

Identifying Musical Works of Art

JUDITH LOCHHEAD

Most of us began to love music as we played or listened to music which has a common practice score. We learned to speak of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* and performances of this work. Philosophies of music trying to pinpoint what performances are of have located the work in a type, mega-type, compliance-class, intentional, or mental object². I am proposing a simple alternative, namely, that musical works and performances are the same. Although you may initially find this solution counter-intuitive, I hope the advantages of this theory will persuade you to consider it seriously.

First, I will outline my position, then I will argue for it by presenting two analogies and an exposition of the analogies. Finally I will offer general criteria for judging theories of musical identity and show why the position presented here succeeds in answering questions left unanswered by other theories.

Position

I believe a musical work of art and a performance are synonymous 2. A musical work is a construct of sounds and silences developing through time. Each is as unique and unrepeatable as a painting. I believe that musical works are heard. Some of the beauty of music is tied to the quality of sound. The strain of the voice reaching a high note, the subtleties of execution of a phrase or ornament, the starkness of the contrasts in dynamics, for example, are elements of the musical work. The sonorous surface of the work is created by performers. The creation of the harmony, melody, rhythm, and other musical features is, in Western music, often the responsibility of someone other than the performer. However, in Jazz, aleatoric, and non-Western music, the performer and composer are often the same.

I believe we philosophers of music have been ethnocentric. In much of the great Western music, the composer creates a score which records many of his ideas. These scores are then used as blueprints for producing

performances. But, theorists have often been obsessed by the role of the score. The score should be seen for what it is, an incomplete set of instructions for producing something important: the work of art that is heard³. (We do not place as much emphasis on the blueprints of a work of architecture, for example.) Furthermore, a complete theory of musical identity must account for scores of various kinds and unscored music from non-Western traditions. I believe that identifying musical works and performances allows us to explain music of all types.

By locating musical works in performances I am *not* suggesting that music is merely uninterpreted sound. Performances are complex events, and I will not present a complete theory of performances here. In fact, if I am successful in persuading you of my thesis, I hope that you will join me in focusing attention on this very topic. I do not believe, that listeners are simply using the sounds heard in a performance as a conduit for something beyond the performance such as disembodied musical relationships⁴. Listeners revel in the beauty of both the structure created by the composer and the sensuous aspects of the sounds themselves, both of which are heard in a performance.

Analogies

I will offer two analogies to explain this theory. First, the gene analogy will be presented in order to clarify the relation between score and performance; and second, the cake analogy to clarify the relation between performance and musical work. (These analogies obviously refer to music created from a score. Other of music will be considered later.)

Zygotes contain the genetic information which directs the development of an organism. The hereditary instructions are contained in the chemical (DNA) of the genes. The organism is produced by those instructions being actualized in an environment. In a controlled study, a scientist consciously selects the conditions under which the organism develops. The scientist may decide to modify the information of the genetic code by subjecting the developing individual to certain controlled physical environments, e.g., light, moisture, etc. Since genes, to be expressed, must be actualized in some environment, with or without the conscious control of a scientist, modifications are inevitable. A scientist *regulates* changes in order to produce certain characteristics. Scientists may also expose the organism to chemicals and thus actually alter the genetic structure. Changes of this sort are optional, but such influences can produce substantially better (or worse) organisms.

The scientist selects the environment which will produce the desired characteristics of the individual. The same genes can produce two very different individuals, as when identical twins are raised in different environments. It is possible to have equally healthy but different organisms developing from the same genetic instructions.

Now let's apply the above in an analogy to music. The score is the genetic information. All the markings on the score such as notes, rests and repeat marks are comparable to the chemical code of each gene. The score has the potential for realization in a number of ways. The performance is the organism. The performance is the result of environmental influences on the genetic instructions. The performer acts as a scientist, a conscious part of the environment. A performer must actualize the score. As she brings the score to fruition some of the potential of the genes will be actualized. The resulting musical work will be a product of both the structure of the score and the creative input of the performer (s). A phrase marked on a score is realized in a number of possible ways: grace notes must be interpreted in the actual playing, tone quality must be controlled, balance between the parts must be considered. Just as environmental influences such as light and soil necessarily affect the developing individual, the touch of the finger on the keys of a piano necessarily affects the sound produced. The elements of a score must be realized in sound. *Rubato*, *diminuendo*, pedal markings, rests, *fermatas* all must be actualized and to actualize them is to construe these elements in one way or another. The performer's skills and musicianship, the acoustics of concert hall, and the quality of the instrument (s) provide the environmental additives which are *necessary* in the development of a performance.

So far, I have considered only the necessary modifications of the score that performers make. But a performer may alter a score in other ways. For example performers add phrase markings, breath and bowing marks to scores. Performers even choose to leave out groups of notes in complex passages or change a note in a score where the composer has written a note which the performer judges to be inconsistent with other passages. These changes are optional, as is the decision to bombard an organism with X-rays in order to alter the developing organism's phenotype.

The performances of the score, like the individuals who have the same gene structure, share family resemblances (with apologies to Wittgenstein). Performances may have overlapping characteristics, yet be very different from

each other 5. Some offspring are brighter and more interesting than others. Some performances of the same score may be more exciting and aesthetically interesting than others.

This analogy reveals a flexible relationship between score and performance. There are certain necessary modifications and additions which the score must undergo as it is realized in sound. The performer plays a very important role in constructing a musical work from the score's instructions. I do not want to downplay the creative genius of the composer; I wish merely to insist on the necessary creative function of the performer.

Next consider the relationship between works and performances. This is the heart of the question of identity. Where a score exists, it may serve as a rough criterion for grouping performance as individuals related to one another. But it is the individual that is aesthetically important. When listening to music, one may be aware of the similarities and differences between this performance and other performances of the same score, but the focus of attention is this performance with all its aesthetic qualities. All of the members of a family may be called Smith, but they are also Christine Smith, or Megan Smith, or Jordan Smith. When applied to music, all performances of the score of *The Goldberg Variations* by Bach can be grouped as a family, but aesthetically it is Gould's 1955 recorded performance of the score, or Landowska's performance of the score, or Landowska's performance of the score which is the focus of a given experience of music. The class of performances of a certain score is comparable to grouping Titian's *Danaes* or Monet's *La Gare St. Lazare*. There are five various *Danaes* and seven *La Gare St. Lazare*, each of which is a work of art, just as each of five performance of a score is a work of art. In short, I reject Goodman's allographic/autographic distinction.

Another analogy will perhaps make this point about performances and works clearer. Reflect, for a moment on a chocolate marble cheesecake. There is no THE chocolate marble cheesecake to be identified with the class of compliance-cakes, an ideal cake, a conceptual cake, or a type-cake. There are only cakes and recipes 6. If I have a recipe, and if I know how to cook I can imagine other cakes similar to this one. But those are simply imagined cakes, what is real is this cake in front of me which I am about to eat.

This, I propose, is also the case with music. There are only scores and performances. Each performance of the score of *The Piano Concerto in G*

composed by Ravel is a unique musical work of art. We can group cakes by the recipe, and we can group performances by the score, but the group is not central. Many of the aesthetically important properties of one musical work completed by one performer of a score will be missing from another musical work completed by another performer of the same score. Compare Hogwood's performance of the *Jupiter Symphony*, with Bernstein's performance of the same score. Two very different works of art are created using the same Mozart score. Indeed, each time the same performer plays the same score, many subtle but aesthetically important changes are made 7.

Further more, the better the recipe, the cook, the ingredients and the equipment, the better the cheesecake. The better the score, conductor, the performers, and the instruments, the better the musical work.

Recipes are written in a language, and thus can be copied word for word given to neighbor. The neighbor can, in turn, produce his own cheesecake. These facts do not reveal some mysterious logical status of cheesecakes. Cheesecake is still something I eat, I eat cheesecake, I look at paintings, and I hear musical works.

Exposition

Two analogies have been presented : one concerning genes and one concerning recipes. The gene analogy focuses on the score-performance relation. Its aim is to reveal the necessary as well as the optional modifications which occur when a score is realized 8. This analogy focuses on the abstract and unrealized nature of a score. This point is also an element of the cake analogy. Recipes are not cakes, but only instructions for producing cakes. But a more important element of the cake analogy is the performance-work identification. The musical work, and the dish, are what one experiences.

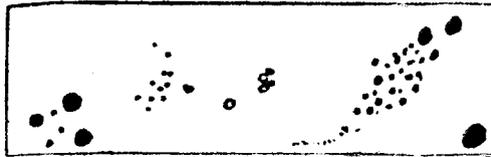
A composer's production of a score and a performer's reading of that score are directed toward one goal : production of a musical work, i.e., a performance. Likewise, recipes are written and copied in order to produce food to be eaten.

Most of the above discussion has concerned performances which result from scores. But there are some types of musical works for which there is no score. For example, improvised jazz pieces and electronic music are not always scored. In both of these cases the composer is the performer. In electronic music such as Varese's *Poeme electronique*, a composer/performer creates one tape. When such a tape is played, listeners have heard the musical work. This is comparable in the recipe analogy to a concoction

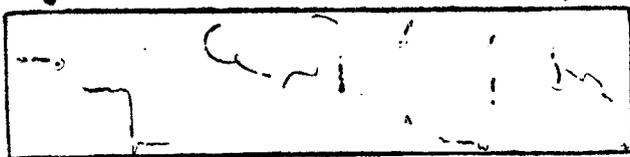
which a desperate college student creates out of leftovers. (I do not intend to imply a value judgment of Varese or electronic music in general.) While dishes which are created by following a recipe will have other dishes which bear family resemblances to it, the student's concoction is unique, but it is still a dish. A child without siblings and a child with siblings are both children. A performance created by following a score and a performance created on a tape and played for listeners are both musical works.

Jazz improvisation, like that of Coltrane, may be like electronic music, that is, a work not closely related to any other musical work. But most jazz improvisations are members of a family of performances all called by the same name. In this case there is usually a "mental" score, e.g., a set of chords or melody, which is freely improvised. Here a performance is not exactly like an orphan electronic piece, but is more like aleatoric music.

Aleatoric music is the opposite of electronic music. Whereas electronic music is completely determined by composers (who are the performers), aleatoric music is, to a large extent, determined by performers. Scores for aleatoric compositions, for example in the score of Variations I by Cage, are loose and very informal (like grandma's recipes which call for a pinch of this and a dab of that.) Scores for aleatoric music are often graphics. Graphics indicate stress and time and pitch by a variety of means.⁹



Graphics are created by composers to reflect their musical ideas. The creation of the music is then completed by the performer who "is expected to realize the notation not only differently but differently at each performance."¹⁰ Sometimes composers, such as Earle Brown, even compose scores that intersperse explicit notation with graphics. The graphics may be played by one or more of the performers, or there may be silence. "The music thus goes back and forth between events controlled by the composer and events that are largely unpredictable."¹¹



So, the family of performances becomes very loosely defined 12. It is a performance, not a family, that is a musical work. Each performance of an aleatoric score is a musical work as is any performance of a common practice score. If performances are musical works then the unscored performances, electronic music, aleatoric music, and performances of the kinds of scores that exist since 1650 are all accounted for.

Advantages

I wish to make clear criteria by which any theory of the identity of a musical work should be judged.

1) A theory should be able to account for all kinds and periods of music, e.g., aleatoric, non western, Baroque, contemporary, and unscored music.

2) A theory should clarify the relations between the work, performance, and various types of scores.

3) What is identified as the musical work must be consistent with our aesthetic experience of music. There are intellectual pleasures when listening to a performance as when one appreciates the harmonic structure, as well as sensual pleasures as, for example, when one appreciates texture. Music must be something that can give rise to these experiences.

4) The theory should take into account the types of judgments made about music.

I do not have the time here to examine the problems in each of the rival theories. However, I would suggest that theories of types and mental or ideal works cannot account for aleatoric, jazz, or non-western music in which the composer (if there is one) *expects* the performer to help create the music. A theory of compliance-classes has difficulty accounting for unscored music or music created from graphics.

I hope that the examples given in the explication of my theory have shown that it can explain music created using both common practice scores and other "irregular" scores, as well as a variety of kinds and periods of music. So I will concentrate here on showing that this theory can meet criteria numbers three and four.

A complete theory of music must recognize all of the features of music, the richness and complexity of the rhythm, e.g., as well as the appropriateness of the timbre to the dynamics. In the music most of us are accustomed to, the former is created by composers, and the latter by performers. Most theories pay tribute to the contributions of composers, but the importance of the performer is underplayed¹³. The performer must join the composer's score in creating the work of art because a composer's idea for a work and the score produced are both unactualized potential¹⁴. In music, the composer who creates a score presents elements for a *group* of works of art. Composers 'and performers' roles in creating the musical work depends on several fluid elements. In some works, the performer is responsible for many of the aesthetically important properties (e.g., Bach *Invention*, a medieval chant, a jazz performance, a raga or a work of Cage). In other works, the composer's score is highly restrictive (e.g., Mahler and Webern and Stravinsky) But even the most specific score does not release the performer from the obligation of helping to create the work of art. Bernstein and Berlioz, Horowitz and Handel, Menuhin and Mendelssohn--these are all artists who help create music. What is real is the individual performance, the formed matter or substance (to use Aristotle's language) In short, I wish to replace the Platonic theories of musical identity with an Aristotelian theory.

Another advantage of this view is that it explains the discriminations made concerning a musical work. Critics sometimes evaluate scores on the basis of potential and performances by comparing the achievement with that

potential. This is comparable to scientists spotting "good" genes, i.e., one for which there is a high probability of healthy organisms, or cooks judging the likelihood of a good cake by reading the recipe. A conductor can make the same predictions from a score. In short, it is possible to judge potential as such. Furthermore, even a sensitive listener can learn to distinguish the qualities of the performance that are attributable to the performer and those inherent in the score. A listener might say: "Tonight's performance was good; it is only a mediocre score, but Horowitz really made something out of it." This judgment compares the potential of the score with the achievement of the performance. When one says, "The performance is bad, but it's not a bad piece," one means the score has a high potential for good performances but that potential was not realized. Or, one means there are other performances of this score which are much better. When one judges by comparing aptitude to achievement, the more the performance actualizes the potential of the score, the "better" the performance.

According to my position, a performance may also be judged "good as a kind" or just "good." When I judge "good as a kind," I compare the individual to some group. The group to which I compare this individual may be an historical period, e.g., "The recording I just bought is an excellent example of koto music of the Tokugawa period." Or I might judge a work by its genre, e.g., "Armstrong's *Dippermouth Blues* is classical jazz at its best." I may judge a performance as a good or bad rendition of a score (if there is one). For example, "The university orchestra missed so many notes last night you could hardly tell they were performing the score of Mahler's *First Symphony*." Or, I judge the performance in relation to the potential for aesthetic quality of the score. Critics might say, "This performance did not bring to light the complexities of rhythm found in the score of *Le Sacre du Printemps*". Finally, one can judge a performance according to its faithfulness to the score or authenticity to an historical period, e.g. "Ormandy's performance of the *Suites* by Bach is not consistent with Bach's period. Pincock's, on the other hand, is historically correct"¹⁵. All these types of judgments are made and are consistent with theory presented.

Another judgment made of musical works is simply in terms of achievement. Some performances are not created by actualizing a score, and even when there is a score, sometimes we judge the musical event, *per se*. Critics ask, "Is this a good individual when compared to all others? Is this good music?" Judgments such as "Harty's rendition of *Water Music* is not

historically accurate, but it was very moving." Or, "I don't know if this is a good *raga* or not, but it was very powerful aesthetically." Or, "I know the score indicates that the piece should be louder and faster, but the music had a lilting quality which was marvelous." When such judgments are made, critics are judging the work, i.e., *per se*, and distinguishing this judgment from judgments as "good as a kind" whether according to accuracy to the score, historical period, or genre. When a musical work is judged as a work of art in and of itself, listeners evaluate the musical structure and the sounds and silences which are heard. Along with the variety and strength of the rhythm, grace of the melodies, and complexities of the harmonies and coherence of these elements (created by the composer,) exquisiteness of the technique, quality of the voice, and intricacies of the balance (achieved by the performer) are highly valued in a particular performance.

Conclusion

Locating the musical work in a performance corresponds closely to our aesthetic experience of all types of music and to the judgments critics and listeners make of music. Therefore, I propose that we should abandon the views of musical work as an ideal, or a concept, or a type, or a megatype, or a compliance class. Let us focus on performances and begin to describe and develop a complete ontology of these complex events.

Notes and References

1 See, for example, R. G. Collingwood, *The Principle of Art* (Oxford, 1938), p. 139, and, Renee Cox, 'A Defence of Musical Idealism', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 26, No. 2 (1986), pp. 133-142 for the ideal position. See for example, Richard Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (Ringwood, Australia, 1968), p. 91; Joseph Margolis, *Art and Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, 1979), ch. 2-4; and Philip Alperson, 'On Musical Improvisation, *The*

Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism Vol. XLIII, (1984), p. 25 for the type/token position. See Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (New York, 1968), p. 197 for the compliance-class position.

2 I am not at this point indicating what constitutes a performance, but it is certainly more than soundwaves vibrating in the air. Similar views of performances are found in the follo-

wing works : Langer, op. cit., p. 138. "Performance is the completion of a musical work;" Jay Bachrach, 'Type Token and the Identification of the Work of Art', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 13 (1971), p. 417; and Edward T. Cone, *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (New York, 1968), p. 34.

3. Although performances that are imagined when reading the score are very similar to performances which are heard, I agree with Langer when she says, "Inward hearing usually stops short of just that determinateness of quality and duration which characterize actual sensation." Susanne K Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York, 1953), p 137.

4. I believe Ingarden comes close to this when he says, "Listening to a specific performance with our attention on the work itself, we seem involuntarily to ignore the individual mode of existence of the currently occurring individual concrete sounds. We extract from the manifest *concretum* the composition itself. (emphasis added) Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity* trans. Adam Czerniawski (Berkeley, 1986), p. 62.

5. After writing this essay, I discovered a similar analogy applied to *raga* music. "Every *raga*, then is a melodic seed. Sow the melodic idea

of a *raga* into the depths of the mind. There are species of seeds. Each will give its own kind of plant : a mango seed will yield only a mango tree but not a banyan. However, no mango tree is identical with another mango tree - Two renderings of the same *raga* are essentially similar, but different in details owing to the temperament of the musician and the mood of the situation." Bigamudre Chaitanya Deva, *An Introduction to Indian Music* (New Delhi, 1973), p. 12.

6. This analogy is mentioned in Nigel Harrison, 'Types, and the Identity of the Musical Work', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol 15 (1974), p. 344-345, but it is rejected without development.

7 Notice the difference in two recordings of the same blues melody made on consecutive days. The performances even have different names : *S.O.L. Blues* and *Gull Low Blues*. *The Louis Armstrong Story* album, Vol. 2 ML54384).

8 See Gordon K. Greene, 'For Whom and Why Does the Composer Prepare a Score?', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 32 (1974), p. 506.

9. Kurt Stone, 'Notation', *Dictionary of Contemporary Music*, ed. John Vinton (New York, 1974), p. 523.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 525.

12. A position such as Goodman's, which focuses on families or classes of performances, has a great deal of difficulty accounting for aleatoric music or jazz.

13. For example, James Feibleman speaking of Bruno Walter says, 'It means that he trained the orchestra, and it means that he keeps time for them and by his presence reminds them of their training...But it does *not* mean that he wrote the music,

or that he is responsible for it in any way.' (emphasis added) in 'On the Metaphysics of the Performing Arts', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* Vol. 28 (1970), p. 298.

14. Schoenberg discusses the many elements of music which a performer must add to the score in *Style and Idea* ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (New York, 1975), p. 200-201.

15. For an interesting discussion of criteria for authenticity, see Stephen Davies, 'Authenticity in Musical Performance', *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol. 27, no. 1 (1987), pp. 39-50.