are often thought not to be genuine qualities of the things which possess them: first, because of their ‘supervenience’, secondly, because they are neither deductions from experience nor used in the explanation of experience; thirdly, because their perception requires peculiar capacities (such as imagination) which cannot be tied down to any ‘sense’, and which perhaps do not belong to speechless beings. It does not matter much for present purposes whether we take a ‘realist’ view of these qualities. What does matter is that we should recognise the peculiar dependence of our power to observe them upon our power of thought.”

However, one might want to question the degree to which the experience of music is created by the active imaginings of the listener. For example, it seems that there are times when we hear music in the background and we are making no conscious effort to interpret what we hear. Nonetheless, what we hear *is* music and we are aware of it as such, even if we are not really listening to it. An example of this might be something like lift music or the “jingles” we hear emanating from our televisions. If the experience of music is something that is the result of our imaginative perception, then a significant contribution is made by our sub-consciously hearing the music as having certain qualities. It seems as though the kind of minimal musical understanding that Ridley suggests distinguishes our experience of sound from that of music is beyond our active control. It is only the further refinement of the perceptual properties that we can have any influence over. But, for Scruton, the active participation of the subject in the imaginative realisation of music in their experience is central to making sense of the way we make evaluative judgments about the music. As he explains:

“The voluntary character of this perception provides one of the foundations for the structural criticism of music. It is because I can ask someone to hear a movement as beginning in a certain place, as phrased in a certain way, and so on, that the activity of giving reasons in support of such analysis makes sense. Much of music criticism consists of the deliberate construction of an intentional object from the infinitely ambiguous instructions implicit in a sequence of sounds.” (Scruton, 1998, p.101)

Scruton thinks that we can persuade ourselves into hearing sounds as being related to each other in different ways, so long as we can make a coherent case for the specification of those relations. While this can certainly account for, say the role of the music critic whose task is to direct our attention towards different aspects of the music, it nevertheless seems as though

much in our experience of the form of music is already predetermined and immovable before our consciousness has an opportunity to alter it. Cook (1992, p.25) reminds us that psychologists employ the notion of “perceptual construction” to account for the fact that perception in general is not a literal response to the sensory attributes of stimuli. The concept of perceptual construction does to some extent undermine Scruton’s notion of imaginative listening as it emphasises the pre-conscious and involuntary aspect of the process. A standard example of involuntary perceptual construction is the “Phi” phenomenon. This refers to the experiment where two lights are alternately turned on and off in a dark room and the resultant impression is one of a single light that swings back and forth. Perceptual construction is not amenable to rational argument as Scruton wants imaginative perception to be. In addition, there seem to be certain limits as to what a person can choose to imagine when they hear certain sounds. Cook (1992, p.25) gives the example of our not choosing to hear a violin being played backwards as “a series of smears, grunts, and squeaks”. We can do little to avoid this outcome.

Perhaps musical understanding in fact plays a much lesser role in determining what we hear than Scruton thinks and if this were the case, then it would seem more natural to say that our experience of music’s formal qualities, such as rhythmic patterns and melodic lines, is in fact more akin to our experience of secondary qualities. They are listener dependent only in the sense that a normally functioning listener must experience the sounds in order to have the experiences. On the other hand, the music’s expressive qualities seem to be unquestionably in the realm of tertiary qualities. Even if we were to accept that the experience of music’s form (which is essential if we are to have an experience of music at all) is on the level of an intentional object, when we fulfil the criterion of a normal perceiver in normal conditions, we will perceive only one set of formal qualities, irrespective of

our level of musical understanding. This is, after all, what seems to be the nature of the majority of our musical experiences. We do not in general experience the kind of formal re-orientation that Scruton describes and this might lead us to think that our musical understanding plays as much of a role in our experience as Scruton wants to claim it does.

In reply to this, it does not seem implausible to me that we should accept that much of our musical understanding is manifested un-consciously. By the time most people are old enough to speak, they have typically been exposed to countless examples of music in the tradition in which they have been raised. A slow process of learning and acculturation cements interpretive techniques into the person's psychological background and forms the basic tools for their minimal musical understanding. The unconscious action of one's musical understanding in the shaping of one experience of music, explains why when one hears a piece of music as having a certain rhythmic pattern, it is very hard to imagine how it could be experienced differently. It is at this point that the active part of our imaginative perception begins to take effect and we are able to in a sense "override" the initial impression delivered through our unconscious understanding, with an alternative conscious interpretation. Scruton (1998, p.102) provides an example from the opening of *Parsifal*, where the same temporal order of notes can be heard as having a different rhythm. The listener can direct his attention in different ways in order to arrive at a different rhythmic interpretation of the same sequence of notes.

4.2. Understanding and the Aesthetic Value of Music

We have been considering the view that our experience of musical properties depends on our musical understanding. What bearing does this have on the aesthetic value of formal and expressive properties of music?

Firstly, what we experience as the music's form, such as its particular rhythmic patterns or melodic lines, are properties that do not belong to an independently existing material thing. As expressive properties are dependent for their existence on formal properties, we can duly surmise that expressive properties are also properties of no material thing. In this sense at least, they are on a par.

Conclusion

For Hanslick, our experience of music's formal qualities is experience of properties that derive their existence from something, the music (whether construed as performance or notation), that had an existence outside of our own experience of it. Thus Hanslick was seduced into thinking that if one abstracted from all of one's interpretive tendencies when listening to music, one would be approximating a kind of "pure" aesthetic experience. The properties that manifest themselves to someone having this kind of pure experience would be what Hanslick takes to be the truly aesthetic properties of the music; the formal properties. The notion of a pure aesthetic experience remains a tempting one. If we aim to provide any kind of firm ground for our aesthetic judgments then surely, this is the kind of experience we should be aiming to capture? However, Hanslick did not discuss, or at least underestimated the possibility that for the sounds to be heard as music, there must be a framework of understanding utilised by the listener. Those sounds must be understood in a particular way, and the sequences of notes are ambivalent, at least to a certain degree, as to which interpretations can be made of them. This framework is a pre-requisite for grasping musical form and therefore aesthetically evaluating the music. It is this understanding that shapes the experience of the music and thus its aesthetic character. If the music is not *understood*, then there can be no scope for judgment concerning its aesthetic value.

If the experience of form is an interpretive result of our musical understanding, then what should we make of the experience of expression? We know the experience of expression is parasitic on an initial experience of the music formal qualities. I maintain that the music's expressive qualities are best understood as a "higher order" perceptual property of the music. By this I mean that they are also an interpretive product of our musical understanding. The difference is that expressive properties are interpretations of music's form, while form is an interpretation of the sensory qualities of sound. Just as the terms used to describe form, do not have a literal application to the material world of sounds, our characterisations of music in emotional terms do not have a literal application (in the sense that the music is something that exhibits emotional qualities outside of our imaginative experience). Much of the time we experience expressive qualities of music just as immediately and with as little conscious participation as our experiences of formal qualities. As both are a function of a developed musical understanding, it is understandable how both kinds of properties can seem so immediate in our experience of music. Thus on the view that I am advocating, one cannot discount our experience of expressive properties as somehow inferior to our experience of formal properties on the grounds that they are interpretive or subjective, as both form and expression are subjectively interpreted properties of our experience.

Overall Conclusion

I have argued in support of the claim that both formal and expressive qualities are equally relevant to our judgements concerning the aesthetic value of music. I chose to narrow the focus of my enquiry to instrumental music, taking it to be the "hard case" in this context.

I began my investigation in part one by considering the nature of aesthetic experience, taking it that aesthetic value is grounded in such experience. I argued that the content-orientated approach to characterising aesthetic experience is the only viable option. I then explained that form and expression are typically considered paradigmatic musical properties and I resolved to establish whether they could justifiably be considered to be so.

Part two was devoted to a discussion of musical form. I began by describing what I understood form to consist in. I took it to include both Green's notions of musical shape and form. I then examined how we could value the experience of music for its formal qualities. I explored Kivy's idea that we play "games" with the form of the music in our experience of it; namely, what he called the hypothesis and hide-and-seek games. I concluded part two by considering Hanslick's formalist position that the formal qualities of music *alone* are relevant to its aesthetic value. I maintained that Hanslick's argument does not establish this conclusion.

Part three was an exploration of expression in music. I examined various theories of expression and established that no one account captures all the possible ways one might experience music as expressive. I maintained nonetheless that we can make sense of the idea of expression experienced as a musical quality. I then argued that expression can be considered an aesthetically valuable quality of music in virtue of its coherence and the imaginative stimulation it provokes. I also claimed that expression is valuable in terms of its mutually supportive relationship with form.

Finally, in part four, I addressed the claim that expression is inferior to form in terms of its relevance to the aesthetic value of music as expression alone is subjective. I developed an account of musical understanding, which claims that both our experience of expressive and formal qualities of music

are products of our understanding and therefore have a subjective existence.
Form and expression are therefore equal in this sense and thus have equal
claim to aesthetic value.



Bibliography

- Boghossian, Paul A. 2002: "On Hearing Music in the Sound: Scruton on Musical Expression", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 60, No.1.
- Budd, Malcolm 1985: *Music and the Emotions*, Routledge.
- Budd, Malcolm 1989: *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*, Routledge.
- Budd, Malcolm 1996: *Values of Art*, Penguin Books.
- Carroll, Noël 2006: "Aesthetic Experience: A Question of Content", *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, Matthew Kieran (ed.), Blackwell.
- Collingwood, Robin 1947: *The Principles of Art*, Clarendon Press.
- Cook, Nicholas 1992: *Music, Imagination and Culture*, Oxford University Press.
- Cooke, Deryck 1959: *The Language of Music*, Oxford University Press.
- Cox, Renee 1989: "Varieties of Musical Expressionism", *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, George Dickie, Richard Sclafani & Ronald Roblin (eds.), St. Martin's Press.
- Davies, Stephen 1980: "The Expression of Emotion in Music", *Mind* (new series), Vol.89, No.353.
- Davies, Stephen 1994: *Musical Meaning and Expression*, Cornell University Press.
- Dickie, George 1989: "The New Institutional Theory of Art", *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, George Dickie, Richard Sclafani & Ronald Roblin (eds.), St. Martin's Press.
- Eggebrecht, Hans Heinerich 1993: *J. S. Bach's 'The Art of Fugue': The Work and Its Interpretation*, Jeffery L. Prater (trans.), Iowa State University Press.

- Faulk, Barrie 1993: "Consciousness, Cognition and the Phenomenology of Perception", *Supplementary Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Vol. 67.
- Goldie, Peter 2000: *The Emotions*, Oxford University Press.
- Goldman, Alan 1992: "The Value of Music", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 50, No.1.
- Green, Douglas M 1979: *Form in Tonal Music, An Introduction to Analysis*, Holt, Reinhart, Winston.
- Hamilton, Andy 2007: *Aesthetics and Music*, Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Hanfling, Oswald 1992: "Aesthetic Qualities", *Philosophical Aesthetics an Introduction*, Blackwell.
- Hanslick, Eduard 1957: *The Beautiful in Music*, Liberal Arts Press.
- Iseminger, Gary 2006: "The Aesthetic State of Mind", *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, Matthew Kieran (ed.), Blackwell.
- Kivy, Peter 1989: *Sound Sentiment: An Essay on the Musical Emotions*, Temple University Press.
- Kivy, Peter 1990: *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience*, Cornell University Press.
- Kivy, Peter 2001: "Absolute Music and the New Musicology", *New Essays on Musical Understanding*, Oxford University Press.
- Kivy, Peter 2002: *An Introduction to a Philosophy of Music*, Oxford University Press.
- Levinson, Jerrold 1996: "Musical Expressiveness", *The Pleasures of Aesthetics*, Cornell University Press.
- Matravers, Derek 2003: "The Experience of Emotion in Music", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.61, No.4.

- Matravers, Derek 2007: "Expression in music", *Philosophers on Music*, Kathleen Stock (ed.), Oxford University Press.
- Meyer, Leonard B 1956: *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Chicago.
- Ridley, Aaron 1995: *Music Value and the Passions*, Cornell University Press.
- Ridley, Aaron 2004: *Philosophy of Music*, Edinburgh University Press.
- Ridley, Aaron 1993: "Bleeding Chunks: Some Remarks about Musical Understanding", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 51, No. 4.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur 1969: *The World as Will and Representation*, E. F. J. Payne (trans.), Dover.
- Scruton, Roger 1979: *The Aesthetics Of Architecture*, London.
- Scruton, Roger 1983: 'Understanding Music', *Ratio*, 25.
- Scruton, Roger 1998: *The Aesthetic Understanding*, St Augustine's Press.
- Trivedi, Saam 2001: "Expressiveness as a property of the music itself", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.59, No.4.
- Walton, Kendal 1988: "What is Abstract about the Art of Music?", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 46.

