

evolutionary biology, he looks at various evolutionary traits of music with case studies surveying melody, rhythm, and pitch systems. Recognizing that “no single factor influences musical evolutions equally across all cultures,” (287) he suggests careful studies analyzing mutually-influencing trends to create a more informed model. He proposes using a tool called Agent-Based Modeling (ABM), coming from the field of archaeology, to more fully understand the chaotic systems.

Looking at some of the newer trends in musical creativity through the lens of the Schillinger system, John Morton, a well-known composer, trombonist and arranger, expresses some of his philosophy on the construction of music as opposed to a romantic notion of “inspiration” or “creativity” in composition. The chapter sums up some of the pertinent points of the Schillinger system, touching on melody, harmony, counterpoint, melodic configuration, and scales. The Schillinger system he describes is still taught at the Berklee College today, as it has been since the founding of that institution. He explains that Schillinger dismissed atonal music as a revolt against nature, and that twelve-tone music rarely allows a listener to perceive the structures and internal logic of the composition upon hearing and is thus difficult to interpret.

The book ends with an essay outlining an experiment on the aesthetic experience of the singing voice by Maja Vukadinovic and Agota Vitkay-Kucera. The authors examined whether singers perceived their own voices as sounding better while they were singing or when later listening to recorded performances of themselves. The authors concluded that perception of the singing voice is in a relationship to not only one actually hearing their voice, but also to the psychological state of a person and their understanding of the art. This small study may inspire further research, but for now, they recommend teachers to ask their vocal students to frequently record and listen to their own voices. This can be helpful to them in their perception of their own voice and improving their vocal quality and singing techniques.

This book’s series of essays takes the reader through an incredibly dense set of intellectual movements and forays, completely fulfilling its subtitle of “perspectives on a musical species.” The reader will come away with new understandings of the origins, functions and methods of musical production, and benefit from the abstract overviews of the interaction of music and how it helps to define, create, and underpin humanity in all its development. The book’s perspective is that music is intricately linked to many aspects of human development and has been part and parcel of those developments, influenced both by human biology and human cultures. Ultimately, this book asks the question whether by understanding these intersections and diverse studies we can infer any general principles, and whether that is necessary. One may conclude after reading these essays that a grand narrative may not be particularly useful.

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THE IMAGINATION OF EXPERIENCES: MUSICAL INVENTION, COLLABORATION, AND THE MAKING OF MEANINGS. By Alan Taylor. London & NY: Routledge, 2021. 114 pp.

In the *Imagination of Experiences*, London-based musician, conductor and musicologist Alan Taylor has provided an engaging synthesis of current academic theories of musical imagination. Taylor is also interested in the practical implications of this synthesis: If this model of the imagination is true, how should that inform musicians’ approach to music? How should it inform listeners? That said, this deceptively short volume covers a lot of ground. Each section is a distinct area of study: The trope of the composer as solitary genius; the theory of imagination; a typology of musical collabora-

tion; and the construction of musical meaning in the minds of listeners. Taylor summarizes present thought on each topic, and proposes his own refinements, which flow logically from the current consensus. The crux of the matter is the theory of imagination, and all other topics are ultimately viewed through its lens.

Taylor persuasively shows that musical imagination *necessarily* draws from the lived experience and influences of the composer; that musical ideas come unbidden into the conscious mind, only after an *unconscious* process transforms these experiences and influences; and that this unconscious process takes the abstract form of a *dialogue* between influences, making the ideas thus formed inherently complex and ambiguous (25).

In addition, he cites a distinction between two roles of the imagination: first to *generate* ideas, and then to *evaluate* them (44). This evaluative role of the imagination is particularly intriguing, because the criteria can be unconscious. Composers speak of a “gut feeling” or things “clicking”; in other words, an *embodied* emotional response to their own work, and at times mysterious (to the conscious mind) reasons for being satisfied with it (38).

Taylor draws support for this model of the imagination from theorists on a variety of artistic fields, including dance, visual art, theatre, literature, and poetry, as well as music. He also shows that the model accords well with composers’ written accounts of their own creative process, particularly the oft-repeated trope of an artist feeling that their ideas happen “through” them (2), rather than by their will alone.

The chapters not specifically concerned with this framework are concerned with its implications. Taylor’s first target, and the opening salvo of the book itself, is the notion of the composer as genius (6). In short, because musical imagination by definition cannot exist without influences—it is literally a process of transforming influences—then a composer’s ideas do not originate in their mind alone. This being the case, no composer is worthy of veneration as a solitary creator. This is not a new argument, but it is newly invigorated by the clarity of Taylor’s model of the imagination. Alas, the argument is not now any more likely to catch on, beyond the academics who already overwhelmingly accept it. Particularly among classical musicians, the composer-as-genius idea appears to take on the level of an ideology—and Taylor admits that “belief in an ideology can lead people to resist evidence which contradicts their fixed view” (16).

The section on ideology is brief, and represents a missed opportunity. *Why* do classical musicians cling to the composer as solitary genius? A deeper examination of the psychology of hero worship might have been salubrious here. Despite the acknowledged “dark side” of humans’ fundamental attraction to charismatic leaders (Spector 2015), hero worship—even of fictional heroes—can have positive outcomes as well. These include, for example, imparting wisdom, revealing deep truths, providing a model for emulation, developing emotional intelligence, and providing energy and inspiration to succeed (Allison and Goethals 2015). At the very least, the “ideology” of the genius composer seems rooted in something deeper than mere artistic politics—and this may be more important than the fact that it is wrong.

In any case, Taylor subsequently refines his evidence-based position on composers in the fourth section, by rejecting the validity of the “composer’s intention” in assessing the *meaning* of music (77 ff.). In his conception, composers and performers are classified as types of listeners, and their subjective experiences of music are taken as fundamentally similar to that of other listeners. The process of musical imagination which creates the sensation of meaning is somewhat more complex than that which generates ideas, but it still involves the same mechanism of *embodied cognition* (92). This chapter may be a difficult pill to swallow for a composer—particularly one who suffers from the “illusion” that they are the sole originator of their own ideas (18)! Taylor leans on Derrida and Barthes, at times taking a polemical line on the “death of the composer.” But this should not be misconstrued: Taylor is himself a composer, and an important piece of evidence for him was a separate study he performed, in which his own intentions for the meaning of a piece were compared

to listeners' accounts of the meaning they experienced (86). There was a large discrepancy in specific detail, but broad agreement on the overall tenor of the experience. For Taylor, then, the skill of a composer consists of developing ideas—which anyone may have—into compelling musical *experiences* (79), through the application of a deeply developed craft—which can only be acquired through time and work (8). An experience creates a different sense of meaning in each person's unique imagination; it does not convey denotative information. And so, although composers certainly have the right to assess meaning in their own work, performers and other listeners have an equal right to do so, and cannot be called "wrong" if they disagree with the composer. After all, their experiences of meaning stem from the same imaginative faculty.

Aside from one's personal feelings as a composer, there is some room for dispute on the broadness or absoluteness of Taylor's claims about meaning-making. He admits that in "a few cases" (87) it may be possible for music to communicate more specific meaning as intended by a composer, without naming any. But what of film music? For many people, film scores and soundtracks are their primary exposure to classical music. "The audience must understand... musical conventions" in order to successfully interpret a score during viewing (Green 2010). Indeed, musical conventions can be highly specific ("the youthful brightness of the lydian #4, the alien quality of a tritonal progression"), and there are many such stereotypical emotional cues (Lehman 2018). This may well be a genre in which musical meaning is transmitted more directly than Taylor specifies, from savvy composers to savvy listeners. He does limit the scope of his book to "Western art music" (2), but it is hard to see how film music could be fully excluded from this category; and given its extraordinary reach, it ought not be ignored as a paradigm of meaning-making.

Less controversial is Taylor's third chapter, which deals with musical collaboration. This chapter is, in fact, rather beautiful—it elegantly categorizes four basic types of working arrangements between artists, based on whether *all* participants are able to generate ideas and evaluate ideas, or only *one* participant has final say over one or both imaginative processes (60). Setting out the parameters of the working relationship ahead of time, one could easily imagine saving artists a great deal of grief. (Taylor also provides instructive case studies on *failures* of communication.) The chapter is a sensitive treatment of artistic communication in general, and would be valuable study material for any college music curricula with a collaborative focus.

The Imagination of Experience would be a useful contribution to any library on music cognition, even had it limited itself to the second chapter's engaging, informative and well-supported description of the musical creative process. But Taylor goes further, pursuing its implications to occasionally provocative places. In any case, his treatments of imagination and collaboration are refreshingly clear, and the prose style approachable to both scholars and the lay audience. It is the latter whom Taylor wishes to empower: "Musical imagination must be a universal ability," he writes, and therefore "every [person] must then be capable of being an artist." We must simply re-learn the "freedom of spirit" we had as children (108).

Works Cited

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