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## Play On; Give Me Excess of It: Intercorporeality and Musical Definitions

Abram Basil Soucy Capone

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

PLAY ON; GIVE ME EXCESS OF IT:  
INTERCORPOREALITY AND MUSICAL DEFINITIONS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY

BY

ABRAM B. CAPONE

CHICAGO, IL

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It may not shock anyone to learn that I am not only committed to the idea that collaboration produces the *best* philosophy, but that *all* philosophy is collaborative; and those of you who find their names in the following pages will certainly not be surprised to know that I had no idea what that really meant until I started making headway on my dissertation. Dissertations, I abstractly knew and have come to intimately understand, are group projects of a certain flavor.

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I'd like to dedicate this song to everybody here with hearts, any kind of hearts, and ears.

—Jimi Hendrix



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	x
ABSTRACT	xi
INTRODUCTION: (PRELUDE)	1
Overtures and Preludes	6
CHAPTER ONE: METHODOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY (ALLEGRO)	18
Ontology, Definitions and the Intercorporeal Project	21
Methodology	25
Revisionist Approaches	27
Descriptivist Approaches	32
Methodological Balance	36
Musical Ontology: Begin Again (Again)	38
Antirealist Musical Ontologies	42
Realist Musical Ontologies	50
Ontological Dismissal	87
Ontological Pessimism	92
Ontological Deflection	98
Ontological Refusal	103
Cleaning House	106
CHAPTER TWO: UNILATERAL DEFINITIONS (LARGHETTO)	112
Intrinsic Definitions	116
Critiques of Intrinsic Accounts	122
Subjective Definitions	124
Critiques of Subjective Accounts	128
Intentional Definitions	137
Critiques of Intentional Accounts	142
Unilateral Definitions	147
CHAPTER THREE: EXTENDED MUSICAL COGNITION (VIVACE)	155
Interlude: 4E Cognition	157
The EMC Hypothesis & Musical Definitions	163
Traditional Definitions Adapted?	165
Alternative Paths Toward EMC Definitions	183
A Performative Solution?	207
PREFACE TO CHAPTER FOUR: INTERMEZZO	210
CHAPTER FOUR: THE INTERCORPOREAL ACCOUNT (PRESTO)	214
Extension (Exposition)	217

Highway 61 (Krueger) Revisited	219
The EMC Double-Bind	226
EMC Insights, In the Key of E(xtension)	233
Corporeality (Development)	236
Interlude: Methodology	238
Interlude: Musical Terms	245
Corporeality (A Theme)	249
The Audible and the Inaudible: Phenomenological Corporeality (B Theme)	266
Medial-Caesura	289
Performativity (Recapitulation)	296
Pointing in a Crooked Line (A Theme)	297
Imitation and Musical Insubordination	303
Musicians Just Want to Have Fun (B Theme)	307
Essential Structural Closure	316
Coda	318
Take V (Dominant Harmony)	319
Tonic (Resolution of Dominant Harmony)	322
Tonic (Reinforced)	326
CONCLUSION: (ENCORE)	330
The Operatic Prelude Returns	330
On Music and Musics	336
BIBLIOGRAPHY	339
VITA	356

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Selection from Bach's *Clavier-Übung III* 256

## ABSTRACT

Philosophy of music, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, presides over a relatively narrow range of field-specific ontological and metaphysical questions. I claim that a focus on classical music and a reliance on analogies to the plastic arts constitutes an unhelpful (but pervasive) methodology in philosophy of music, one that stands in tension with its purported aim of accurately accounting for “the ways we talk, think, and act” in relation to music and musical works (Rohrbaugh 2003, 179). While philosophers of music explicitly aim to describe praxis, a significant gap exists between existing theory and ordinary musical experiences. To work toward closing the praxis-theory gap that exists in traditional philosophy of music I claim that music is an activity or relational mode, and that musical works are best understood as types of relationships constituted by musicking activities; I call this position the Intercorporeal Account.

Philosophers of music almost universally treat musical works as objects. The Intercorporeal Account relies on work in queer theory, extended musical cognition, phenomenology, and philosophy of music to argue that music is a corporeal activity that produces relationships, not objects. At its heart, the Intercorporeal Account works toward centering the often philosophically underexplored aspects of musical engagement; what would it look like to begin a serious discussion of music with Alf Gabrielsson’s (2011) claim that “music is much more than just music”? I argue that the Intercorporeal Account best describes music’s extraordinary role in ordinary life, the way that music becomes an integral part of personal identity, and our deeply affectively or emotionally charged experiences of specific works.

## INTRODUCTION

### (PRELUDE)

*or, If music be the food of love, play on;  
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,  
The appetite may sicken, and so die.*

I have always loved first lines. I love the lines that start novels (“Call me Ishmael,” “It is a truth universally acknowledged”), poems (“Let us go then, you and I”), and essays (“The center was not holding”); and I love the first lines in music both linguistic (“The screen door slams,” “There must be some kind of way out of here,” “Loving you isn’t the right thing to do”) and instrumental (Beethoven’s *5<sup>th</sup> Symphony*, Schumann’s *Carnival Op. 9*). Even the title I chose for this project is an opening line, and I feel that Duke Orsino’s words are a better reflection of its contents than my own could be. But with phrases like these in the back of my mind, I must confess that I am fearful of beginning my own remarks. These opening lines are not just where *I* want to begin, but where I believe *you* want me to begin. (Have I guessed correctly? What do these choices reveal about me that I may have wanted to keep to myself?) With this fear, I do take a certain comfort in knowing that I am not alone in my trepidation, not when speaking about music and one’s own musicality. Suzanne Cusick, a scholar whose work I take up throughout the following chapters, begins an essay with a similar confession, “Ho grandissima paura,” because she too was fearful at the prospect of writing about music and her relationship with it (2006).<sup>1</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Musicality is, for Cusick, quite an intimate topic. She has great fear (and is careful to say that she is not *afraid*, but that she *has fear*) at the prospect of speaking publicly about her private and strangely erotic musical experiences. She opens this essay with a full paragraph in Italian, despite the fact that she is a native English speaker, because she feels it would be easier to say what she must in a language that she does *not* speak with the illusion of naturalness.

strikes me as relevant that music streaming platforms with social-media integration include an option to hide certain songs or listening sessions from our friends. (What about the music we listen to is so private that we would want to hide it? What do our choices reveal that we are scared someone else might recognize?) If this is a fear of being vulnerable, of revealing too much, of saying more than we meant, then perhaps it is artifice that scares us.

There is a certain artifice in opening lines, and I have always loved them because the artifice cannot help but disclose the vulnerability it purportedly conceals, like a thin drop-cloth draped over a grand piano; and I suppose that I have always loved music for the same reason. What we carefully, cautiously, and consciously choose to say—how we construct these beginnings of which we have great fear—cannot help but reveal what the artifice is meant to hide. Our musical choices too (the music we listen to, perform, or compose) form an integral part of our identity and I am troubled by people who vehemently profess a complete lack of musical taste or preference.<sup>2</sup> I imagine what that might literally mean, and what might be true of such a person. Who, when presented with Vivaldi, BTS, Johnny Cash, and Death Grips can earnestly say that these artists are all equally appealing to them?<sup>3</sup> When they take their turn playing DJ during a road-trip, do their friends and partners silently place bets on whether death metal, baroque classical, indie folk, sea chanties, or children’s songs are about to fill the car? Surely, this is not

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<sup>2</sup> For context, in one of my classes, I assigned “The Aesthetic Self” (Fingerhut et al. 2021) in which the interdisciplinary team of authors argues that musical preferences form a core part of one’s identity. The influence of musical preference on one’s identity is shown to be comparable to (if not stronger than) one’s political alignment, religious beliefs, or profession. Several of my students claimed that the authors were on to something, but that they themselves had no musical preferences whatsoever, and the article’s argument (while correct) did not apply to them.

<sup>3</sup> My example here is highly westernized but appears to be the most generous interpretation of what my students claim when they say they have no musical preferences: in *their* context, with the Western musical canon that they have ready access to, they have no inclination toward or away from any of these (culturally easy-to-access) musical genres.

what people mean when they say: “I’ll listen to *anything*, I don’t have a favorite genre.” What I have come to suspect is that musical preferences are so deeply personal that we hide what we believe to be conservative, mainstream, or otherwise *uncool* musical taste behind a protest that we have none. What I fear (what we are perhaps scared to learn) is that there is little we can do to mask these aspects of our identity. To speak about music is to speak about one’s inner self, a self we hide behind the careful artifice of first lines and cautious constructs—perhaps it is clearer now why speaking about music produces such fear. Still, I must begin somewhere, and I choose to begin where this project began, with an unmistakably undergraduate question and a complete ignorance of how complex satisfactory answers would be: What is music?

Reading Walter Benjamin for an undergraduate course, a passage jumped out at me the way certain melodies might get stuck in a person’s head. I inattentively whistle Mariah Carey around Christmas and Bruce Springsteen when summer starts to turn into autumn not because I am especially fond of their music, but because something in the melody compels me; and for a year I wandered around small towns in PA mentally reciting a few lines of Benjamin like a mantra.

In even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence—and nothing else—that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject. [...] *The whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological—and, of course, not only technological—reproducibility.* (Benjamin 2003, 253).

In certain continental philosophic communities this passage is immediately recognizable as part of Benjamin’s reflections on mechanical reproducibility and the aura in aesthetics. Of course, I must acknowledge his focus on photography and not music (Benjamin avoids discussing music

with studious precision).<sup>4</sup> This is maybe what puzzled me so much about this passage. Benjamin's discussion addresses the visual arts (photography, film, painting, and sculpture) and the role of visual art and mechanical reproduction in the rise of fascism and its propaganda, all *without* addressing music. I found it strange that Benjamin would remain so silent on the subject of music, especially considering his conversations with Adorno and the wealth of musical references in the letters the two philosophers exchanged. I became convinced that if only I knew what made music *music*, then I would know where to find the aura, where to find the part of a musical work that "bears the mark of history."

Indeed, whatever *is* special about music sounds similar to Benjamin's concept of the aura—there is something about the "here and now" of a performance, "its unique existence" that escapes technological reproduction. Even the most pristine recording fails to capture *something* that we experience in live performance, otherwise we would not spend hundreds upon hundreds of dollars to see our favorite bands live, from the balcony section in a sports stadium.<sup>5</sup> In an undergraduate thesis, "Talking About the Ineffable" I explored what it might mean to import Benjamin's aura into the realm of music, what challenges this adaptation might confront, and asked whether or not music really *was* the kind of thing that could hold this value. I became convinced that musical value is not auratic value. Auratic value belongs to the "sphere of

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<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he preferred to leave music, as a subject of philosophic interest, for exploration by Adorno. Several remarks in the surviving letters the two philosophers exchanged make reference to concerts they attended together and Adorno's own work on jazz and aesthetics, but Benjamin never picked up the topic for sustained examination (Adorno & Benjamin 2001).

<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing (in 2022) the cheapest tickets to see Blink-182 in Los Angeles are \$250. Surely, there is something special about a concert that means that listening to the band, across the length of a football stadium, *from the second deck* is worth *twenty times* more than the going rate for a digital copy of the band's album.



authenticity,” but this authenticity is not (cannot be) what we value in musical performance.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps we can still play Pachelbel’s quartets on gut strings, in literal chambers, candle-lit while the audience wears the appropriate clothing for the period, all to perfectly reproduce the acoustic setting of the original, but musical performances are not legitimized in this way. Perfect, authentic reproduction of the original is not just impossible (or difficult enough to seem impossible) in musical context but these performances are typically undesirable. The umpteenth, meticulously reproduced version of a classical work simply is not interesting to us in the way that new interpretations, vivacious conductors, and subtle variations between performances are. As an example, I care that the print hanging above my desk (a half-size reproduction of Hopper’s *Nighthawks*) is a faithful reproduction of the original, that the details are the same and that the print is high enough quality to maintain its connection to the original under close examination. But when I say that I love Arthur Rubenstein’s *Carnival*, I mean that I love how he plays it *differently* from other pianists. If everyone’s versions of the Schumann composition sounded identical (the way prints are meant to appear identical to the original) we would have no reason to re-record or re-perform popular classical works; a single, authoritative version would suffice. What we value in music is clearly not the same as this auratic value and its invocation of authenticity, but there is *something* about music that sets performances apart from recordings, something that appears to originate in the “here and now” of the concert.

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<sup>6</sup> R. A. Sharpe, from an embodied cognition standpoint, claims that musical authenticity “occurs only if we can hear the music as an experienced musician or connoisseur contemporaneous with its composition would have heard it” but *our* experience, unlike the experience of contemporaneous musicophiles, relies on propositional knowledge and not the embodied “know-how” proper to musical engagement (Sharpe 2000, 146–47). Authenticity, as much as it functions as an ideal for musical production and reception, is impossible for us to achieve after the work’s “original” appearance.

With Benjamin in the background, I would like to return to the original question: What is music? For someone (like myself) who listens to near-enough 500 hours of music a year *just* on streaming platforms, this should be an easy enough question to answer—all I need to do is describe what I have been listening to for over an hour a day (on average) for the past 20-ish years of my life, and fundamentally that is what I aim to do in this project. I now believe that music is not a *thing* at all, but a corporeal, relational activity, a way of connecting musicians and listeners that is primarily about the people and secondarily about the sound. To defend this position, I construct an original account of music called the Intercorporeal Account, which argues that music is a corporeal, relational activity, and musical works are best understood as relationships and not aesthetic objects. In the meantime, as might be apparent, the project is organized in symphonic form—each chapter loosely emulates the thematic development we would expect from the parallel movement. It makes sense, then, to introduce my argument with a prelude.

### **Overtures and Preludes**

Preludes come in all shapes and flavors, so please indulge a quick aside (the first of many) to explain this introduction with some musically themed metacommentary, specifically by contrasting Baroque and operatic preludes. The preceding remarks constitute a sort of Baroque prelude, a free-form composition that meanders through some of the ideas and motifs that the following, rigidly structured, work systematically explores. As an example, we might think about Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier BWV 846-893* which consists of a series of preludes and fugues that are paradigmatic of these Baroque musical forms. Bach's preludes, in their lack of structure and formal organization, introduce fugues which are *highly* structured and conventionally organized. I will not (in any great detail) return to Benjamin, people who profess a lack of musical preference,

or famous first lines; I will, however, explore some of these themes by discussing musical performance (the “here and now” of a musical work), expert and nonexpert musical opinion, and what I eventually call the “musical subject” whose identity is imbricated with their musical taste.

Operatic preludes, unlike their Baroque namesake, are overtures that quickly and expediently cover the important motifs that listeners should be familiar with in order to understand the soon-to-be-performed work. If Baroque preludes are an *amuse-bouche* for the formal presentation to follow, operatic preludes are more like a tasting menu. I say that operatic preludes are like a tasting menu because they are only introductions insofar as they are a shorter, condensed version of the larger acoustic feast that is the opera. As an example, we might think about Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte K. 620*. The major themes explored in Mozart’s *Magic Flute* opera are addressed in the lengthy prelude, central characters are acoustically introduced, and listeners are left with a general understanding of what they are about to see unfold on stage. I would like to frame the following remarks as an operatic prelude of sorts—I will briefly articulate the Intercorporeal Account<sup>7</sup> and explain the major argumentative moves of each chapter.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> My thanks to Vincent Colapietro and Claire Lockard for their comments at the 2020 Central APA and for suggesting the term intercorporeal. Earlier iterations of this project used the term intersubjective, rather than intercorporeal, and contributed to (as commentators identified) some confusion in my discussion of the cognitive and bodily components of musical activity. The term intercorporeal, borrowed from Merleau-Ponty and the concept of “intersubjectivité charnelle” that he develops, helps centralize the role of the embodied subject in musical production and reception.

My only worry is that the term intercorporeal masks some of the ways that musical relationships are temporally and geographically dispersed, the way they are constituted more like correspondences than face-to-face conversations. My account of music suggests that the work of art is a relationship of sorts, constituted by the embodied subjects whose activities comprise it, but does not require that there be face-to-face interactions between these embodied subjects. In other words, I want to account for how music can afford an experience of presence, rather than absence, even when musical subjects (listeners and musicians, for example) cannot or do not communicate face-to-face.

<sup>8</sup> I here distinguish between what I believe (and sometimes argue for on behalf of the Intercorporeal Account) and the Intercorporeal Account itself. As should be clear in Chapter 4, I am personally

The Intercorporeal Account claims that music is a corporeal, relational activity and that musical works are sets or assemblages of relationships. Put differently, the claim is that “music” is best understood as a normatively circumscribed relational mode, rather than a medium that produces work-objects like those in the plastic/visual arts. To explain the implications of the theory, we might imagine a few prototypical examples of musical engagement. I argue (the Intercorporeal Account claims) that “music” is what musicians and audiences are *doing* during a performance in the way that “baseball” is what the Red Sox and the Cardinals were *doing* during the 2004 World Series. It is not that musicians are faithfully, authentically reproducing an abstract and objective musical work during performance, but that music is the activity that musical subjects perform in the way that “baseball” is what athletes are *doing* on the field. This is perhaps intuitive in the case of improvisational work, where the actions of the musician in response to the audiences’ affect literally constitute the musical work in question; my argument is that this is also true in all instances of musical performance, even those guided by notated instructions (a score, guitar tabs, or the like). In conversations with musicians, this position is met with measured indifference, as though these claims are obviously true and anyone who believes otherwise must labor under some grand musical delusion. Among philosophers, however, the Intercorporeal Account is a clear outlier.

The primary issue for the Intercorporeal Account is a longstanding belief among philosophers of music that there exist musical works in a traditional, objective sense. If music just is the activity that musicians and audiences undertake, then what constitutes a musical *work* and how is it that we perform the same work multiple times? I claim that if music is constituted by the

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sympathetic to some admittedly extreme positions among philosophers of music that are not necessarily part of a robust defense of the Intercorporeal Account.

relational activities of musicians and audiences, then musical works are best understood as a kind of temporally dispersed relationship. I realize that this is perhaps not a satisfying answer—I wish I could say (as I did in earlier drafts) that musical works are perdurant happenings like rain-delayed baseball games, where the literal same event is played across multiple days. The truth of the matter is that I have no simple answer to traditional philosophers who claim musical works *must* be such-and-such a type of entity in order to be multiply-instantiable in the way we assume they are; the truth is that these issues are ever so slightly beyond the scope of the Intercorporeal Account. As I will discuss, ontological commitments in philosophy of music tend to quickly overflow their boundaries and flood the field of general ontology, and I want to be careful of saying *anything* too specific about how musical works must or must not exist. When I claim that musical works are best understood as relationships, I mean this in the most ecumenical sense possible.

A not-insignificant amount of discord in philosophy of music is produced by extra-musical disagreements over what kinds of entities exist in the world, music notwithstanding. Take, for example, the issue of musical works as abstract objects and their creation: Ross Cameron argues that musical works (if they exist at all, and he is wary of that assertion) must be abstract objects in order to admit of multiple instantiations, *and* that musical works must be created by composers, *and* that abstract objects are not created by humans (2008). Philosophers of music can resolve this inconsistent triad by rejecting any of these claims, and some (for an example, see Dodd 2000; 2002) reject the third and claim that abstract objects *can* be created by humans (i.e., physical causes can produce abstract objects). Setting aside a review of this argument for the time being, I want to draw attention to the fact that this ontological position has widespread implications beyond philosophy of music. One might disagree with this position if

they believe that abstract objects cannot be created or even that abstract objects do not exist. These disagreements, however, are bound up in non-musical ontological beliefs. My aim in constructing the Intercorporeal Account is to identify music as a relational activity and musical works as relationships, but I (mostly) refrain from speculating about what sorts of entities relationships might be. This is a loose identification of musical works, to be sure, but allows for adoption into any ontology that admits of relationships. The primary contribution of the Intercorporeal Account is its focus on music as a type of relational, embodied activity. The implications of this position for musical ontology should, as a matter of philosophic ecumenicalism (and due to philosophy of music's core methodologies) produce as few disruptions in one's existing ontological beliefs as possible. To explain what the Intercorporeal Account *does* claim, and to illuminate its place within the broader field of philosophy of music, I will briefly summarize the project in order.

The allegro movement, Chapter One, provides a brief overview of the ontology of music. I first discuss standard methodologies in the field of musical ontology, subsequently review standard ontological positions in philosophy and music alongside their shortcomings, and finally critique musical ontology in general using what I call the principle of "ontological dismissal." I begin with musical ontology because many philosophers do, and this is no accident because nearly any utterance *about* music carries ontological implications. If, for example, I say that I prefer a certain Baroque composer over another, then I imply quite a lot about my ontological commitments. I might say "I prefer Vivaldi to Bach, and Monteverdi to Pachelbel" and (if I mean this utterance literally) I have *also* implied that I believe musical works exist, works can be compositions and not merely performances, that performances or recordings provide access to musical works directly, and that what Vivaldi or Monteverdi composed is music. To

accommodate and standardize our ontological intuitions, philosophers of music employ a methodology of balance between revisionist and descriptivist ontological projects and measure their work against the pragmatic constraint. In general, the goal of musical ontologies is to explain the ontological status of musical works in ways that *describe* musical intuitions and praxis, and that *revise* our intuitions as little as possible to maintain consistency. The pragmatic constraint serves as an ontological guide and safeguard, “constraining” the realm of acceptable ontological positions using musical intuition and common-sense.

The field of musical ontology is dominated by the beliefs that musical works are some sort of abstract entity (either eternally existent or created) *or* that musical works are nominally collected sets of concrete entities. I review both Platonist and creationist approaches to musical works as abstract objects and demonstrate how nominalist ontologies attempt to circumvent some standard objections to abstracta-based positions. Next, I review two nonstandard ontologies of music (action theory and idealism) as potential alternatives to standard ontologies in light of the standard objections that these established positions face. Finally, I articulate what I call the principle of ontological dismissal which suggests that work in musical ontology is difficult, unnecessary, or beyond the scope of philosophy of music altogether. I combine moderate versions of these approaches to claim that musical ontology (a worthwhile endeavor in philosophy of music, I contend) can be set aside for consideration later, once I have fully articulated the Intercorporeal Account. Because definitional projects carry ontological implications (and *vice versa*) I claim that it will be possible to articulate a definition-like project (such as the Intercorporeal Account) and *then* return to the issue of musical ontology with fresh eyes. This is possible because, as ontological dismissal illustrates, musical ontology is less important for philosophy of music that the field’s gargantuan scope seems to imply.

The *larghetto* movement, Chapter Two, provides a similar (and similarly brief) overview of standard definitions of music since the Intercorporeal Account stands to contribute to both ontological and definitional projects in philosophy of music. The overarching goal of the chapter is to convince readers that the three standard definitional strategies that exist in philosophy of music face serious challenges on their own merits, and that they are undesirable in general due to their unilateral construction. Definitional projects, I explain, are differentiated by a primary (although nonexclusive) focus on either intrinsic, subjective, or intentional definitional conditions. Intrinsic definitions identify music by reference to the intrinsic features of musical works, and typically argue that the auditory components of a performance must include certain features in order to qualify the work as properly musical. Often, however, intrinsic definitions are either incomplete or inaccurate in their attempt to identify “music” or musical works by reference to necessary and sufficient conditions. Subjective definitions suggest that whatever we, individually or collectively, identify as music *is* music on the basis of this interpretation or perception. These definitions, perhaps obviously, stand to reproduce inaccuracies in common sense with no way to remedy this question-begging. Finally, intentional definitions claim that whatever works are *intended* to be musical properly *are* musical. However, intentional definitions fare about as well as their predecessors because either *all* or *some* intentions qualify works as musical. If only some intentions qualify a work as musical, then restricting properly musical intentions is a matter of intrinsic identification and intrinsic critiques pertain to these definitions. If any intention that a work be musical can qualify it *as* musical, then intentional definitions stand to reproduce the question-begging of subjective definitions. Broadly, I argue that the issue with standard definitional strategies in philosophy of music is that they identify music by reference to either the musician’s/composer’s production, the aesthetic work, or the audience’s reception and that this



kind of unilateral definition is undesirable. Since the producer, work, and audience comprise what I call the “musical triad” I argue that a multilateral definition centrally addressing more than one of these components may prove more accurate than intrinsic, subjective, or intentional definitions. Importantly, I argue that merely mixing and matching unilateral definitions is insufficient to make a definition multilateral, since the critiques raised throughout the chapter still apply. Instead, I offer the emerging field of Extended Musical Cognition as a viable path forward.

The vivace movement, Chapter Three, addresses Extended Musical Cognition (EMC) as a potential solution to some of the definitional issues faced by traditional philosophy of music. Traditional definitions are unilateral and address either the musician, aesthetic work, or audience as constitutive of a work’s musical status and EMC addresses some of these worries by claiming that music can be identified through embodied musical engagement, an activity undertaken by musicians and audiences both. I hesitate to call this definition tri-lateral (or comprehensive) because it maintains a focus on “musical engagement” that highlights the role of musical production and reception at the expense of definitive statements about the aesthetic work in question. Instead, I suggest that EMC offers a bi-lateral definitional strategy that enjoys significant advantages to traditional unilateral techniques, but still suffers from a slew of critiques and intra-disciplinary issues specific to the specific definitional strategy employed. EMC, I argue, affords three primary paths for definitional progress (1) the adaptation of traditional definitions using insights from the field, (2) merely sidestepping definitional issues and proceeding on the basis of common sense combined with the extended-mind commitments that underpin EMC scholarship, or (3) the construction of a thoroughgoing EMC definition of music “from scratch” as it were. Adapting traditional definitions is undesirable because few unilateral definitions are

compatible with the multilateral approach that EMC offers. Meanwhile, merely proceeding on the basis of common sense works well for most EMC projects but does little to help us construct a definition of music that substantially moves beyond unilateral subjective techniques. Last, I argue that constructing a thoroughgoing EMC definition would be a viable strategy if it were not so wildly unpopular and rarely successful. In the final chapter, I raise a meta-disciplinary worry about EMC philosophy and its identification of music and speculate about why potentially viable definitions still seem to fall flat.

The presto movement, Chapter Four, is organized as a sonata with its three distinctive sections and a coda. Sonatas contain an exposition, development, and recapitulation section before cadencing in which musical themes are (respectively) introduced, developed, and modulated. The overarching account provided in Chapter Four is a meta-definitional (what we might also interpret as an ontological) claim that music is best understood as a corporeal activity, and that these activities are not only relational but establish specific relationships. In order to support these claims, Chapter Four takes up EMC philosophy, continental philosophy of music, and insights from queer musicology and performativity theory.

Chapter Four's exposition addresses EMC definitions and argues that identifying music as a tool that affords extended musical engagement (as our exemplar, Joel Krueger, and most EMC theorists do) is insufficient. EMC, as a discipline, takes the extended mind thesis as accurate and explores its implications for music, but I argue that these commitments recommend treating music *as* the activity of musical engagement and not a separable, stable object with which musicians and audiences interact. Some theorists already point in this direction, but none yet commit themselves to the idea that music just is musical engagement. I argue that a focus on musical engagement by ordinary folks recommends the current perspectives found in EMC, but

that a comprehensive examination of musical praxis and intuition on the part of musical experts suggests music must *be* musical activities (i.e., extended musical engagement).

Chapter Four's development section addresses the role of embodiment in musical engagement and takes up phenomenological evidence to support an account of music as an embodied (or corporeal) and relational activity. First, I review work by Suzanne Cusick that suggests music is not only an activity of some sort, but a relational activity. I turn to Merleau-Ponty as a common source for both EMC and musicological perspectives on music and musical embodiment and argue that music is not just an activity but a relational activity. Merleau-Ponty, of course, suggests that this relationality is a confrontation between self and world, but Cusick emphasizes the way that music is not just relational, but a *relationship*. Given the insights I borrow from EMC and phenomenology, I interpret Cusick's work to mean that most philosophers of music are simply looking in the wrong place when they go to define music. Music is not, this evidence suggests, an object but a relational mode of sorts, a way of connecting musicians and audiences with one another through engagement with specific musical activities. On this framework we can call music an activity that operates according to certain norms and modes of engagement, and musical works specific relationships that operate according to these principles. At this stage, the Intercorporeal Account is nearly complete, the sonata has reached its *medial caesura* where musical development naturally concludes, and the original melodies are prepared for recapitulation.

Chapter Four's recapitulation section takes up the Intercorporeal Account and offers a few closing thoughts to thematically conclude the argument. Primarily, the recapitulation section suggests that Judith Butler's performativity solves some of the issues with gendered embodiment that Merleau-Ponty's theory of intercorporeality faces and helps explain a key analogy in the

Intercorporeal Account: music is like marriage. Music, like the institution of marriage, is normed and so defined by the circulation of its concepts. Music and marriage both are institutions and what we call the specific instantiations of these institutions, and both are performatively constituted by active engagement on the part of gendered (or musical) subjects. Specific marriages, and I argue specific works of music, are circumscribed by their performative construction, and rely on performative utterances and certain materializations in order to be legitimized. The key insight I borrow from Butler is the claim that these activities and relationships are not ontologically grounded in some base reality but are constituted by their own iterative and reiterative performance, that they are what we (collective) make of them, and there is no original to which instances are authentic.

The Intercorporeal Account, more than anything, means to claim that music is a way of relating to one another, and that music is therefore not primarily about the sound, but about the collective activity and about the people. Most definitions of music rely on the intuition that musical works are objects like any other, that there is not such a huge difference between painting and composing. Perhaps this is convenient shorthand, but I mean to claim that music is best identified without this reliance on visual media, and that it is best identified in the way that musicians and musical experts discuss it, as an activity that *we* perform together. Altogether too often we dismiss the ways we talk about music as too poetic, or mere fantasy, but what if it were true that when you *feel* as though the voice on the radio is singing to *you*, it actually is? If our ontologies and definitions are beholden to praxis, the ways we think and talk about music, then what would a definition of music look like if it accommodated the less-academically-rigorous ways that we discuss music? To that effect, allow me to conclude this prelude of sorts with one last poetic illustration.

Suzanne Cusick reports that her earliest memories are of bewilderment when confronted with the categories of an adult world, and of music that came to her in dreams, “a music which seemed palpable, shining, like silver air, a music through which one could pass out of the bewildering world and into reality” (2006, 69). This shimmering music is familiar to me (although truthfully it has not come to me in dreams for quite some time now) and I share Cusick’s conviction that there is something special about music, something that sorts a childlike world of chaos into order without sacrificing its wonder. I remember being 17 and hearing an already-ten-year-old song by Mountain Goats, “Color in Your Cheeks,” and being so struck by it that I literally could not listen to anything else for a month; I remember being swept off my feet, and I remember *loving* this song in the truest sense of that word. John Darnielle recorded the song on a broken Panasonic RX-F500 boombox, and as the first few chords rang out, tinny and loud against the low drone of the cassette recorder, I fell head over heels for this sound. Of course, like many first loves, my infatuation was not particularly long-lived, and my relationship with the Mountain Goats developed into something altogether more complex in the ensuing years, but this monomaniacal experience of music has not waned. Call it obsessive, but there is something to certain songs that grabs ahold of me so powerfully that I cannot help but stay enraptured until the relationship runs its course. I could regale you with stories of song after song that captured me in this way, but what I mean to say is that there is more to music than Hamlet’s philosophies could contain, much less skeptical Horatio’s. In fact, our philosophies are often inadequate in the face of these musical experiences, but these *are* our experiences of music. I hope I can take a step toward explaining music not just as it is, but as it is *to us*.

## CHAPTER ONE

## METHODOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY (ALLEGRO)

*or, I Knew Prufrock Before He Got Famous*

“Ce qu’on ne peut dire et ce qu’on ne peut taire, la musique l’exprime” is a famous passage concerning music that roughly translates to “That which cannot be said and cannot remain unsaid, music expresses” (Hugo, 1864). This and myriad other hyperbolic (and egregiously misquoted) sayings about music are readily available to any moderately curious English speaker with an internet connection. It appears as though everyone from Plato to Bono had something inspirational to say about music. As musicophiles, we are perhaps sympathetic to these claims. After all, music is what emotions sound like, it speaks where words fail, it is an outburst of the soul itself, and even infamously dour Nietzsche is quoted as saying that without music, life would be a mistake.<sup>1</sup> Music, these quotes imply, is somehow fundamental to our lives. In our most melancholic moments, we might imagine ourselves as Rob Gordon<sup>2</sup> from the opening scene of *High Fidelity*: Sitting in our Chicago apartment, listening to a vinyl copy of “You’re Gonna Miss Me” (original, not re-released) on appropriately chunky headphones to drown out deadlines, bills, and recent breakups. In these examples, music appears again and again as a kind of foundational human experience. Music is said to ground our lives, to inform

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<sup>1</sup> Feel free to substitute your favorite cliché in this list for maximum effect, none of these lists appear to be accurate by even the most lenient of citational standards.

<sup>2</sup> Often literally! For the author’s example, see The Wonder Years’ “My Life as Rob Gordon” from *Suburbia I’ve Given You All and Now I’m Nothing*. (Hopeless Records, 2011).

how we understand ourselves and the world around us. All this hyperbole is making music sound more and more like a kind of “first philosophy.” Plato’s Socrates even goes so far as to say that philosophy itself is a *type of music* in the *Phaedo* (Plato, 60d-e). However, philosophy and musicology are clearly different disciplines; listening to a lecture is quite a different experience than listening to an album. I contend that whatever subjects and disciplines might be called “first philosophy” musicology is not one of them.

I understand, I’m disappointed too. Philosophy of music has pulled off an impressive theoretical bait-and-switch. Yes, philosophers of music wax poetic about the importance of real-world practice—but when philosophers of music begin discussing music, they begin (like everyone else) with ontology. Even work in the continental tradition, centrally concerned with sociopolitical and contextual questions, usually starts with some sort of ontological claim (Roholt 2017, 51). This makes sense, of course, since discussions about music fall flat when folks cannot even agree on what counts as “music.” Often philosophers sidestep this question by focusing on particular genres or uncontroversial examples of music, but an ontological claim is latent in even these narrowly circumscribed projects: “What *I* am talking about *is* music.” No matter where philosophers of music begin their discussion, ontology makes an appearance.

Despite how foundational ontology is to the discipline, most of us rely (at least initially) on a kind of Potter Stewart<sup>3</sup> approach to music. Musical ontology is broadly committed to maintaining a “praxis-oriented” methodology and subscribes “to a methodological principle now commonly known [...] as ‘the pragmatic constraint’” (Giombini 2017, 70). The pragmatic constraint asks us to measure the accuracy of our theories against real-world practices.

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<sup>3</sup> I know it when I ~~see~~ *hear* it!

Ostensibly, this principle is intended to facilitate inter-theory discussion and provide a standard by which to judge musical ontologies. However, this reliance on intuition is a double-edged sword. Despite its popularity, the pragmatic constraint produces as many different intuitive musical ontologies as there are theorists since our intuitions regarding which musical practices are primary (or deserving of inclusion in our ontology) are culturally and individually specific. Additionally, several theorists refuse the pragmatic constraint altogether and opt for heavily revisionist ontologies instead. With the number of competing intuitions and approaches that exist, for those of us invested in the conversation, the stakes of musical ontology are deceptively high.

Specifically, musical ontology so often puts us in the position of defending the pieces and works we hold most dear. To illustrate these stakes, I propose a brief exercise *à la* Rob Gordon (Hornby 1996): Take a moment and mentally prepare your desert-island, all-time, top five favorite songs.<sup>4</sup> As a means of helping guide this process, imagine pieces that are particularly meaningful to you, pieces you return to after a long hiatus, or even just pieces that you can hum the melody to. [Go right ahead, I'll wait up!] Now that you have a list in mind, indulge me with a few follow-up questions: Do any of your desert-island, all-time, top five songs have words? Do any include improvisation as part or most of the piece? Are they sufficiently similar to 19th-to-20th century Western classical music that they could be definitively scored? Are they performed

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<sup>4</sup> Why is this project always so difficult? For reasons discussed later, I suspect that we have competing intuitions regarding what music is, categorically speaking: On the one hand, we intuitively categorize music at least into popularly recognized genres and what we enjoy about certain genres is often different than what we enjoy about others. On the other hand, we believe that 'music' is a complete category and that all musical works are identifiable as the same artistic medium. Judging works in a cross-genre context is quite a difficult project since deciding what to include often means deciding which forms of enjoyment we value most.



based on a prescriptive score written in musical notation? Chances are that some, if not all, of the pieces you find indispensable cannot be called “music” according to some standard musical ontologies. In this way, what is at stake in musical ontology is the legitimacy of the pieces of music we hold dear, and (by extension) the legitimacy of our musically constituted identities. Because our favorite pieces of music are so dear to us, because our musical taste comprises such a large part of our identity, these ontological theories speak to something altogether more personal than abstract musical existence. The musical ontologies we subscribe to (and their claims about the music we listen to, love, and share) tell us something important about ourselves. What is it we value, musically? Philosophically? Personally?

### **Ontology, Definitions and the Intercorporeal Project**

Merely saying that musical ontology is where *most* philosophers begin their discussions of music is different from claiming that we must also begin with these questions. In fact, to begin work on the Intercorporeal Account that I propose, we will ultimately set aside issues of ontology, strictly circumscribed. This is possible, in part, because definitional and ontological projects in philosophy of music pursue different goals but overlap in both methodology and content to a large extent. By this I mean to imply that definitional and ontological projects in philosophy of music are conceptually, if not always pragmatically, distinct. Allow me to explain the differences between these projects, and how the Intercorporeal Account situates itself relation to existing ontological and definitional theories.

In deciding what counts as music, philosophers may propose a *definition* of music that purports to identify all and only instances of music. This kind of circumscribing of possible musical entities is different than the project of ontology in which philosophers weigh in on the ontological status of music or musical works. A definition, for example, may only consist of the

claim that objects in the world matching X, Y, and Z conditions qualify as music (or at least qualify as musical). Further, definitional accounts are often in the business of differentiating music from other nonmusical events. A proper definition of music should likely explain why music-like sounds (train-track rhythms or whale songs, for example) are not music, despite sharing a number of auditory similarities with musical performances (or else these accounts should provide a compelling argument for the status of these sounds *as* music). For the purposes of this project, I call accounts of music “definitional” if they aim to provide necessary and/or sufficient conditions to identify actual instances of music or musical works. For example, a robust definition of music might claim that pieces of art that demonstrate rhythm, harmony, and melody qualify as “music.” Definitional accounts answer the “What is music?” question by explaining how to judge musical from nonmusical entities.

By contrast, an ontology of music usually provides an account of what *sorts* of entities musical works must be such that they appear in the world (or, in the case of antirealist ontologies discussed later, why they cannot appear in the world). Ontological projects often attempt to identify what *makes up* music or a musical work, whereas definitional projects usually attempt to identify music or musical works regardless of their ontological makeup. For the purposes of this project, I call accounts of music “ontological” if they aim to explain the sort of entity a musical work must be. Many ontological projects recommend or support specific definitions, but most of these accounts merely identify which ontological category of entities musical works belong to. For example, a robust ontology of music may only claim that musical works are “ideas” in certain relevant senses without providing standards by which to separate musical ideas which constitute a work from other kinds of (nonmusical) ideas. Ontological accounts answer the “What is music?” question by telling a story about the stuff from which it is made.

These projects, musical definitions and ontologies, are closely related by a kind of “hermeneutic circle” in which ontological commitments shape what kinds of definitions we find compelling, and *vice versa*.<sup>5</sup> I claimed that musical definitions and ontological accounts are theoretically distinct but not necessarily separable in practice. That is because making significant progress in either kind of project implies certain commitments in the other. Ontologists who, for example, believe that musical works are eternally existent abstract entities (in the way that mathematical proofs or formulas are) cannot commit themselves to definitions which identify music by reference to composer intent. Similarly, musical definitions which identify music by subjective standards cannot easily reconcile their project with a Platonist ontology of musical works. Given the close relationship between ontological and definitional projects, each one constantly influencing the other, why begin with ontology?

From a pragmatic standpoint, philosophers of music begin with ontology because it’s easy. No, seriously. Constructing a whole ontology from scratch is a monumental and intimidatingly complicated task but relatively few theorists (at least in recent years) proceed in that manner. Most of us (philosophers, people broadly) enter into these discussions with some latent ontological commitments that help guide us through the theoretically difficult terrain of

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<sup>5</sup> I’m introducing the hermeneutic circle as a kind of metaphor for the self-reinforcing work that definitional and ontological projects perform in the philosophy of music. To be clear, I understand a whole *account* of music to involve both a definitional and ontological component, but working on both at the same time is a difficult task since changing one’s commitments in either project usually requires changing one’s commitments in the other. We can, by way of analogy, think of the ontological project of a musical account as a kind of ‘context’ for the definitional project and the definitional project as a kind of ‘text’ situated in the context of a certain ontological theory. As we gain a better understanding of the context in which our definitions operate, we gain a better understanding of what is required of the definition and *vice versa*—as we develop more specific or cohesive definitions, it is likely that our understanding of the relevant context will change as well. The metaphor is not to imply that the work performed by philosophers of music is merely interpretive, but to highlight the way in which our *fundamental* beliefs about ontology are likely to be placed in question as we develop definitions that accurately track intuition and real-world practice.

musical ontology. At risk of sounding tautological, those of us with broadly Platonic ontological commitments can easily adopt Platonic musical ontologies. In this way, choosing an ontology of music is a relatively straightforward task of matching preexisting ontological commitments to the range of available musical ontologies while making sure that our commitments are sufficiently “praxis oriented” to account for actual music-making practices. Choosing or constructing a musical ontology, unlike choosing or constructing a musical definition, allows us to directly import deeply held ontological beliefs and apply them in musical contexts. It is, in this way, perfectly possible adopt a kind of readymade account of music in which one applies their previously held ontological beliefs to the special case of music. Better yet, for definitional projects, one can pick from the plethora of robust ontological accounts which already exist. However, if this kind of mix-and-match account of music was sufficient for the Intercorporeal Account’s aims, then the remainder of this dissertation would be largely unnecessary.

The Intercorporeal Account begins with ontology “nawt because it is easy” but because it wipes the slate clean and allows the project to proceed within relatively narrow ontological boundaries. While the majority of existing ontological (and definitional) projects are incompatible with the goals of the Intercorporeal Account, the project cannot begin from scratch. The account takes up the standard methodology of philosophy of music and relies heavily on existing work from ontological and definitional projects in the field. The Intercorporeal Account is, for example, committed to “methodological balance” and the pragmatic constraint; it is committed to providing an ontological and definitional explanation of music in the broadest terms. As such, in what follows, I aim to review the standard methodology used by philosophy of music, and several of the most successful ontologies of music. An initial review of musical ontology and methodology helps the Intercorporeal Account set the terms of debate; helps readers loosen their

grip on pre-existing ontological assumptions about music; provides background for later ontological, methodological, and definitional claims; and provides good reasons for moving forward in the “hermeneutic circle” of philosophy of music *without* a robust ontological foundation.

### **Methodology**

In plain terms, philosophy of music’s ontological and methodological debates are complicated—so complicated, in fact, that Lisa Giombini’s book *Musical Ontology: A Guide for the Perplexed* offers a guide for *experts* perplexed by the field of musical ontology. Despite a surfeit of literature concerning the state of the field, little consensus exists regarding musical ontology’s proper scope, methodology, content, or even existence. In fact, offering a comprehensive guide to the discipline can feel like a truly Sisyphean task; everyone in the field is, even at the intra-disciplinary level, writing a guide for the perplexed. But no matter how many accurate and well-organized guides are published, confusion persists. The sheer diversity of projects sheltered under the umbrella of “musical ontology” means that even experts in one area are often novices in others. Given these challenges to establishing consistent standards in the field, some theorists recommend abandoning the subdiscipline altogether in favor of broader ontological projects. Notably, Ridley (2003), Thomasson (2005), and Walton (1988), contend that musical ontology is a philosophically trivial project. These theorists hold the position that the fundamental concerns of musical ontology are adequately addressed by general ontological accounts. According to this line of argument, an adequate ontology of musical simply is an adequate ontological theory, full stop. Ontology of music is, for these scholars, a mere application of ontology or (at best) a sub-field within ontology but does not fall within the proper scope of philosophy of music. However,

even considering musical ontology as a type of sub-discipline, we can identify certain features that differentiate it from more expansive ontological accounts.

Musical ontology is uniquely committed to the idea that “artworks, particularly musical works, are among the most metaphysically puzzling things there are, and thus that they are not *mere* examples, but centrally important ones” (Kania 2008a, 31). Musical ontologies, perhaps obviously, take music or musical works as their initial point of inquiry and operate under the assumption that any adequate ontological theory must first provide an adequate account of music or musical works. Of course, deciding what qualifies as an adequate account is easier said than done. Musical ontology addresses an intuitively familiar phenomenon; music is, especially with the advent of portable music players, a relatively commonplace part of ordinary lived experience. Accordingly, a significant number of theorists are committed to a type of descriptive project that aims to account for real-world musical practices. This descriptivist approach to musical ontology is contrasted by revisionist approaches in which metaphysical consistency takes priority over musical praxis. Broadly speaking, I will categorize musical ontologies (and their methodological aims) as existing along a spectrum between descriptivism and revisionism, similarly to Giombini (2017). However, there are a variety of related terms, theories, and concepts that interact with these organizational categories to produce the incredibly varied landscape of musical ontology. I mention this to acknowledge that nuance exists between these poles of the spectrum that the scope of this project cannot adequately address, and to note that many of the terms I will be using are still in a state of flux. However, if the field of musical ontology can be said to exist as a unique discipline, ontologies of music are (near-universally) measured by their ability to balance revisionist consistency-based accounts with a descriptivist focus on praxis.

## Revisionist Approaches

I begin, as do some of the more prolific philosophers of music (Giombini 2017; Kania 2008b), by mentioning Nelson Goodman's *Languages of Art* (1968) as the origin of the modern debate in musical ontology. My purpose, similar to my interlocutors', is to illustrate a highly revisionist ontology not because the precise features of Goodman's theory are important, but because the intuitive cost that it demands is widely understood by musical ontologists as unreasonable. Of course, revisionist musical ontologies ask adopters to sacrifice some or many of their intuitions regarding music for the sake of philosophic rigor, broadly construed. These kinds of ontologies "claim that our intuitive judgments about the identity and persistence of things are incorrect" (Giombini 2017). However, even revisionist theories are usually measured against the "pragmatic constraint," (an admittedly vague) standard that serves as a stopgap against truly bizarre musical ontologies. The pragmatic constraint, in its most widely accepted form, "constrains" theories within certain intuitive bounds, essentially requiring that musical ontologies remain somewhat rooted in the praxis they address. A theory violates this constraint when it does not adequately account for real-world musical practices in egregiously counterintuitive ways. Goodman's ontology of art has become infamous in musical ontology as an example of a poorly balanced revisionist account, and I will briefly review his theory to demonstrate the sorts of intuitive costs that most philosophers of music find prohibitively expensive.

In discussing music, Goodman begins by differentiating between works that permit of forgeries (which he calls *autographic*) and works that do not (called *allographic*). In the autographic arts, the identity of a work is tied to the authorship of that work such that a precise replica is a forgery, and not one instance of the work among many. We might think of painting or sculpture, the "plastic arts" broadly construed, as autographic in this way. A brushstroke-for-brushstroke

replica of Vermeer's *Girl With Pearl Earring* is a forgery because the important aspect of the painting, to us, is its authorship. Meanwhile, in the case of the allographic arts (including literature, poetry, and music), precise replicas of the *important artistic aspects* of the work are called copies. Two identical versions of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* are called copies because a word-for-word replica of the original story is merely a copy of the story, and not a forgery. To distinguish between the important and unimportant aspects of a work in the allographic arts, Goodman remarks, "all that matters is what may be called *sameness of spelling*: the exact correspondence as sequences of letters, spaces, and punctuation marks" (1968). When we replicate a poem or piece of literature, so long as we preserve "sameness of spelling" we have created a copy of the work, not a forgery.<sup>6</sup> A copy, in this terminology, is a perfect recreation of the original work according to an accepted notational system such that all the information communicated by the notational system is preserved. The most important implication of this definition is that in the allographic arts, an attempt to copy the original which is inaccurate according to *any* of the information communicated by the notational system is not a copy of the original. In the case of literature, this means that a reprint of a text which includes errors in comparison to the original manuscript is not the same text, and in the case of music, a performance with *any errors* in comparison to the score *is not the same work*.

Concretely, what Goodman implies is that a single wrong note is enough to disqualify a performance from being a performance of the work it intends. That this is an implication of Goodman's theory is uncontroversial because he makes this claim explicitly (1968, 186). I further

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<sup>6</sup> Importantly, copies only replicate the "sameness of spelling" or the artistically important aspects of the allographic work. For example, a version of *A Christmas Carol* that purports to be a first edition when it is not would be considered a forgery, but that the book itself is a first edition is not "artistically important" to the work of literature that Dickens wrote.



claim that if this is true, there has never been a performance of a scored work in the sense that Goodman discusses it. To explain, it is important that Goodman believes a work of music must be *definitively* notated in order to properly count as allographic in the first place (179-92) and that those parts of a musical work which are not wholly determined by the score (e.g., free cadenzas, figured-bass notation) are not properly allographic. In this way, no variance whatsoever is permitted between a work (identified here as a definitively notated score) and its performance such that any imperfect reproduction of the definitively notated aspects of the work disqualifies the performance from being of the work we assume it is. Perhaps Goodman is willing to bite the bullet concerning *most* performances, but it is my contention that *no* performances of musical works exist in his ontology. Perfectly reproducing a score is difficult (at least nearly, if not actually, impossible) just due to the overwhelming possibilities that a mistake occurs during performance: a slightly out-of-tune instrument (perhaps due to a cold breeze from a venue's HVAC system), a tuning system that does not match the composer's (most classical orchestral works were not composed to be performed with concert A at 440 Hz and yet that is the standard nowadays<sup>7</sup>), or a *just barely* out of time percussionist would be sufficient to (on Goodman's terms) disqualify the performance from being of the work it purports to be of. Additionally, it might be impossible to perfectly reproduce the work-as-scored when that score indicates the use of

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<sup>7</sup> As a matter of historical curiosity: a<sup>1</sup> ("Concert A") became such a subject of politics that the French government instituted the "Diapason Normal" in 1859 which set a<sup>1</sup> at 435 Hz after pressure from choir and opera singers. The style of the period continually increased the pitch of Concert A, pushing singers further and further out of their register until the note reached pitches above 451 Hz. Unfortunately, the French Diapason Normal only lasted a few decades; internationally, Concert A fell in pitch during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century until the Treaty of Versailles (yes, the same treaty that ended World War One) instituted the now-standard pitch of 440 Hz. These changes were a nightmare for woodwind players who no longer needed to transpose their parts to play within their register, and for organists who might sit down at an instrument tuned to Italian standards (with a<sup>1</sup> at only 395 Hz) or modern English standards (with a<sup>1</sup> somewhere between 427 and 460 Hz) (Thistlethwaite and Webber 1999).

instruments that are no longer made or are widely unpopular (as in the case of gut strings, for example) not to mention that some scores instruct musicians to play with a certain *feeling* as if affect were part of the notation of the work. (How, exactly, would we go about verifying musicians' affect and emotions in performances?) More than these worries, however, Goodman's understanding of what counts as an acceptable reproduction is *quite* precise, and an "acceptable reproduction" appears to require more precision than most humans are capable of.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> My concern here is practical—I mean to say that no worldly performance is perfectly accurate to the score in the relevant sense. Goodman claims that a single note in a score indicates an "acceptable range" of pitches which the performer is meant to replicate, and he claims this to avoid the counterintuitive conclusion that a *slightly* out of tune performer would disqualify a whole performance from being of the work it claims to be (1968, 182). However, this "acceptable range" must be incredibly narrow since he also claims there are audible, pitch-based differences between differently spelled notes on string instruments. If the differences between an *a*-flat, *g*-sharp, and *f*-double-sharp are meaningful, and Goodman believes they are (182), the acceptable range of pitches indicated by each must be extraordinarily small. Given this demand for precision among a host of other practical concerns, I sincerely doubt that *any* musical performance has been perfect in every way, for every note, on every instrument, for the entire work, start to finish.

Generally, I worry about Goodman's understanding of music theory insofar as it influences his ability to determine the relevant features of a notated score. In particular, his description of musical "spelling" reveals a concerning misunderstanding. Goodman claims that musical notation for certain instruments is redundant because multiple notations indicate the same sound-event (1968, 182). In the case of a piano, Goodman claims that the notations "*c*-sharp, *d*-flat, *e*-triple-flat, *b*-double-sharp, and so on" are sonically identical (181) whereas in the case of a violin, they are not (182). The meaningful difference, he believes, is that the *actual pitch* of the note is different on a violin since it is a non-fretted string instrument, but the actual pitch of a piano performing each note is identical. While this is a common misunderstanding, note spellings are a vitally important part of musical notation due to their functional role in chord spelling. Each note spelling is meaningfully different on *every* instrument, regardless of sonic variation, because the functional role of the chord is determined by its spelling in the same way that a word is determined by its letters. (As an analogy, suggesting that *e*-triple-flat is functionally the same as *b*-double-sharp because they notate the same pitch would be like saying that *son* and *sun* are the same word because they *sound* the same.)

For example, a German Augmented 6<sup>th</sup> (G<sup>6</sup>) chord and a Dominant 7-flat-5 (D<sup>7</sup><sub>(b5)</sub>) are sonically identical when played on a piano but are spelled differently because they function differently in the context of the work. G<sup>6</sup> chords avoid parallel 5<sup>th</sup> in voice leading to transition from a pre-dominant chord to the dominant chord. By contrast D<sup>7</sup><sub>(b5)</sub> chords are *extremely* rare (often appearing as re-spellings of G<sup>6</sup> chords) and function either as a type of neighbor-tone dissonance resolved to the supertonic (ii) before a cadence or as a dominant chord itself. In other words, two identically sounding chords either function as a type of pre-dominant chord, or as a dominant chord, depending on the spelling.

Part of the definitive notation of a work is an indication of musical progression, and misspelling a chord is in this way identical to misspelling a word in a novel. If part of what it means to be an allographic work is that two people can confront the same work in different reproductions, this indicates that musical

If I am correct that no composed works have ever been performed (or Goodman is correct and there are far fewer real performances than we believe) his ontology requires an immense amount of revision to our intuitive understanding of the world. Even the most generous interpretation of Goodman's argument implies that most of us have never seen a classical work performed even if we have bought tickets to the symphony and attended a concert. Indeed, Goodman's revisionist ontology might sound almost cartoonish to us when he freely admits: "the reader must be prepared to find his convictions and his common sense—that repository of ancient error—often outraged by what he finds here" (1968, xii). Goodman explicitly asks his reader to sacrifice deeply held intuitions for the sake of correcting error and working toward a more accurate understanding of the world. The issue for Goodman's theory (and other revisionist ontologies like his) is that musical ontology purports to explain human behaviors. If Goodman is right, and very few of us have ever *really* witnessed a performance of a classical, composed musical work, then what is it the rest of us have been doing for the past several hundred years?

Revisionist ontologies like Goodman's offer ontological or metaphysical consistency at the cost of (some of) our intuitions regarding musical practice, and our ordinary interactions with music and musical ideas (conversations about our favorite songs, a general understanding of what it is radio DJs are doing when they spin a record). Revisionist approaches like Goodman's are appealing to philosophers because they aim to satisfy our belief that musical ontology just is a type of ontology. The same reasons we have to accept other, widely held ontological positions

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spelling is *essential* to the identity of a musical work. The actual pitch of the notes performed, in cases where pitch variance is possible and permitted, is informed by the functional role of the note in the context of its chord or the temporal progression of the piece. It worries me that Goodman misunderstands what is important concerning musical notation, given that he believes notation to be determinative of accurate allographic reproduction.

also support broadly revisionist approaches to musical ontology since they are constructed with the same goals of coherence and accuracy. Revisionism in ontology (musical ontologies included) is concerned with describing “the world more accurately as it actually is, independently of our thought about it” (Giombini 2017, 72). However, “what it comes down to is why one would prefer theoretically congruent revisionism to satisfactory, albeit more vague, reliable descriptions of musical phenomena” (Giombini 2017, 72). It is precisely this concern that motivates descriptivist ontological projects in opposition to revisionist approaches like Goodman’s.

### **Descriptivist Approaches**

Revisionist ontologies, like Goodman’s, run opposite to descriptivist ontological projects in which “the demands of the art one is attempting to understand trump the demands of metaphysics” (Kania 2008b, 431). Admittedly, this construction of descriptivist methodology by Kania is nearly as extreme as Goodman’s version of revisionist ontology. Just as no one believes that *all* our intuitions should be sacrificed for the sake of metaphysical consistency, no theorist actually holds the position that *all* the demands of praxis trump the demands of metaphysics. Rather, descriptivism in musical ontology is a call to attend to intuition as a viable, even primary, source of evidence for our theories. This methodology of description serves as a direct foil to revisionist ontologies that emphasize metaphysical consistency at the expense of our commonsense understanding of ordinary musical praxis. It is important for us to understand that descriptivist ontologies treat praxis as primary and metaphysical concerns as secondary, whereas revisionist ontological approaches do the opposite.

We might have all kinds of good reasons to prefer a descriptivist, praxis-oriented approach. Guy Rohrbaugh remarks that a properly constructed account of art is “ beholden to our artistic practices—the ways we talk, think, and act in relation to art or at least some rational

reconstruction of these” (2003, 179). In plain language, Rohrbaugh claims that whatever we say about art, we need to engage with art as it is practiced. There is no sense, proponents of descriptivism claim, in constructing a consistent theory to explain musical praxis if it cannot adequately *explain praxis*.<sup>9</sup> Operating in the background is a basic assumption that what we do when we do ontology is provide a theory to explain the world as we encounter it. This directly opposes the project revisionist ontologies that claim to describe the world *not* as we encounter it, but *as it actually is* (supported by the assumption that these are separate). What remains important in this discussion is that these are ontological methodologies, ways of constructing ontological goals, and deciding which theories adequately satisfy those goals. Talk of revisionist or descriptivist ontologies reflects how specific accounts were constructed primarily using one or the other methodology.

Returning to our earlier discussion, we are now in a better position to contextualize the pragmatic constraint as a kind of descriptivist goal. The pragmatic constraint essentially asks us to measure the accuracy of our ontological theories against praxis, thus offering a desideratum for musical ontologies of all sorts, and an especially important desideratum for descriptivist projects: Account for actual musical praxis, the ordinary ways we engage with music both as experts and in the ways we think, talk and act in relation to music and musical works in the world.<sup>10</sup> In

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<sup>9</sup> It is important, with Rohrbaugh’s claim in the background, to note that “musical praxis” is a blanket term in the field that covers both expert and nonexpert musical engagement. What this means, practically, is that the demand that musical ontologies “explain praxis” is not merely a demand that we accurately account for how musicians and composers produce musical works, but a demand that we accurately account for how ordinary folks like you and I listen to, talk about, or otherwise engage with music in our everyday lives.

<sup>10</sup> We should be careful about the language we use to link the pragmatic constraint. A focus on clear philosophic description can (and often does) conflict with a focus on messy, real-world praxis. Because musical praxis is not consistent across cultures and genres, a descriptivist ontology can only be so

addition to providing methodological guidance the pragmatic constraint also provides a methodology of critique. Giombini notes that the “pragmatic constraint is thus applied not only as a methodological principle to pursue the best possible ontological theory of artwork, but also to reject theories that do not respect the principle” (2017, 72). In this way, descriptivism (here used as an interchangeable term with “praxis-oriented methodology”) pulls double duty for the musical ontologist: it simultaneously builds ontological theories that rest on the primacy of praxis, *and* critiques ontologies that fail to satisfy the pragmatic constraint.

The critical project of descriptivism is integral to musical ontology of all kinds. Returning to the previous section, we find that the majority of Goodman’s critics rely on a kind of descriptivist metric in their refutation of the “wrong-note paradox.” For Goodman to claim that a single wrong note<sup>11</sup> disqualifies a performance from being of the work it purports is counterintuitive and forces us to forfeit deeply intuitive beliefs about music and musical works in the world. The demand for praxis-oriented approaches that are compatible with our musical intuitions is so strong that noncompliance alone is enough to cast doubt on a theory.

However, it is still uncertain what compliance constitutes, much less how one might recognize noncompliance so egregious that it disqualifies an otherwise promising ontological theory. That the pragmatic constraint is uncertain has been the subject of some debate in musical

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comprehensive before it suffers from a lack of coherency and consistency. To mitigate this worry, Giombini (2007) and others identify “a link between descriptivist and praxis-oriented approaches. A descriptivist ontology of music is able to take into account our pre-theoretical thoughts about music, and consequently our musical practices” (73). While esoteric theories may pull apart descriptivist and praxis-oriented approaches, the vast majority of theorists believe that the desiderata of descriptivist and praxis-oriented ontologies are the same; in other words, they are one and the same project (Giombini 2017). For our purposes we can treat praxis-oriented and descriptivist ontologies as the same sorts of projects.

<sup>11</sup> “Wrong” here construed to mean inaccurate regarding the score either in pitch, spelling, duration, any other feature available to musical notation, or many of these features at once.

ontology. A purely praxis-oriented approach is likely to reproduce inconsistencies between musical practices in our ontologies, and relying on musical intuition to measure ontological success implies both that folks already have strongly-held intuitive beliefs concerning music, *and* that our beliefs are genuinely connected to the phenomena.<sup>12</sup> We have reason to be suspicious of musical common sense due to music's wide historical and cultural variance. Some theorists take classical music as central to their project and accommodate their intuitions regarding, for example, symphonic form. Others take rock or jazz as primary and attempt to accommodate their intuitions regarding improvisation and performance rather than composition and notation. Even when we take 'intuition' to be important, the intuitions we are concerned with vary between people, cultures, and across history. (Whose "common sense" do we choose in the case of conflict? Does expert opinion take precedence, or does the sheer popularity of amateur belief win out?) Even if we trust that some musical intuitions are accurate and available for adaptation into an ontological project "this does not mean that these beliefs will [...] honestly reflect correspondent musical practices. Indeed, our way of thinking about musical phenomena may be influenced by external factors, such as personal education, culture, social status, political membership, etc." (Giombini 2017, 74). The potential for variance between *and within* historical moments and cultures is too great to rely on descriptivist or intuition-focused methodology alone. The primary reason we are concerned with descriptivist methodology is twofold: descriptivism offers a way of holding our ontological projects accountable to praxis and the ways we ordinarily

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<sup>12</sup> As an analogy: purely descriptivist musical ontologies can be quite like surveying undergraduates to determine whether abstract numbers exist (and if so, in what capacity). Yes, this type of research will tell us quite a lot about *what* people believe, but whether or not these beliefs are at all connected to the real objects they describe is a separate issue. Thanks to Dr. Vukov for this helpful example of descriptivist methodology in non-musical philosophy.

talk, think, and act in relation to music; and descriptivist methodologies stand in direct tension with revisionist methodologies. Most musical ontologies, in fact, are constructed using a methodology of balance that exists along the spectrum between these two poles. Typically, acceptable theories in musical ontology are beholden to both metaphysical consistency *and* praxis.

### **Methodological Balance**

There are good reasons we have been discussing revisionist and descriptivist ontological methodologies as *primarily* concerned with either praxis or metaphysical consistency rather than *solely* focused on these issues. Foundationally, these two approaches divide the field of musical ontology, but both methodologies are employed by every respectable ontology of music. While ontologies are likely to rely more heavily on one methodology than the other, this reliance is never exclusive. Every revisionist ontology claims at least marginal intuitive benefits, and every descriptivist methodology claims at least adequate methodological consistency. This feature of musical ontologies reveals that overarching methodology is one of balance—revisionist and descriptivist methodologies operate in concert with one another, helping construct the most consistent ontologies possible that still account for widely-varied musical practices.

Even Kania, a noted fictionalist<sup>13</sup> regarding musical works, claims that musical ontology “is always to some extent a matter of finding a balance between the benefits of a theory and its cost in terms of our pre-theoretic intuitions” (Kania 2017). This remark identifies a path forward:

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<sup>13</sup> That Kania is a fictionalist is important insofar as he is committed to the idea that musical works *do not exist* in a meaningful sense, but rather that our *talk* of musical works is a helpful fiction. I will discuss fictionalist commitments later in this chapter; I remark on this feature of Kania’s philosophy now to suggest that his theory is *highly* revisionary, and yet even he is committed to balancing our musical intuitions against metaphysical concerns.



The practice of doing musical ontology or attempting to define music is at least in part a matter of balancing the explanatory benefits of a theory against its intuitive cost. We have reason to be suspicious of theories that neither provide a cohesive explanation of music nor provide for our intuitive beliefs about musical practice. As methodologies, descriptivist and revisionist approaches offer directly competing standards by which to judge ontologies of music, but the field is full of theories old and new that attempt to find a proper balance between praxis- and consistency-oriented commitments. If you find this unsatisfying, methodologically speaking, because these methodologies *also* recommend competing desiderata by which to judge musical ontologies, I would be inclined to agree. We will address the problem of adjudicating between ontologies as a methodological issue in discussing Matheson and Caplan (2011) and what I call “ontological pessimism.” This pessimism introduces the idea that deciding between these methodologies, and deciding between ontologies for methodological reasons, is often impossible or unhelpful in the case of musical ontology. I suggest that a pessimistic approach to musical ontology may be fruitful in moving beyond disciplinary debate, but these methodological concerns reappear again and again throughout philosophy of music as a way of measuring a theory’s success. Because music is a human practice, philosophers of music usually agree that our theories need to account for praxis, and that balancing metaphysical and practical demands is at the heart of any successful project. At present, what is important to us is that the primary methodology of musical ontology encourages a balance of pre-theoretical intuitions against metaphysical consistency where straying too far from intuitive beliefs can be fatal for a theory. Because this methodological standard is accepted across the whole of philosophy of music, I will be taking the standard of methodological balance on board in my discussion of musical ontology and musical definitions, and in constructing the Intercorporeal Account. In the meantime, we will use this methodology

of balance (between our intuitions and the “demands of metaphysics”) to address standard ontological theories and my reasons for ultimately supporting a kind of ontological pessimism regarding music.

### **Musical Ontology: Begin Again (Again)**

Musical ontologists are, as Matheson & Caplan claim, “interested in a number of questions, including the following ones. Are there musical works? If there are musical works, what are they like? If there are musical works, what relation do they stand in to their performances?” (Matheson and Caplan 2011). At its most basic, the field of musical ontology addresses questions of existence and relations in the musical world. Kania (2008a) claims that musical ontology is “the study of the kinds of musical things there are, and the relations that hold between them” (20). In a very basic way, this is what differentiates ontological and definitional projects from one another. Both ontological and definitional projects attempt to answer the same question, “What is music?”, but acceptable answers for ontologists range from “nothing” to “everything” with most theorists advocating for a middle ground between these extremes. The goal of a musical ontology is to utilize the methodology of balance to construct a robust account of what sorts of musical objects exist (what objects count as musical, as well as their nature and defining characteristics) and what relationships hold between them. The goal of a musical definition, by contrast, is to identify all and only instances of music, potentially without comment on the underlying nature of those musical objects. When we examine traditional (what I sometimes call orthodox<sup>14</sup>) ontological theories in the philosophy of music we should not be

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<sup>14</sup> I will be using the language of “traditional” and “orthodox” interchangeably in part to stylistically foreshadow my claim that the Intercorporeal Account is philosophically or ontologically “ecumenical” in that it is widely compatible with a variety of ontological commitments.

surprised if they imply definitional commitments; the two projects are much more than just incidentally related given that what *kind* of thing musical objects are will have a huge impact on the instances of music our definitions pick out. However, we will be focusing on ontological accounts first, and later transitioning to definitional projects in the next chapter.

Given that the goal of a musical ontology is to describe musical objects and the relationships that obtain between them, ontologists must first decide what constitutes an adequate answer to their questions. The desiderata of musical ontologies are a shifting target and deciding what a theory must account for already narrows the range of acceptable ontologies. For example, Giombini describes the desiderata for musical ontologies in three parts: (1) repeatability, (2) audibility, and (3) production (Giombini 2017, 31–32). Whatever else an ontological theory explains regarding music and musical works, it should be able to account for how musical works can be repeated more than once, how audible performances connect listeners to the musical work itself, and how musical works come into existence. These appear to be relatively uncontroversial features of an ontology of music but note that even these minimal desiderata already point toward a relatively weighty notion of what counts as “real music.” That music must be *audible* may prove difficult if we want to account for how deaf and hard of hearing folks meaningfully engage with a work of music.<sup>15</sup> Not to mention, some of us (transparently, myself included) might want to say that primarily silent pieces like Cage’s *4’33”* are music in a meaningful sense, even if the work itself is not precisely *audible* in the way musical works are typically thought to be. That music must be *repeatable* may prove difficult to accommodate in an

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<sup>15</sup> In this case, we have very good reasons to believe that deaf and hard of hearing folks indeed *do* meaningfully engage with music-qua-music on phenomenological and historical grounds. If Beethoven proves to be an insufficiently compelling example, others are ready to hand.

account that addresses improvisation or instances of musical performance art. In fact, the issue of deciding what counts as acceptable desiderata for an ontology of music is so difficult that Giombini remarks,

Choosing between theories of musical ontology, indeed, is not simply a matter of finding a balance between a theory's benefits and liabilities, since one has first to decide what counts as a benefit and what a liability, i.e., to what extent preconceived notions should count in evaluation. (Giombini 2017, 33)

While the methodology of balance is an integral part of constructing any ontology of music, it matters where we start, and what desiderata we take on board before the project even begins. In these cases, a popular way of constructing an ontological account of music is to begin with an example. Even in instances where two ontologies report identical desiderata, the examples from which they begin can color (influence the timbre of?) our understanding of those conditions and the methods by which we pursue them.

Take, for example, Mattheson and Caplan's chapter "Ontology," referenced earlier, where the authors attempt to begin from the beginning, asking what musical ontology is, and what constitutes a successful answer to ontological questions in the field. Methodologically, their article employs the *Hammerklavier* as a paradigmatic example of a musical work and begins with the assumption that *if* there are any musical works, Beethoven's composition is an exemplary candidate to be one of these. We may want to begin thinking about how our ontological commitments might differ if we privilege certain musical traditions over others. Privileging classical music from (roughly) either about 11<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>16</sup> to (again, roughly) the turn

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<sup>16</sup> This is a *huge* discrepancy, claiming that classical music either begins in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century, but these alternative dates track the origins of the modern score. Contemporary musical notation has its roots in the notation style of Benedictine monastic chants from the late 10<sup>th</sup> century but didn't gain widespread adoption until centuries later (closer to the 17<sup>th</sup> century). Differing opinions depend on personal

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century inevitably guides our ontological progress. The notion of repeatability based on a written score, or the relatively narrow window for ornamentation that Beethoven gives his performers, might concern ontologies of music that account for nonwestern traditions. For example, what commitments might we imagine central to musical ontology if we began by examining Indian *rāga*, or Arabic *maqamat*?

Pragmatically speaking, then, constructing a musical ontology is a kind of double application of the methodology of balance: Not only must we balance our intuitions against metaphysical consistency, but we must balance *our* intuitions against the broad range of intuitions that *could* be accommodated by an ontology of music. The methodology remains consistent, but the particular approach of a musical ontology is largely dependent on the basic assumptions each theorist brings to bear on their project. Pre-theoretical commitments and central examples help ontologists determine, as Giombini writes, “what counts as a benefit and what a liability” even before the project begins (Giombini 2017, 33). Since there is almost no meta-ontological guidance concerning what features of an ontology fall into which category (benefit or liability), musical ontologists are left to rely on their own, personal intuitions and encouraged to adequately contextualize what sort of music their ontology addresses. Nevertheless, we philosophers of music are rarely prone to humility, and most “ontologies of music” purport to address just that—*music*. As we examine orthodox ontologies, keep in mind that each of these theories is judged using the methodology of balance, *but* each is constructed with a slightly different set of desiderata than the

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commitments to the consistency of musical works across the expressionist and modern era of classical music. If we accept that modern classical music *is* classical music (a potentially controversial claim) we might even make the case that this style of music has not ended at all. The safer claim is that the kind of musical styles proper to western classical music declined precipitously in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, insofar as composers began to understand themselves as creative rather than constructive. I would be happy to elaborate on that distinction given adequate time and interest.

others. Giombini's identification of three desiderata for musical ontologies is accurate to the majority of musical ontologies (with the exception of anti-realist accounts). However, the particular examples, pre-theoretical commitments, and philosophic background of the ontologists in question force nuance regarding these criteria—not everyone agrees on what the standards of audibility or production actually constitute, or what it means for a work to be repeated. As we address these theories, anti-realist theories first and realist theories second, I want to dwell on the kinds of music that the ontologies were constructed to account for. Each ontological theory carries with it certain definitional commitments and certain goals; part of our job in the coming sections is to illuminate what those commitments and goals are.

### **Antirealist Musical Ontologies**

Does music exist? Unconditional answers to this question divide the field of musical ontology along a fundamental, but well-explored schism: Antirealists, who claim that music does *not* exist in any meaningful sense, seem to keep a respectful distance from realists, who claim that music *does* exist. While realists enjoy a huge range of ontological theories by which to explain the existence of music, antirealists primarily appear in one of two flavors<sup>27</sup>: fictionalism (Kania 2008b) and eliminativism (e.g., Cameron 2008). As the more extreme starting point, we will begin with eliminativism and move toward the orthodox theories of musical ontology.

Eliminativists, including Ross Cameron, argue that music does not belong in our ontology. Cameron's version of this argument follows an extraordinarily simple structure,

Here are the three propositions:

1. Musical works are created.
2. Musical works are abstract objects.
3. Abstract objects cannot be created.

These three propositions obviously form an inconsistent triad and yet each of them enjoys some intuitive support. (Cameron 2008)

Cameron here constructs an inconsistent triad of intuitively true claims. Each of these claims seems correct, and yet at least one must be false. Cameron solves this inconsistency by rejecting Premise 2 and claiming that musical works are not objects of *any* kind, in fact, musical works do not exist at all. Cameron doubles down on his controversial claim by making the further assertion that no artworks exist whatsoever (which is not to say that objects called art do not exist, but that no distinction exists between art and ordinary objects, and in the case of music this means “works” of the usual sort cannot exist even if sounds produced by musicians obviously do). Certainly, this is a *consistent* claim: If artworks do not exist, then musical works cannot exist because *if* they exist, they are almost undeniably artworks. However, we will remember that the methodology of musical ontology requires us to balance our intuitions against metaphysical demands. In this case, Cameron asks us to sacrifice our intuition that art exists in order to resolve an apparent contradiction between the claims that musical works are both created and abstract objects. It certainly feels like Cameron is throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Generally speaking, these kinds of arguments are common in eliminativist positions. We might understand eliminativists as prioritizing metaphysical demands above, and often at the cost of, pre-reflective intuitions.

In order to ameliorate the intuitive liabilities of his theory, Cameron reassures us that nothing of practical concern hinges on accepting his eliminativist position. “I claim that ‘Beethoven created a work of music when he composed Beethoven’s Ninth’ is a literally true sentence of English. What I deny is that recognizing the truth of this commits me to admitting that there was an increase in ontology when Beethoven composed” (2008, 306). Cameron’s theory claims that what composers are doing, when they create a musical work, is assembling simples in such-and-such a way *but* that the whole is not more than the mere sum of its parts.

When simple ontological objects are assembled in such-and-such a way, we call the resulting collection a *musical work* despite the fact that works do not exist (only collections of sounds exist, or the notation of these collections in scores). Cameron famously argues that the same logic holds for all artistic mediums; there is no such thing as a statue, only matter assembled statue-wise that we call a *statue* by virtue of this organization and collective agreement.<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, this helps eliminativist positions gain traction against the mountain of intuitive evidence for musical realism. Like we already believed, our everyday utterances about music are true; the one catch is that these claims are not true in the way that we imagined. When I say “I listened to the Mountain Goat’s new album” it is *literally* true that I listened to a collection of sounds and words that we call the album, but it is not true that any such album exists above and beyond the parts which comprise it. This is the relatively slim theoretical peg upon which

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<sup>17</sup> As a brief aside, Cameron’s eliminativist position is grounded in a broader argument for compositional (sometimes called mereological) nihilism: the position that composites do not exist, and all objects are simples arranged in *object-wise* patterns (Brenner 2015; Cameron 2010). Compositional nihilists believe that there is no need, ontologically speaking, to claim that composite objects exist when we have recourse to say that ontological simples (entities with no parts) compose what we *call* objects through particular arrangements. Since most of the things we imply are “objects” with ordinary language are composite, compositional nihilists believe that very few ordinary objects (if any) actually exist. For example, Cameron might be inclined to say that there is no such thing as a coffee mug, only enamel and ceramic (or, to be more accurate, sub-atomic particles arranged ceramic-wise and enamel-wise) arranged coffee-mug-wise. This view directly corresponds to the view that there are no musical works, only sounds arranged music-wise. However, it is a curious feature of Cameron’s ontology that he is an eliminativist on *meta*-ontological grounds. The distinction is subtle enough that Cameron remains a good example of the eliminativist position, but the differences are quick to explain.

What we might call flat-footed eliminativism claims that no such things as musical works exist, and that talk about musical works is therefore false. This position implies that when I say that I love such-and-such a work, I am wrong about what I love and the sentence I have uttered is false.

Meanwhile, Cameron claims that our utterances are *literally* true but do not imply an ontological commitment to the existence of what we describe. When we say that we love such-and-such an object or musical work, we commit ourselves to the existence of *truthmakers* for that object or work, and not the existence of the work itself. In other words, Cameron is an eliminativist not because he thinks that our utterances about works or objects are not true (as flat-footed eliminativism would say) but because they *are* true, just not in the way we typically believe. Cameron is not a fictionalist (because he does not believe that utterances are *metaphorically* true) but neither is he a traditional eliminativist.



eliminativists hang their hat: even if utterances about music are literally true, musical works are not the kinds of things that exist in the world and our utterances are not true *in the way we intend them*. When we speak of Beethoven's *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony* or the various versions of "My Funny Valentine" we are not picking out real objects in the world. Rather, we are picking out a motley assemblage of "My Funny Valentine"-wise collections, or collections of sounds that we typically call the *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony*.

As a relatively controversial view, most philosophers of music believe that eliminativism violates the pragmatic constraint. Recall that the pragmatic constraint operates both as a methodological goal (that our ontologies are praxis-oriented) and a principle to reject non-compliant ontologies. The going rate in philosophy of music is that wholly eliminativist positions of the type proposed by Cameron violate this principle. This high intuitive cost sounds even more strange contrasted against Cameron's concluding claim: "I believe that the balance of costs and benefits favours my view" (2008, 314). The methodology of balance, Cameron imagines, favors his view since it properly balances (quite consistent) metaphysical benefits against (quite high) intuitive costs. However, violating the pragmatic constraint alone is usually sufficient grounds for rejection, regardless of how consistent a theory is. Few ordinary folks are satisfied by the claim that music does not exist, and I would be willing to bet that fewer are compelled by the position that *no art* exists whatsoever. Pure eliminativism violates the pragmatic constraint because none of us actually behave in this musically-Churchlandian way, speaking as though eliminativism were true and we can only talk of collections of sounds organized *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony*-wise or *Let It Bleed*-

wise.<sup>18</sup> Because eliminativism is so susceptible to disqualification by the pragmatic constraint, very few theorists defend this ontological position. Instead, eliminativist intuitions are taken up (albeit more moderately) in fictionalist ontologies.

Fictionalists, unlike eliminativists, claim that “thought and talk about that subject matter [music] is, or should be considered as, a useful fiction” (Killin 2018). Killin draws on a number of traditional examples of fictional entities, but for our purposes we might imagine a fictional character we discuss *as if* they were real. Permit me a brief aside to discuss Sherlock Holmes (the original Conan Doyle invention, not the reboots or television characters)<sup>19</sup> and the lengths to which fans have gone to legitimize his (entirely fictional) legacy. First, fans latch on to useful fiction and turn it into truth, as in the case of 221B Baker St. The address, contemporary fans might be disappointed to know, did not exist. Baker St. address numbering stopped well before the 200s at the time that Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* first mentioned the residence. Now, a museum faithfully replicating the 17 steps and multi-room flat stands *nearby* to where the address would be (between 237 and 241 Baker St.) although the address *still* does not exist. Second, fans act as though Holmes were real, and in fact the stories were so influential on the collective English psyche that when Doyle killed off (to later revive) his fictional character in 1893, *real* people wore *real* black armbands in mourning. Finally, scholars write and behave *as though* Sherlock Holmes were a real person and Christopher Morley (a founding member of the *real*

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<sup>18</sup> I say “Churchlandian” to indicate positions like the one championed by Paul and Patricia Churchland, a form of material eliminativism according to which talk of “beliefs” and “persons” as outdated, false, and misleading. The Churchlands are said to adhere to this philosophical position even in ordinary conversation.

<sup>19</sup> Although, I can’t help but mention that *if* any television series were faithful enough to garner Doyle’s approval, I propose Jeremy Brett as the definitive Holmes.

Baker Street Irregulars social club) and novelist Dorothy Sayers (known for the Lord Peter Wimsey mystery series) wrote articles of “Holmesian speculation” to address and attempt to reconcile irregularities in the Conan Doyle stories. What I mean to illustrate here is that fictional does not mean valueless, and musical fictionalists take music just as seriously as the Baker Street Irregulars take Sherlock Holmes. Talk of these fictional entities is useful because it *matters* to real people even if the entities in question are entirely imaginary.

Fictionalists in musical ontology ground their claims in the same arguments that all fictionalists do: these entities are not a part of our ontologies, *but* we talk about them without ontologically committing ourselves to their existence. Killin explains that “there are two theses associated with fictionalism – a linguistic thesis, and an ontological thesis. The linguistic thesis maintains that ‘utterances of sentences of the discourse are best seen as [...] useful fictions of some sort,’” and “the ontological thesis is anti-realist, rejecting the existence of the entities associated with the concept at hand” (2018). Given the narrowly circumscribed ontological position articulated by these theses, the differences between fictionalist accounts hinge on relatively narrow distinctions. Broadly speaking, fictionalist and eliminativist theories enjoy the same benefits and suffer from the same disadvantages. This is because fictionalism and eliminativism *both* claim that music and musical works do not exist and should not be accounted for in our ontologies. In fact, eliminativism and fictionalism both claim that music and musical works<sup>20</sup> do not exist, and both claim that our utterances about music are false. However, where

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<sup>20</sup> A brief digression: Thus far we have been using the terms music and musical works interchangeably. This is in large part due to the language of literature, which is itself imprecise on the distinction. This distinction becomes important in the context of fictionalism insofar as some theorists (Killin included) propose a kind of hybrid realism in which they claim that *musical performances* may meaningfully exist, but musical works do not, and thus performances are not *of* anything real.

eliminativism claims that our utterances are false *in the way we mean them*, fictionalism claims that our utterances are false *but helpful* ways of discussing the world.

The controversial claim that music does not exist is not only a reason that antirealist ontologies tend to violate the pragmatic constraint but also moves the question of musical definitions outside the scope of philosophy. If musical utterances are merely helpful fictions and do not pick out anything real in the world, it may be a matter for linguists and sociologists to determine what music is, and what counts as an accurate utterance. Killin even points towards sociological methodology in his article. His fictionalist account of music relies on the contributions of the Canberra Plan which recommends constructing a list of desiderata for ontological theories by polling experts. While philosophy certainly has a hand in determining several important issues surrounding a study of this kind (Who is being polled? Why expert instead of lay intuition?) the majority of this project is addressed by ethnomusicology or sociology. Given the sociological or musicological expertise in definitions like this, we have both theoretical and pragmatic reasons for rejecting antirealism: If we are to believe that providing an account of music, as an art, is a matter of philosophical and ontological importance rather than a mere linguistic project (and I must, given the nature of this dissertation) then antirealism is perhaps not for us. More concretely, antirealism helps the Intercorporeal Account insofar as it

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I take it that very few eliminativists would deny that performances, the ones we call musical, exist and are meaningful in a unique way to us culturally or historically. However, what fictionalists deny is that these performances are of a work of art. The reason I believe this distinction to be vague and ultimately unhelpful in our discussion is because theorists focusing on the *musical work* usually understand the existence of a *work* to give artistic legitimacy to the creation. What is being denied, even in denying only the musical *work*, is that music is the kind of art we know it to be. If there is no musical work, music becomes useful only as an adjective. To call something music or musical, according to fictionalism, is to make a claim about its appearance and nothing more. Differences between musical and nonmusical objects cease to be differences in kind.

circumscribes the scope of the project. The joint ontological and definitional claims that I ultimately defend metaphorically skirt around the edges of antirealism in their ecumenicalism. An account of music, like the one I offer, that does not rest on a singular ontological foundation might be compatible with antirealist ontologies. (If I do not say what music is *made* from, then can I say it *exists* at all?)

My goal in this discussion was to articulate antirealist positions well enough to demonstrate that the Intercorporeal Account is not built (could not be built) on this ontological foundation. Both eliminativist and fictionalist accounts of music proceed from the belief that music is not *real* and that the issues of ontology and metaphysics that analytic philosophy of music explore are trivially interesting. It bears mentioning that this review of anti-realist positions among musical ontologies is incomplete, and insufficient for a full discussion compositional nihilism in musical context or a sustained discussion of fictionalists positions in aesthetics. There are nuances in this debate that this dissertation is unable to capture, nuances that would be better articulated in anthologies and books.

Fundamentally, however, the claim that music *does not* exist implies that there is no need to provide an ontology of music, and that defining music is a matter of sociological or anthropological inquiry. Fully describing Sherlock Holmes, for example, is either a matter of literary criticism (if we confine ourselves to Conan Doyle's stories) or cultural survey (if we accept fan-made adaptations as more or less legitimate parts of the singular character). If describing music is a *philosophic* project, then we must be committed (in at least a limited sense) to the belief that music exists (by which I mean, exists in at least such a way that philosophic inquiry will provide insights beyond historical or sociological research). Given the constraints of the Intercorporeal Account, and the unpopularity of anti-realist positions like compositional nihilism

both in the musical and non-musical philosophic literature, I begin with the assumption that music exists, and set out to articulate how it exists in line with other realist musical ontologies.

### **Realist Musical Ontologies**

Directly opposite antirealism, realism constitutes the other side of this ontological schism. Where antirealists claim that there are no such things as musical works, realists claim that music *does* exist in a meaningful sense (and, often, that musical *works* are the kinds of things our ontologies ought to account for).<sup>21</sup> There is little scholarly consensus regarding how to categorize realist musical ontologies, and the list I provide is by no means exhaustive. Holding these theories together is a shared commitment to the existence of music (in some sense), and usually musical works (although this is contested in certain cases). Drawing on Kania's (2008a; 2011b) work (and moving from theories that enjoy widespread acceptance toward more esoteric theories) I offer the following taxonomy of realist musical ontologies.<sup>22</sup>

#### a) Abstracta

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<sup>21</sup> We may also notice that realist and antirealist musical ontologies are focused on slightly different kinds of music despite sharing a methodology. Ontology of music could be split, I argue, into two major categories: (1) accounts primarily interested in theorizing 'from the center' and (2) theories interested in the margins.

In the first case, primarily realist theories explain the way that music functions in everyday contexts, in ordinary, non-problem cases. In the second, antirealist and non-standard theories and definitions seem to be primarily interested in the problem pieces, and in new or novel solutions to these kinds of problems. Although this is a general trend between realist and anti-realist ontologies, the "central case/problem case" division does not track these ontological lines perfectly.

<sup>22</sup> I should point out that this is not a list found in any one of Kania's works. Kania remains one of the most systematic thinkers of musical ontology, and his categorizations are immensely helpful for field-specific meta-discourse, but his views have evolved. His Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) entry, for example, excludes creationism and includes historical individualism. For the purposes of this overview, I choose to include as many of the orthodox theories as possible and omit only one theory Kania usually includes in his taxonomy of musical ontologies: historical individualism. While the theory is interesting, and potentially solves some of the issues associated with idealism and action theory, it enjoys a singular supporter (Guy Rohrbaugh) and a singular interlocutor (Julian Dodd). The theory, while amenable to musical, is primarily concerned with the case of photography, and bears little relevance to orthodox musical ontologies or the definitions taken up in later chapters of this project.

- i) Platonism
- ii) Creationism
- b) Nominalism
- c) Action Theory
- d) Idealism <sup>23</sup>

While this list is not comprehensive, I aim to strike a balance between brevity and completeness.

This list begins with the two “orthodox” theories of musical ontology (abstracta-based, and nominal approaches) and includes some widely recognized nontraditional theories (action theory and idealism). Addressing the primary ontological theories, in turn, will provide us the ontological foundation necessary to critique traditional definitions of music (in Chapter 2), understand the ontological worries raised by extended musical cognition (in Chapter 3), and construct the Intercorporeal Account (in Chapter 4). Fine-grained discussions of musical ontology are far from riveting but will be essential moving forward.

***Abstracta (a.i, a.ii)***

Some ontologists believe musical works are abstract entities of some sort, and that this best explains how a singular musical work can be instantiated multiple times without ceasing to exist between performances. Abstracta-based theorists are separated into two broad categories by their commitment to either (a.i) the eternal existence of abstracta, or (a.ii) the creation of certain kinds of abstracta (i.e., musical works). I will address each of these in turn, demonstrating some of the advantages and disadvantages of each as measured by methodological balance and the pragmatic constraint. Here, it might be helpful to mention that a large portion of philosophy of

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<sup>23</sup> Idealism and action theory present interesting alternatives to so-called orthodox musical ontologies but are not themselves compatible with a wide variety of musical practices. For the purposes of this project, I will address the orthodox ontological theories, and briefly discuss the final two theories. While interesting, these theories fail the pragmatic constraint so egregiously that they are rarely addressed in philosophic discussion of musical ontologies.

music and this project (the first three chapters, give or take a few pages) uses a standard organization of iterative theoretical development. Starting from the beginning (e.g., the widely popular belief that musical works are abstracta) is important because each theory iterates on the last. A great deal of musical ontology rests on intuition, and ontologies of music typically begin by attempting to resolve the counterintuitive conclusions produced by other ontologies. When I say that these ontologies are iterative, what I mean is that each theory begins by addressing a previous theory's weaknesses, using critique to begin the positive work of constructing new ontological positions. Creationism (a.ii) helps address the deeply counterintuitive claim of Platonism (a.i) that all musical works that have been, are being, or will be composed have existed forever. Similarly, Nominalism (b) helps address some of the counterintuitive claims of abstracta-based ontologies, whereas Action Theory (c) and Idealism (d) help resolve some of the counterintuitive conclusions of Nominalist ontologies. For this reason, appropriately assessing relatively esoteric ontologies and definitions requires at least basic knowledge of these foundational, widely held theories.

Musical Platonism (a.i) holds that musical works are abstract entities, and that musical works are therefore instantiable but not creatable in ways that track our intuitive beliefs about Western classical compositions. To determine that we are hearing *music* during a particular sound event only requires that we correctly identify the abstract object which has been instantiated by the performance. Of course, if musical works are abstract entities in a Platonic sense, several implications follow: musical works can be instantiated, these instantiations can be better or worse, and when instantiations veer too far from the abstract entity in question the event ceases to be an instantiation of that entity. In brief, these commitments characterize a strict Platonic approach to musical works insofar as the "real" work must be the abstract object, and not its performance.



A commitment to the abstract nature of musical works is constitutive of both Platonic (a.i) and creationist (a.ii) projects, but Platonists<sup>24</sup> are distinguished by their commitment to musical works' eternal existence. In (broadly) non-improvisational traditions, instantiations of an abstract musical work are judged against an objective standard of measure—how closely does this performance correspond to the work which it purports to instantiate? Furthermore, this objective standard by which we measure performances was not itself *created* in any meaningful sense. Musical works are not, according to strict Platonists, composed according to our pre-reflective understanding of the term. Considering the score as a set of mathematical relationships (as is common for Baroque and early Classical era compositions) Platonists offer an account of how these scores come into existence: a composer *discovers* the particular set of mathematical relationships that comprises one piece, rather than another, and writes them down. Musical composition, on this view, emulates the construction of a mathematical proof—it is not that a proof or score is created, but rather it is *discovered* and *notated* by the mathematician or composer.

So far so good for Platonists: the discovery model of musical composition tracks our common understanding of Western classical music as primarily or entirely concerned with those parts of a musical score which are capable of being *notated* in Goodman's sense, the mathematical relationships between notes and the mathematic definition *of* notes as specific pitches and

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<sup>24</sup> Giombini (2017) calls these two versions of abstract approaches “weak” and “strong” Platonism, where strong Platonism indicates what I call “Platonism” and weak Platonism indicates what I call “creationism.” I use these terms to illustrate the core difference between these two ontological approaches (whether or not musical works are created or discovered) whereas Giombini foregrounds the joint commitment of these ontological approaches to the *abstract* nature of musical objects.

overtones.<sup>25</sup> According to musical Platonists, when we talk about musical works (such as Beethoven's *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony*) we are talking about particular sets of abstracta (notes) and their relation to one another (progressions) which constitute the work in question. Knowledge of the abstract objects allows us to judge performances, determine which piece is being performed, and determine whether that piece was *actually* performed in the event of any mistakes. In exchange for this concise theory and its explanatory benefits in Western classical contexts, Platonists ask us to give up our intuition that musical works are *composed* in the sense that we usually mean that term. Platonists imagine composers, metaphorically, as rifling through "an infinity of musical types of all degrees of complexity" before selecting the appropriate one to produce a score for (Reicher 2000, 208). Although musical Platonism enjoys widespread acceptance, the issue of composition generates significant debate. On the other side of this debate, within the bounds of abstracta-based ontologies, Creationists (a.ii) maintain that musical works *are* literally created in the intuitive sense of that word.

Creationists (a.ii) attempt to preserve our intuitions that (in the case of Western classical music) the abstract, notated aspects of the work *are* the work, while simultaneously maintain the position that special kinds of abstract objects (at least musical works) are created by time-bound beings such as ourselves. Creationists "maintain that to compose a musical work is to *create* it, in the full sense of the word" (Reicher 2000, 207). Unsatisfying as this brief description may be,

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<sup>25</sup> Goodman (1968), we should remember, believes that a *notational* system records all those *artistically important* aspects of the work that are capable of being copied or instantiated according to the score. Notational systems, in this sense, record all those determinate aspects of the allographic arts. This means the important parts of a piece of music are just those that *do not* involve improvisation or ambiguity. The line of thinking behind Goodman and Platonists' approaches to music is that the so-called important parts of music just are the objective, notated aspects of the work capable of existing in as abstracta. (i.e., the mathematical relationships between notes, determinate tempo markings, prescribed embellishments, etc.).

creationists are primarily concerned with making ontologically compatible the position that musical works are abstract with the position that musical works are created. In this sense, Creationism is a direct and cohesive response to the issues of traditional musical Platonism, but Creationist philosophers are divided over the issue of precisely *how* abstract entities might permit of temporal creation.

Maria Reicher (2000) offers helpful and succinct descriptions of both Platonist (a.i) and Creationist (a.ii) approaches to musical works. Platonists believe that “musical works are pre-existent and necessary entities. Thus, they must be discovered or selected rather than created. (For it is impossible to create something which already exists.) Thus, composing is discovering. The composer does not bring into existence what she composes” (2000, 203). By contrast, creationists hold that “musical works are created. Thus, they cannot be pre-existent and necessary entities. (For it is impossible to create something which already exists.) Thus, composing is creating. The composer brings into existence what she composes” (2000, 203). Creationism, in this way, is a response to Platonism’s claim that musical works are abstract objects with the caveat that some abstract objects (musical works, at least) are properly *created* in the fullest sense. For a musical work to be created means that, upon the composition of a musical work, there *is* (contra anti-realists and Platonists alike) an increase in ontology.<sup>26</sup> These differences become relevant in the context of tension between the created and repeatable nature of abstract musical works.

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<sup>26</sup> By contrast Platonists maintain, along with some anti-realists, that composition does *not* entail an increase in ontology. Rather, composition is discovery and, as such, does not *create* anything ontologically new.

The differences between Platonist and Creationist musical ontologies emerge as important in how they address the tension that exists between “repeatability intuition” and the “creatability intuition” (Bartel 2018, 349). Briefly put, the creatability intuition suggests that musical works are the kinds of things composers and musicians *create*, whereas the repeatability intuition suggests that musical works are identified by their notation such that the same work can be instantiated multiple times in performance. Creationists maintain that philosophers of music should prioritize creatability because musical works are, our intuition tells us, created by their composers in the way that a painting is created by its painter. One line of argument suggests that musical works must be created because it is impossible to compose the same work twice, despite the fact that a singular object can certainly be *discovered* more than once. If, for example, I were to compose a piece of music that *just so happened* to be identical to Handel’s *Messiah* (note-for-note, word-for-word), strict Platonists would be forced to admit that I have discovered the same piece of music for a second time and have as much a right to claim it as my own as Handel did in 1741.<sup>27</sup> Creationists reject this conclusion and instead claim that, in this example, I have produced either a copy of the original or a wholly separate musical work.<sup>28</sup> My re-composition of the *Messiah* does not delegitimize Handel as the sole composer of *his* work because what I have

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<sup>27</sup> Some other factors would need specifying for this to be a robust example of the problem. Imagine that I had never heard the *Messiah* and even further that I had never heard of Handel or his composition. Imagine further that I accidentally produced the piece in the same manner he did, by consulting the King James Bible and following traditional voice leading conventions for choir and orchestra. Implausible as this may be, the *possibility* exists that two people discover the same musical work *if* all musical works exist eternally waiting in the metaphysical wings to be called into physical being.

<sup>28</sup> As a matter of literary curiosity: the re-discovery of existing works is the subject of a Borges short story *Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote*. More interesting than Borges’ exploration of precisely this topic in 1939 might be its English translation in 1962, just six years before Goodman’s *Languages of Art* and its distinction between autographic and allographic arts. Perhaps there was something in the metaphoric water causing concern about what it would mean for two identical works to be independently discovered/created. Thanks to Dr. Vukov for mentioning the Borges story, and its connection to musical rediscovery.

created is either a copy or a wholly new musical work that merely *sounds* and *looks* identical to his. It is intuitively false (perhaps counterintuitive enough to violate the pragmatic constraint) to say that Handel *and* I have composed the same *Messiah*. For these reasons, creationists reject the Platonic position that the same work could be “composed” multiple times, and instead claim that even identically notated musical works are distinct when they have been created by separate composers.

Creationists take the impossibility of multiply composed works to support the creatability intuition, but they are still on the hook for explaining how to differentiate between two identical works that are completely separately composed and usually turn to context to distinguish between similarly (or identically) notated (yet distinct) musical works.<sup>29</sup> In this way, composing a piece that is sonically identical to an existing musical work produces a new composition because its compositional context is different from the original. What makes Handel’s *Messiah* unique is not its notation (which can be re-produced), but that Handel composed his work at a particular time and in a particular place. A note-for-note replica of the *Messiah* (one that is neither a forgery nor plagiarized) can be distinguished from Handel’s original because it would have been composed in a different time and place, by a different composer. This ability to distinguish between sonically identical works is imperative for the creationist project, but contextualist approaches produce a kind of dilemma. Claiming that separately composed but sonically

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<sup>29</sup> Reicher (2000) offers an alternative, compatibilist solution to this conflict by suggesting that the nature of a *work* is such that it must be created. Insofar as works are necessarily created, the creative work of a composer is to turn an example of a “pre-existent type” into a musical *work*. In this way, composers are not creators *ex nihilo* but rather work in a transformative capacity analogous to the plastic arts. Analogously, we may imagine musicians as like carpenters—craftspeople who do not “create” the materials with which they build but assemble them into a meaningfully new arrangement such that there is an increase in ontology.

identical works are not the same abstract entity forces us to question what actually constitutes the abstract entity we call the musical work. On the one hand, if contextual factors *are* part of the abstract work, where might we find these in the score, and how would we recognize them in performance? It is implausible to suggest that a work's compositional context could be encoded in the mathematical relationships which constitute the score because this notation is precisely what sonically identical works share. On the other hand, if contextual factors *are not* part of the abstract musical work, then are musical works fully abstract in the sense that creationists claim? In our example, the dilemma is that either there is something unique about Handel's compositional context that pertains to its abstract and multiply instantiable existence, or musical works are differentiated by non-abstract means and thus it is impossible to say which work has been instantiated when either is performed. Of course, neither of these options are desirable for creationists.

Platonists (a.i) confront this challenge by rejecting the creatability intuition outright. This approach solves some problems that creationists confront. There is, on a Platonist account, nothing that *should* distinguish notationally or sonically identical works. When two works are found to be sonically identical, Platonists claim that two composers (in different contexts) discovered one and the same abstract object. However, rejecting the creatability intuition to save the repeatability intuition does not solve all the problems Platonists face. Specifically, the claim that musical works are *discovered* is difficult to intuitively reconcile with our musical practices. Kivy (1983), for example, holds that Wagner did not create the famous "Tristan chord," but discovered it. The mathematical relations between notes existed before Wagner wrote them, and Wagner's contribution was in revealing them to the world through *Tristan und Isolde*. Since, Kivy argues, this is true of a single chord, it should also be true of the whole opera. Relations between

notes in a chord are mathematically similar to relations between chords, and so on. At least for short strings of notes Kivy's argument seems plausible. However, the intuitive cost of Kivy's theory mounts proportionately to the length of the composition.<sup>30</sup> Many of us may be willing to bite the bullet and say that Wagner discovered the chord, and the mathematical set of relationships that it encodes, but pre-dominant chords can move into dominant harmony in a variety of different ways and the "Tristan Chord" is resolved in an especially strange way (in fact, whether or not it is resolved at all is a live question since the chord can be spelled either as pre-dominant, secondary-dominant, or augmented-dominant harmony). If we are willing to bite yet another bullet and say that Wagner discovered the resolution of this chord as well, are we then willing to say that he discovered the next chord, and the next, and the next? Tonic harmony (where these pre-dominant and dominant chords eventually resolve) can move to *any* scale-degree, and the atonal exploration of *Tristan und Isolde* enjoys an even larger number of possible paths forward (harmonically speaking); pretty soon the number of *possible* operas is going to get out of hand. The problem is that Wagner very well might have chosen the "Tristan Chord" from among several hundreds or thousands of different chords he *could have* written, but the same is true for each and every harmonic movement (typically one or two harmonic movements per beat and 3 or 4 beats per measure) in the entirety of the four-hour opera. If Wagner *discovered* the whole of the opera, he chose it among an exponentially increasing number of potential operas (and we have not even discussed the possibility that Wagner could have arranged or orchestrated these chords differently than he did!) and skeptics believe that this ontological expansion is messy

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<sup>30</sup> Related: How unique does a musical performance need to be for us to properly call it created? Are there, properly speaking, mathematical relationships that comprise and obtain between the sounds produced in Joh Cage's *I've Got a Secret*, or *Water Walk* (both of which involve found objects and a large amount of uncertainty in performance)?

and undesirable. If Wagner discovered the “Tristan Chord” and the whole of the opera, he chose from a pre-existing set of operas that (depending on what we consider part of the notation) may very well outnumber grains of sand on earth. Pretty soon we’ll be eating lead like breakfast cereal if we commit ourselves to Wagner’s true discovery of *Tristan und Isolde*.

Additionally, Kivy’s position commits us to the weird belief that all music that (1) has ever been composed, (2) will ever be composed, and (3) *could* ever be composed, eternally exist. If a work can properly be called “music” then Kivy’s ontology commits to its eternal existence. It might strike us as odd to believe that “Call Me Maybe” or “Rain Dogs” co-existed with Plato and Aristotle, just waiting for the Carly Rae Jepsen and Tom Waits to bring them into the physical world. Even if these are unconvincing examples, it should deeply concern us this picture leaves little room for our usual understanding of improvisation. Are operas, pop-songs, and jazz improvisations the kinds of things that have existed *forever* waiting for the right instantiation? Even if these are not the kinds of works in question for Platonists, classical music provides us with counterexamples. For instance, there was much debate over the performance of trills in the 18th century. The majority of performers began trills on the upper auxiliary (the note immediately above the indicated note in pitch), but other performers and composers advocated for beginning with the indicated note and accenting either up or down in pitch (2004, 491–92). The result of this apparently small distinction is huge in the context of music theory. Whether or not a non-chord tone resolves up or down indicates a great deal about the passage for the performer and astute listener. Brown remarks that a trill (especially when entered into by leap and resolved down by step from the auxiliary note) can function as a repeated appoggiatura. Similarly, a trill that begins on a chord-tone, reaches up to an auxiliary ornamentation, and then resolves with the chord change *up* by step functions as a suspension rather than an appoggiatura (2004, 492).



Suspensions and appoggiaturas are extremely different types of musical dissonance that guide the listener in opposite directions.<sup>31</sup> In other words, improvised ornamentation influences the musical meaning of a piece to a great extent, but Platonism typically cannot account for these differences in the meaning of the work because the work literally is its abstract, notated components.

Influencing the “discovered” chord progression through trills (or other kinds of embellishment or ornamentation) implies a level of control over those very same mathematical relationships that are said to comprise the work. Perhaps we are willing to say that a trill up or down from the chord-tone *does* constitute a change in the musical work, but this would commit us to the view that two *separate* works are performed when musicians choose between contrasting ornamental conventions. The abstract mathematical relationships between notes *are not* preserved in instances where the performer wholly improvises a passage or chooses anachronistic ornamentation, and yet these powerful interpretive practices are the very subject matter of musicology, musical performance, and conducting.

Usually, improvisations with this amount of performative influence over the nature of the work are thought to instantiate the work *in performance*. We may imagine our favorite jazz performer (Davis or Coltrane perhaps) in this context. Our intuition, in the case of improvisation, is that the performer creates or co-creates the work of art in question. This is at least one reason why certain performances of jazz standards are favored over others. Whatever can be said of

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<sup>31</sup> Suspensions are thought to guide a listener toward the conclusion of the piece more quickly. In their most basic form suspensions are dissonant notes performed as an extension of a chord-tone found in a previous harmony. They anticipate the notes movement and resolution and provide a sense of continuity with the previous harmonic structure. Appoggiatura, on the other hand, are jarring interruptions in a work. They are approached, exclusively, by leap and resolve down by step to a chord tone. They serve to interrupt a listener’s sense of anticipation, to disorient our year and force us to hear the next chord as something wholly new and unexpected.

Davis' performances at the 1963 Monterey Jazz Festival *cannot* be said of any other instantiation of those pieces. The same, I argue, is true of most classical music insofar as conductors and musicians exert an immense amount of control over the works they perform. Even apparently small decisions, like deciding to trill up or down from the chord tone, carry with them a host of musicological commitments that are intuitively *not* part of the work-as-notated or the work-as-abstracta. Musical Platonists attempt to defend the repeatability intuition by constructing an ontology of musical discovery and interpretation, but it is unclear how successful this can be along intuitive lines. Improvisation and ornamentation are not intuitively part of an abstract, determinate, and eternally existent musical work, but these are essential components of works in many musical traditions. Once again, our musical ontology runs into trouble—Platonism and creationism both appear to violate the pragmatic constraint. Both ontologies commit theorists to views that are too far afield from common-sense intuitions to accurately describe the ways we think, talk, and act concerning music and musical works. Regardless of how consistent these ontologies are, they violate the pragmatic constraint because they cannot satisfactorily account for ordinary musical behaviors.

### ***Nominalism (b)***

Musical nominalism emerges as a mainstream counterpoint to Platonism or creationism in analytic philosophy of music. Work in analytic musical ontology, at least recently (since the 20th century), appears as a kind of chiselling spiral working ever further toward an intuitively plausible, explanatorily powerful musical ontology. To reiterate, many of these ontological theories are direct responses to one another; nominalism, for example, is in many ways a direct response to the counterintuitive conclusions of musical Platonism. Rather than beginning with the assumption that musical works are a kind of abstracta because they can be instantiated

multiple times, nominalists believe that musical works are best identified as collections of concrete objects, nominally circumscribed into specific works.

Caplan and Matheson, in their hallmark article “Defending Musical Perdurantism”, offer a nominalist approach to musical ontology by rejecting the fundamental assumption abstracta-based theories. They ask,

If musical works are abstract objects, which cannot enter into causal relations, then how can we refer to musical works or know anything about them? Worse, how can any of our musical experiences be experiences *of* musical works? Perhaps there are satisfactory answers to these awkward questions. But it would be nice to be able to sidestep the questions altogether. One way to do that would be to take musical works to be concrete objects. (Caplan and Matheson 2006)

Caplan and Mattheson suggest that musical works might be properly analogous to persons, rather than abstract objects, in that they are concrete and perdurant entities. The point of departure for musical nominalists is to reject the central claim of Platonism and see where this train of thought goes. What does it mean to say that musical works are, as many nominalists claim, perdurant collections of particulars? What kinds of particulars qualify to be part of the work-set? And what theoretical bullets are we forced to bite along the way?

First, and as briefly as possible, perdurantism is the theory that “objects *persist* [over time] by having different temporal parts at different times” (Costa n.d.). In the case of ordinary objects, we believe that no single “slice” of time fully represents the object in question. Rather, the object persists four-dimensionally and is identified as the sum of its temporal “slices.” To foreshadow a sustained example, I can briefly explain that perdurantism claims that when you see a cup of coffee on your desk it is not the *whole* cup of coffee. What you see is “cup of coffee at time *x*” and in the next instant you will see “cup of coffee at time *y*” and so on and so forth. The real cup of coffee is the sum of all these individual temporal “slices” of the whole, and no singular slice is the perdurant whole, but merely a part of that whole. Importantly, perdurantism is distinct from a

stage view of persistence (in which numerically distinct entities exist at individual moments) and guarantees identity across time. Perdurantism is perhaps easiest to explain in the context of persons. We ordinarily assume that a person exists, completely, in each and every moment; in this common-sense framework I would claim that the self who chose to pursue a doctoral degree *is* my whole self, just as the self who completes the degree will also be my self, whole and complete. Ordinary theories of persistence might even claim that the self who chose to pursue the degree is the *same* self who will receive the degree, but this is perhaps not so intuitively true (people change, after all, and I sure hope that the self who entered grad school is not the same as the self who graduates). To address this intuitive worry, stage-persistence suggests that the self who exists at each moment is numerically distinct from the selves at every other moment (i.e., the self who entered grad school is not the self who graduates). Perdurantists critique this view, suggesting that it might be intuitively implausible to suggest that the self who made coffee this morning is not the same as the self who drinks it. Instead, perdurantism suggests that the “self” who exists at any given moment is a part of the trans-temporal being that I am. The self who enrolled in a doctoral program *is* the same self that will graduate not because I have not changed over time, but because each of these “selves” is a part *of* the self who perdures over time, not a complete self that exists at every moment. In the case of music, perdurantism suggests that a musical work is not the kind of thing that exist wholly at each moment (in every performance) but that musical works are collections of concrete objects and performances that perdure over time.

Caplan and Matheson further suggest that musical works are likely *mereologically* perdurant. This claim raises another important distinction for nominalist theories: Namely, mereological perdurantism requires that these persisting objects (works) have parts that, together, comprise the object in question. The important distinction here is between perdurantism, which

admits that even simples (entities without parts) perdure across time with the whole being made of the sum of these temporal “slices.” The example of personhood serves us well here, since we typically believe persons are simples (i.e., that the “self” does not have parts that comprise the whole). The *mereological* perdurantism that Caplan and Matheson articulate suggests that entities (musical works, specifically) are the sum of their parts, and that these parts are both physically and temporally dispersed. The parts of a musical work might be concrete in an intuitively physical sense (as in the case of scores, the particular instruments used to perform, or a conductor’s baton) and likely includes concrete parts in a more general sense (e.g., specific performances or digital recordings). In this way (and in direct contrast to a stage-view or an endurantist view of identity) individual performances become *part* of the work to which we refer but are not themselves the work. Musical perdurantism in this way sidesteps many of the tricky issues that face theories involving abstracta. The musical work need not be present in each and every performance, the sum of the work’s performances and physical objects comprise the “whole” in question. Similarly, musical perdurantism allows us to consider the score and physical accouterment of a musical performance as part of the work, without identifying the work *as* any of these component parts. In essence, perdurantism solves a persistent worry for nominalists who believe that works are constituted by concrete parts. If musical works are comprised of concrete parts, and these concrete parts cease to exist for a period of time (perhaps all the scores have been destroyed or did not exist in the first place, and no performances are currently underway) perdurantism explains how we can properly, literally say that the musical work *exists* during this lacuna without resorting to a theory of abstracta.

Both mainstream musical ontologies (Platonism and nominalism) both take works to be *objects* in a robust sense. Musical works do, after all, seem to be the kind of thing we can interact

with as we do ordinary objects. I can pay attention to, attempt to ignore, and even re-produce musical works in similar ways to how I interact with my guitar (or my coffee cup, to use a non-musical example). This basic assumption supports our intuition that musical works are distinct from one another, manipulable, producible (perhaps), and replicable. Differentiating the two theories are their understandings of what specific kind of objects are eligible to be musical works—abstract objects, in the case of Platonism and concrete objects in the case of nominalism. While there are good intuitive reasons to believe that musical works are abstract objects (that they are multiply insatiable, for instance) nominalism purports to solve some of the more worrisome features of musical Platonism.

By refusing to identify particular musical works with other kinds of abstract objects (like mathematical relationships) nominalists gain a large amount of intuitive ground over their interlocutors. Platonists are responsible for balancing the creation and instantiation intuitions regarding musical works, but nominalists sidestep the issue altogether. Ordinary objects, after all, are the kinds of things that will never be insatiable but are endlessly creatable. We can create new musical performances just by performing and compose new works by creating a concrete particular (e.g., a score or recording) that did not exist prior to the creation. While there might be instances of trivial creation (when I change a note or two of an existing classical composition and call it a new work, for example) nominalist ontological theories claim that whatever we *say* belongs to a musical work properly belongs to that musical work.

Of course, independent, non-opinion-based reasons usually influence our decisions (collective or individual) regarding which particulars belong to a given set. In the case of persons, there are good reasons to claim that a friend (we can call him Joe) perdurantly exists from moment to moment without recourse to complete subjectivism. There may be certain physical

reasons to believe that Joe is the same person at time *a* as he is at time *b* (for example, his consciousness stays in the same body at both times, at least in some important senses), but we likely have other reasons to say that Joe perdures. Reconnecting with Joe at time *b* and find that he still enjoys Pynchon novels, and still believes in an ontology of powers, means we have good reasons to believe that this is our same friend from time *a*. In the case of music, this perdurantist nominalism functions at two levels: the level of “music” as a category, and at the level of musical works. Initially, a nominalist understanding of “music” as a category of particular musical works does not *completely* rely on our perception of the situation. Sufficient similarity between musical works provides us with good independent reasons to collect these particulars under the same umbrella term, “music.” The category of music can therefore be considered a mereologically constituted category, nominally circumscribed to accommodate common musical conventions.

There are also good reasons to nominally identify specific groups of performances and physical artifacts together as a particular work. When a series of performances sound sufficiently similar, are performed sufficiently similarly, and are typically called by the same name, we can understand them as related to one another by more than our mere conjecture.<sup>32</sup> However, I should be careful to note that “nonarbitrary” does not here mean that a musical work is determinately circumscribed once and for all; the contents of these mereological composed, nominally identified categories can (and frequently do) change over time. The work of arrangers, after all, is grounded in the assumption that we can manipulate the contents of a nominalist category (such as Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*) without creating a new category (a new work) altogether. Just as our friends change over time in smaller or greater ways, so too do musical

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<sup>32</sup> If it looks like a duck Bach’s *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*, and quacks sounds like Bach’s *Tocatta and Fugue*, then it must be Bach’s *Tocatta and Fugue*.

works according to nominalists. Caplan and Mattheson similarly claim that we have non-arbitrary reasons for collecting concrete particulars in the way that we do, even when the contents of these categories are malleable. The exact manner by which particulars are collected differentiate nominalist ontologies from one another (and non-nominalist ontologies from other ontological projects).

It is telling, perhaps, of its plausibility that a great deal of the musical nominalist literature is devoted to defending nominalism from critics rather than building the theory itself. It seems that we, as humans, are primed to believe that works of art are (at least partially) just concrete particulars. In the plastic arts, nominalist identity is relatively simple to articulate: When we talk about “the work of art” in the case of painting or photography, we know the concrete (physical) components that comprise the object or its production (a canvass, paper, ink, paint, negatives, molds, or whatever is proper to the medium). What stops this being true about musical works? Nominalism suggests that musical works, like their aesthetic counterparts, just are the individual pieces that properly belong to the work’s production and presentation. Musical works, then, are a motley collection of physical (perhaps even non-physical) concrete particulars. A piece of classical music might be best understood as a set of more-or-less similar scores, performances, recordings (digital and analogue), and the various components that contribute to each of these parts. A modern song, similarly, might be a collection of masters, dubs, takes and re-takes, digital and analogue, a written or unwritten linguistic component, and written or unwritten, improvised or composed tonal components.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Of course, these claims put nominalists in a corner regarding what kind of a thing a single musical work is, much less *music* as a broader category or label. What precisely, beyond intuition, holds the particulars together? We might have good reasons for collecting concrete objects into “music” and particular works



Some of the standard objections against perdurantism, considered as a general ontological outlook, are (often or usually) inapplicable to music. For example, the no-change objection and the “Crazy Metaphysic” objection are easily solved in the case of musical works. The no-change objection claims that perdurantism makes change impossible. Theorists worry that an object cannot (as perdurantism requires) both change and remain identical with itself, and this is at least puzzling, if not downright concerning, in the case of (personal) identity. However, in the case of musical works, this paradox of sorts is quite desirable. There is a sense in which, when we attend a performance of a particular work, we expect to witness a performance of *that* work. However, the performance in question cannot, and is not expected or anticipated to be, identical with the work’s first performance or the score in use that night. No performance is perfect, no performance is completely identical with another, and yet we expect that two performances belong to the same object, the same work. This odd paradox, where musical works change and yet remain identical with themselves, is a desirable feature of *musical* perdurantism even if it is undesirable in other kinds of perdurant ontologies. Similarly, the Crazy Metaphysic objection raised by Thomson (1983) holds that it would be “obviously false” to believe that a new part of a single physical object is brought to be and destroyed moment to moment. Perdurantism commits us to the view that (at least physical) objects are never completely *there* in the way we imagine them to be because the temporal parts of an object are not identical with other temporal parts or with the object as a whole. In the case of ordinary objects, the objection suggests that it would be metaphysically “crazy” to maintain that, for example, the coffee cup sitting on my desk

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in the way we do, but to do this in a non-subjective way is more difficult. Nominalists are on the hook to answer precisely this question in an intuitively plausible way, or else risk violating the pragmatic constraint.

is brought into partial being and destroyed at each and every moment (no, the mug is *not* the same one I saw just two seconds ago, *this* mug which I see now is a different slice of the mug's trans-temporal existence). While this is problematic in the case of physical objects, mereological, nominally identified musical works do not face similar problems. It seems perfectly natural, in fact, that *this* or *that* performance is not identical to the other, that each performance is brought into existence and fades from existence in every moment, but that they nonetheless all belong to the same work. If Thomson's objection is intended to show that it would be silly to believe that objects come in and out of existence all the time, that objection poses no problem for *musical* nominalists. A musical work could, perfectly coherently, be said to come into and out of existence as its parts come to be and cease to exist in the way performances do.

However, while musical nominalism sidesteps some of the standard objections to perdurantism and nominalism, several land closer to their mark. Fundamentally, nominalism in any of its various iterations (perdurant, endurant, or even antirealist nominalist ontologies like fictionalist) endorses a view by which "there are no musical works of the kind implied by our musical practices, since those practices imply that musical works are abstract" (Kania 2013, 208–9). This intuitive cost is, according to Kania, too great to bear for musical nominalists. Two problems immediately arise: First, certain kinds of music make nominalist claims difficult to take literally. When we speak of "My Funny Valentine", for example, we imagine that we are referring to a particular work of music, the "work" that holds individual performances together. But what kind of entity is that *work* in the case of improvisational music? For nominalists, the work cannot be a concept that binds together concrete objects and performance (this is precisely the abstracta view that they reject). When I say that I love "My Funny Valentine" have I actually said that I love a collection of scores and performances? This is odd, and intuitively costly,

because the ordinary ways we speak about music track poorly with strict nominalist commitments. I do not, for example love Sting's version of "My Funny Valentine" even though I believe I speak literally when I say that I love the song. What I take myself to refer to, when I report this love, is not the collection of its performances but something else, something that binds these performances together.

Moreover, nominalists face a serious challenge when it comes to deciding between the essential and non-essential features of a mereological collection. Very little, on the nominalist's account, even *can* be a necessary component of a musical work because nominal collections are variable, but it would be strange to suggest that a work like Beethoven's *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony* remains the same even if every original score ceased to exist such that only adaptations and arrangements were ever performed.<sup>34</sup> However, this is a tricky theoretical position since nominalism cannot (without violating the pragmatic constraint) simply posit that *anything* we might say belongs to a musical work properly belongs to that work. Nominalist positions like this appear to beg the question regarding both particular musical works and the category "music." On the one hand, if there are certain essential features of a work (or of *music* broadly) such that some versions are too far from the original to count as the same work (no matter what we *say* about them) then our identification of it seems less and less nominalist in the relevant ways. On the other hand, if no essential features exist, we cannot be *wrong* about what belongs to a musical work (or *music* generally). Are we really willing to say that my half-hearted, out-of-tune, mockingly-sung "ba ba

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<sup>34</sup> More troubling, I worry about jazz performances when I remember a particular rehearsal of Billie Holiday's where, for 15 minutes, she sings "God Bless the Child" without once reproducing the original melody. Can we meaningfully talk about the nominally identified musical work called "Billie Holiday's version of 'God Bless the Child'" when versions share nothing but a chord progression? Even if we *say* that these are the same song, and they are all sung by the same person, it seems odd to suggest that they are the *same* when Holiday's versions of the song are so different from one another.

ba bum” counts as part of Beethoven’s *5<sup>th</sup> Symphony* just because I have decided to collect it alongside more professionally-rendered performances? Perhaps these issues are not so deeply troubling that we need to dispense with nominalism altogether—deciding what kind of entity a work is, and if there are non-question-begging ways of identifying music or musical works, are resolvable problems if the theoretical benefits of the theory are commensurate to the intuitive cost it demands. However, we have more reasons to believe that nominalism runs afoul of the pragmatic constraint.

For example, to say that Vivaldi’s “Winter” movement from *The Four Seasons* is just that set of concrete particulars to which we ascribe the name “Winter” (as nominalists do) is an unacceptable situation. Nearly every (literally every, on some metrics) performance includes some variation, inaccuracy, or mistake with relation to the score, and necessarily differ from (cannot be numerically identical to) past and future performances. To say that “Winter” is just that set of objects and performances to which we give that name implies two further claims: (1) “Winter” is a set and not an individual entity, and (2) “Winter” legitimately includes discrepancies from Vivaldi’s notation that we would typically call mistakes. These conclusions are intuitively implausible, but potentially unavoidable without recourse to talk of “more” or “less” accurate performances with respect to some ideal “musical work” (which, Kania points out, the nominalists have explicitly rejected) (Kania 2017).<sup>35</sup> Nominalism is not just question-begging regarding what can or cannot belong to a musical work (i.e., any performances or score we *call* legitimate *is* a legitimate part of the work in question), but further commits us to the view that

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<sup>35</sup> To an extent, this critique of nominalism rests on theories of authenticity proper to recent (in the last few centuries) Western classical compositions. While these theories of authenticity are important *now*, the intuitive costs of this ontological theory would not be nearly so great in a pre-Beethoven world, or when referring to non-Western, non-classical music practices contemporarily.

musical works do not exist in the way we typically believe, as a way to guide performance and judge its accuracy. Certainly, it sounds strange (strange enough to violate the pragmatic constraint?) to say that Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* itself contains mistakes because it is unclear what those mistakes stand in relation to. Nominally identifying musical works as collections of performances and physical objects means that the score does not necessarily hold an authoritative position over performances. When a musician plays a wrong note in their performance, there is no nonarbitrary way to decide whether this or that concrete part of the "work" holds authority over the others such that we can say the musician was wrong and not the score.<sup>36</sup>

To conclude our discussion of nominalism, it bears mentioning that nominalist theories make quite a lot of sense in the context of pop music. Take, for example, "All Along the Watchtower", a song that Bob Dylan famously says *he* covers from Jimi Hendrix's definitive version of the song. That this is literally true can easily be accommodated by nominalist ontologies since musical works' authoritative versions just are whatever we say they are (again,

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<sup>36</sup> This objection is perhaps not especially clear in the case of classical music but consider the Beatles' "Blackbird" as an example. The piece is reportedly based on Bach's *Bourrée in E minor, BWV 996* and perhaps for these reasons includes a pedal-tone that seems more appropriate to Bach's organ. (Pedal-tones are literally played with the organist's feet on a pedal keyboard, and function as a sustained harmony throughout the piece's performance grounding the work to a particular key, to tonic.) "Blackbird" stands out from its pop-music associates, musicological, due to a sustained G pedal-tone beneath much of the melodic line, and (strangely) beneath the otherwise progressing harmonic structure of the piece. The pedal-tone changes the song's harmony, the character of the chords above it, and thus the character of the work. Music theorists still argue about whether this "pedal"-tone is or is not an essential part of the song's harmonic progression. The trouble for nominalists is that a *significant* portion of covers omit this sustained G altogether, meaning that the work which is "Blackbird" both does and does not contain this guitar-simulated pedal-tone. Since the note determines the character of the piece to a large extent, we might be inclined to say that there are two different works: "Blackbird with a G pedal-tone" and "Blackbird without a G pedal-tone" but this is impossible on nominalist grounds. Since we *call* the original and its covers versions of one and the same work, they must *be* versions of one and the same work. Musically speaking, this is unsatisfying, but a necessary conclusion for most musical nominalists.

this is not to say we arbitrarily decide, but that our *deciding* is what makes it so). This flexibility with regard to authoritative performances and compositions is exactly what nominalists call on us to believe. In the case of pop and jazz, nominalist theories fit with our lived experience because we typically *want* to categorize works and genres according to consensus opinion or another form of nominalist identification. However, not all experiences of music are pop or jazz, and a compelling musical ontology will need to account for (at least) central cases of music making. Nominalist ontologies imply that whatever has been collected into a musical work properly belongs to that musical work, but this appears question-begging in unsatisfying ways at least in the case of discrepancies between performances and scores (or merely between alternate performances). Further, nominalist ontologies imply that works are collections of widely varying (what we would *want* to call inaccurate) performances and objects in ways that are intuitively strange. Perhaps nominalism is not for us, or at least contemporary versions of nominalism are unsatisfying.

### ***Non-Orthodox Theories (c, d)***

While Platonism and nominalism dominate the ontological landscape in philosophy of music, several less-widely-held theories are championed by a smaller contingent of ardent supporters. In the section that follows, I review (c) action theory and (d) idealism as alternatives to the dominant positions in musical ontology. Of course, other ontological positions exist besides action theory and idealism (historical individualism, for example) but since these relatively unpopular theories are typically aimed to account for other aesthetic media (e.g., photography and film) they exist beyond the scope of this critique. For our purposes, we will examine action theory and idealism, in turn, to address the ways that these relatively unpopular theories attempt to circumvent some of the issues that pertain to abstracta and nominalist ontologies of music.

David Davies offers a rehabilitation of (c) action theory in line with Gregory Currie's (1989) original articulation of the theory. The primary claim of action theory is "a work just is the performance whereby a work-focus is specified" (Davies 2003, 147). There is, of course, some internal debate among action theorists about how works are individuated (whether the actions generating works are properly understood as types or tokens themselves, for example) but all action theorists agree that the work of art itself is the collection of actions taken to produce a work-focus or relevantly similar product. In other words, action theory identifies the work itself with the set of actions undertaken by the artist and *not* the product of those actions. For example, consider Alma Thomas' *Starry Night and the Astronauts* (1972). In our experience of the canvas, we do not literally see the work of art, according to action theorists. Rather, action theorists claim that the work itself is the series of actions that Thomas undertook in putting acrylic to canvas: each piece of the mosaic-style painting individually mixed on her palette, each one individually brushed onto the unfinished canvas, each minute motion of her brush weighted differently each time with different amounts of paint in different shades. These actions Thomas undertook to complete the canvas *literally are* the work of art according to action theory. Meanwhile, hanging in the museum, patrons see the *work-focus* and not the work of art directly. The canvas-and-acrylic object that hangs in the Art Institute of Chicago is not the work of art itself, but the work-focus that Thomas' work of art produced.

This is a rather poetic interpretation of aesthetic ontology. Action theory validates the work typically unseen by audiences and crystalizes a difference between the work itself and the finished product (which often falls short of the artist's imagination). For the audience, action theory is desirable for a number of reasons, many of which are closely related to the previous discussion of nominalism. Nominalism produces, I argued, relatively counterintuitive conclusions

concerning musical works. The concrete set of particulars that nominalists identify as a “work” include mistakes, improper performances, and a motley collection of undesirable inhabitants of the sets we call musical works. Further, we have cause to worry that nominalism has no recourse to an authoritative work against which we can measure individual performances. Action theorists neatly skirt around these issues insofar as the work itself just is those actions undertaken by the artist. The work itself is authoritative because it is not just one mereologically collected object among many, it specifies the work-product and therefore specifies what counts as an acceptable (or unacceptable) reproduction *of* that product. No matter the mistakes that inattentive printers, overzealous musicians, or unwieldy museum patrons<sup>37</sup> make, the *art* is preserved—only the work-focus could be damaged or imperfectly reproduced throughout the course of history. In the context of music, action theorists consider the work itself as the of actions undertaken by a composer, which are later instantiated by musicians in performance. The particular set of compositional actions that generate the work-focus (the score) *just is* the work itself and any mistakes or imperfections in the performance are a separate ontological issue. These imperfections which were so troubling for nominalists are not only acceptable but expected in the case of action theory.

However, while action theory solves some issues that plague orthodox musical ontologies, it produces several counterintuitive conclusions. In as far as action theory helps solve some of the problems that nominalists encounter, it tends to reproduce a familiar worry from abstracta-based ontologies. Perhaps most importantly, action theory (like Goodman-style musical Platonism) suggests that we rarely encounter the *work itself* insofar as we typically understand artworks. For

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<sup>37</sup> Here, we might imagine a number of cases of intentional or unintentional cases of museum vandalism.



example, action theory contends that what we see in the Louvre is *not* the *Mona Lisa*; what we see in the Louvre is the work-focus *of* the *Mona Lisa* and not the work itself. The work itself is the set of actions undertaken by da Vinci to produce the canvas that current hangs in the Louvre, but the canvas itself is merely the work-focus generated by the original work of art. The issue compounds in performance arts where the artist (in our case, the composer) relies on others to instantiate the work-focus. Davies writes,

Music is a performance art which comprises musical composition, on the one hand, and the performances of the conductor and assembled musicians, on the other. I shall tentatively define the performance arts as those art forms in which, as we would normally put it, our access to, and appreciation of, *works* (as receivers) is at least in part mediated by *performances of those works*. (Davies 2003, 247)

The audience, action theorists like Davies claim, is not in a position to see the work itself. Rather, audiences have access to the work-focus (in the case of visual arts) or the performance which mediates the work-focus (in the case of performance arts). Initially, this appears compelling in the case of classical music: it seems plausible, for example, to suggest that a kind of double event occurs in Bernstein's version of Beethoven's *Eroica*. Bernstein's performance, we might suggest, constitutes a wholly original work of art such that other performances of the *Eroica* symphony are not the same. However, the problem remains that when we attend a concert, we are incapable of experiencing the musical work we expect, according to action theory. When I attend a performance of Beethoven's *Eroica*, I cannot listen to Beethoven's *Eroica*. Instead, I can only listen to a performance *based on* Beethoven's composition, but at no point would I have access to the work itself in any meaningful sense. It at least sounds counterintuitive, perhaps pragmatically unacceptable, to say that very few of us (those of us who are not in the habit of watching painters paint, or composers compose) have ever really seen a work of art in our lives.

While this counterintuitive conclusion may not sink action theory outright, two primary criticisms often push musical ontologists way from Currie and Davies' theories. First, Davies relies on a kind of essentialism in order to determine the difference between artistically relevant and artistically irrelevant actions (Dilworth 2005, 79). Davies writes,

The object of critical evaluation and appreciation, we are claiming, is the motivated manipulation of the vehicular medium, in light of shared understandings, with the aim of articulating an artistic statement, and completed by a particular work-focus. The motivations that enter into the identity of the work, and thus bear upon its appreciation, are those that directly relate to the goal of articulating the artistic statement. (Davies 2003, 156)

Davies here attempts to differentiate between the artistic and non-artistic intentions that contribute to a work of art. He claims that the motivations and manipulations that count as the work are those that “directly relate to the goal of articulating the artistic statement” (2003, 156).<sup>38</sup> This distinction is important for action theorists like Davies because the actions that an artist undertakes *literally are* the work of art, and it is quite important to distinguish between artistic actions and the ordinary actions artists undertake as human beings.<sup>39</sup> The identity of the work is at stake in properly identifying the essential and accidental actions that contribute to the creation of the work-focus (the physical object that, for example, a painter or sculptor produces).

Dilworth's critique points out that this feature of Davies' action theory implies a kind of essentialism with respect to artistic intentions. What, precisely, should we assume is true of an artist's intentions such that some enter into the work of art and others do not? Davies uses his

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<sup>38</sup> Of course, Davies is assuming quite a lot about art including, for example, that all art must have an “artistic statement” and that the artists' intentions are influential in the identity of the work produced. Whether this is true is highly controversial.

<sup>39</sup> To briefly explain, the worry is that an artist's bathroom break intuitively does not count as “part of the artwork” (Duchamp notwithstanding) but there are few nonarbitrary ways to draw this line.

construction to bracket out behavior like Coleridge's famous use of opium in writing *Kubla Khan*, or what he calls the "painters coffee break" example.<sup>40</sup> In order to distinguish between the *causal* and *artistic* factors related to a work-focus' production, we need only distinguish between the actions that directly relate to the artistic statement and those that do not, but who decides what the artistic statement is? Could it not be that Coleridge *wanted* to make an artistic statement about the effects of opium?<sup>41</sup> These issues are worrying because we have no universal standards by which to distinguish between artistic and non-artistic actions. More troubling, perhaps, is that this metric Davies suggests (that we distinguish between actions that contribute to the articulation of the artistic statement and those that do not) identifies works of art by reference to intentionality in ways that are undesirable. Among other issues that intentional identification raises, for action theorists like Davies, artistic processes like Jackson Pollock's are difficult to explain, because the actions which contribute to the work may not directly relate to any expressive goal.

Second, action theory encounters problems in attempting to distinguish between individual works of art. Action theory holds that works of art are identified by the concrete actions undertaken to produce that work, and this solves some worries that pertain to mediums for which there exists a physical work-focus. For example, in painting the same image twice, a

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<sup>40</sup> To clarify: the painter's coffee break problem holds that Picasso taking a break to drink coffee during the process of painting does not count as "part of the work" in the way that his painting activities (paint mixing or choosing, and the actual brushstrokes) are said to. In both the Coleridge and Picasso examples, the issue is that we *want* to say that there are non-artistic actions we take during the process of creating a work-focus that are not properly part of "the work" in question. The Coleridge example illustrates why this is an issue when we continually undertake non-artistic actions during the actions that constitute the work, whereas the painter's coffee break example illustrates how we might want to handle works of art whose parts are temporally dispersed due to breaks or pauses in the process.

<sup>41</sup> In fact, given that the poem's subtitle is "Or, a vision in a dream. A fragment" it seems likely that Coleridge believed opium to have a direct influence on his artistic process such that it contributed to the identity of the work.

painter has undertaken unique sets of actions to generate each work. Action theory can therefore distinguish between apparently identical works of art that are nonetheless different due to the unique sets of actions which constitute the separate works. Two identical paintings are differentiated as work-foci of two separate artworks because the painter must have mobilized different actions for each painting. Unfortunately, this line of reasoning fails to accommodate the central cases of musical works that Davies discusses. Especially in the case of Western classical music, if a composer were to generate the same score twice over, would they be considered wholly separate works? Action theorists are likely committed to the fact that these identical scores are nonetheless separate works of art, despite being functionally identical in their notation. The idea that different actions may produce otherwise identical products and yet not reproduce the *same* artwork helps accommodate our intuition that one cannot create the same painting twice over, but this is not such an easy insight to accommodate in the case of music. There is something about a physical work of art that seems to “bear the mark of history” such that two otherwise identical canvasses cannot be considered the same work of art. However, in the case of what Goodman would call the *allographic* arts, this otherwise intuitive caveat puts our intuitions in jeopardy. Returning to Davies’ example, what if Coleridge had written *Kubla Khan* (word-for-word) twice over, once under the effects of opium, and once without? Davies is committed to identifying these as wholly different works of art, but we might wonder if that is truly the case.

Perhaps these objections are bullets we are willing to bite but Davies’ action theory also begins with a set of heavy intuitive costs. These costs are so great, in fact, that Kania’s encyclopedia entry on musical ontology wholly dismisses action theory well before raising any concrete objections. Kania remarks that action theory implies “that an instance of a work is some action performed by a composer, rather than a performance. In order to make up for such

damage to our intuitions the theoretical benefits of an action theory would have to be quite extensive” (Kania 2017). Davies, of course, has an answer for Kania’s critique regarding works and performances (calling performances a kind of doubled artistic event in which performers have access to the composed work, and create a wholly new work of art by their performance acts). Kania’s second point, however, still strikes at the heart of action theory ontologies like Davies’. The intuitive costs of these theories are extraordinarily high by comparison to orthodox theories, and the explanatory benefits are not equally extraordinary. There is no doubt that action theory is a relatively coherent (and relatively complete) ontology of musical works—the problem is that action theories fail the pragmatic constraint. Action theory touts its unification of aesthetics under a singular ontology as its great accomplishment, but if we are not swayed by the idea that all art *should* adhere to the same conceptual/ontological framework, we may not be in apposition to accept the intuitive costs associated with such a theory. Combine this unexamined claim that all art should adhere to the same ontological framework with the internal issues for action theory (regarding how to provide a nonarbitrary distinction between “essentially artistic” actions and the “painter’s coffee break,” not to mention the implication that few of us have ever seen a painting in real life) and action theory appears less desirable than it initially did.

Musical idealism (d), by contrast, begins with an almost opposite set of issues compared to action theory. Whereas action theory (c) attempts to unify all art under a single definition and places a significant number of intuitive commitments in jeopardy, musical idealism begins with the intuitive claim that music is first and foremost an *idea* but offers this definition for a relatively narrow number of works. Renée Cox, for example, identifies musical idealism as the theory that musical works “are repositied and exist in an only in conscious and unconscious human minds” and offers the caveat that this definition is proper to “fully notated, tonal, European instrumental

works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries” (1986, 133).<sup>42</sup> In this limited form, musical idealism appears as a relatively coherent and intuitive account of notated, Western, tonal compositions from the past several hundred years. However, this is an incomplete account of *music* if we believe that music is more than just European-style compositions from the recent past. To expand musical idealism Cray and Matheson identify idealism as “the view that entities such as Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Dio’s ‘Holy Diver,’ and Duke Ellington’s ‘Sophisticated Lady’ are best identified with *ideas* or some similar mental entities” (2017, 702). All kinds of music, on this account, are mental entities represented and made available to interpretation by a system of notation or communication. In this way, we can meaningfully speak of “music” as a relatively universal human artistic endeavor without needing to directly reconcile differing concepts of “musical works” between cultures or historical periods.<sup>43</sup>

Due to musical idealism’s foundational claim, that musical works are ideas, idealists hold that there are as many musical works as there are audience members for a particular piece, and that musical works are not intersubjectively accessible (Kania 2017). These are relatively difficult objections that some idealists attempt to circumvent. For example, Cox explains that “to say that

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<sup>42</sup> Cox claims that “it would be difficult, if not impossible, to derive a definition of a musical work that would apply equally well to ancient chant, improvisational Baroque works, organic structures of the nineteenth century and contemporary aleatoric compositions, to say nothing of music in non-Western traditions” (1986, 133). Sounds like I have quite the project ahead of me, if this is the type of account I aim to offer!

<sup>43</sup> It bears mentioning that Cray and Matheson’s attempt to universalize “music” does little to expand beyond Cox’s identification of fully notated tonal music from the last two centuries. The examples Cray and Matheson provide arguably already exist in the category Cox specified. Duke Ellington and Dio share more, musically speaking, in common with Beethoven and Mozart than we typically hear; and I would be more than happy to digress into a discussion of music theory education as a way of hegemonizing relatively esoteric, Western-classical standards of musical composition. However, the authors take themselves to be speaking of music more universally, and I treat their argument in accordance with that belief.

a score or a sound sequence represent music is to say that they represent music *for* someone” (1986, 138). However, to say that a score or recording represents music *for* someone, is not to imply that these artifacts represent the *same* work to everyone. To avoid the conclusion that there are as many works as there are listeners, Cox opts for a quasi-nominalist account of musical works in which relevantly similar ideas of a singular work can be collected together based on similarity in interpretation and audience background (1986, 138). When a collection of performers and audience members have a relevantly similar understanding of a work, the work comes to be identified as a singular entity. Since musical works are, on this account, properly identified with composers’ ideas, making them intersubjectively accessible requires that the notational system composers use to communicate their ideas is interpreted in the proper way by performers and audience members. Because these notational systems only *represent* a work, and are not the work itself, musicians and audience members must form relevantly similar *ideas* based on that representation in order for their ideas to be of the same work. However, it is unclear if expert and nonexpert musical ideas are relevantly similar in the ways they would have to be in order for idealism to allow audiences and musicians access to the same musical work.

The primary issue for musical idealism, in fact, is that there is no way to guarantee that these interpretations of the work are similar in musically relevant ways. Audience members are not experts in musical interpretation, and their understandings of a work may vary so drastically as to separate these interpretations as wholly different works.<sup>44</sup> Especially in cases of Western

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<sup>44</sup> How many times have you heard someone attribute “Hallelujah” to Jeff Buckley, or “All Along the Watchtower” to Jimi Hendrix? The concern, more than misattributing covers, is that audiences are rarely in a position to judge whether a piece is relevantly musically similar to others in ways that make the collection of instances a singular work.

classical music, where much of a work's meaning hangs on subtle distinctions between chord spellings or functional progressions, minor differences in interpretation are often enough to comprise a wholly new work from the one which existed in the composer's mind. Some attempts have been made to solve these issues, but they trend in two directions. Interpretations like Cox's blend musical idealism with relatively established ontological theories in the field (nominalism, in this case). Blending idealism with other musical ontologies forces us to wonder why the original theory was not sufficient to handle our intuitions, and these combined theories tend to face the same problems as their theoretical components. If Cox relies on musical nominalism to claim that musical works are ideas and yet that many ideas are collected under the umbrella of a singular work, why could we not include musical ideas among the objects that nominally comprise musical works? Further, if musical works are nominally collected ideas, then musical works certainly include mistakes and mishearings, since almost no performance (and therefore the idea that performances produce in one's mind) is perfect. Meanwhile, other attempts to rehabilitate musical idealism, including Cray and Matheson's, alter our definition of "ideas" to better accommodate the intersubjectively accessible nature of musical works.

Cray and Matheson's essay, "A Return to Musical Idealism," levies a battery of analytic philosophic tools against the issues that plague musical idealism. They claim that, "recent work in the ontology of ideas makes available a new—and quite satisfactory—version of idealism" (2017,

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Perhaps more worrying is that, in the case of classical music, there might be quite a lot that audience members simply are not in the position to understand. If I asked, for example, that you identify the *medial caesura* in any of Beethoven's sonata-form movements, could you? In fact, Beethoven is noted for obscuring this particular moment of musical closure from his audiences, and few expert musicians are in a position to form an authoritative idea concerning where precisely this moment occurs in his sonatas (Richards 2013). If even experts cannot come to a consistent conclusion about the musical structure of these popular works, can our ideas of the work be sufficiently similar to guarantee that we are all hearing the same work when we attend a concert?



702). Setting aside the question of how effective this particular strategy is, the article raises a bigger question for musical idealism and, in fact, musical ontology as a whole. That is: What is the status of musical ontology in comparison to ontological projects more generally? When a theory of musical ontology asks us to change not just our understanding of musical works, but our understanding of the world at large, how are we to cope with the intuitive costs demanded by such a drastic change? Would we be better off leaving the project of musical ontology behind and focusing our theoretical efforts on a robust ontology such that musical works fit neatly into a larger picture? While I am sympathetic to Cray and Matheson's project, I worry that asking readers to give up longstanding or foundational ontological beliefs (about, for example, what kinds of a thing "ideas" are) is an unacceptable intuitive cost in the case of musical ontology.<sup>45</sup> Here we begin to stray from the path of musical ontology proper, and into the realm of ontology in general. We will have to ask ourselves where we want to draw this line, and what this ontological Rubicon actually represents, whether or not we are willing to cross over into a discussion of ontology at the expense of music. The most damning part of musical idealism is hardly its adherence to the view that musical works are ideas in a composer's mind, but that it asks us to forfeit our beliefs concerning *ideas* of all kinds, just for the sake of a cohesive ontology of "fully notated, tonal, European instrumental works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Cox 1986, 133).

If this is sounding a little silly or a little hyperbolic, there are alternatives that do not demand we return to traditional Platonic or nominalist ontologies of music, nor do they require

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<sup>45</sup> If reworking whole swaths of ontology for the sake of music is an acceptable position, why not accept a kind of Berkeley-style idealism and say that *all* objects are ideas in the relevant sense, musical works included?

that we halt progress in musical ontology every time these projects have wider-reaching implications that we intend. There already exists a robust tradition of literature in philosophy of music that I will be calling *ontological dismissal*, which provides us with good reasons to forgo a robust and specific musical ontology, at least for the time being. Where traditional projects attempt to offer complete and cohesive ontologies of musical works, ontological dismissal suggests that a common-sense, minimalist ontology is likely sufficient to account for musical works as we typically encounter them. Perhaps we can think of ontological dismissal as recommending that we can start on the other side of what I called the musical version of the “hermeneutic spiral” that exists between ontological and definitional projects. Just because definitional projects imply ontological commitments does not mean that they rest on a cohesive and comprehensive ontological foundation. Rather, positions like the ones I will address in the following section make it clear that, even in the context of philosophy of music, competing musical ontologies might be incommensurable, and that intra-disciplinary divisions between these ontologies are often inconsequential.

In the following section, I review three types of ontological dismissal (what I will call pessimism, deflection, and refusal) and ultimately endorse a general ontological agnosticism that will allow us to set aside (but eventually return to) musical ontology once it becomes relevant for the Intercorporeal Account I aim to construct. Of course, I should be careful to note that the projects I call “ontological dismissal” constitute a kind of meta-ontological project that aims to identify the shortcomings of contemporary work in the discipline. I say this to assuage your (and my) worry that the last however-many pages of this project have all been in vain if ontology can simply be “dismissed”; I assure you, that is not the case. In order to understand the musical definitions examined in the next chapter, contextualize the work of extended mind philosophy

and its influence on philosophy of music, and to articulate the Intercorporeal Account, we will need a general sense of the acceptable positions that exist in musical ontology. However, in order to make progress on these topics, rather than languish in the purgatory of abstracta-ontological issues, it will be necessary to set aside some of the intradisciplinary issues and refocus on musical definitions as our path forward.

### **Ontological Dismissal**

Reviewing the standard ontological positions available in philosophy of music demonstrates a variety of internal problems that each theory faces and illuminates a broader issue with the methodology of musical ontology. Because these standard ontological theories take methodological balance as a primary consideration in musical ontologies, there exists a certain amount of tension between these projects' revisionist and descriptivist goals. This tension is inevitable in ontologies that are constructed using the accepted "methodology of balance" that most (especially analytic) philosophers of music do. Insofar as descriptive and revisionist projects are separate, and insofar as widely accepted ontologies of music engage with *both* projects in an attempt to balance revisionist consistency with descriptions of (admittedly complex) praxis, musical ontologies are in the business of producing and living with theoretical tension.

This tension, sufficiently balanced in individual ontologies, makes it difficult to adjudicate between competing ontological theories. Picking one theory among many is as much a matter of preference as careful philosophical consideration. Given that all theories constructed using a balance of revisionist and descriptivist methodologies produce this tension (all orthodox musical ontologies and the vast majority of so-called non-orthodox ontologies as well) how are we to pick between competing theories in a nonarbitrary way? Amie Thomasson remarks, "the variety of positions [in the ontology of music] seems to be an embarrassment of riches, for it is not clear

how we are to decide among these apparently mutually incompatible and often surprising views” (Thomasson 2005, 221). Thomasson articulates this worry in musical ontology: the field is full of competing theories but lacks objective standards by which to compare them. To a certain extent, philosophy of music often encourages theorists to take up whichever relatively cohesive ontological theory best supports their pre-existing intuitions and ontological commitments. In a relatively clunky, analytic way, allow me to explain this worry more concretely: Consider ontological theory *A* which offers theoretical benefit *w* and incurs theoretical cost *x*. Consider another theory *B* which offers theoretical benefit *y* and incurs theoretical cost *z*. Imagine further that the intuitive costs of *x* and *z* are relevantly similar, and that *w* and *x* are equally desirable. The worry is that there is no nonarbitrary way to decide, on the methodology of balance, whether to endorse theory *A* or *B* since the methodology of balance would recommend both. Both suffer from the same tension between intuitive claims and counterintuitive implications, and with a similar balance between benefits and costs there may be no intra-disciplinary way of deciding which theory is best. Instead, theorists are often in position of deciding which pre-reflective intuitions of theirs to accommodate in their ontology of music. In our example, if a theorist already has extra-musical reasons for believing *w* and rejecting *z*, then they would have good reasons to take up ontological theory *A*. The worry, of course, is that if we are deciding between ontologies of music for extra-musical reasons, then why not simply accommodate musical works into whatever pre-existing ontological view we begin with? And if we are merely doing ontology with an eye toward musical examples, then are we really doing *musical* ontology anymore? Without exceeding the scope of the discipline, competing theories might be incommensurable. The alternative, perhaps obviously, is to *not* choose between competing ontologies of music.

There is already a small body of literature published concerning the idea that musical ontology might be a lost cause from its inception, and that theorists are better off not engaging with it (not choosing between musical ontologies at all). Aaron Ridley writes that “a serious philosophical engagement with music is orthogonal to, and may well in fact be impeded by, the pursuit of ontological issues, and, in particular, that any attempt to specify the conditions of a work’s identity must, from the perspective of musical aesthetics, be absolutely worthless” (2003, 203). This admittedly extreme stance that Ridley articulates suggests that philosophy of music is impeded, rather than aided, by work in musical ontology. Why would we care about what constitutes a musical work if our common-sense intuitions are sufficient to identify them? We might imagine, analogously, that we do not need to know what a musical work *is* in order to appreciate it, in the same way that we do not need to know that water is H<sub>2</sub>O in order to stay hydrated. Ridley’s claim is that ontological projects are therefore a matter of philosophic curiosity, not musical importance. Granted, even Ridley admits that “one needs to have some ontological views to draw upon, some identity conditions that will, at least in principle, allow one to either settle the question,” and that he is “perfectly happy to agree, at least for the sake of argument, that there might be genuine borderline cases” (2003, 216). In other words, he remains convinced that the work performed in musical ontology is unrelated to genuine philosophical engagement with *music* as a subject of inquiry, even if ontological issues occasionally crop up in our philosophic debates.

Ridley here makes two primary claims that will motivate what I call “ontological dismissal” in a broad sense and the varieties of ontological dismissal addressed in the following sections. First, Ridley claims that engagement with music, from a philosophical perspective, is typically not ontological in nature. When we ask and attempt to answer philosophically

important questions about music, few of them hinge on whether we identify musical works as a set of actions, an idea, or some collection of perdurant objects and performances. Second, Ridley claims that our preexisting ontological commitments, rudimentary as they may be, are typically sufficient to address most instances of music (and that when they are not, it is likely a feature of the aesthetic work, and not our ontology, that causes our confusion). Some instances of art (including musical works) may be “genuine borderline cases” that our preexisting ontological commitments are *insufficient* to address, but the majority of musical works are accounted for, in uncontroversial ways, by ordinary (i.e., not specifically musical) ontological theories.

The position that ontological issues are “orthogonal” to a serious philosophic engagement with music is the foundation of ontological dismissal: Serious philosophical engagement with music is possible, he claims, *without* first building a robust ontological framework to support that engagement. Rather than adhering to a readymade musical ontology (and attempting to convince readers to adopt a particular set of ontological views concerning music that have widespread implications for their *other* ontological beliefs) I opt for a kind of ontological agnosticism or dismissal moving forward. However, dismissing musical ontology is not so easy as Ridley makes it sound; scholars have proposed several solutions to the issue of musical ontology that argue for its dismissal using various strategies, while others merely proceed with the clear assumption that ontological issues are beyond the scope of philosophy of music.

First, to briefly foreshadow the Intercorporeal Account, I should note that ontological dismissal remains a running theme in the following chapters. The Intercorporeal Account I defend is, I take it, a hybrid position between musical definitions and ontology that does not

directly contribute to either project as directly as the positions I review.<sup>46</sup> Concretely, what I mean to claim is that music is a way of constructing relationships, an active and corporeal relational mode that engages audiences and musicians with one another. While I sincerely hope that this onto-definitional claim will make more sense in context (situated alongside musical definitions and informed by scholarship in philosophy of mind) what matters for now is that the Intercorporeal Account can set aside traditional ontology of music because it implies relatively few ontological commitments beyond the realm of music. Merely saying that music is a bodily, active process and a way that people relate to one another is compatible with a wide variety of foundational ontological principles. As we will see shortly, most definitions of music carry strong ontological commitments (e.g., definitions that identify intrinsic features of musical works typically imply a Platonist ontology of some flavor) but the Intercorporeal Account's relative lack of definitive ontological claims means that ontological dismissal of some flavor is a viable path forward, out of the ontological quagmire.<sup>47</sup> Candidly, I am not in the business of trying to convince readers that their long-held ontological beliefs are erroneous, a task that traditional ontology of music asks its proponents to undertake in advocating for a particular ontology over others. Instead, I opt to construct the Intercorporeal Account on a foundation of ontological

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<sup>46</sup> I call the Intercorporeal Account a hybrid position because it aims to define music, but ultimately says very little about how to identify specific examples of musical works in the world—I offer a few remarks concerning the defining characteristics of music and musical works, and briefly comment on how one *could* identify all and only instances of music using the account's criteria. From an ontological point of view, also, I call the Intercorporeal Account a hybrid position because it directly identifies what musical works *are made from* but does not construct a robust ontology as such.

<sup>47</sup> Of course, articulating the Intercorporeal Account requires a certain amount of ontological background (for example, to differentiate the Intercorporeal Account from action theory) but for the time being we can set these concerns.

dismissal and suggest that it can be incorporated into any ontology that accepts the existence of bodily agents and relationships.

In the sections that follow I categorize existing work into three categories based on the techniques used in each case—I address what I will call ontological pessimism, deflection, and refusal as compatible strategies which provide good reasons to set aside musical ontology for the time being. Last, I will explain my working position with a small analogy to spring cleaning and conclude with a promise to return to these issues when the time comes. More on the Intercorporeal Account and ontology later; for now, we can review why, exactly, one would want to “dismiss” ontology in a field that remains enmired in ontological issues.

### **Ontological Pessimism**

Starting (somewhat) from the beginning, Matheson and Caplan claim that “ontologists of music have been interested in a number of questions, including the following ones. Are there musical works? If there are musical works, what are they like? If there are musical works, what relation do they stand in to their performances?” (2011, 38). Of course, constructing an ontology that satisfactorily answers certain questions (Are there musical works?) does not necessarily require answering others (What relation do they stand in relative to their performances?). Ontologies of music are, in this sense, helpful even if they cannot answer every question we have concerning music. Instead, musical ontology attempts to “handle those intuitions of ours that are relevant” to the aforementioned questions (2011, 42). Constructing a satisfying musical ontology usually involves answering many or all of our basic questions concerning musical works and the nature of their existence. First, Matheson and Caplan claim that the proper role of a musical ontology is to accommodate preexisting musical intuitions in a cohesive aesthetic ontology. Musical ontologies are always in the business of balancing theoretical benefits against intuitive



costs, the new piece of information that Matheson and Caplan provide is an understanding of “theoretical benefits” as an accommodation of musical intuitions and pre-existing ontological beliefs. Second, and most important for our discussion of ontological dismissal, Matheson and Caplan identify the scope of musical ontologies: once the majority of our questions about music can be answered, once “those intuitions of ours that are relevant” are accommodated, our work is finished. A *musical* ontology need not accommodate other aesthetic media, or seriously engage with extra-musical issues.<sup>48</sup> However, circumscribing the scope of musical ontology does not address Matheson and Caplan’s worries concerning the methodology of balance and inherent accommodation of musical intuitions.

First, it seems that commonplace intuitions are woefully inadequate to construct a full musical ontology, and that not all intuitions are the result of careful consideration or musical expertise. Given the (often) unreflective way in which musical intuitions are constructed by the nonmusical public, why ought they be the standard for measuring musical ontology? While the field takes lay understanding of the issues seriously and attempts to address real-world musical practices, the simple fact is that most musical professionals are more cautious than their amateur counterparts. Gallope writes, addressing ancient philosophy of music,

If Aristotle were a virtuoso on the aulos or the kithera, would he have plunged confidently into a scientific treatise on the specific effects of particular melodies, harmonies, and rhythms? The musician in me suspects that he would have refrained. And perhaps refraining is a wise and even insightful course of action. (Gallope 2017, 4)

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<sup>48</sup> Good thing too! I take it most realist ontologies would otherwise be on the hook for solving the famous “problem of universals” in order to explain how “music” in addition to musical works exist. Thankfully, solving this particular metaphysical conundrum is beyond the scope for us musically inclined philosophers.

Gallop echoes Matheson and Caplan's worry concerning intuitive constructions of musical ontologies. Specifically, whose intuitions are we responsible for accommodating? It would appear that most philosophers (even philosophers of music) are not experts at the practice of music, and yet it is these philosophic intuitions that are often accommodated in musical ontologies. While this difference between theory and practice is usually inconsequential in philosophic circles (and we might be able to, for example, imagine an expert in philosophy of science who cannot design a successful experiment) in the case of music, expertise becomes important. When we, as philosophers, hold ourselves accountable to real-world practices, we are responsible for understanding those practices, but *musical* practices are not only extraordinarily complex, but widely varied between cultures and across time. Becoming an expert is no small matter, and most philosophers are unable (pragmatically, as a matter of time) to become expert musicologists in addition to expert philosophers. Additionally, we might have reason to distrust expert testimony when it conflicts with lay intuition and engagement. Our ontologies and definitions of music should track real musical practice, but musical practices are not the exclusive purview of musical experts. Perhaps musicians, as musical experts, would be well-poised to explain what happens during rehearsals and performances of standard musical works, but our ontologies probably need to explain what happens when we turn the radio on in the car, what we hear when our alarm goes off in the morning, and what is happening with the church-bells down the road every hour on the hour. Not to mention, expert intuition is fallible in the same way that lay intuition is; not every musician or musicologist is equally well-equipped (or well-equipped at all) to determine the relevant philosophic intuitions that an ontology of music should accommodate. Given the likelihood that we may misinterpret our own intentions or behaviors as more or less important (ontologically speaking) than they actually are, expert testimony is also susceptible to error.

Consequently, deciding which ontologies best accommodate “musical intuitions” may be *one way* of adjudicating between musical ontologies, but it is far from satisfying or determinative.

Intuitions also appear unreliable because they change over time.<sup>49</sup> It is a desideratum of musical ontologies (at least realist ontologies) that they address all instances of musical production, not just those that happen to conform to widely held cultural beliefs in a particular time and/or place. Not only does one’s involvement in particular subcultures or genres (punk, grime, indie-folk, Romantic-era classical, etc.) influence their intuitions regarding what is and is not music, but our concept of music is extremely historically variable. Would Bach have believed that Kendrick Lamar was composing *music*? Perhaps the case could be made that he would, but the popular musical understanding of 17th century would be unlikely to *intuitively* accommodate rap.<sup>50</sup> Just because we have certain intuitions regarding music now does not mean that they have been similar in the past or will be similar in the future. In other words, if we want to construct an ontology of music that reflects a cohesive understanding of music trans-historically, then we cannot accept that intuitions are, at least solely, sufficient for constructing an ontological theory.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Similarly, just because our intuitions are formed a certain way now does not mean that they must have formed in that way. We can easily imagine a world in which the underlying reality of music is similar to the one in ours, but where our intuitions are severely misguided (or, in which our intuitions are the same as they are now, but the underlying reality of music is drastically different). Importantly, these are two separate objections to using intuition to judge between objective ontologies of music. When we claim to identify the stuff of music (so to speak), there are collective mistakes we could make. In the first case, discussed above, our intuitions could change over time without a corresponding change in the nature of music. In the second case, alluded to in this footnote, our intuitions could have been erroneous from the start due to some miss-match between our intuitions and reality that we fail to perceive.

<sup>50</sup> In fact, many contemporary folks with conservative intuitions have quite a difficult time accommodating rap as music!

<sup>51</sup> Of course, we do not need to accept that there is a trans-historical “essence” of music identifiable by ontological projects. The alternative would be a theory of *musics* (plural) rather than music. In the eventuality that an ontology of musics is acceptable, however, adjudicating between ontological theories

Second, Matheson and Caplan raise a larger issue beyond the case of misguided intuition: What if multiple ontologies are equally intuitively plausible? They explain that Platonism and nominalism (at least musically speaking) rely on paraphrase; in other words, certain non-intuitive musical ontologies require that we translate ontologically difficult concepts into everyday language in order to track our intuitions. In these cases, the translation process of non-intuitive ontologies results in extraordinarily similar common-sense utterances, and “we do not seem to have a way of adjudicating between those views and their rivals” (Matheson and Caplan 2011, 43). For example, musical ontologies that rely on abstract objects posit either that musical works are discovered, or that they are created. Adherents to both beliefs are likely to say the same kinds of things about music and musical production (musicians perform the work *itself* in some meaningful sense, or that particular works are attributable to particular composers). The actual mechanics of discussing music in an everyday context are not greatly influenced by one’s ontological commitments. But if the intuitive commitments contained within certain utterances about music can be translated equally well into Platonist or nominalist ontologies, how should we decide between these theories? Depending on one’s view of explanation and ontology, this poses larger or smaller issues for the project generally. For realists, musical ontologies are aimed at describing the nature of reality such that music and musical works are possible; if several theories produce equally explanatorily satisfying (and plausibly intuitive) conclusions, we might be unable to adjudicate between the two with the methodology of balance and the pragmatic constraint.

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(including those that define music, or attempt to collect what we call music into a single ontological category) becomes unimportant. We could, on this understanding of music, construct a new intuitively plausible definition of music for each genre, historical period, and cultural practice.

Third and finally, even assuming that one can adjudicate between ontological theories, Matheson and Caplan suggest “that no ontology of music can save all of our current intuitions concerning musical practice, no matter how much creative paraphrasing we employ” (2011, 43). Flat footedly, no musical ontology can accommodate all our current intuitions regarding musical practice because these intuitions are inconsistent across cultures, history, and even over the span of an individual’s life. What *I* believe about music is surely different than what *you* believe about music, which is almost certainly different from what *we* believe about music, which is almost as certainly not what *we* *believed* about music. Because conflicting intuitions exist regarding musical practice no single ontology of music is capable of satisfying all common-sense intuitions. In these cases they suggest we turn to a methodology similar to reflective equilibrium in philosophical ethics (2011, 43). According to this methodology, we would resolve conflict between our theories and pre-reflective intuitions by revising our theory and beliefs “to the smallest extent possible” (2011, 43). Insofar as Kania, Davies, and others discuss musical ontology, this seems to be common practice. Little compromise exists in the field that has not been generated by accommodating particularly thorny musical dilemmas (e.g., whether or not to include naturally generated sound sequences as music) and we typically accommodate these difficult cases with the smallest ontological revisions possible. The reason this methodology exists in the first place, Matheson and Caplan point out, is because no musical ontology can accommodate *all* our intuitions and so every ontology asks us to revise *some* of our pre-existing beliefs (hopefully not by too much).

At the end of the philosophic day, arguments regarding musical ontology are won and lost on intuitive grounds, and meaningful headway under the current methodological paradigm is limited at best. I call Matheson and Caplan’s theory “ontological pessimism” because they seem

to articulate a position in which choosing between ontologies (and potentially constructing them in the first place) is impossible on at least pragmatic grounds. Since musical ontologies are constructed using methodological balance and “musical intuitions” work in the field is difficult without recourse to meta-methodological standards by which to judge competing theories, but it is unclear what these standards would be if not our pre-existing ontological commitments. For ontological pessimists, it is not that musical ontology is an unimportant project, but that making headway is an arduous task whose theoretical benefits are outweighed by the difficulty of the task. Ultimately, I take ontological pessimism as a contributing, if not sufficient, reason to move beyond musical ontology as the starting point for the Intercorporeal Account. Matheson and Caplan hover in the background of the following sections, reminding us to think about whether or not the intuitive costs of these theories are worth the ontological, musical payout. In the following section, I will examine another contributing, if not sufficient, reason to move beyond musical ontology: ontological deflection.

### **Ontological Deflection**

Beginning slightly more optimistically than Matheson & Caplan, Lydia Goehr divides musical ontological positions into three primary camps with an emphasis on the work-*concept* as a historically emergent framework. These three primary positions in musical ontology, according to Goehr, are (1) Platonism, (2) Aristotelianism, and (3) Nominalism, each relevantly similar enough to their non-musical counterparts to avoid confusion (2007, 13–15). However, she claims that all three of these theories are limited by a kind of overreaching beyond their intended use. She writes,

Theorists have wanted to have it both ways: first, they have wanted to consider their theories as based on works such as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. Then, they have wanted to use examples given from early music, avant-garde music, and other sorts of music. (Goehr 2007, 84)

Contemporary or proto-musical examples are anachronistic to the majority of musical ontologies insofar as most ontological theories are designed to explain a specific historic, geographic, and sociocultural moment in musical history (i.e., Western classical composition). Goehr reminds us that we ought not be surprised when Ornette Coleman cannot be accommodated by the same ontology designed to reflect the musical practices of Haydn and Mozart. This is at least partially a cautionary tale concerning the overlap between our musical examples and the musical ontologies they produce. When we set out “to describe the status and identity of musical works” we often produce “a conclusion about their ontological status” (Goehr 2007, 84–85). The kinds of practices and behaviors we take as primary tend to carry ontological commitments with them, even unintentionally. For example, explaining how a singular work of Western classical music can be instantiated multiple times in better and worse ways tends to recommend musical Platonism since abstract objects are singular entities which can be instantiated multiple times in better and worse ways relative to the ideal form. What Goehr points out is that beginning with the assumption that all musical works can be instantiated multiple times and are measured relative to an ideal form begs the question, these intuitions naturally recommend a Platonic ontology since they are rooted in certain ontological beliefs about ideal, abstract objects. Goehr believes that this kind of circular reasoning, combined with theorists’ attempts to overstep the limitations of their chosen ontology, proves problematic for philosophers of music.

Rather than metaphorically diving in headfirst to the debates in musical ontology, Goehr articulates a kind of ontological position that I call *deflection*. While Matheson & Caplan believe that musical ontologies are incommensurable using current methodologies, Goehr suggests that a deep or consistent understanding of musical ontology is unnecessary. Centrally, Goehr articulates what she calls “the Historical Thesis” in which she suggests that a radical shift occurred in

musical production “since the end of the eighteenth century” (1989, 55). The work concept did not emerge *ex nihilo* at the same time that people began performing music. Rather, the work concept is a relatively recent invention that accommodates intuitions imported from “Enlightenment, Romantic, and Idealist thought notably in German and French aesthetic theory” (1989, 55). The Historical Thesis is well supported, Goehr explains, by etymological, ethnomusicological, and music theory work from the past century (1989, 55). In some ways, this places Goehr’s theory in good company with other genealogical accounts of musical production. Music, Goehr and other continental-leaning theorists (including Jaques Attali) claim, should be subject to functional analysis rather than theoretical speculation. It does not matter, on Goehr’s account, whether or not musical works exist, only that we use the concept to explain certain musical phenomenon. To answer the question: What is a musical work? Goehr answers: What is the concept of a musical work *doing*?

In a brief aside, I would like to address Jaques Attali’s genealogical account of music as an example of this kind of functional account of music. Attali claims, in *Noise*, that “everywhere codes analyze, mark, restrain, repress, and channel the primitive sounds of language, of the body, of tools, of objects, of the relations to self and other” (1987, 7). While codes provide the order necessary to establish society, Attali claims that music is unique in its ability to channel power through the manipulation of ritualized and repetitive sounds. Music’s capacity for regulation is unique insofar as it denotes the boundaries of societally sanctioned methods of noise production. Attali writes, “music, prior to all commercial exchange, *creates political order because it is a minor mode of sacrifice [...] the ritualization of a murder substituted for the general violence, the affirmation that a society is possible if the imaginary of individuals is sublimated*” (1987, 25–26). Music thus has a double purpose. First, it provides for the regulated expression of violence and stands in as a simulacrum of



ritualized sacrifice. When violence is coded into auditory space, it is no longer permitted or necessary for individuals. The violence necessary to establish a state and civil society is thus coded into the permissible noise of that society. Second, music already incorporates a sacrifice of freedom into its production whereby it represents the violence *and the relinquishing of that power*. Composers are (in most cases, with notable exceptions) forced to ‘play by the rules’ in how they code noise. Musicians give up physical violence with a twofold purpose: to reintegrate violence back into society through sanctioned auditory channels, and to engage in the suppression of that violence through willful submission to musical standards of measure, and meter, and rhyme.

Important to us is Attali’s continuous deflection of the question of musical ontology; he cares very little about what a musical work is, ontologically. He *does* explain that musical works permit of stockpiling but are only representationally heard once; that musical works manipulate, coalesce, and distribute power or sociocultural violence; and that musical works are a simulacrum of ritual sacrifice. But aside from his analysis of music’s functional role as a means of manipulating auditory and social power, the genealogical account he provides contains little in the way of definite claims regarding the nature of musical works, the *stuff* from which they are made.

Similar to Goehr, Attali and others in the continental tradition are less concerned with the nature of music or musical works, and instead understand music’s functional role(s) as the primary matter of philosophic inquiry. Ontology aside, these authors want to know what role music filled, what it is capable of now, and what it may do in the future. These questions are not a matter of ontology in the traditional sense, they purport to identify music by reference to its genealogy, but this is not an ontological identification. This foundational assumption, that the nature of music or musical works is secondary to music’s socio-cultural function, just is

ontological deflection. These theorists “deflect” the issue of musical ontology in order to focus on what they consider more pressing musical or philosophical issues. Deflection implicitly claims that musical works, as a concept, are best examinable by sociological and historical analysis; the “musical work” is a useful concept, but it does not matter what a work is, only that they perform certain functions. According to ontological deflection, the wide variety of musical ontologies are not just incommensurable (as Matheson and Caplan suggested) but unnecessary.

Previously, I suggested that ontological deflection would provide us with compelling, but insufficient reasons to move beyond musical ontology. This is true, but in a limited sense in light of Goehr’s and Attali’s contrasting approaches to philosophy of music. Attali, for example, might not object to musical ontology being done, just to its importance within philosophy of music. Attali’s type of deflection rests on the assumption that music is *something*, but that we care more about its function than ontological nature. Meanwhile, Goehr’s work *is* an argument against the work of musical ontology even being done in the first place. Since the “work concept” only emerged a few hundred years ago (and is now used to describe a *wide* variety of musical phenomena) she would object to ontologists who claim to have discovered the status of “musical works” writ large. No such entity exists, according to Goehr, and so no ontological project can accurately describe it. For the purposes of the Intercorporeal Account, we might not be satisfied with these varieties of ontological deflection: Goehr strays perhaps too near musical antirealism and the claim that legitimate philosophy of music is an anthropological project; meanwhile, Attali does not give *us* any reason to deflect ontological issues, even if that was *his* preferred strategy. Rather, what I hope is that deflection and pessimism give us good reasons to be skeptical of musical ontology in general, and more sympathetic to ontological refusal. The variety

of ontological dismissal that I take up is a kind of refusal, one that I sincerely believe is rooted in pessimism and the careful attention to scope that characterizes deflection.

### **Ontological Refusal**

In contrast to his interlocutors' pessimism and deflection, Kania helps us see what it would mean to *refuse* the terms of this debate, suggesting that there may be a difference between *musically relevant* ontology and ontology broadly. In a sense ontological refusal is a doubling-down-on, or an elaboration of, Matheson and Caplan's claim that musical ontologies are properly circumscribed by musical interests. Kania remarks that his reader might wonder whether debates in musical ontology "ought really to be classified as musical ontology—whether its proper place is really in a volume of aesthetics rather than a volume of metaphysics" (Kania 2008a, 30). In other words, readers ask a perfectly legitimate question in wondering about the applicability of generalized metaphysics to the specific case of aesthetic objects and musical works in particular.

For example, we might ask how "music" could be responsible for making particular sounds or objects *musical* in a relevant sense. What is the relationship between works and the category? How are we to understand musical works as *part* of an ontological category, and how are we to understand their temporal instantiation? Answering these questions puts us on the hook for solving the problem of universals, thus initiating a debate with wide-reaching ontological consequences. Clearly and fully articulating the relationship between musical works and musical performances is likely a project of spelling out one's ontological commitments far beyond the scope of *musical* ontology. He imagines that we might ask: Why must we revise *all* our ontological commitments for the sake of musical works? And replies,

One defense that might be given is that artworks, particularly musical works, are among the most metaphysically puzzling things there are, and thus that they are not *mere* examples, but centrally important ones for any general metaphysician. Anyway, even if this criticism is a good one it does not object to this kind of

metaphysics *being done*, only to its classification as part of the philosophy of music proper. (Kania 2008a, 30)

Here, Kania claims that musical metaphysics will be whatever kind of metaphysics are importantly involved in questions of musicality, but that this distinction need not matter to those he calls “curious metaphysicians.” In other words, if we are interested in issues of ontology and metaphysics, we should not be worried that musical ontology oversteps its bounds quite regularly. Further, for those of us interested in ontology generally, contributions from musical ontology will be important because musical works are ontologically puzzling entities. Kania *refuses* to make a distinction between ontology and musical ontology such that either one is neatly circumscribed. The issue with such an approach, however, is that it does not provide a compelling reason to engage with musical ontology for those of us primarily interested in *music* (and not ontology). In fact, Kania’s argument supports the opposite intuition: if musical ontology is primarily interesting for ontological, and not musical reasons, then we can (and should!) object to “its classification as part of the philosophy of music proper.”

I call the ontological position inspired by Kania’s work ontological *dismissal* because he claims that issues of musical ontology are properly housed in ontology or metaphysics broadly, and not philosophy of music. In this way, the position is a rearticulation (and expansion) of Matheson and Caplan’s claim that musical ontology should “handle those intuitions of ours that are relevant” to specifically musical questions (2011, 42). Kania’s important contribution, it seems, is a concrete articulation of what “relevant intuitions” are. He quotes Davies’ version of the pragmatic constraint, suggesting that “artworks must be conceived of ontologically in such a way as to accord with those features of our critical and appreciative practice upheld on rational reflection” (Davies 2003, 23). Notice, though, that this articulation of the pragmatic constraint helps us circumscribe musical ontology, and quite narrowly at that! An ontology of music should

provide what is required to support our “critical and appreciative” practices in light of “rational reflection.” (Of course, neither author is particularly clear about what constitutes adequate “rational reflection” or how many of our intuitions and practices should be accommodated.) The position I draw from Kania is the belief that musical ontology shares a large amount of overlap with ontology in general, and that musical ontology is “the ontology of a specific tradition” (Kania 2008a, 39). His argument dismisses ontological issues in the field by “rehousing” them elsewhere and claiming that the proper scope of musical ontology is *musical* questions and not those questions that imply revision to further-reaching ontological beliefs.<sup>52</sup>

Similar to Kania, I cannot object to this kind of metaphysical or ontological project *being done* only to its direct and immediate relevance to philosophy of music. Also similar to Kania, I argue that the best way of doing musical ontology might be to rehouse musical ontological issues elsewhere, in ontology and metaphysics broadly. I take it that, brief as it is, Kania’s argument provides a foundation for us to build upon, a real way of arguing that musical ontology (or, at least, its contemporary analytic appearance) is not within the proper scope of philosophy of music, and this project by extension. Instead, I argue that a kind of common-sense ontology will serve us well enough as we move forward, even if these pre-reflective beliefs are not ultimately sufficient for the Intercorporeal Account. Recall my previous analogy between philosophy of music and the “hermeneutic spiral”: I claimed that work musical ontology will influence musical definitions and *vice versa*. Ontological dismissal, and the refusal-like stance I articulate in the

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<sup>52</sup> I should mention that Kania believes this is a good argument to *start* with ontology, and the reasoning sure goes both ways: narrowly circumscribing musical ontology means that we either have good reasons to simply move past musical ontology for the sake of a project in philosophy of music, *or* that we should abandon work in philosophy of music until we can construct a general ontology that includes musical works. Since I am working in philosophy of music, I opt to carry his argument in the first direction, although he does not.

following section, is merely an argument that we begin with definitions and return to ontology at a later time. I am not claiming that musical ontology is not an important topic of discussion or debate, but that the ontologically ecumenical stance I ultimately articulate is better supported by a focus on definitions than ontology. What I take on board moving forward, then, is a combination of ontological dismissal theories: I believe that choosing between musical ontologies is mostly a matter of choosing the “best fit” for our pre-reflective beliefs, that most work in philosophy of music is best served by a focus on definitions and function than ontology, and that most musical ontology is best housed in the field of general ontology.

### **Cleaning House**

To offer a path forward by way of analogy, imagine that doing this kind of ontological philosophy is like cleaning house. Doing ontology concerns putting things in order, identifying, categorizing, and organizing the kinds of things that are said to exist. Putting your house in order inevitably involves cleaning every room, categorizing all kinds of things, and putting them in their proper place. Every room, and all the objects contained therein, will be organized by this kind of large-scale project. However, cleaning a specific room does not require cleaning the whole house. Cleaning one particular room does not even require identifying, categorizing, and organizing each and every item within the room, only identifying which items plausibly belong to that room properly and which are best housed elsewhere.

Musical ontology is like one room in the sense that cleaning house (doing ontology) will involve setting every room in order, the “music room” included. However, the opposite is not necessarily the case; cleaning a single room does not require us to clean every room. With this analogy, I mean to argue that doing musical ontology ought not require us to solve problems particular to other ontological areas. Cleaning the music room and finding a kitchen knife does

not require that we then go organize the kitchen, only that we plausibly identify what we have found and move it aside for more careful consideration in the future (by whomever it is that decides to clean the kitchen).

What I recommend is dividing broad ontological questions from philosophy of music and its specific ontological puzzles. Even questions that look at first glance to be properly musical (Does “music” exist? Categorically? In instantiations?) are not necessarily within the scope of philosophy of music. One’s answer to the question about whether or not “music” exists will have wide ranging implications for the status of universals generally. We might be better off tackling the problem of universals head on than asking if and how “music” exists, point blank. When doing musical ontology, we are responsible for a limited number of ontological problems: just those problems that are proper to the study of music and require relatively limited extension to broader issues. Insofar as this dissertation is concerned, I am willing to step aside when the cleaners come through, letting us know what kinds of things belong in our room and which were misplaced, but my job is not to annex other rooms for renovation simply because they have features that overlap with ours. (Sheet music in the music room needs organization, but this does not imply that I need to organize papers everywhere: documents in the office, recipes in the kitchen, and craft supplies.)

The difference between musical ontology and ontology broadly, then, is at least partly a matter of interest. What features of music interest us, and how much those features overlap with broader metaphysical questions will be influential in deciding where we draw our line in the theoretical sand. We might find ourselves moving out of our arbitrarily designated scope before we realize it, making claims that influence a broader variety of ontological issues without knowing. As a good rule of thumb, we can accept Kania’s claim that all metaphysics might be

musical because musical works are some of the most “metaphysically puzzling things there are” and thus, any purportedly comprehensive ontology should account for their status. This claim boils down to the belief that all metaphysics or ontology is involved in determining the status of musical entities, and therefore all metaphysics is a kind of metaphysics of music. Underlying this is an implied conditional claim that *if* the metaphysics involved uses musical entities as more than mere examples, *then* it is a metaphysics of music. This distinction helps us differentiate between metaphysical or ontological projects that involve music (all of them, on this view) and the projects that we specifically identify as part of the metaphysics/ontology of music (the ones that directly address music as central cases).

Unfortunately for us, Kania (and the field at large) is relatively vague concerning what it means to use a musical test-case as *more* than a mere example. As a rough-and-ready measure, I suggest that a kind of counterfactual necessity might help us determine whether or not our musical exemplars are more than mere examples. Nonmusical ontologies (aesthetic ontologies, or ontological theories generally) include ontological commitments concerning music that can be sufficiently articulated using nonmusical aesthetic examples. Properly musical ontologies, I will claim, are those ontological positions and commitments that require musical examples in order to be intelligible (those ontologies that *but for* the musical example, would not make sense).

To illustrate what this means, consider how we might go about answering the question: “Does music exist?” While the answer to this question properly concerns philosophers of music, the question’s implications stretch far beyond the scope of philosophy of music and into aesthetics or ontology broadly. It seems perfectly possible to answer this question about musical existence by answering a separate one: “Does literature exist?” Most ontologists believe these questions mean something like “What is the ontological status of categories of aesthetic objects that permit



of multiple instantiations?” in that answering one of these questions likely implies a similar answer to the other. The answer to our question concerns the status of so-called Goodmanian *allographic* artworks. Because the answer to our question concerns the allographic arts in general and would be intelligible when supported with literary or poetic examples, it seems that the question properly belongs in the ontology of art, and not musical ontology specifically. Often, even when we believe that we are asking musical questions, our answers imply that we are asking *ontological* questions that just so happen to include musical examples.

However, if our musical examples are not interchangeable with examples from other media, then we have grounds to call the ontological question or position properly musical. For example, we might wonder if Charlie Parker’s version of “Summertime” is sufficiently similar to Sydney Bechet’s to count as the same song. Of course, there are some ways in which answering this question is meaningful for other allographic arts<sup>53</sup> but comprehensively answering our hypothetical question about “Summertime” asks us to weigh in on how it is that multiple musicians might perform the *same* song despite key, tempo, and phrasing discrepancies. Deciding the role that key or tempo changes might have on the identity of a musical work does not allow us to “swap out” our musical example with a nonmusical one.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps this is a fuzzy way of articulating the line between musical and non-musical ontologies, but what I mean to illustrate is

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<sup>53</sup> How many wrong notes can Parker hit before the song is no longer “Summertime”? How many typos in my transcription of a poem make it *not* that poem anymore? Answering either of these likely implies commitments about the allographic arts in general, since the broader question behind these is: How many mistakes (relative to the length of the work) can an allographic reproduction make before it ceases to count as a *version*, and becomes a separate work altogether?

<sup>54</sup> I take it that reading an English language poem in a higher or lower pitch, or at a faster or slower tempo, does not make it a different poem, but that these changes *might* influence the status of a musical work.

how the foundational questions of “musical ontology” are often merely ontological questions about the status of artworks and universals, and how niche questions about specifically musical features of artistic works demand properly *musical* answers that a general ontology might not provide.

My broad claim is that ontology of music is (or should be) a much more narrowly circumscribed field than we would ordinarily believe. Completing work in philosophy of music likely does not require that we *first* decide the ontological status of musical works, or that we solve the problem of universals for the sake of saying that “music” exists as a category. This position is, as I construct it, a combination of past dismissal methods: Matheson & Caplan suggest that ontological positions in philosophy of music are incommensurable, Goehr suggests that these theories are irrelevant to philosophic progress concerning music, and Kania’s argument suggests that the vast majority of ontological questions that engage with philosophy of music are actually not germane to musical projects. I agree that most ontological positions are incommensurable until we consider our preexisting ontological beliefs, that the Intercorporeal Account can proceed without serious engagement with ontology as its foundation, and that most of the ontological questions raised in the last chapter are better housed in ontology generally. What I intend to add is an adaptation of Kania’s claim about metaphysics and musical examples, the caveat that when ontologists and metaphysicians use musical works as more than a mere example, we can properly say that they are working within the field of *musical* ontology. This standard can function (if not for the discipline, then for this project) as a way of measuring our engagement with ontological issues and refocusing our attention on musical matters. In following chapter, I address traditional musical definitions to contextualize the Intercorporeal Account and proceed on the assumption

that minimal, but definite, ontological claims will appear as my account comes clearer into view;

we will allow definitional, practical concerns guide our ontological claims, and not *vice versa*.

## CHAPTER TWO

## UNILATERAL DEFINITIONS (LARGHETTO)

*or, the Gilded Oldies*

Previously, we discussed the methodology of balance favored by philosophy of music in relation to ontological accounts of music or musical works, and we have addressed a variety of strategies for bracketing ontological considerations for a later stage of the project. The discussions that follow build upon this ontological foundation to explain the range of traditional definitions of music that exist in the field.<sup>1</sup> In a sense, we might treat the following chapter as a second pass at a literature review in philosophy of music, just beginning on the other side of our “hermeneutic spiral,” with definitional rather than ontological accounts. The account I aim to offer is an account of *music*, and ontology was a natural starting point insofar as philosophers of music typically either begin with ontological claims or admit that ontological claims influence their theories. However, as I argued, we have good reasons to believe that we can understand, construct, and meaningfully critique definitions of music without first articulating a robust or comprehensive ontological foundation. Our previous discussion of ontology sets the groundwork for the following discussion since musical definitions are influenced by, and implicitly recommend, specific ontological positions, but the principle of ontological dismissal suggests that

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<sup>1</sup> At risk of repeating myself, it bears mention that I will not be addressing “definitions” of music that exist in popular culture. The Intercorporeal Account means to intercede in philosophy of music, and so the bounds of this literature review will follow the borders of the established philosophic field. Frankly (and with the amount of respect due such “definitions”) this dissertation might turn into a crimson-faced tirade if I felt it was necessary to explain precisely how definitions like Ben Shapiro’s (*music is an art with melody, harmony, and rhythm*) are not only inaccurate and incomplete, but racist and harmful.

our common-sense understanding of these ontologies and their issues will be sufficient moving forward.

Fortunately, our discussion of musical definitions does not require a second review of methodology because ontological and definitional projects alike balance revisionist and descriptivist motivations and employ the pragmatic constraint<sup>2</sup> in largely similar ways. There are, however, two large differences between ontologies and definitions that bear mentioning. First, while ontologies of music aim to account for the kinds of entities musical works are and the relationships that obtain between musical entities, definitions aim to “make explicit the boundaries of this concept [music]” (Kania 2011b, 3). Constructing a definition of music is still a project of “finding a balance between the benefits of a theory and its cost in terms of our pre-theoretic intuitions” but the goal of these accounts is to delimit the concept “music” and identify specific instances of musical works (Kania 2017). Where ontologies ask, “What kind of thing is a musical work?” definitions ask, “What are examples of musical works, and how can we tell? What unifying features do all and only musical works share?”

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<sup>2</sup> Here and for the remainder of the chapter, I will be using “pragmatic constraint” to refer to what we might call the “defeating construct” of the pragmatic constraint in which the principle is used to reject accounts that are wholly unintuitive or require too great an intuitive cost. This is in contrast to the “pragmatic constraint” discussed previously in which the principle has both a positive and negative construction in ontological debates.

The pragmatic constraint, in Davies’ original articulation, provides a way of *constructing* a musical ontology in praxis-oriented ways. This version of the pragmatic constraint explicitly advocates for a descriptivist approach to musical ontology and is balanced against revisionist tendencies. By contrast, Giombini (2017) explains a second construction of the pragmatic constraint in which the principle operates separately from the methodological balance between revisionist and descriptivist aims. In this construction the pragmatic constraint plays a kind of ‘defeating’ role in which it is used to reject musical ontologies that veer significantly too far from praxis-oriented accounts. Saying that an ontology (or, in this chapter, a definition) fails the pragmatic constraint is claiming that the account is too intuitively costly to stand.

In what remains, I will be using the term “pragmatic constraint” in this defeating construction to indicate that methodological balance is the first step in *constructing* definitions or ontological accounts, but that significant intuitive costs offer *prima facie* reasons to reject a theory outright.

Second, definitional accounts tend to be more narrowly circumscribed than their ontological counterparts. Revisionist ontologies often ask that we weigh our pre-existing ontological commitments *in general* against the specific case of music, but definitions rarely exceed the scope of the musical debate in this way. A musical ontology may, for example, require that we revise our pre-theoretical intuitions about abstract objects, type-token relationships, or mereology broadly, but definitions attempt to balance our pre-theoretic intuitions *about music* against the explanatory benefits revisionist strategies can bring to the account. Because the intuitions that matter to definitions of music are those that pertain directly to music (and not our broader ontological commitments) we can begin work on musical definitions without first having to clean our *whole* metaphoric house. In this way, work on definitions of music sidesteps some of the larger worries raised by ontological dismissal.<sup>3</sup>

In a very practical sense, the work of constructing a musical ontology often looks like taking one's pre-existing ontological beliefs and adapting them into an account for music; by contrast, the work of constructing a definition of music is often a matter of intuitively identifying music and constructing a definition such that our favorite examples and paradigmatic intuitions are preserved. Accordingly, musical intuition plays a large role in constructing and judging definitions, and theorists are known to construct definitions around including (or excluding) what they take to be paradigmatic examples of music (or particularly tricky counterexamples). This strategy of accommodating paradigmatic cases of music and relying heavily on musical intuitions,

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<sup>3</sup> Ontological pessimism might still worry us since it critiques the methodology of balances as insufficient to adjudicate between competing theories and musical definitions still employ this standard methodology. However, deflection and refusal are nearly self-evidently nonissues in the case of musical definitions. Deflection claims that projects other than ontology can be our starting point (and here we address definitions, not ontology) and refusal claims that musical ontology covers a narrower range of topics than we typically believe (and here, we are directly engaging with musical definitions, not ontology).

narrowly construed, helps work on definitional accounts of music progress even in the absence of robust ontological commitments.<sup>4</sup> Because a definition of music should identify all and only instances of music, a large amount of the literature is dedicated to defending definitions from counterexamples and similar challenges. The goal of these counterexamples is clear: provide an example of music so uncontroversial that its exclusion from a definition is reason enough to reject the account on the basis of the pragmatic constraint (see Pillow 2002; Kivy 2000; 2002 for an example of this type of debate).<sup>5</sup> Truly counterintuitive counterexamples provide theorists with reason to believe that the definition in question fails the pragmatic constraint cannot account for musical praxis.

While this strategy can be effective against extreme definitions of music (that fail to accommodate paradigmatic examples or include obviously nonmusical phenomena) merely providing counterexamples to reject definitions of music is often unreliable. Raising counterexamples to a particular definition of music only works if both parties involved in the debate agree that the counterexample provided *ought* to be categorized differently than the definition currently does. In other words, the pragmatic constraint is only a check on ridiculously unintuitive definitions if theorists are unwilling to just bite the metaphorical bullet. There appears to be no nonarbitrary way of deciding between theories without *first* deciding whether or not the

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<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, not to say that ontological commitments are not a huge part of definitional work. One can hardly adopt a subjective definition of music while maintaining Platonist ontological commitments, for example. However, a great deal of the work done by musical definitions is relatively ‘ontologically agnostic’ and a variety of definitions are compatible with multiple ontological frameworks. The ontological commitments necessary to construct a definition of music are, as will be shown, relatively limited in comparison to what is required by musical ontologies.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, the opposite strategy works as well: provide an example of a nonmusical phenomenon so uncontroversial that its *inclusion* in a definition is sufficient evidence to prove that the account fails the pragmatic constraint.

counterexamples are compelling, weighing in on their status as musical (and therefore deserving of inclusion in the definition) or not. This standard critical methodology often cannot provide us a way of adjudicating between definitions without first begging the question concerning a particular example's status. Matheson and Caplan's incommensurability worry pertains, with some modification, to musical definitions: Without first deciding what is or is not music, we only appear capable of disqualifying wholly unacceptable definitions rather than making fine-grained distinctions between better and worse accounts.

The Intercorporeal Account attempts to sidestep some of these issues by levying a large meta-methodological criticism against orthodox definitions of music. Despite the wealth of evidence that traditional definitions can (and often are) successfully defended against counterexamples, I argue that these definitions fail on their own criteria due to their *unilateral* construction. Each of the three types of "orthodox" definitions of music (intrinsic, subjective, and intentional definitions) rely on a single facet of the work/audience/musician triad to properly differentiate music from non-musical performances. This focus on a single facet of musical performances represents a significant shortcoming of these definitions above and beyond the counterintuitive conclusions and counterexamples. In order to explain why the Intercorporeal Account is not, and cannot be, a definition of this type I will examine traditional definitions and illustrate their strengths and shortcomings, first on their own merits and then considering their viability as unilateral definitions generally.

### **Intrinsic Definitions**

Intrinsic definitions identify some intrinsic feature of a musical work (independent from performer, composer, or audience) as determinative of its status as musical or nonmusical (Kania 2011b). Thoroughly intrinsic definitions identify music by reference to these features of what we



might call the “sonic product” in question. Importantly, the intrinsic criteria each account identifies pertain to the aesthetic object produced by the musician or composer and do not include reference to anything external (the musician themselves or the audience, for example). Definitions of this type often aim to distinguish between music on the one hand, and mere sounds on the other by an examination of the sounds themselves (Kania 2011b, 5). Because these intrinsic criteria pertain directly to the aesthetic object, theorists are able to sidestep tricky questions about musical intentions including whether or not music is a distinctively human undertaking. For example, depending on your personal beliefs about art, it may be an advantage of these accounts that they are able to accommodate works produced by artificial intelligence as properly musical. Intrinsic definitions aim at a kind of scientific impartiality in which music is identified similarly to other natural and artificial categories; so long as the work carries the necessary and sufficient conditions for inclusion in the category “music,” the work must be musical, period.

To ground our discussion throughout the chapter, I will address (and periodically return to) Theodore Gracyk’s definition of music. What Gracyk’s definition illustrates particularly well is how different definitional strategies are compatible with one another, and how theorists often mix and match components to construct a complete and cohesive identification of musical works. Differentiating between types of definitions (like differentiating between types of ontological projects) is often a matter of interest and not only (or always) a matter of methodology or content. Almost no theorist defends a purely intrinsic (or subjective or intentional) definition, but most definitions are characterized by a certain focus or interest in a singular strategy. Ultimately, I argue that almost all definitions are grounded in a singular strategy, that one technique for identifying music carries the “philosophic weight” of the definition more than others.

Theodore Gracyk, for example, offers a primarily intrinsic definition when he identifies music as “sound patterns [...] when their organization establishes rhythmic or harmonic relationships (or both)” (2013, 21). Gracyk’s definition establishes the category “music” (to which individual works belong) without reference to the production or reception of musical works, meaning that any sounds that are organized in patterns and demonstrate rhythmic or harmonic relationships are properly called music. Purely intrinsic definitions are relatively rare in contemporary debate, but few definitions exist that are not influenced by this definitional strategy. We might notice that Gracyk’s full definition introduces additional criteria (cultural expectations) to address the shortcomings of wholly intrinsic accounts, but he remains committed to the existence of sonically instantiated rhythmic and harmonic relationships in all and only instances of musical works.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the rarity of *purely* intrinsic definitions, many accounts borrow intrinsic components to restrict the kinds of sounds that their definitions need to accommodate, and definitions that rely on intrinsic components are extremely popular (see Dodd 2010; Gracyk 2013; Kania 2011; and Noë 2016 for a variety of examples of definitions that heavily, or exclusively, rely on intrinsic components). Given that wholly intrinsic definitions are exceedingly uncommon, what motivates their popularity (albeit in modified form)? Intrinsic definitions, and

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, the whole of Gracyk’s definition claims that music consists of “sound patterns [...] when their organization establishes rhythmic or harmonic relationships (or both). Musical patterns are music only if they reflect—and are so intended to be interpreted in light of—cultural expectations about musical structures.” This definition is more complex than a simple intrinsic definition insofar as it introduces exclusion criteria along cultural lines. However, the bulk of the definition relies on the intrinsic features of the musical work (even if some of those intrinsic features are artificial rather than natural). Gracyk’s definition is a paradigmatic case of intrinsic identification insofar as it *primarily*, if not exclusively, identifies intrinsic features of the work as necessary conditions for inclusion. In later sections we will return to this definition and demonstrate how one would interpret it as consistent with subjective and intentional frameworks.

definitions that rely heavily on intrinsic components, are often motivated *sonicist* intuitions, the commonsense belief that musical works are about the sound. Julien Dodd explains that sonicism is the position that “musical works are types of sound-sequence events” and that a work’s status as musical “is determined purely by its acoustical properties. Nothing else matters” (2007, 2, 201). To say that musical works are types of sound-sequence events implies that musical works are a subset of sound-events, that sound events are to musical works as rectangles are to squares. For the purposes of motivating intrinsic definitions, we can differentiate between weak and strong sonicism. Weak sonicism is the limited, and deeply intuitive, claim that musical works can be identified by reference to certain features of the audible component of the work—what music sounds like differentiates it from nonmusical sounds and from other artistic mediums. In other words, weak sonicism is the claim that certain audible features are *necessary* components of a musical work even if these features are not exhaustive of the work’s identity. By contrast, strong sonicism argues that identifying certain features of audible components of a work is *sufficient* to define music. Strong sonicism, almost exclusively championed by Julien Dodd, comes closest to a pure intrinsic definition because it implies that a work’s auditory qualities are constitutive of its musical (or nonmusical) status, and not just that musical works all include certain recognizable auditory components. Dodd and his sympathizers rely on the intuition that musical works are not just primarily, but exclusively about the sounds they indicate/produce. Strong sonicist commitments like Dodd’s are often supported by a belief in what Alva Noë calls the acousmatic ideal.

Noë identifies the “acousmatic ideal” as the understanding that music is primarily or exclusively concerned with sound (Noë 2016, 170). This ideal, which motivates certain kinds of sonicism and intrinsic definitions, is intuitively plausible insofar as we typically distinguish

between music and performances that utilize music as one component among many. Pop performances (Noë claims) or performances that use music components to a greater or lesser extent (ballet, opera, musicals) are differentiated from *musical* performances by this acousmatic ideal: When the performance is “primarily or exclusively concerned” with the sounds produced we call the performance or work properly musical. By contrast, performances that are not primarily about the sounds produced are either *using* music in a supporting capacity or are simply nonmusical. Noë claims that the acousmatic ideal has maintained popularity in recent decades through the ubiquity of recording technology. He claims,

Recording technology adds fuel to this acousmatic fire. In an age where most people know music not by way of encounter with live performance but by downloading, live-streaming, or turning on the radio, or putting on a CD, the idea that to listen to music is to pay attention to the performer seems quaint and untrue. (2016, 170)

In other words, definitions of music that force us to shine the theoretical spotlight on ourselves or on the performer are often delegitimized by a system of music consumption that decenters the listener and musician/composer in favor of the sound considered as its own entity. Developments in recording technology support our pre-reflective intuition that music exists within a sonicist framework. Without this framework in place, we struggle to make sense of what precisely platforms like Spotify, Tidal, or SoundCloud are doing. Since we take *music* streaming services to be services through which we stream *music*, tautologically, we need a way of making sense of the absent musician. It should come as no surprise that sonicist- or acousmatically-motivated definitions, intrinsic definitions, are intuitively plausible despite a variety of rather serious critiques. The primary methods of contemporary music consumption hide two of the three important components of musical communication, listeners and musicians, behind a metaphoric curtain.

I alluded earlier to the idea that music, as we experience it, typically consists of three components: a performer or composer broadly construed who produced the work; the work itself in some abstracted sense; and finally, the audience, singular or plural, who experiences the musical work. Combined these aspects of music comprise what I call the “musical triad,” the three components of any musical work that exists in the world. Subjective and intentional definitions of music (addressed in subsequent sections) focus on musical reception or production (the audience or composer/performer). Intrinsic definitions, however, in addressing the aesthetic work alone, are amenable to the contemporary musical practices Noë describes. After all, the (potentially unintentional, unavoidable) result of contemporary modes of musical consumption is to strip the listener and producer out of the equation. Music streaming platforms, even CDs and record collections allow for the stockpiling of “music” in the form of recordings (Attali 1987). What music *is*, record shops and DJs seem to imply, can be captured by the grooves on the record, the bits and bytes on a CD or in a download. We can meaningfully talk and think about “possessing” music even when we believe that music is mere sound and even if listening to the whole of our collection in a single lifetime is physically impossible. Radio stations, online music streaming platforms and similar technologies help listeners strip away the embodied component of musical performance *and* the embodied component of musical engagement. One can hardly be engaged with the music on the radio *qua* music while sitting in traffic on I90<sup>7</sup> and one cannot be expected to engage with the performer in any meaningful way when they are separated by distance, time, and recording fidelity from the original performance. The kinds of musical consumption that we now take for granted serve to alienate ourselves from musical embodiment

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<sup>7</sup> Believe me, I’ve tried.

both as listeners and performers. No wonder, then, that intrinsic definitions of music are so popular: they help us account, in commonsense terms, for the aesthetic object as it is typically consumed, distributed, and collected.

### **Critiques of Intrinsic Accounts**

Despite their virtues and intuitive plausibility, intrinsic definitions suffer from a slew of hard-to-accept theoretical consequences. Kania makes reference to some of these difficulties, remarking that intrinsic definitions are usually overly broad or overly narrow in what they identify as music (Kania 2011b). In short, intrinsic definitions run into a kind of dilemma: in attempting to identify all and only examples of music, these definitions almost always include *some but not all* examples of music, or *not only* examples of music.

On the one hand, broad intrinsic definitions are ill suited to identifying *only* examples of music in the world. Defining music as a subset of sound with an eye towards nonstandard and alternative modes of performance often results in definitions that include clearly nonmusical examples. Sounds that have been organized to have pitch, rhythm, and phrasing is produced by birdsong, as well as poetry in tonal languages. However, it seems odd to say that such examples (although music-like) are music, properly speaking (Gracyk 2013, 6–8). To avoid biting the bullet regarding this charge of liberalism, intrinsically minded theorists often create better definitions by an additive methodology. Where one account excluded a clearly musical example, the definition is chiselled into accordance with our intuitions. Perhaps it is vague and inaccurate to say that music is organized sound, therefore we might say that music is sound organized by both pitch and rhythm. These conditions rule out certain sounds like engine noise, or a person walking steadily in loud shoes, where a steady rhythm is produced in a nonmusical context. These examples lack the necessary changes in pitch that are essential to music. But perhaps even these

modifications are inaccurate since they let in examples of poetry (especially in tonal languages), and so we might want to say that music is pitched and rhythmically organized and *also* utilizes the 12-tone scale or traditional melodic constructs. This helps rule out poetry, birdsong, and other nonhuman sounds that sound musical, but are not music.

The difficulty with narrowing overly broad intrinsic accounts is that such definitions run into the second horn of the dilemma. While detailed intrinsic definitions are well-suited to differentiate musical sound from nonmusical sound, they often exclude clear examples of music making as well. Relying on the 12-tone scale, to take our example from earlier, excludes a great deal of jazz, as well as most nonwestern traditions from counting as music; relying on melodic constructs likely rules out a great deal of rap and nonwestern musical modes. Even relying on a definition that (in a minimal sense) requires pitched and rhythmic organization of sound excludes certain kinds of music which are *either* pitched or rhythmically organized, like percussion routines. Again, theorists are welcome to bite the bullet on these consequences, but they ought to be able to account for the places where intrinsic definitions are simultaneously too narrow and too broad. Those that include, for example, birdsong as pitched and rhythmic (and even reproducible in some cases) but exclude purely percussion-based performances in an attempt to disqualify slam poetry from counting as musical. Given that musical theories are often judged in virtue of the balance they strike between explanatory power and counterintuitive conclusions, we have reason to dismiss intrinsic definitions. Intrinsic definitions enjoy plausible ontological foundations but suffer from a host of counterexamples at every turn. To solve some of these issues, we can turn to subjective accounts as an alternative and direct response to the issues raised by intrinsically framed definitions.

### **Subjective Definitions**

Subjective definitions are, in contemporary debate, often situated as a direct response to intrinsic definitions. If intrinsic definitions aim toward objectivity by identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions that, without reference to personal belief or opinion, determine a work's status as musical or nonmusical, then subjective definitions reject the premise that such a project is possible or desirable. Rather than providing a definition of music that could be universally applied to works themselves, subjective definitions of music rely on listener perception to determine whether or not a particular work is music. In a basic, flatfooted construction, subjective definitions claim that "whatever sounds like, or is perceived as, music by a given listener *is* music, regardless of its intrinsic properties" (Kania 2011b, 6). This construction makes clear the fundamental differences between subjective and intrinsic definitions. Rather than attempting to identify works by shared intrinsic properties across contemporary and historical musical genres, subjective definitions double down on the demands of the pragmatic constraint and opt for an almost wholly descriptivist approach to music. Whatever one perceives *as* music *is* music. However, this admittedly extreme construction of subjective definitions does little to motivate the theory or explain its uptake in mainstream philosophy of music.

Like intrinsic definitions, subjective accounts have almost no unconditional supporters in the contemporary literature. Instead, we can return to Gracyk's (primarily intrinsic) definition to illustrate the reasons why theorists might include subjective components in their accounts of music. Gracyk identifies harmony and rhythm as necessary (intrinsic) components of musical works, but these conditions are not sufficient to identify all and *only* instances of music. Specifically, this minimalist list of musical features lets in a large number of counterintuitive counterexamples. Because "harmony," according to most music theorists, includes both



consonance and dissonance, Gracyk's harmony condition only properly differentiates between individual noises (e.g., single instruments) and sounds that include multiple components perceived as a unified whole (e.g., an orchestral performance which includes many instruments contributing to a single performed piece).<sup>8</sup> Worse yet, the rhythmic component identifies a vast number of sounds that repeat at more-or-less regular intervals, not all of them musical. Combined, these components identify members of the category "music" as any sounds which include multiple components and are regularly repeated. Since, for reasons rehearsed previously, it is difficult to construct an exclusively intrinsic definition without introducing counterexamples, Gracyk and others employ subjective conditions to address these issues.

Gracyk shores up his definition by claiming that music includes rhythmically and harmonically organized sounds that "are music only if they reflect [...] cultural expectations about musical structures" (Gracyk 2013, 21). This subjective component of the definition serves to restrict the overly broad scope of the intrinsic component. The intrinsic conditions identify any example of rhythmically organized sound that includes multiple parts contributing to a unified whole, and the subjective condition further restricts music to examples of the former which

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, to exclude nonmusical sounds we could assume that so-called 'real' harmony implies some kind of musical organization, but identifying that musical organization without introducing new, and undesirable, intrinsic conditions to the account is difficult. We could, for example, say that harmony must rely on a sound's relationship to the tonic. This condition could exclude most nonmusical sounds which are merely comprised of parts. However, the requirement that harmony is grounded in a tonic implies that works without a key, atonal works, are not properly music. This condition excludes mere noise which includes constitutive components, but also excludes a huge amount of nonwestern music and western music post-Wagner. By contrast, we could say that harmony implies that multiple pitches contribute to a singular perceived sound. The requirement that harmony includes concurrently performed pitches would also exclude a variety of nonmusical sounds but could exclude solo performances as well.

These potential conditions illustrate the way in which Gracyk's definition runs into the intrinsic dilemma—restricting an overly broad definition, without introducing non-intrinsic conditions, usually means making the definition overly restrictive instead. At the very least, even if such a feat were possible, this exclusive reliance on intrinsic conditions is neither easy nor desirable.

conform to pre-reflective cultural intuitions concerning musical structures. By appealing to listener interpretation or cultural reception, theorists sidestep the issue of counterintuitive counterexamples. Any obviously nonmusical example that the intrinsic components accidentally allow are excluded by the subjective clause because anything which is *obviously* nonmusical does not reflect these cultural expectations. In this way, Gracyk differentiates between “musical patterns” which naturally occur and are *not* music, and music itself which must address, incorporate, or otherwise engage with widely held beliefs about what can or cannot properly be called a musical work.

Additionally, academics might be sympathetic to subjective definitions because they help us explain what is happening in “tricky examples” like Cage’s *4’33”*. These accounts provide both an explanation of these works’ vague status, *and* an account of the historical variability observed in certain works. Certain pieces (of music?) demonstrate a large amount of intrinsic ambiguity regarding their categorization as musical or nonmusical. Subjective accounts direct our attention toward the reception of the work rather than any intrinsic features that it may or may not demonstrate. When we ask if *4’33”* is *music*, for example, we are really asking if we hear it *as* music (regardless of its intrinsic features). This approach raises some difficult questions about what it means to hear a work *as* music but importantly moves the locus of inquiry from the work’s features to its reception. The fact that one can listen to *4’33”* in a number of ways (including, I would assume, while completely ignorant of the fact that it is being performed) explains why so many opinions exist about its status as musical (or not). A multitude of legitimate categorizations exist for *4’33”* because a multitude of legitimate interpretations of the work exist as well. Subjective accounts provide a clear explanation of “tricky cases” in this way: We expect to see cases that truly are undecidable at a societal level because no consensus exists regarding the

work's interpretation and reception. Subjective definitions can claim, depending on the specific role played by general consensus, that these works are either both musical and nonmusical, or neither musical nor nonmusical. In either case, these examples are not undecidable for genuine ontic, and not epistemic, reasons. When we cannot decide the status of a work, that work's status is genuinely undecidable as a matter of ontic fact.

Subjective definitions are well-suited to accommodate historical variability in the category "music." Take, for the sake of argument, Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. The album was recorded in 1959 and received harsh criticism from Miles Davis and Charles Mingus; the very same record, however, has occupied a spot in the Library of Congress since 2012 (Rush 2012). Subjective accounts help explain how something which barely conforms to *any* intrinsic condition nevertheless count as music so unequivocally that the album is included in the Library of Congress. What is happening in the case of *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (and other albums like it, Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica* for example) is that the actual ontic status of the work has shifted over time. While contemporary audiences were not ready to hear what Coleman recorded as music, shifts in broader cultural attitudes about "musical organization" resulted in a real shift in the status of the work from nonmusical to musical over time. Subjectivists would argue that, between 1959 and 2012, Americans became more receptive to hearing *The Shape of Jazz to Come* as musical in important ways, and thus (eventually) determined the status of the work as musical. Regardless of whether we take general consensus as definitive of a work's status, the claim is that subjective definitions are well-positioned to address precisely the difficult cases that often trouble intrinsic accounts. Subjective definitions have a story to tell about all how and why difficult cases became difficult in the first place, and what to do about their status as musical (or

nonmusical) based on listener reception. In short, these definitions perform well in precisely those cases where intrinsic definitions stumble.

### **Critiques of Subjective Accounts**

However, despite the virtues of subjective definitions (especially in combination with intrinsic accounts) they lead to their fair share of problematic implications. Subjective accounts suffer from two primary types of critique: First, as a matter of intra-methodological critique, it appears that subjective accounts' reliance on descriptivist methodology undermines the usefulness of these theories. Claiming that whatever we hear *as music is music* begs the question regarding music's definition. Second, as a matter of meta-methodological critique, subjective definitions run the risk of (re)producing socioculturally problematic conclusions. Most, if not all, types of subjective definitions risk delegitimizing non-hegemonically situated musical practices.

Previously, I explained that subjective definitions rely on the listener(s) to identify what is or is not music and while that *is* the purported goal of subjective definitions, a larger problem faced by these accounts is that listeners not only *identify* what is or is not music (picking out which individual works properly belong to the category 'music') but *determine* that status by virtue of their subjective judgement. This difference is more than merely semantic, since purely subjective accounts rely on listeners to identify *all* instances of music and thereby give audiences the ability to literally determine if what they are listening to is music or not.

Returning to our example in Gracyk's definition, he claims that "Musical patterns are music only if they reflect [...] cultural expectations about musical structures" (2013, 21).<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>9</sup> It sounds, at this point, that I have a particular grudge against Gracyk's account, but I assure you that is not the case. Gracyk's account contains intrinsic, subjective, *and* intentional components; demonstrates how an intrinsic definition can be made more cohesive by the addition of a subjective condition; and will

original purpose of this clause, I have discussed, is to curtail the otherwise overbroad intrinsic conditions of the definition. Without a reliance on “cultural expectations” about what is or is not musical, the definition merely identifies music as harmonically and rhythmically organized sound. However, the subjective clause almost sounds recursive. (What does it mean to say that music must be structured in ways that reflect cultural expectations about musical structure?) While this clause may help us rule out counterexamples like train rhythms or spoken-word poetry, that do not reflect cultural expectations about musical structure, it does little to identify music beyond an appeal to cultural intuitions. (After all, not every culturally popular intuition is accurate or desirable. How does one determine which intuitions about music are important in this account?) In short, this kind of subjective clause risks merely reinforcing pre-existing intuitions about what is or is not musical and does not help us identify novel or surprising instances of music in the future. Listeners cannot be mistaken about their perception of a work because subjective definitions rely on listener interpretation to *determine* whether or not a sound or work is musical. This is a significant weakness of purely subjective definitions because it seems that these kinds of identification strategies are descriptive to the exclusion of offering an explanatorily powerful account.

Music, as a socio-cultural practice, is beyond the control of any individual (thank goodness, since there are a lot of us that have quite conservative or otherwise undesirable views concerning what is and is not music), and a definition of music should provide proponents of the account with new information. By this I mean to suggest that a good definition of music provides

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later demonstrate how the addition of an intentional component can assist accounts which already include intrinsic and subjective components. Because this definition is so clear, and constructed in an easily demonstrated linear manner, I choose to use it as a running example.

information about the aesthetic medium and particular works that would otherwise be unavailable to the pre-reflective musicophile. Definitions should adjudicate disputes and provide a framework above and beyond what is offered by mere intuition such that judgements about music are not only based in opinion. When an account is founded in intuition alone it cannot help us adjudicate disputes concerning music or give us new information that we lacked before developing a robust definition. In other words, an overreliance on praxis results in these kinds of subjective definitions in which one learns little from the application of the definition. It ought to be the case that we can ask “I am experiencing *X* as music, is it?” or we can ask “I am not experiencing *Y* as music, but is it?” However, these questions are meaningless on the terms of a subjective definition. In asserting a preliminary assumption (that I am or am not perceiving *X* as music) one determines the status of the work. If a listener thinks that a particular work is music (and in fact perceives it as such) then that work just is music, regardless of how musical it seems to be.<sup>10</sup> This issue is what I call the intra-methodological critique of subjective definitions: a satisfactory definition of music needs to accommodate the possibility that listeners make mistakes regarding non-hegemonically situated musical practices, but a purely descriptivist approach cannot provide these normative claims.

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<sup>10</sup> I want to be careful here to note that I *am* allowing a slight amount of slippage between the terms “perception” and “opinion” (or “belief” or “experience”). Subjective definitions, on the whole, do not rely on a distinction between instances where one *believes* that the work they experience is music, and instances where one’s *perceptual apparatuses respond* to the work as they would to musical experiences. This distinction becomes meaningful in the following chapter, where I address extended mind philosophy and the potential that one might be wrong about their beliefs from a neurological or physiological perspective. In the context of subjective definitions, one’s *belief* that a work is musical constitutes their perception of the work as musical, and vice versa in the case of nonmusical works. The possibility that we might be wrong about our own perceptions is interesting, but not a matter of debate among musical subjectivists.

The intra-methodological critique claims that subjective definitions of music suffer on the grounds of methodological balance—in claiming that music just is whatever is perceived as such, these accounts overemphasize descriptivist methodologies and the demands of the pragmatic principle to the exclusion of providing meaningful information about unfamiliar cases. In other words, subjective definitions cannot help us determine the status of novel works about which we are uncertain, and instead reinforce our (or broader cultural) pre-reflective intuitions about what is or is not musical. This troubling feature of subjective accounts directly contributes to the meta-methodological issue I identify. Because subjective definitions rely so heavily on individual listener’s (or cultural) intuitions they reinforce (or at least risk reinforcing) biased or problematic intuitions regarding music and the status of specific works.

The meta-methodological critique claims that the ways in which subjective definitions appeal directly to listener intuition are problematic insofar as they serve to reinforce listener bias about what legitimate music is.<sup>11</sup> For example, there exist extreme cases where listeners categorically refuse certain genres’ status as musical on intrinsic grounds.<sup>12</sup> While these issues are easily handled on intrinsic grounds, theorists constructing subjective definitions (or using subjective components in their definition) should be worried by the fact that some individuals (and some cultural groups) refuse to engage with certain kinds of music *as music*. Using a

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<sup>11</sup> Kania (2011, 6) calls this the problem of the “culturally ignorant listener.” I claim that the issue is larger than Kania suggests, and that the issues are not merely theoretical. Kania’s culturally ignorant listener is a problem because they determine the status of a work, even when they are not experts in particular cultural modes of musical expression and so are likely to mistake musical performances for non-musical ones. The issue I raise includes this objection and highlights the way in which privileged, hegemonically positioned subjects are more likely to make these exclusionary mistakes and the way that these mistakes serve to reinforce traditional, dominant perspectives on music and musical legitimacy.

<sup>12</sup> Looking at you, Ben Shapiro! (For the blissfully unaware, the conservative attorney-turned-talk-show-host claims that all music must include melody, rhythm, and harmony and that on these standards rap is not music since it lacks melody and harmony.)

subjective definition of music means that these genres of music literally are not music, at least for the individuals who hold such a view. Setting aside the intra-methodological critique, this is not yet a problematic conclusion, just an unsatisfying one: It could be that there exist a multitude of “musics” and each of us is entitled to a definition of music that supports their own pre-reflective beliefs about music and musical structure. However, in a pragmatic sense, this discrepancy between individuals’ definitions of music is likely to reinforce culturally dominant views about music and its definition. In either the case of a consensus-based subjective definition or in the case where there exist as many subjective definitions as individual listeners, dominant, widely accepted modes of musical perception reinforce dominant and hegemonically accepted musical practices as legitimate. This conclusion is a direct result of the intra-methodological critique. For example, recall that the subjective component of Gracyk’s definition of music claims that music must reflect “cultural expectations” about musical organization and production. In addition to begging the question on the level of individual works, this reliance on subjective perception reinforces existing narratives about what constitutes legitimate, serious musical expression. By measuring a work’s status against “cultural expectations” regarding musical organization, only those works that sufficiently resemble current expectations can be legitimized as music.

That subjective definitions are likely to reinforce culturally dominant perspectives on music is not itself a problematic conclusion (although it may still prove detrimental to the theory). It is possible, however unlikely, that dominant perspectives concerning music are inclusive enough to legitimize the wide variety of musical practices that a definition of music should accommodate. The problematic conclusion of the meta-methodological critique appears due to an asymmetry between dominant and countercultural musical perception such that dominant modes of perception are more restrictive than those that emerge from the margins, and because



the legitimization of alternative musical practices is an issue with consequences for non-hegemonically positioned individuals and musical practices.

Subjective definitions, as we have discussed, rely on the listener to perceive a work *as* musical in order for that work to count as musical. Because subjective accounts rely on listener perception, the extent to which one is able (or willing) to perceive certain practices as musical determines the definition's scope. When listeners or groups of listeners are capable of perceiving a wide variety of practices as musical, their definition of music will be equally broad and *vice versa*; when listeners perceive relatively few practices as musical, their definition of music will be equally narrow. Relying on work in social epistemology, I claim that those in privileged positions are more likely to perceive music more narrowly, and therefore define music more narrowly when using these types of subjective definitions.

José Medina argues that privileged individuals are more likely to be “closed-minded” insofar as they fail to cultivate habits of open-mindedness and often cannot (or simply do not) consider alternative perspectives in the way that oppressed subjects do (Medina 2013, 44). Medina's epistemic theory suggests that oppressed subjects are in the habit of developing ‘open-mindedness’ and are “more attentive to the perspectives of others. They have no option but to acknowledge, respect, and (to some extent) inhabit alternative perspectives, in particular the perspective of the dominant others(s)” (2013, 44). Medina's identification of the epistemic virtue “open-mindedness” suggests that oppressed subjects practice inhabiting dominant perspectives as well as their own, and that privileged subjects are unlikely to perform this sort of epistemic labor. Applied to the case of music, this means that privileged subjects are less likely to possess the habits of perception required to understand musical practices unlike their own *as musical*. On the other hand, oppressed (or at least non-hegemonically situated) subjects are likely to perceive both

alternative and dominant performance practices *as music*. As a matter of mere perception this is an acceptable risk for most accounts of music—a subject’s misperception of a work as nonmusical is not immediately problematic because they can be wrong about their judgement. However, this misperception is important in the case of subjective definitions because these types of accounts construe listener perception as deterministic of a work’s status. Returning to Gracyk’s definition as our example, this asymmetry in musical perception implies that broadly accepted “cultural expectations” about music are likely to be relatively narrow insofar as privileged individuals inhabit the culturally dominant, hegemonic positions from which these expectations emerge.

Given that music is asymmetrically identified along subjective lines based on the cultural position of the listener and given that this strategy of definition reinforces dominant perspectives on music provides us with good reason to believe that subjective definitions are at least undesirable. However, to understand why these claims are harmful we need to understand what is at stake in defining music inclusively or conservatively. What, in addition to the label “music,” does a definition provide for those that engage with nonstandard or non-hegemonically supported aesthetic works? Robin James argues that the legitimization of non-hegemonic musical practices is tied to the legitimization of self-expression for the marginalized subjects who engage in and with those genres. In other words, there are real sociocultural stakes to defining music in ways that either do or do not accommodate countercultural, non-hegemonic, or non-western (non-white) practices. The regulation of “legitimate” musical expression is a regulation of the bodies and subjects (considered inseparably) who express themselves musically. She writes,

Music is no mere example [...]because what is at stake in defining what constitutes music and what constitutes race or culture is fundamentally the same issue—the determination of the relationship between raced, colonized, or resonating bodies and the social forces that operate in, through, and on these bodies. (James 2005, 171)

James' argument is that defining race and music are part of the same fundamental project, but a mere connection between the two is sufficient to motivate the meta-methodological critique of subjective definitions. Due to similar methodologies between accounts of race and music, and an intersection between racial/gendered and musical issues, James argues, "the way we conceive of and experience music inflects the way we think of and experience race and gender, and vice versa" (2005, 181). In some cases (James takes up the blues as an example) this influence is obvious. If we understand the blues to be a paradigmatic case of black musical expression, then defining the blues is a matter of circumscribing what constitutes legitimate self-expression for those artists. As an extreme example we can imagine a "culturally ignorant" listener who, upon hearing Billie Holiday, cannot hear her songs as music. This egregiously poor perceiver has, according to subjective definitional practices, determined that Billie Holiday was not making music. While a singular listener may not be indicative of a larger problem, wider-reaching examples exist, particularly along racialized lines, in contemporary music. If we believe that Lil Nas X composed and produced a *country* song (and *he* believes that he produced a country song) then Billboard's exclusion of the piece from their country charts signals that his self-expression has failed. Dominant cultural perspectives, in this way, serve to delegitimize the artistic project that he set out to complete. The same goes not just for genres, but for the category of "music" in general. In literally perceiving certain genres or practices as music, and others as nonmusical, those committed to subjective definitions determine who has and has not succeeded at this type of self-expression.

In combination with the asymmetry of musical perception that Medina's epistemology suggests may occur, these issues of legitimization take on problematic sociocultural consequences. Defining music narrowly risks delegitimizing certain modes of expression, and the narrow

construction of musical definitions by privileged subjects serve to reinforce racialized and gendered assumptions and delegitimize the self-expression of already-marginalized subjects. While we may have good recourse in intrinsic accounts of music to claim that this kind of misperception is harmless (subjects who misperceive in these ways are simply wrong, demonstrably), the issue is more insidious in the case of subjective definitions. Because subjects cannot be mistaken about their perception, and because (Medina's epistemic theory suggests) dominant cultural perspectives are likely to identify music along more restrictive lines than countercultural perspectives, we have reason to believe that subjective accounts serve to reinforce dominant, relatively narrow, and often problematic perspectives concerning race, gender, and music.

The meta-methodological critique claims that subjective definitions, considered alone, have no recourse to judge the "cultural expectations" or perception of listeners in ways that recommend inclusive definitions over exclusive ones. Although these accounts *allow* for incredibly inclusive accounts of music, they consider listener perception as determinative of music's scope in ways that may not be quite so accommodating. Further, given the asymmetry of perception Medina's theory suggests, we have reason to believe that privileged subjects are more likely to adhere to narrow definitions whereas oppressed subjects are more likely to understand, or perceive a wider variety of practices as musical. This asymmetry of musical perception, coupled with subjective accounts' inability to make normative claims about how one *should* perceive particular works, means that subjective definitions at least reinforce ones pre-existing perspectives on music in question-begging ways and at worst rely on "cultural expectations" in ways that risk delegitimizing the musical expression of marginalized subjects.

Subjective accounts, despite being relatively popular as components of more robust theories, are in a difficult position. Without subject-independent standards of judgement they have little to offer beyond merely describing commonplace musical perception. This circularity or question-begging results from methodological *imbalance* in that the theory relies wholly on a description of praxis to the exclusion of making prescriptive or normative claims. Worse yet, merely describing “cultural expectations” about music often serves to reinforce the dominant perspectives which comprise these expectations, and these perspectives are not neutrally constructed. Hegemonically accepted perspectives on music, James demonstrates, often reflect cultural expectations about race and gender as well. For these meta- and intra-methodological reasons, we can reject subjective definitions as a viable standalone strategy, and we should be wary of their inclusion as components of larger definitions.

### **Intentional Definitions**

To address some of the worries about musical perception raised against subjective accounts, some theorists suggest defining music by reference to musical intentions rather than perception. Intentional definitions suggest that certain audible performances are music due to “the music-making intentions of the people ultimately responsible for those sounds” (Kania 2011, 6). To determine what is or is not musical, then, one must examine the intentions of the performer or composer. This identification of music along intentional lines addresses the third and final part of what I have called the musical triad of audience, work, and performer/composer. Intrinsic accounts address the necessary and sufficient features of a work which qualify it as musical and subjective accounts rely on the audience and listener perception to identify music. Intentional accounts rely on performer or composer intentions to determine which works are legitimately called music. Typically, however, there is little reason to adopt an

intentional definition of music unless the previous two strategies have failed. The greatest benefit of this strategy is an ability to address the shortcomings of intrinsic and subjective definitions. Accordingly, and similar to subjective definitions, there are almost no wholehearted supporters of intentional definitions. Rather, intentional components are often used in conjunction with intentional or subjective definitions to address the issues encountered by the intentional or subjective components.

Intentional definitions, as a standalone strategy for identify music, are desirable on their own merits (even if no purely intentional definitions exist). Like subjective accounts, intentional definitions help accommodate “tricky examples” like Cage’s *4’33”* or Tom Wait’s “What’s He Building?” (or Kania’s favorite example, Yoko Ono’s “Toilet Piece”). Intentional definitions help account for the musical status of works that cannot be identified as such by intrinsic accounts. Even in the absence of *any* identifiable intrinsically musical features, certain works count as music by virtue of the intentions involved in their production. When works are produced with the correct musical intentions (and when these intentions are successful), no feature of a work (or lack thereof) could provide damning evidence against that work’s musicality. Pieces like *4’33”*, therefore, count as music on most intentional definitions despite their infamous lack of intrinsically musical features. Similarly, intentional definitions can bracket out cases of rhythmic or harmonic sounds that are nonetheless obviously nonmusical, like train-track rhythms, because they were not produced with the correct musical intentions (or, in this case, any intention whatsoever). This ability to cleanly handle difficult cases and counterexamples helps recommend

intentional definitions of music, or at least the inclusion of an intentional component.<sup>13</sup>

Intentional definitions share this ability to address difficult cases with subjective definitions because both accounts rely on proper engagement with, rather than intrinsic features of, a work to determine its musical status. Rather than identifying the necessary and sufficient intrinsic features of a work which identify it as musical, these accounts rely on proper reception or production to define music. A reliance on musical modes of engagement helps accommodate those works which are *prima facie* musical despite a lack of musical features (or *vice versa*). Nothing *must* be true of a work to qualify it as musical on either subjective or intentional accounts.

Unlike subjective accounts, however, intentional definitions tend to be more inclusive because they rely on intent to determine the musical status of a work. Intentional accounts, unlike subjective ones, provide theorists with the normative tools required to judge cultural expectations and listener perception. The intra-methodological critique claimed that subjective definitions are ill suited to defining music because they are question begging. By defining music as anything the listener perceives as music, subjective definitions have no recourse to judge that perception as accurate or inaccurate because no criteria external to listener perception could ground a claim that the listener is mistaken. Intentional accounts, by contrast, provide the resources necessary to identify instances of mistaken perception. It is possible, within the intentional framework, to ask

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<sup>13</sup>Importantly, this is not to imply that intentional definitions have all the answers about these difficult examples. Saying that all and only those works produced with proper musical intentions count as music is a metaphysical claim about the status of works and the intentions which produce them, and not an epistemic claim about the transparency of those intentions. The actual determination of these specific examples (when we ask, “Is *X* music?”) raises epistemological concerns. It appears that listeners are only capable of knowing the status of particular works if the intentional state(s) of the performer(s) or composer(s) is transparent to them.

Additionally, I say “composer(s)” and “performer(s)” to acknowledge the fact that many works are not composed by a single person, and even fewer performances include a soloist alone. There may be particular difficulties to ascertaining the collective intentions by which works are produced even above and beyond the mere aggregated intentions of those individuals involved in producing the work.

“I think  $x$  is music, is it?” because the status of the work does not rely on the listener’s perception. Of course, it may be that these questions are rarely answered in satisfying ways. Determining the intentional states of others is at least an epistemic problem for theorists to solve before making positive claims about what is or is not music(al). However, for intentional accounts these concerns are epistemic, and not metaphysical in the ways they were for subjective definitions. Imagine, as an example, that every listener of Beethoven’s *Allegretto in B-Flat Major* could not perceive the work as musical. Subjective theorists would be hard-pressed to explain what actually *is* happening in recordings or performances of the work since it shares many features in common with other pieces Beethoven composed, but it is not musical by virtue of its reception. Subjectivists might be forced to conclude that the work is not musical if no listeners exist who perceive it as such.

Intentionalists face their own set of issues when attempting to categorize Beethoven’s *Allegretto in B-Flat Major*, including the fact that Beethoven is dead. Trivial as that sounds, without a time machine it will be impossible to consult Beethoven himself to determine which intentions were influential in the work’s construction. Worse yet, *Allegretto in B-Flat Major* was published posthumously, further removing the work from Beethoven’s direct intentions. If he never intended to publish the work, what else about Beethoven’s intentions might remain opaque to us as audience members? The key distinction between subjective and intentional handlings of cases like our hypothetical is that subjectivists have no recourse to features of the work or the composer’s intent to claim that audiences are mistaken. Intentional accounts may not provide substantially more answers than their subjectivist counterparts, but the issues are merely epistemic. There *is* a fact of the matter regarding the status of the *Allegretto in B-Flat Major* even if we cannot determine the status of the work without a time-machine. Further, we can speculate about the composer’s intentions in relatively helpful ways. Even if intentionalists cannot say with



100% certainty that Beethoven's intentions were musical, the structure of the work (and its title) provide us with plenty of clues toward that conclusion.

Because intentional definitions can account for mistaken listener perception, they also address the meta-methodological critique raised against subjective definitions. The meta-methodological critique claimed that subjective definitions, insofar as they reinforce pre-existing and often pre-reflective individual and collective assumptions about music, can contribute to the delegitimization of non-hegemonically situated musical practices. Fortunately, the meta-methodological critique only appears as a direct consequence of the intra-methodological critique. The reification of pre-reflective and often restrictive musical assumptions is a direct result of the account's reliance on listener perception as decisive of a work's status. In our hypothetical example, intentionalists could make an educated guess regarding the status of *Allegretto in B-Flat Major* as music even in the absence of any identifiable listener who perceived the work as such. On a micro scale, we might think about the "cultural expectations" that determined "Old Town Road" was not a country song. Lil Nas X's intention to produce a country song was inconsequential to the work's status because listeners in positions of power did not perceive the song as country. Intentional accounts are well-suited to handling both the hypothetical and actual examples discussed. Beethoven's intention to compose a piece of music determines that *Allegretto in B-Flat Major* is a musical work. Similarly, intentional accounts have reason to claim that Lil Nas X's intention to produce a country song is sufficient to determine that "Old Town Road" is a country song. Because listener perception is insufficient to identify a work as musical or nonmusical, intentional accounts can judge cultural expectations concerning musical works. Intentional accounts can, and at their best actually do, advocate for inclusivity as a desideratum of musical definitions.

## Critiques of Intentional Accounts

While intentional definitions are well-suited to addressing the shortcomings of both intrinsic and subjective accounts, definitions of this type suffer from a number of issues. Most, if not all, of these issues result from an exclusive disjunct faced by intentional theories at large: either *any* intention is sufficient to guarantee that the work produced is musical, or only *certain* intentions are sufficient to produce music.<sup>14</sup> Thus far I have addressed the idea that pure intentional definitions of music claim that all and only those works produced with musical intentions count as music. We now have reason to ask what, precisely, these “musical intentions” actually are. Is it that the mere presence of an intention to make music is sufficient for the work produced to be musical? Or rather, could it be that certain kinds of intentions are required for the work to count as music? I ultimately argue that neither of these options is satisfying and instead we have reason to reject intentional definitions along with the other orthodox, unilateral theories.

First, it could be that any musical intention is sufficient for the work produced to count as music—in what I call “unrestricted” intentional accounts, so long as the musician or composer *intends* to produce a work of music then the work produced *is* music. This construct of intentional accounts suggests that the multitude of subjective perspectives on music have the potential to produce a similarly varied number of legitimate musical works. Importantly, the status of the work does not hinge on an individual’s accurate grasp of any essential, intrinsic features of musical works. Even when composers or musicians adopt exceedingly liberal, or otherwise

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, a third possibility theoretically exists: it could be that *no* intentions are sufficient to guarantee that the work produced is musical. This potential perspective on musical intentions is precisely what subjective and intrinsic definitions cover.

unpopular definitions of music their intentions are sufficient to determine the status of their works as musical. While this is a broadly inclusive account of music, the intra-methodological critique from subjective definitions reappears in this context. In the case of subjective accounts, I worried that listeners could not be wrong about what they perceived due to the theory's reliance on listener perception as decisive of a work's status. In the case of intentional accounts, we worry that musicians and composers are put in precisely the same situation. A composer or musician who *intends* to produce a musical work cannot be mistaken about what they have produced according to intentional accounts. However, it is unclear why a musician or composer, rather than a listener, is a better judge of what is or is not musical. There does not seem to be anything about a person's role as creator that necessarily confers this kind of decisive ability.

The inability of creators to be wrong about their creation raises two concerns for these kinds of intentional definitions. Primarily, we might worry that musicians do not themselves have sole purview over whether or not their intentions are successful. Imagine, for example, that I intend to knit a pair of socks. There are a variety of ways that this task could go awry, and my intention is incapable of making the misshapen ball of yarn I *actually* produce a sock in any meaningful way. Perhaps I am looking at the wrong pattern, or perhaps I am just especially poor knitter. Whatever the reason, my intention that the product is a sock, does not make the haphazard pile of yarn before me a sock.<sup>15</sup> Similar concerns obtain regarding music: just because an individual intends for their performance to be music does not necessarily make it music. Secondly (and of secondary concern here), it seems that music might be produced without any direct intention. Some theorists even argue that "I intend to X" is almost *never* a part of our

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<sup>15</sup> Thanks to Claire Lockard for this crafty example, and her patience with my longwinded analogies.

rationale for undertaking an action (Alvarez 2010). A drawback of intentional accounts is that they have difficulty accommodating instances where we intuitively believe that music has been produced and yet no musical intuitions existed. Imagine, by way of analogy, that I am baking and following a recipe to make oatmeal raisin cookies because I know that my roommate hates raisins and I intend to bake only for myself. Accidentally, I add chocolate chips instead of raisins and make oatmeal chocolate chip cookies instead (which my roommate loves). I have, in this example, inadvertently produced a dessert for my roommate when I did not intend to. Similarly, it seems that musicians sometimes produce something musical when they intend the opposite. We might imagine a performer aimlessly (thoughtlessly, perhaps) strumming their guitar between sets only to find themselves playing a familiar tune or chord progression. Their intention to kill time has gone awry and what they have produced seems to be music. It appears, then, that intentional definitions are ill suited to accounting for mistakes where music *is* produced without any apparent intention on the part of the musician, or when we would want to say that music is *not* produced despite a clear musical intention.<sup>16</sup> Since it seems that intentions are the kinds of things that do not necessarily determine the status of objects in the world post-production, intentional definitions result in deeply counterintuitive conclusions. Anytime that a musician's intentions do not correspond to our (or their) understanding of the object produced, we are said to be mistaken in ways that are hard to account for.

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<sup>16</sup> The case of collective intentionality confuses these definitions even further, suggesting that no one individual could even be capable of the intention to "produce music" in a meaningful sense. In these cases of truly collective intentions (that *we* produce music, for example) what would it mean to say that music is produced whenever a collective has the intention to produce music? Could music be produced by the amalgamation of individual, nonmusical intentions? I suspect so, but further exploration of that issue will be reserved for the EMC and Intercorporeal accounts.

Second, it could be that intentional definitions are well-served by developing criteria to judge intentions. (I call intentional accounts that adopt criteria like this “restricted” intentional accounts to indicate the way in which musical intentions are restricted to those that demonstrate certain musical features.) Judging particular types of intentions, or components of intentions, could help theorists identify where and how certain musical intentions succeed, and others fail. For example, we might claim that the guitarist who intended to kill time *also* intended to strum their guitar, finger particular chords, and so on. If we identify any of these component intentions as properly musical, then we have good reasons to claim that the song our guitarist aimlessly played *is* music. These strategies attempt to identify certain features of properly musical intentions such that those intentions (and only those intentions) which share in these features are capable of producing musical works. Kania, for instance, offers a disjunctive intentional definition of music in this tradition. He argues that music is “(1) any event intentionally produced or organized (2) to be heard, and (3) *either* (a) to have some basic musical feature, such as pitch or rhythm, *or* (b) to be listened to for such features” (Kania 2011b, 12). Part (1) constitutes the strictly intentional component of Kania’s definition, while part (3a) and (3b) curtail the kinds of intentions eligible. The musician’s intentions, on this definition, must include the intent to produce a work with “musical” components or that is intended to be listened to for such (musical) features. While this particular definition can be dismissed on charges of circularity (What specific features of a performance are “musical,” and which are not? Are we not able to determine what is and is not music on the basis of “musical” features in the absence of intention?) other definitions of this type may circumvent the circularity problem. Using this strategy, a work is properly musical only if it is created with certain kinds of intentions. In these cases, the mere intention to make music is insufficient to make the work musical. Rather, the music must be

intended to include certain “basic musical features.” However, in advancing this line of argumentation Kania and his interlocutors run into the same problems faced by intrinsic definitions. If mere intentions are not enough to guarantee a work is music, and the musician must intend to produce a *certain kind* of work, then the features that define that *certain kind* are performing the definitional work.

For example, suppose that we return to an intentional account of baking and that I intend to make chocolate chip cookies. To avoid subjectivism, we could say that not just *any* intention is sufficient to guarantee that I will succeed in making chocolate chip cookies. If what I produce is made without chocolate and with cinnamon sugar and cream of tartar instead, it is hard to argue that I have made chocolate chip cookies instead of snickerdoodles, no matter my intention. To avoid this conclusion (that *anything* I make is a chocolate chip cookie) these kinds of intentional accounts can try to restrict the kinds of intentions or products proper to making chocolate chip cookies. What I make must either include chocolate chips or be eaten for the sake of those chocolate chips and must avoid the use of other ingredients characteristic to other cookies. In this case, it seems that the defining feature of chocolate chip cookies is not my intention to make them, but some feature *of the thing produced*. In the case of music, these restrictions put intentional accounts on similar footing to intrinsic definitions. Since we dismissed intrinsic definitions as either too broad or too narrow in their delineation of “music” as a category, we have good reason to dismiss restricted intentional definitions as well.

It seems, given these shortcomings, that neither path is desirable for intentional definitions. Neither unrestricted nor restricted intentions are sufficient to help intentional definitions from falling into the same problems as previous orthodox accounts of music. Intentional definitions that include musical features as necessary for the production of music

seem to reduce to a kind of augmented intrinsic definition. The part of the definition doing the theoretical “heavy lifting” is the part identifying what features a work must exhibit to be musical. Intentional definitions which do not restrict potentially musical intentions in this way seem reducible to refocused subjective definitions. Musicians are in the unenviable position of never being mistaken about what they make.<sup>17</sup> This means that every musical intention produces music, and no nonmusical artistic intentions could produce music. Musicians, in other words, are never surprised by the nature of what they produce. In either case, intentional definitions are unsuccessful in mitigating our concerns regarding intrinsic and subjective accounts of music and face the same criticisms as previous theories.<sup>18</sup>

### **Unilateral Definitions**

Intrinsic, subjective, and intentional definitions all face a significant number of counterexamples and produce a number of unintuitive conclusions. These difficult counterexamples and deeply unintuitive commitments provide theorists with reasons to reject

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<sup>17</sup> This is a very real worry for those of us who began studying music at an early age. I personally shudder to think that my early violin recitals were music in the same sense that Vivaldi or Paganini are said to have produced music. It was pointed out to me that there exists a threshold between playing notes in succession and playing a piece of music in a cohesive sense. This is perhaps precisely the kind of distinction that intentional definitions aim to accommodate for, but often miss.

<sup>18</sup> Even if it were possible to avoid reduction to subjective or intrinsic definitions (by, for example, constructing an account of collective and potentially mistaken intentionality) it remains unclear how intentional definitions offer a balance between explanatory power and counterintuitive conclusions. Intentional accounts become extraordinarily complicated rather quickly because they are best poised to address music created under ideal conditions. It seems that intentional definitions are only clear-cut in cases of a singular composer or performer. Without a relatively robust account of group intentionality, it is unclear how a group of people might perform music together. While classical music is often written by a single composer, the vast majority of music produced and consumed in contemporary culture is created by a distributed network of composers and performers. In these cases, there is at least the potential that no one person truly *intends* for the song to exist in an intuitively plausible way. While each person in the network might intend to produce something music-like, it is unclear that everyone (or anyone) needs to intend to produce something *musical*.

these theories on the grounds of methodological balance and what I have called the defeating construct of the pragmatic principle. Calls for methodological balance and the invocation of the pragmatic principle aim to identify those projects which have strayed too far from their purported goal of accounting for actual musical praxis. Intrinsic accounts face a dilemma of inclusivity, subjective accounts beg the question, and intentional accounts risk collapsing into either an intrinsic or subjective account. However, despite these issues, intrinsic, subjective, and intentional definitions enjoy widespread acceptance in the literature. Despite good reasons for the popularity of traditional definitions of music, I ultimately argue that they should be rejected due to their unilateral focus, and that multilateral accounts can provide a better path forward for my Intercorporeal Account.

This widespread acceptance of intrinsic, subjective, and intentional definitions rests on two features of contemporary debate over definitions of music: the *ad hoc* defense of these accounts against counterexamples, and the combination of unilateral definitions into multilateral definitions. First, these definitional strategies are defended against counterexamples on an *ad hoc* basis. A not insubstantial amount of traditional philosophy of music exists to defend ontological and definitional accounts against the difficult counterexamples that quickly appear. These defenses proliferate quickly, with theorists weighing in to defend certain definitions against (or critique them on the basis of) what they perceive to be the theory's unacceptably counterintuitive commitments. As an example, we might consider Peter Kivy and Kirk Pillow's debate over whether musical forgeries exist within Goodman's aesthetic framework. Goodman (1968) offered a compelling argument that music is an allographic art, that is, an artistic medium which utilizes a standardized notational system to allow for the production of *versions* of the original. Accordingly, Goodman must claim that musical forgeries are impossible since a perfect



reproduction of the original is a version of it, and not a forgery passed off as an original (as in the case of painting). Peter Kivy, otherwise committed to Goodman's aesthetic theory, believes that the impossibility of musical forgeries is a problem, but that this issue can be addressed using resources from Goodman himself. According to the "committed Goodmanian" a perfect note-for-note reproduction of an original work would simply be a legitimate instance of that work (in other words, a perfect reproduction is a version, not a forgery but Kivy argues that *inventive* forgeries of musical works are possible. If, for example, one reproduced a Bach manuscript with scrupulous accuracy (down to Bach's famously elegant handwriting) but changed certain musically important features of the original work, then the work produced is a forgery, and not a legitimate version of the original work (Kivy 2000). Pillow responds, claiming that Kivy has made an error in identifying all versions of a work as versions of *that specific* work. It is perfectly possible, Pillow argues, that two versions of a work are not both instances of that singular, original work. To illustrate this possibility Pillow raises the example of Gus Van Zant's reproduction of *Psycho* in which Van Zant faithfully reproduced "the script, camera work, and musical score" of Hitchcock's original (Pillow 2002, 178). Pillow claims that versions of this kind are wholly separate aesthetic works, not instances of the original, despite their reliance on a singular notational foundation. These kinds of "versions" do not share a "history of production" with the original and are properly identified as adaptations, not forgeries. Pillow remains committed to the idea an inventive musical "forgery" is merely an original work—Kivy's exemplar forgers have not succeeded in *forging* a version of Bach's *Partia for Unaccompanied Flute*, they have succeeded in composing a wholly new Bach-inspired work that illegitimately claims Bach as its composer. Kivy responds to Pillow's claims by distinguishing between the "work-a-day" concept of a version (which addresses both legitimate versions or instantiations of a work *and* adaptations of that

original work) and the accurate, philosophical definition of a version (which only identifies faithfully reproduced versions *of* an original, singular work). Perhaps it is true that Van Zant's *Psycho* is merely a "work-a-day" version of Hitchcock's original, but Kivy claims that musical forgeries are still possible when a composition claims to be a version of a work in the stricter, philosophical sense of that term. Kivy's exemplar forgers claimed that what they produced was a version of the Partia for Unaccompanied Flute composed by Bach himself, whereas Van Zant never claimed that his production of *Psycho* was directed by Hitchcock (Kivy 2002). This hopefully intriguing digression serves to illustrate a larger point: ontological and definitional accounts of music are imperfect, but one way to account for their popularity is through the wealth of secondary literature that exists to defend specific theories, or types of theories against counterexamples.

I call this type of defense *ad hoc* because these debates assume that one is already committed to a particular ontology or definition of music. This digression into the possibility of musical forgeries is interesting for those already committed to Goodman's aesthetic theory of the allographic arts. To have this discussion one must first accept the terms of the debate, that is, the aesthetic theory under which these distinctions (between forgeries, versions, "versions," and copies) appear as meaningful. The primary concern for these kinds of *ad hoc* defenses is that they are just that, *ad hoc* (to this) and not *ad his* (to these). A robust defense of Goodman's theory against the counterintuitive conclusion that musical forgeries are impossible only helps those already committed to Goodman's aesthetics in the first place. Kivy and Pillow's discussion does

little to help those that would rather adopt a different theory and thus avoid the problem of forgeries altogether.<sup>19</sup>

A second strategy for rehabilitating orthodox definitions of music is to construct a definition with components borrowed from multiple types of definitions. For example, it may be that no purely intrinsic definitions are accurate, but Kania offers a definition of music which rests on intrinsic components but utilizes intentional components as well (Kania 2011b). The reason Kania suggests that musical works are either identifiable by their intrinsic qualities *or* by the intent that they are listened to *for the sake of* those qualities (whether or not they actually appear in the work). To avoid the issues associated with purely intrinsic definitions Kania incorporates elements of intentional definitions to close those theoretical gaps. As another example, we can return one last time to Gracyk's definition of music. His full definition claims that musical patterns are "sound patterns [...] when their organization establishes rhythmic or harmonic relationships (or both)," and that "musical patterns are music only if they reflect—and are so intended to be interpreted in light of—cultural expectations about musical structures" (Gracyk 2013, 21). Gracyk relies on a strategy of definitional expansion, rather than *ad hoc* defenses, to shore up his account of music. As we have seen, a purely intrinsic account of music is often either too inclusive or too exclusive. Defining music merely as sound patterns with harmonic or rhythmic relationships obviously includes nonmusical sounds, but many more intrinsic conditions

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<sup>19</sup> For instance, accounting for forgeries under an intentional definition of music is nearly trivial. Because, on these theories, intention is constitutive of a work's status as musical, we can claim that forgeries are compositions that illegitimately claim a particular composer or musician intended to produce that work. As an example, Haruki Murakami claims to have seen a physical (vinyl) copy of a fictional album he invented, *Charlie Parker Plays Bossa Nova*. If this album exists, as he claims, it could not be anything *but* a forgery on an intentional account. The album is apparently a recording of Charlie Parker, directly related in this way to his musical intentions, but since Charlie Parker died in 1955 (a full 7 years before Bossa Nova broke through in the United States) he could not have possibly recorded such an album.

would only serve to exclude legitimate musical works. Instead, Gracyk identifies these sounds as “musical patterns” which rise to the level of music if they intentionally incorporate cultural expectations about musical structures. Gracyk and Kania skirt the issues associated with *ad hoc* defenses because they bite the bullet and admit that no singular strategy is sufficient to properly define music. However, these attempts to combine definitional strategies fundamentally transform orthodox accounts into something they are not: they attempt to make unilateral accounts into multilateral accounts.

I have suggested before that music appears to include three distinct components which I call the *musical triad*: a producer, the work produced, and an audience. I claim that accounts are unilateral when they address a single component of this triad in attempting to define music. Applied to our discussion, we can call the orthodox definitions of music unilateral because each takes up a different, singular feature of the triad as definitive of a work’s musical status. Intentional definitions (exclusively) rely on certain features of the *work* to distinguish musical from nonmusical sounds, subjective definitions rely on *audience* perception, and intentional definitions rely on the *producer’s* intent. I argue that each of these definitional strategies faces problems due to their unilateral construction.

The core issue with unilateral accounts is that no single feature of the musical triad (musician, audience, and aesthetic work) is sufficient to ground a robust and accurate definition of music, one that identifies all and only instances of music in the world. Intrinsic definitions cannot account for instances where audience members (or composers) treat works as musical despite a lack of traditionally musical features; subjective definitions have difficulty accounting for cases of misperception due to their sole reliance on listener perception; and, finally, intentional definitions face many of the problems associated with the previous theories. Each of

the specific issues faced by these unilateral accounts stems from their inability to address more than one feature of the musical triad. In other words, traditional definitions suffer from a lack of methodological balance due to their unilateral construction. Treating any one aspect of the musical triad as determinative of a work's status contributes to overly descriptive or overly revisionist approaches to musical definition. Well-balanced definitions of music should (obviously) *balance* the role that that musical works themselves, their reception, and their production play in defining the medium.

Of course, the problems with unilateral accounts could be addressed on an *ad hoc* basis, but the stronger defense of orthodox definitions appears to be the combination of multiple definitional strategies under one umbrella. Gracyk and Kania's definitions both use this additive strategy to avoid the issues associated with purely intrinsic accounts. Kania relies on the composer's (or musician's) intent to close the theoretical gaps associated with intrinsic definitions and Gracyk, by contrast, primarily relies on a subjective condition to differentiate naturally occurring "musical patterns" from music, properly speaking. While this additive technique enjoys some success in the literature, the foundational problem of unilateral accounts remains unaddressed. Merely combining unilateral accounts to address the specific shortcomings of a primary, foundational strategy does little to accommodate the role that other facets of the musical triad play in making music what it is.

In some cases, as in Gracyk's definition, the problems associated with component strategies even reemerge in the final definition. Claiming that musical patterns must include harmony *or* rhythm offers a relatively wide intrinsic definition but curtailing that reach through an appeal to "cultural expectations" about musical structures is unsatisfying for reasons discussed in relation to subjective theories. It appears that a full, accurate definition of music should

fundamentally accommodate all three elements of the musical triad because an additive definition (one that incorporates elements from multiple unilateral theories) often reproduces the issues associated with each of its various components. Combining unilateral accounts, in short, attempts to turn these definitions into something they are not, that is, multilateral accounts. As an analogy, definition-by-combination is like drawing multiple circles to create a Venn diagram and saying that music is whatever we find in the overlap. A truly multilateral account should draw a singular circle that successfully circumscribes musical works by considering multiple aspects of the works included, both intrinsic and extrinsic features.

Music, I argue, is a fundamentally multilateral undertaking that requires musicians and audience members to co-create the aesthetic work in question. Given that our definition of music should be “beholden to our artistic practices—the ways we talk, think, and act” and given that music *is* multilateral as we experience, produce, theorize about, or otherwise encounter it, whatever definition of music we support should be capable of accounting for each component of the musical triad (Rohrbaugh 2003, 179). A robust and accurate definition should account for multiple facets of the musical triad simultaneously, rather than addressing each individually and combining accounts *ex post facto*. In fact, the Intercorporeal Account that I propose takes up insights from 4E aesthetics and Extended Musical Cognition (EMC) which centrally address the role that proper engagement plays in identifying music. Musical engagement, in this literature, identifies the ways that performers, composers, and audience members alike encounter, respond to, and otherwise interact with musical works. This reliance on musical engagement decenters unilateral accounts in ways that naturally address the shortcomings associated with them. Multilateral approaches, in other words, are better suited to constructing coherent, compelling, and praxis-oriented definitions of music.

## CHAPTER THREE

## EXTENDED MUSICAL COGNITION (VIVACE)

*or, Science vs. Romance*

Music as an aspect, affordance, or component of the extended mind has recently received direct attention from (among others) Alva Noë, Joel Krueger, Mark Leman, Simon Høffding, Jakub Matyja, and Andrea Schiavio (Høffding 2013; Krueger 2014; Leman and Maes 2014; Matyja 2016; Noë 2016; Schiavio et al. 2017). Theorists working at this intersection attempt to combine commitments from the extended mind hypothesis (and its relatives: embodied, embedded, and enactive cognition theories) with ongoing work in philosophy of music and musicology. The field of study which emerges is called Extended Musical Cognition (EMC) and “relies upon the hypothesis that embodied sensorimotor engagement is essential to both production and perception of music” (Matyja 2016). In contrast to the unilateral definitions of music previously discussed, EMC theorists provide accounts of music that address the production and perception of music simultaneously through resources available from 4E cognition.<sup>1</sup> Traditional definitions of music addressed either the composer/performer, listener, or aesthetic work and relied on the combination of discrete theories to account for multiple components of this triad. EMC accounts are capable of accounting for multiple aspects of the musical triad because they rest on the assumption that similar sensorimotor contingencies are at work in both musical production *and* reception. This ability to centrally address both the production and

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<sup>1</sup> “4E cognition” here refers to the collection of extended, embodied, embedded, and enactive cognition theories.

reception of musical works allows for truly multilateral accounts of music. To demonstrate this advantage over traditional definitions of music, we will need to understand the 4E insights that EMC accounts rely on.

First, however, to briefly foreshadow the Intercorporeal Account, permit me a brief aside. EMC philosophy is a growing sub-field of 4E cognitive studies, and its aims are, at times, orthogonal to the account I construct. What I mean to do in the following sections is provide an overview of 4E philosophy and the state of EMC studies because the Intercorporeal Account relies on two key insights of EMC philosophy, and levies one major critique against EMC approaches to musical identification. First, the Intercorporeal Account I construct borrows the concept of musicking from EMC philosophy. While theorists often use different words to identify this near-universal concept, I use the term “musicking” to identify multilateral musical engagement such that we can meaningfully speak of musicians *and* audience members as “musicking” (i.e., engaging with musical works) in relevantly similar ways. While there are obvious differences between what musicians and audience members are doing, EMC philosophy suggests that there are significant similarities between musicians’ and audiences’ engagement with musical works (this claim should become clearer when I discuss those similarities directly). Second, the Intercorporeal Account reaffirms the EMC position that to perceive music as music requires embodied, active engagement on the part of musicians and audience members. In part, this is an insight directly from 4E philosophy because it is grounded in the extended mind and enactivist claims that all conscious perception requires active, sensory exploration of one’s environment. Finally, in the following chapter, the Intercorporeal Account levies a critique against EMC philosophy; while many EMC philosophers claim that musicking is analogous to tool use (where music is here considered as a tool that affords musicking activities) I claim that



musicking is not separate from music or musical works on 4E grounds. For now, the remainder of this chapter provides an overview of 4E philosophy, an overview of EMC philosophy, and explores potential paths toward identifying music in a multilateral, 4E context.

### **Interlude: 4E Cognition**

EMC relies on two key concepts from 4E cognition: the assertion that the mind is an extended process, and the concept of sensorimotor contingencies which characterize specific types of perception and engagement. In tandem, these two features of 4E hypothesis help EMC account for the ways music is a multifaceted process that affords certain types of engagement by musicians, composers, and listeners alike. Importantly, EMC studies borrows from a variety of 4E theories, but primarily focuses on extended and enactive accounts of cognition. The extended mind thesis offers the mind-as-process construction whereas enactivism contributes the framework for a sensorimotor account of musical engagement. What follows is a brief review of each of these concepts in turn before returning to EMC accounts of music directly.

A key component of all 4E theories (and their uptake in EMC) is an argument “against the assumption that cognition is an isolated and abstract, quasi-Cartesian affair in a central processing unit in a brain” (Newen, Gallagher, & De Bruin 2018, 5). This argument is constructed in more or less extreme versions specific to each flavor of 4E theory but all four rest on the claim that the mind is at least partially constituted by extended cognitive processes which involve an agent’s environment. More concretely, cognition is “in some sense [...] dependent on the morphological, biological, and physiological details of an agent’s body, an appropriately structured natural, technological, or social environment, and the agent’s active and embodied interaction with this environment” (2018, 5). In other words, cognition is a function of an embodied agent’s interaction with their environment. In so-called “weak constructs” of this

hypothesis (many embedded and embodied cognition theories) it is suggested that this environmental interaction merely influences an agent's cognition. A GPS, for example, allows drivers to exercise different types of cognition than they would using a map (or relying on memory alone) to reach their destination. One's cognition (in this case, the process of responding to GPS instructions and carefully navigating the road) *responds* to features of the environment even if these environmental factors are not themselves constitutive of cognition. The "strong construction" of this hypothesis suggests that cognition is (at least in some cases) *constituted* by these environmental factors. This strong construction of the 4E hypothesis is a common feature of extended and enactive theories of mind which heavily influence the field of EMC.

The extended mind hypothesis suggests that dependence on one's environment for certain types of cognition is sufficient to indicate constitution through the application of the parity principle. The parity principle claims that if a specific type of information processing is properly called cognition when it occurs *in* the brain, then the same process ought to be called cognition *wherever* it occurs (Clark & Chalmers 1998). Clark and Chalmers further recommend a theory of *active externalism* according to which features of an agent's environment play an active causal role in cognition. Some cognition involves features of an agent's environment that "are coupled with the human organism, they have a direct impact on the organism and on its behavior. In these cases, the relevant parts of the world are *in the loop*, not dangling at the other end of a long causal chain" (1998, 10). According to the active externalism endorsed by the extended mind hypothesis, one's environment is "in the loop" with brain-generated cognition meaning that the environment plays an active causal role in cognitive processes. Cognition is said to be constituted by this agent-world interaction because at least some features of an agent's

environment are active causal components of cognition in the way the agent's brain is.<sup>2</sup> Clark and Chalmers rely on the example of expert Tetris players from Kirsh and Maglio (1994) to demonstrate that one's environment plays an active causal role in cognitive processing above and beyond what would be possible for brain-based cognition alone.<sup>3</sup> Clark and Chalmers extend this argument for active externalism from cognition (narrowly construed) to other mental states (notably memory and belief) and thereby extend their argument to the mind in general. Aspects of an agent's environment play an active causal role in all kinds of mental states, not just the information processing Clark and Chalmers believe constitutes cognition. Memory, for example, appears to rest on a type of active externalism (at least in some cases).<sup>4</sup> According to the parity principle, if we call memory a part of the mind when the relevant processes occur *in* the brain, then we must call it part of the mind when the relevant processes occur *outside* the brain too. Given that a variety of everyday activities are extended in this manner (long division, playing

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<sup>2</sup> The alternative to this parity principle (that when the world and brain serve the same functional roles, the processes instantiated by either are eligible to be called "cognition").

<sup>3</sup> This now famous example involves expert Tetris players who determine whether or not incoming shapes will fit with other blocks by rotating the shape and visually determining its ability to fit *in that orientation* faster than they would be capable of by mental representation alone. Mentally representing a block's rotation takes, they demonstrate upwards of 1000 milliseconds, whereas rotating the shape on the computer screen takes 300 milliseconds, on average. Once the shape has been rotated (mentally or physically) the player is then able to determine if it will fit in that orientation and proceed to rotate the shape again or drop the shape in place. Clark and Chalmers, relying on work from Kirsh and Maglio (2004), take this to mean that the physical rotation of a Tetris piece is an example of offloaded cognition since the same process happens in the brain, albeit much more slowly. It therefore cannot be that the player mentally represents the rotation of the block *as* it is rotated on the screen, but rather that the player substitutes environmental manipulation and visual perception for intra-cranial representation.

<sup>4</sup> This is the subject of Clark and Chalmers' famous "Otto's Notebook" example in which Otto, who suffers from Alzheimer's, uses a notebook-based memory system to inform his beliefs in similar ways to how Inga uses her brain-based memory system. The claim here is that Otto's notebook is an example of extended memory or beliefs and therefore indicates the presence of an extended mind as well.

Tetris, basic memory tasks, and even belief formation in some cases) it appears that the mind is at least partially constituted by one's environment.

Granting that the mind is extended offers a number of theoretical benefits over Cartesian theories, but EMC specifically takes up the concept of mind-as-process as relevant to cases of musical engagement. However, Clark and Chalmers do not provide a sustained argument to prove that the mind is better understood as a process than an object. Rather, this claim is grounded by a kind of Occam's Razor applied to competing accounts of the mind and cognition. Although it may be hypothetically possible to reconcile a Cartesian view of the mind with embodied or embedded cognitive theories (that take mental activities to reside in the brain, even if they are influenced by an agent's environment), this project would face serious problems applied to the case of active externalism we find in extended and enactive theories. Specifically extended and enactive mind are usually committed to the multiple realizability of mental states, such that mental process can be instantiated in both neural *and* non-neural systems (i.e., by the brain *and* the environment). Even neo-Cartesian cognitive theories that reject substance dualism still understand the mind as an object, rather than as a substrate-independent process as 4E cognition recommends. What a strange metaphysical object Otto's mind would have to be if it included both grey matter *and* a notebook indicating where to find MoMA (or any number of other physical, non-neural objects). Instead, the extended mind hypothesis adopts a view of the mind as a process, one that can be instantiated by a variety of physical substrates. The extended/enactive hypotheses attempt to demystify the mind, so to speak, and explain how it is that a mind might be comprised of paper, ink, *and* neurons as active and causally efficacious constitutive components. A mind just is, according to the extended mind hypothesis, the processes which constitute mental activity.

Enactivism takes these contributions from the extended mind hypothesis a step further, suggesting that cognition is fundamentally an active process which relies on sensorimotor contingencies to facilitate conscious experience and an agent's engagement with their environment. Accounting for conscious experience proves difficult for anti-Cartesian theories of cognition since the mind is no longer considered an object *in* which consciousness occurs, ready to "take in" sensory information. Still, conscious experience self-evidently exists (Hello there, reader!), so how are we to account for it without recourse to consciousness as a feature of mental substance? Degenaar and O'Regan, committed enactivists, suggest that sensorimotor contingencies may offer an answer. Sensorimotor contingencies are identified "as the regularities in how sensory stimulation depends on the activity of the perceiver" (2015). A different way to say this would be that sensorimotor contingencies are the "structure of the rules governing the sensory changes produced by various motor actions" (O'Regan and Noë 2001, 941). In a limited sense, sensorimotor contingencies are an uncontroversial part of cognition. It is apparent that human beings exercise sensorimotor contingencies on an ongoing basis to interact properly with the world. Driving a car, for example, depends on the operation of sensorimotor contingencies such that when something goes wrong our brain might have a difficult time processing the "new" rules through which we control our environment. Certain patterns of motor functioning and the feedback that they produce are necessary for our perception of the world to be available to us. In fact, it often is not until something has gone wrong that we recognize the role that sensorimotor contingencies play in our perception of the world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As an example: after driving a manual transmission car for some time I found that the first thing I did when sitting behind the wheel of an automatic was slam my foot into the dead pedal, expecting to feel the clutch, while I turned the key. The car, in this analogy, represents our perceptual systems and the driver

In a robust sense, and importantly for work on EMC, sensorimotor contingencies explain how it is that we engage with the world around us *without* relying on internal representation. In fact, according to some enactivists, there may not be anything *in* which to generate a representation! Sensorimotor contingencies, then, offer theorists a way of explaining perception that remains compatible with active externalism and the extended mind hypothesis. O'Regan and Noë (2001) offer a sensorimotor account of vision and visual consciousness, but their claims apply to most perceptual modes. The standard view suggests that visual perception occurs when a subject receives information supplied by their ocular system and represents this picture of the world in their mind. The mind (understood as an object on this view) is responsible for processing this visual information and supplying the agent with a directly available, representational picture of the world (a picture of the world in the “mind’s eye”). However, the extended mind hypothesis that most EMC theorists accept has a difficult time accounting for this standard view of visual perception. If the mind is an extended process, it makes little sense to claim that the world is represented in “mind’s eye” at all. Rejecting the mind-as-object view, O'Regan and Noë instead suggest that “vision is actually *constituted* by a mode of exploring the environment” (2001, 946). Vision is not, on this account, a way of taking information from the world and reconstructing a picture of the external world within the mind. Rather, vision is the sum of those processes of active exploration by which the ocular system engages with the world. “The outside world,” in this way, acts “as an extended memory that can be probed at will by the sensory apparatus” (2001, 946). O'Regan and Noë suggest that internal representation is unnecessary and would be

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represents our brain trying to make sense of the rules by which it interacts with the environment. Sensorimotor contingencies are those patterns we *expect* to obtain when we actively engage a specific mode of perception. When those patterns fail us (because, for example, something about our bodies or the world around us has changed) we suddenly become aware of that engagement in ways we were not before.

a redundant waste of neurological resources. Applied to the case of auditory perception, if one does not need to internally represent the sounds of their environment, then auditory perception can be considered as *constituted* by a mode of environmental exploration specific to hearing as a perceptual mode. EMC theorists, then, have access to both the mind-as-process model and a sensorimotor account of perception such that an object-mind is unnecessary for auditory perception. With this basic understanding of the extended mind thesis and the importance of sensorimotor contingencies for auditory perception, we can return to a direct discussion of EMC.

### **The EMC Hypothesis & Musical Definitions**

Extended musical cognition, as a field, takes these contributions from the extended mind hypothesis and enactivism as integral to an explanation of musical engagement. We are in a better position, now, to understand what it means to say that “sensorimotor engagement is essential to both [the] production and perception of music” (Matyja 2016, 1). Matyja means that engaging with the world according to certain patterns of perceptual exploration (sensorimotor contingencies) is essential to the processes by which we produce and perceive music. For the committed enactivist or proponents of the extended mind framework, this could appear trivial—according to these theories sensorimotor engagement is essential to *any* human activity, so we expect that *some* kind of sensorimotor engagement is essential to each category of activity. Experiencing music either as a performer or listener relies on the use of specific sensorimotor contingencies to guide the kinds of actions involved. However, the EMC hypothesis suggests that “embodiment is a necessary concept for understanding music perception” (Leman and Maes 2014, 242). In other words, understanding musical perception (or musical engagement generally) requires an understanding of embodiment; there can be no musical engagement without embodiment because music is a necessarily embodied activity. For the purposes of constructing a

novel account of music, it will be helpful to consider the concepts of music at work in EMC research because whatever understanding of music supports these projects should address music in its embodied, multilateral context.

There is, of course, a crucial distinction between the kind of work that exists under the EMC umbrella and definitions of music in the usual sense. While definitional projects aim to identify all and only instances of music that exist, EMC philosophers are primarily concerned with accounting for embodiment in musical *engagement* and are usually unconcerned with providing the same kind of fine-grained definition as traditional philosophy of music. Different research goals mean that, despite a significant amount of overlap between the two fields, interpreting a “definition” of music from EMC projects is often a matter of reading between the lines. Still, *some* account of music must be at work in any satisfying account of musical engagement, if only to differentiate music from other aesthetic activities.<sup>6</sup> There appear to be three types of musical accounts available to ground EMC research: theorists could (1) adapt traditional definitions of music into an extended context, (2) rely on a minimal “common sense” approach to musical identification, or (3) construct a thoroughly extended definition of music. While I argue that none of these strategies have been successful in providing theorists a sufficiently embodied account of music, an understanding of music in EMC context will be

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<sup>6</sup> The risk here is relatively minimal, but important to mitigate, especially in the case of music-involved aesthetic projects that are not themselves musical. It seems implausible that a researcher may identify visual perception as necessary for musical engagement but musicals, scored films, ballet, and opera all work *with* musical elements as components of aesthetic works such that separating the musical from non-musical engagement may be impossible. At the very least, a minimal understanding of music is required just to ensure that researchers are all talking about the same aesthetic medium, and not confusing a distinction between properly musical works and works that demonstrate musical features.



essential to constructing the novel, embodied (multilateral) account of music I call the Intercorporeal Account.

### **Traditional Definitions Adapted?**

Merely borrowing an orthodox definition appears to be the simplest option available to EMC theorists, but this strategy is exceedingly rare (at least as an explicit endorsement of a unilateral definition). Adopting these definitions to support EMC research is undesirable for pragmatic and theory-driven concerns. Pragmatically, we have discussed the rarity of intrinsic, subjective, or intentional definitions as standalone accounts. Almost no definitions exist which belong *entirely* to any one of these strategies and the complexity of contemporary definitions can make them difficult to adapt for use in an EMC project. This complexity is partially due to the ways traditional definitions attempt to accommodate difficult counterexamples. For example, Kania's definition: music is "(1) any event intentionally produced or organized (2) to be heard, and (3) *either* (a) to have some basic musical feature, such as pitch or rhythm, *or* (b) to be listened to for such features" (2011b, 12). Kania initially relies on a kind of sonicism to identify music as a subset of sound events—intentionally produced sound events that demonstrate basic musical features, like pitch or rhythm, count as music. However, to address counterexamples that would otherwise prove damning to his theory, Kania includes an intentional component in his definition. Music, he claims, is not just *any* sound event that demonstrates basic musical features, but also includes any sound event that is intended to be listened to for the sake of those features (even in their absence).

For EMC theorists, the intrinsic component of Kania's definition is clear and helpful. If music just is any sound event that demonstrates basic musical features, then explaining embodied musical engagement becomes a project of explaining embodied engagement with works that

demonstrate some or all of those features. The problem is that Kania's definition also includes sound events that are listened to *for the sake of* musical features. Kania's definition includes works like 4'33" as music despite their lack of recognizable "basic musical features." This intentional component of the definition goes a long way toward making it inclusive of alternative or non-hegemonic musical practices but ultimately makes it unhelpful for an EMC project. If *music* lacks any necessary shared features, how are EMC theorists to identify embodied musical engagement? The worry is that it will be impossible to identify embodied musical engagement because music itself is not unified by any specific features. One's embodied engagement with works that *do* include rhythmic or melodic features will likely be quite different from one's embodied engagement with works that lack these features altogether.<sup>7</sup>

Although, as I have argued, EMC theories are often unconcerned with precisely the places where orthodox definitions fall short, it is also true that many of these definitions *are* aimed at accounting for exactly those tricky cases. In our example, Kania's attempt to account for pieces like 4'33" as musical (despite a lack of basic musical features), makes his definition less desirable for EMC theorists. This worry pertains to the vast majority of contemporary, traditional definitions because most of them involve components of definitional strategies, and many are modified in direct response to difficult counterexamples. Definitions that, with the best intentions, address counterexamples can often be hard for EMC theorists to use for precisely this reason—traditional definitions often explicitly aim to accommodate atypical musical examples. The more atypical cases of music that orthodox definitions accommodate the more types of

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<sup>7</sup> What kinds of embodied musical engagement pertain to sound events *with* basic musical features, and what kinds of embodied musical engagement pertain to those events *without* those features? Is there any overlap?

embodied engagement an EMC theory must address. The rarity of single-strategy definitions of music means that EMC theorists have few well-defended, simple to incorporate options when picking an account of music. This is a pragmatic concern since it speaks to the ways that few pre-existing traditional definitions of music are constructed in EMC-compatible ways. There are also theoretical issues with adopting an orthodox definition of music in an EMC project *even if* those definitions are re-constructed according to a singular strategy.

Theoretically, the wholesale adoption of a traditional definition of music in EMC projects is rare due to an incompatibility between orthodox and EMC approaches to music and musical engagement. A purely intrinsic, subjective, or intentional account would be undesirable for EMC theorists both because there are field-specific reasons to reject each of these definitions individually, and because these types of unilateral definitions are generally incompatible with broader EMC commitments. In addition to being unilateral, orthodox definitions are typically *disembodied* and it is precisely this lack of embodiment that is incompatible with the EMC hypothesis.

### ***Intrinsic Definitions***

Intrinsic definitions rely on disassociating music from the human and embodied practices that make musical performance and perception possible. While this approach may be useful in other contexts, this disembodied identification of music is, by definition, incompatible with EMC projects. For example, some types of intrinsic definitions, especially when coupled with strong Platonic ontological commitments, imply that all musical works exist eternally, regardless of their

instantiation (Giombini 2017).<sup>8</sup> This belief, that musical works exist as a matter of eternal fact, follows from the claim that the particular components of musical works are discovered, rather than created. Kivy (1983) offers this argument using Wagner’s famous “Tristan chord” as his example. The chord stands out in the opening of Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, but the chord itself is not unique.<sup>9</sup> What makes the chord special is its relation to the preceding notes (Tristan’s leitmotif) which do not establish a tonal center for the piece, making a traditional functional analysis of the chord nearly impossible. Additionally, as an enharmonic equivalent (i.e., musically respelled) half-diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord, the specific voicing of the chord is difficult to account for.<sup>10</sup> A traditional explanation of the “Tristan chord” claims that Wagner’s composition of the passage is a paradigmatic example of musical composition—because no previous composition used the same atonal introduction for this specific voicing of the chord tones, Wagner is said to have *created* this passage. However, Kivy argues that the unique passage does not imply that Wagner created anything. Instead, he argues that Wagner’s use of the chord is an instance of musical *discovery*. Because the mathematical relationships between the notes of the “Tristan chord” (and between

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<sup>8</sup> Giombini suggests that there are two types of Platonist ontologies of music. Weak Platonism claims that musical works are abstract entities but can be created by human intervention. Musical works, on this account, are *created* abstract entities. Strong Platonism, by contrast, holds that abstract entities cannot be created, and that musical works are no exception. Musical works, on this account, are *eternally existent* abstract entities.

<sup>9</sup> In fact, the chord appears in works by Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven long before Wagner composed the opera in question.

<sup>10</sup> Although, as a matter of minor curiosity, there have been a surprising number of different (often incompatible) interpretations of the chord that support its status as truly innovative. The chord is not *technically* a part of the functional harmony Wagner sets up in the opening passages of *Tristan und Isolde* because it lacks notes necessary to function as a pre-dominant chord. The chord has been said to function as a strange version of a traditional minor 7<sup>th</sup> chord, as a “French augmented 6<sup>th</sup>” chord, or even as a secondary dominant (V/V) chord (Nattiez 1990). The possible interpretations all depend on different methods of understanding the resolution of its dissonance into the more traditional dominant chord that follows.

the chord and the preceding notes) existed before *Tristan und Isolde*, Kivy claims that the chord must have existed prior to its use in Wagner's opera. If the mathematical relationships between the notes of the chord existed prior to Wagner's discovery of them, then the relationship between the preceding leitmotif and the chord were also discovered, and so on until the whole of the opera is accounted for as a discovery. While this argument is especially compelling in the case of *Tristan und Isolde* (due to the "unique" character of the chord and the overt reliance of this type of music on mathematical relationships) it extends to nearly any musical work. EMC frameworks are incompatible with this account of music because it implies that all musical embodiment is trivial.<sup>11</sup> Musical works, on Kivy's analysis, exist independently of their discovery and only require human embodiment for their performance. In other words, there is nothing about music that requires embodied engagement because musical works are not produced by humans.

While not every intrinsic (or even Platonic) account of music holds that musical works exist eternally as a set of mathematical relationships, the larger implications of the position demonstrate an incompatibility between EMC frameworks and intrinsic accounts of music. In extreme cases, as Kivy's argument illustrates, intrinsic accounts imply that musical works have *nothing* to do with human engagement, embodied or not! Less extreme versions of intrinsic definitions are still difficult to square with EMC theory. Music or musical works, according to

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<sup>11</sup> By this, I mean that the account does not address *musical* embodiment as separate from the embodiment required for other behaviors. Kivy's claim (and less extreme versions of it) is *not* that embodiment is irrelevant to an understanding of musical performance or reception, but that the types of embodiment involved are not properly musical. Wagner must have, even Kivy would admit, picked up a pencil or pen and activated certain sensorimotor contingencies to write down the "Tristan chord" and audiences must have activated certain SMCs to hear the music as music. The claim, instead, is that the types of embodiment involved in musical engagement are not *musical*, there is no specific type of "composing embodiment" or "musical listening" distinct from general writing and listening behaviors. These types of embodiment leave open the possibility that musical works exist as static objects independent from humans (meaning, even if no humans had ever existed, Kivy claims the Tristan Chord would have).

intrinsic accounts, can (and, potentially, *should*) be identified without an account of musical embodiment. Even granting that some amount of embodiment is necessary for the instantiation of musical works (writing down a score or playing an instrument, for example) it is possible that musical works exist without this embodied engagement (if an artificial intelligence “composes” a score that demonstrates basic musical features, it likely counts as music on most intrinsic accounts). The issue for EMC projects, perhaps self-evidently, is that they are committed to the idea “that embodied sensorimotor engagement is essential to both [the] production and perception of music” (Matyja 2016, 1). EMC projects proceed from the claim that *all* instances of music involve certain embodied sensorimotor contingencies. Because intrinsic definitions allow for the possibility that music exists in the absence of this type of embodiment, these definitions are undesirable for and incompatible with EMC theory.

This incompatibility between intrinsic definitions and EMC theory stems from a larger incompatibility between the concepts of music at work in each field. Intrinsic definitions disassociate musical works from their production or reception in ways that treat these works as objects. We can meaningfully talk about *playing* music, *practicing* music, or *listening* to music (all of which involve embodied engagement at some level) but the “music” that intrinsic accounts identify is found in musical works (independent from the humans that compose or discover them). Intrinsic theorists would claim that Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* is an example of music, called a musical work, and that it can be identified as such without reference to the active, embodied engagement listeners and performers demonstrate. However, EMC theory claims that embodied engagement is a constitutive component of music analogously to how 4E cognition claims that embodied engagement with one’s environment constitutes the mind. 4E philosophers reject an understanding of the mind as a disembodied “thing” and instead claim that the mind is

a collection of cognitive processes which are necessary embodied, embedded, extended, or enacted. There is, for the 4E theory EMC rests on, no such thing as a disembodied mind, no ‘brain-in-a-vat’ skeptical situation.<sup>12</sup> In a similar sense, there is no such thing as a disembodied musical work for EMC theory. Since EMC theory is committed to embodiment as a necessary component of musical engagement, wherever one finds music, one must also find embodiment.<sup>13</sup> There is nothing, and cannot be anything, that identifies music devoid of embodiment. In this way, intrinsic definitions are incompatible with EMC theory since the goal of these definitions is to identify music *without* direct reference to the embodied engagement it requires.

### ***Subjective Definitions***

While intrinsic accounts are incompatible with EMC theory due to the disembodied, static concept of music they presuppose, subjective definitions do not necessarily share this commitment against musical embodiment. However, subjective definitions are also inherently ill-suited to adaptation into EMC theories precisely because they are wholly subjective in nature. Subjective accounts are incompatible with the kind of externalism, and by extension

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<sup>12</sup> For three reasons, EMC theorists must reject the brain-in-a-vat scenario and other skeptical situations by extension of the 4E theories that the field takes for granted. First, because 4E theories investigate claims of embodied, extended, embedded, or enactive cognition, it is *prima facie* incompatible with skeptical situations such as brains in vats. Since the brain in question is necessarily disembodied for it to count as a skeptical scenario, it is incompatible with the assumptions made in 4E philosophy. Second, because 4E philosophy and extended mind theses in particular assume a kind of externalism with regard to mental content, the brain-in-a-vat skeptical situation is impossible since the premise of the skeptical situation requires an internalist view of mental content (i.e., that the hallucinations of the brain are indistinguishable from veridical experience because both are internal to the brain/mind). Third, brain-in-a-vat scenarios are founded on the assumption that the brain and mind are identical, or at least co-extensive. 4E philosophy, as a matter of definition, rejects this claim (McKinsey 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Unless, of course, we commit ourselves to the very strange idea that musical works have nothing to do with humans. The claim here is that EMC demands embodiment as a component of *every* instance of music since music is something humans *do* and not the kind of thing that exists independent of human involvement (e.g., music is more like language than lithium: language is something humans *use* and *do* on a 4E account, whereas natural kinds like elements exist even in the absence of human engagement).

disjunctivism, that most 4E theorists are committed to.<sup>14</sup> If music just is whatever can be (or is currently being) perceived as music, EMC theorists must reject these definitions on the basis of their extended mind or enactivist commitments.

The incompatibility of EMC philosophy and subjective approaches to defining music rests on what I have called the intra-methodological critique of subjectivism: a definition should allow that listeners may be wrong about their perception of music, but subjectivism cannot draw a metaphysical distinction between works which are misperceived and works that are perceived accurately. Misperceiving a musical work as nonmusical (or *vice versa*) is an impossibility on subjective accounts due to the way that listener perception determines the metaphysical status of the work. Since definitions should provide non-question-begging answers, the inability to distinguish between proper and improper perception is a disadvantage of subjective accounts. Kania illustrates this issue, claiming that when one misperceives an obviously musical work as nonmusical “the subjectivist may say that this performance is not music for this listener, though it may be for other listeners. This seems wrong. This listener is simply mistaken about what he hears, as much as if he denied that the *Mona Lisa* is a painting” (2011b, 6). In other words, the

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<sup>14</sup> There are a variety of externalist positions that support 4E philosophy in its various flavors. We might call content externalism an example of *weak* externalism: the view that mental content exists outside the brain/body, or that at the very least mental states link up with content in the world (i.e., outside the Cartesian mind) whenever our mental states are intentional. Content externalism alone might be enough to disqualify subjective definitions since they imply that whatever we decide *in our mind* causes an ontological change in the world (whenever we decide, for example, that the sounds we hear are *music* and not mere noise). An externalist framework relies on there being something *about the sounds* that causes their perception as musical or not. Alternatively, we might subscribe to something like the *strong* externalism that supports the extended mind thesis: this strong version of externalism builds on content externalism and adds that these features of the world directly bear mental content (i.e., that the world is *part* of our mental content such that accurate perception is not subjective, but intersubjectively adjudicated and directly reliant on certain brute facts about the perceived entities). In this section, the distinction between these two types of mental externalism is relatively trivial, since either one suggests that perception is directly linked to entities in the world, and not a matter of purely subjective or cartesian perception (Rowlands, Lau, and Deutsch 2020).



intra-methodological critique is that subjective accounts cannot differentiate between what we might call veridical and nonveridical perceptions of music, and in fact deny that such a distinction exists at all. When a listener hears a work *as* musical it must *be* musical, even if only for that specific listener (and *vice versa* in the case of perceiving a work as nonmusical). No listener, according to musical subjectivists, can be mistaken about what they have perceived.

For EMC theorists, the possibility that one might misperceive a nonmusical work as musical (or *vice versa*) is analogous to the possibility of hallucinations. A hallucination is a nonveridical experience that a subject nonetheless believes is veridical. Distinguishing between visual hallucinations and veridical experience, then, is like distinguishing between misperception and veridical perception in the case of music.<sup>15</sup> That this is a possibility (distinguishing between veridical and nonveridical perception) is the central claim of disjunctivism, the view that “the structure of veridical experience is different from that of at least some kinds of non-veridical experience” (Logue 2018, 214). Foundationally, disjunctivism claims that hallucinations and veridical experience are not the same kinds of experiences; there must be *something* which distinguishes each from the other.

Logue suggests that the difference between hallucinations and veridical perception might be phenomenological partially because 4E theories typically “attribute the bulk of the contribution [of the phenomenal character of experience] to the objects of experience” (2018, 217). Logue explains that the phenomenal character of an experience (for example, my phenomenal experience of yellowness when I see a yellow bird outside my window) is due to the

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<sup>15</sup> While this argument against the EMC adoption of subjective definitions relies on an analogy between listener misperception of musical works and visual hallucinations, the argument could be made more direct by addressing cases of auditory hallucination in musical context like the ones Sacks (2008) describes.

object of perception (due, in this example, to the fact that the bird *is* yellow, and that the yellowness activates certain sensorimotor contingencies corresponding to the perception of that color). If the objects of experience themselves are responsible for the phenomenal character of an experience, then “according to the Extended View [4E theories], a veridical experience and its subjectively indiscriminable non-veridical counterparts are *not* phenomenally identical” (Logue 2018, 223). A phenomenal difference between experiences that ‘link up’ with the world and those that do not supports Logue’s claim that veridical perception and hallucinations, respectively, are not similar in kind. However, even if the phenomenal character of experiences is not what distinguishes veridical perception from hallucination, 4E theorists are committed to a difference between the two. This difference, for 4E theorists, is always due to what we can call the ‘world-connectedness’ of perceptual experience such that veridical perception involves active externalism of the kind required for the extended mind, and hallucinations do not. The one kind of experience (a hallucination) does not involve active external components by definition, whereas the other kind (veridical perception) must.

Because 4E theory requires disjunctivist commitments, EMC theory must reject subjective approaches to defining music. A hallucination is analogous to a subject’s misperception of an obviously musical work as nonmusical (or *vice versa*) because both cases involve a failure of perception and the subjective experience that this *misperception* is in fact veridical. Subjectivists, however, must claim that there is no difference between veridical and nonveridical experience in the case of music. For subjectivists, all instances of musical perception are cases of veridical perception because listener perception determines the metaphysical status of the work—if one perceives the work *as* music, it *is* music, completely independent of any features of the work in question. The impossibility that one is mistaken about what they perceive is a problem for

subjectivist accounts of music on EMC grounds. There must be, in an EMC account, *something* to distinguish veridical perception from hallucinatory, mistaken, or inaccurate perception. Because extended mind and enactive theorists are committed to a disjunctivist account of hallucinatory and veridical experiences, EMC projects must reject the subjectivist approach that collapses this distinction in the case of music. These issues of compatibility with 4E cognition, coupled with the previously discussed meta-methodological concerns raised against subjective definitions, mean that these accounts are both undesirable for, and incompatible with EMC theory.

### ***Intentional Definitions***

Finally, intentional definitions may gain more traction in EMC theory due to their reliance on specific kinds of composer or performer engagement to determine the musical status of a work. Intentional accounts claim that works count as music due to “the music-making intentions of the people ultimately responsible for those sounds” (Kania 2011b, 6). Intentional definitions identify all and only those works produced with “music-making intentions” as music. At least on the surface, intentional accounts of music appear compatible with broader EMC commitments. An embodied account of intentionality, for example, could support an account of the essential embodiment that EMC theorists claim musical engagement requires. If all works of music involve “music-making intentions” on the part of the musician/composer and intentionality is itself embodied and extended, then all music involves embodied, extended engagement (at least in its production).<sup>16</sup> However, this *prima facie* compatibility between extended accounts of intentionality and EMC studies does not hold up in practice.

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<sup>16</sup> Mark Rowlands provides just such an account of intentionality: if, as he claims, “intentionality is a revealing activity,” then “*Cognition* [...] is a specific form of intentional activity” (2011, 86). With preexisting commitments to the embodied extension of cognition, Rowlands’ claim that cognition is a type

The problem for EMC theorists is that an extended account of intentionality does not address the core issues with this definitional strategy. Music, on this account, is produced whenever and wherever music-making intentions are found, but these accounts face a dilemma in determining which specific intentions count as “music-making”: either any “music-making” intention is sufficient to produce music (and these definitions become highly subjective), or certain criteria restrict which intentions can and cannot produce musical works (and these definitions become highly intrinsic). The dilemma, as it appeared for the unilateral intentional definition, suggested that people (musicians and composers included) are often mistaken about the connection between their intentions and the world (if *any* intention is sufficient, there may be no standards by which to differentiate successful from unsuccessful musical intentions). In an EMC context, this worry is mitigated by the ways that intentions are taken to be extended, and

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of intentional activity implies that at least some intentional activities demonstrate this embodied extension. Further, Rowlands analysis of intentionality is far from unique among 4E theorists, and others, including Epstein (2019), Jordan (2003), and Lethin (2002), share the view that, in *some* sense, intentionality is extended. Views like this provide a potential path to demonstrating a deeper compatibility between intentional theories and EMC studies, although demonstrating that music-making intentions are extended would require further discussion. (Specifically, it would be necessary to either demonstrate that either all intentional states are extended, or that musical intentions belong to the category of extended intentions.)

An extended account of intention could make some headway against the standard critiques of intentional definitions insofar as these accounts move intentionality into intersubjective space. The standard view of intentionality claims that one’s intentions are ‘in the head’ in ways that are incompatible with 4E theories. Even traditional externalist accounts of intention claim that one’s intentions belong to a cartesian-style mind; intentions are said to depend on features of an agent’s environment (what they are *about*) but are not understood as *constituted* by the environment in the ways that 4E theories claim (Rowlands, Lau, & Deutsch 2020). By contrast, a properly extended account of intentionality recognizes the ways that an agent’s environment is at least partially responsible for their intentional states (Rowlands 2011). This implies a difference between intentional states that properly ‘link up’ with the environment, and those that do not. Because the environment is a constitutive part of an agent’s extended intentional activities, traditional worries about mistaken intentions in the case of music are mitigated. When an agent’s intentions do not properly “link up” with the environment, we can simply say that these intentions are mistaken (or unhappy?) in ways that traditional intentional theories struggle to accommodate.

therefore require specific kinds of engagement with the agent's environment.<sup>17</sup> Instead, for EMC theorists, the dilemma is that without certain restrictions, almost any intention can count as a "music-making" intention, but even minimal restrictions end up carrying the philosophic weight of the definition in largely intrinsic ways. In other words, the EMC critique claims that intentional definitions merely shift the philosophic burden of defining music from musical works to musical intentions without contributing a meaningful account of either.

The first possibility is that intentional definitions do not restrict what counts as a "music-making intention" either in relation to the criteria that define these intentions or the works they are involved in producing. Previous critique of subjective accounts focused on the issues associated with claiming that any music-making intention is sufficient to produce music as a problem in light of the kinds of works produced by musical intentions. For example, if any music-making intention is sufficient to produce music, then we may be forced to say that a child's attempt at producing a rhythm by banging on pots and pans counts as *music* properly speaking, since the child clearly intends to make music. The problem, in these instances, is that there is no guarantee that the child's intentions are successful. The child's coordination may be too underdeveloped to produce a rhythm, or they may (as many parents might wish) not produce any

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<sup>17</sup> Returning to a humorous example, we might not be worried about an intention to make chocolate chip cookies that does not involve the use of chocolate chips according to 4E frameworks. These kinds of intentions can be called unsuccessful in that the intention to make chocolate chip cookies is in some part constituted by engagement with chocolate chips. Without this embodied, extended engagement the intention fails in that it does not 'link up' with the world properly. Cartesian accounts of this problem might say that the intention was properly formed (in the mind) but features of the material world caused the actions it produced to fail. The 4E account claims that if the proper features of the environment were not present (or engaged with in the proper ways) the intention itself is unsuccessful, not merely its execution. This mitigates worries about failed intentions nonetheless producing music by virtue of a composer/musician merely *having* the intentional state in the absence of the material necessary to act on it.

sounds at all despite their best efforts. It is possible that a musician's (or child's) best musical intentions do not properly match up with the world in ways that produce music.

Setting aside the issue of unsuccessful intentions helps illustrate the way in which unrestricted intentional definitions merely shift focus from musical works themselves to the musical intentions that produce them. Granting that only successful "music-making" intentions produce musical works mitigates our previous worry about poorly formed, or otherwise unsuccessful, intentions. Accounts that accept an extended view of intentions, for example, are able to describe unsuccessful intentions as those that do not properly engage with the agent's environment (as in the case of a child intending to "play the drums" but failing to actually produce any sound due to a lack of coordination). However, saying that "music-making" intentions must be successful to produce musical works does not help identify precisely what distinguishes "music-making" intentions as opposed to other artistic or non-artistic intentions. Unrestricted intentional definitions leave open the possibility that almost any intention *could* count as musical and are therefore incapable of properly explaining the difference between musical and nonmusical intentions.

Without criteria to judge these intentions, we may be forced to rely on self-identification to determine which intentions (or intentionally produced works) are properly musical. In these cases, it appears that intentional accounts devolve into subjective accounts at the level of intentions. Because musical works and works produced with musical intentions just are the same category according to these accounts, defining music is a matter of identifying what constitutes a music-making intention. The EMC critique claims that without some guidance concerning what constitutes a music-making intention *any* intention could count as musical. This complete subjectivity is undesirable in the case of subjective definitions because they imply that listeners

cannot be wrong about what they hear. Similarly, these unrestricted intentional definitions could imply that a producer is never wrong about what they intend. In this case, the worry is not that an intention will fail to produce a musical work due to a disconnect between one's intentions and the environment (as it was in the orthodox context), but that it might be the wrong kind of intention altogether. To mitigate this worry, some intentional definitions introduce criteria to restrict what kinds of products or intentions count as musical.

The second possibility is that intentional definitions might restrict the type of intentions which properly count as “music-making” in the first place.<sup>18</sup> Traditional restricted intentional accounts claimed that “music-making intentions” were successful when they produced works involving “musical features” and thereby reproduced intrinsic definitions with an intentional component. When a work fails to demonstrate musical features, it cannot be music regardless of the claimed productive intent. For traditional intentional definitions these restrictions helped mitigate worries about unsuccessful or misguided intentions. EMC theory is less concerned with the possibility of failed intentions, and more concerned about the possibility that successful intentions might not be the right kind to produce musical works at all.

For an illustration of restricted intentional definitions of music, we can return to Kania. He claims that music is “(1) any event intentionally produced or organized (2) to be heard, and (3) *either* (a) to have some basic musical feature, such as pitch or rhythm, *or* (b) to be listened to for such features” (2011b, 12). One way of understanding this definition is as a type of restricted intentional account. Kania's claim that all musical works must be “intentionally produced or

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<sup>18</sup> In an EMC context, the distinction between intentions and products here collapses slightly, if one's intentions are properly extended, the product is partially constitutive of the intention and *vice versa*. For these reasons, an EMC critique of restricted intentional definitions is largely the same as the orthodox critique, the primary difference is a reduced emphasis on the types of works produced.

organized” means that all performed or composed works must involve certain intentions to count as musical. Understood as a restricted intentional account, Kania’s definition makes no claims about what the *works themselves* must demonstrate. Rather, he claims that performers or composers must *intend* the work to demonstrate those features or must *intend* for audiences to listen to the piece for the sake of those features, regardless of whether the work demonstrates those features. In this way, Kania’s definition provides criteria to identify musical intentions as those intentions involved in producing an audible work which demonstrates (or can be listened to for) basic musical features. The problem is that “basic musical features” appear to carry the philosophic weight of this account. Kania’s definition is, in this way, a reframed (re-voiced) intrinsic account in which the work *as it is intended* (rather than as it is instantiated or actualized) includes or can be listened to for the sake of “basic musical features” to count as music. Broadly speaking, restricted intentional accounts of this kind merely move intrinsic accounts from the level of works to the level of intention. Again, this may appear promising for EMC since restricted intentional accounts require embodiment insofar as intentionality requires embodiment. However, standard critiques of intrinsic accounts (that they are overly inclusive or overly restrictive) still apply to even EMC interpretations. For example, Kania’s definition leaves open the possibility that tap dance is considered music along with beat poetry, conversations in tonal languages, and any other sound that is intended to include (or listened to for) pitch *or* rhythm. On the other hand, his definition might close off the possibility that “4’33” or other avant-garde works count as music because the composer may not have intended for audiences to listen for pitch and rhythm in the



composition.<sup>19</sup> Merely identifying intrinsically musical features as part of music-making intentions rather than musical works directly does not fundamentally change the structure of these accounts. At risk of sounding reductive, the reasons one should avoid restricted intentional accounts are not unique to EMC theory; the fact that these accounts become intrinsic definitions makes them inaccurate *even if* they are properly embodied in ways that traditional intrinsic accounts are not. The embodiment of musical production does not mitigate worries concerning the circumscription of “basic musical” features either at the level of works or productive intent.

Restricted intentional definitions, then, face the same issues in an EMC context as they did in their unilateral, disembodied context. Any attempt at identifying objective features to differentiate the musical from the non-musical only serves to illustrate a socio-historically specific view of musicality. Historical and cultural variability means that defining music by reference to a set of necessary and sufficient “musical features” is a difficult, if not impossible, project. As a matter of retrospective accuracy, it seems nearly impossible to identify any “basic musical feature” which unites all instances of music across cultures and throughout history, and the issue compounds exponentially as theorist attempt to construct intrinsic definitions that will remain relevant in the face of musical innovation. For these reasons, EMC theorists cannot take on board either a subjective *unrestricted* intentional definition, or an intrinsic-type restricted intentional definition.

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<sup>19</sup> Interesting for this example, the Encyclopedia Britannica includes an uncited quote attributed to Cage in which the author claims that *4'33*” was intended to be ambient sound, which Cage called “the absence of intended sounds.” If this is true, and according to Kania’s definition, *4'33*” is definitively *not* music.

### ***Unilateral Definitions***

Traditional, unilateral definitions of music treat musical works as disembodied objects in ways that conflict with the central project of EMC studies. EMC is grounded in the claim that “sensorimotor engagement is essential to both [the] production and perception of music” (Matyja 2016, 1). Given that this sensorimotor engagement is a feature of embodied consciousness, *disembodied* definitions of music are *prima facie* incompatible with EMC projects. It might be tempting to embody these definitions through the application of EMC principles, but this *ex post facto* embodiment does not address the reason why traditional definitions provide disembodied accounts of music in the first place: where traditional definitions are concerned with what music *is*, EMC concerns what music *does*.

Traditional definitions are primarily aimed at identifying what music *is* in a way that assumes music is (or at least musical works are) static and independent from human embodiment (even if some embodiment is necessary to instantiate musical works). According to this traditional approach, defining music is a matter of identifying objects in the world, and the category to which they belong. What makes one definition desirable over another, in fact, is how accurately theorists believe the definition has captured the full complement of musical works that exist. The EMC thesis, by contrast, suggests that music is involved in *activity* and cannot be identified without reference to its embodiment and performance. The difference can be illustrated by the general answers each field gives to the question: What is music? Traditional definitions answer that music, as a category, is a collection of works properly identified by reference to necessary and sufficient conditions. EMC philosophy answers that music is part of embodied human activity, activities that involve certain sensorimotor contingencies (SMCs) and cannot be understood separate from this embodiment. In other words, orthodox definitions of music are

aimed at identifying music by determining what it *is* and assume that the category “music” contains objects called “musical works.” EMC theories address music in its functional capacity, as what it *does*, and assume that paradigmatic examples of “music” are found in “musical performances.” However, given that traditional definitions are typically insufficient to ground EMC philosophy, it would seem that scholars in the field are set theoretically adrift. In the sections that follow, I sketch out a few of the potential paths forward for EMC definitions of music and discuss whether and how alternative strategies are sufficient for the larger EMC project of identifying and examining embodied musical engagement.

### **Alternative Paths Toward EMC Definitions**

Because traditional definitions of music proved incompatible with EMC theory, scholars are left to fend for themselves in a complicated and often vaguely defined theoretical landscape. Retracing the familiar ground of orthodox definitions proved impossible for committed EMC theorists who, instead, find themselves in metaphorically unmarked territory, asked to sketch out the rough contours of their surroundings. In this orienteering-themed allegory, EMC theorists have two potential paths ahead of them: first, theorists can rely on intuition and common-sense, identifying music only specifically enough for their project; second, theorists could instead construct a new definition of music grounded in EMC’s commitment to musical embodiment.

These two approaches can be categorized in a variety of ways (the first borrows from popular consensus, the second constructs an original theory; the first provides a limited account of music, the second provides a robust account) but for our purposes we can differentiate these approaches by their goals. Projects that borrow a common-sense understanding of music often aim to elucidate some aspect of embodied musical engagement rely on an account of music only specific enough to accommodate the type of embodied engagement under consideration. The

second approach constructs an account of music from within an EMC context (treating embodied engagement as essential to an understanding of music) and provides this account as the central aim of the project. Although these separate paths aim toward different goals (the one provides an account of music as the project itself, the other provides an account of music as part of a larger project) they are unified by an essentially embodied understanding of music.

Notably, almost all EMC projects take up the first of these strategies. For example, a limited, common-sense account of music supports EMC research investigating embodied musical listening (Krumhansl 2002), motor neuron involvement in musical engagement (Leman and Maes 2014), and a number of other field-specific projects (Høffding 2019; Kersten 2017; 2014; Schiavio and Høffding 2015). Because the EMC thesis concerns the nature of musical *engagement* (and not the nature of music directly) this should not be surprising—the goals of an EMC project are usually achievable without providing a comprehensive definition of music.<sup>20</sup> However, this common-sense approach to music still reveals a great deal about EMC theorists' musical beliefs. Even though almost no EMC project is interested in providing a rigid definition of music, most offer *some* positive remarks toward such an account.<sup>21</sup> Stephen Asma and Joel Krueger serve as paradigmatic examples of this approach to EMC philosophy: both rely on a common-sense

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<sup>20</sup> Traditional definitions of music usually require an identification of all and only musical works, such that counterexamples and difficult cases are accounted for properly, but an investigation into the nature of musical engagement merely requires that theorists and their audiences share a mutual understanding of the topic at hand. For example, whether Cage's (in)famous "4'33'" counts as music is a central concern for traditional definitions, and quite beside the point for an investigation into the ways that motor neurons are involved in the perception of rhythm. Because EMC projects often investigate a singular aspect of musical engagement, difficult cases (and the accounts of music necessary to handle them) are simply not at issue. Instead, many theorists merely identify those features of music or musical works that they take to be universal *enough* to distinguish music from other aesthetic media.

<sup>21</sup> We will, after considering Krueger and Asma's accounts, consider Alva Noë's account as a nearly unique in its articulation of a direct, enactivist definition of music.

understanding of music and offer limited positive remarks about what specifically makes it unique. Asma provides a unique perspective on this kind of project insofar as his larger argument includes, and is informed by, significant work toward defining music. Krueger, by contrast, provides a paradigmatic example of this ‘common-sense’ approach in EMC philosophy.

### ***Common Sense Approaches***

Stephen Asma identifies music in the context of his chapter “Music and the Evolution of Embodied Cognition” to demonstrate the ways that music is evolutionarily advantageous and is itself a type of embodied cognition (Asma 2020). He claims that “if music is not auditory cheesecake [pleasurable, but useless], then it has been selected for because it gave some advantage to music producers and consumers” (2020, 168). In other words, music (in this evolutionary context) ought not be identified by reference to some transhistorical object, nor reference to the work-concept, but by its *function*. This tracks the theoretical lines of 4E philosophy broadly (and EMC studies specifically) in that he identifies music by its function, what it *does*, rather than as an artefact. Additionally, Asma’s claim that music must have been evolutionarily advantageous for both consumers *and* producers, places this account squarely in multilateral territory (addressing two of the three aspects of the musical triad).<sup>22</sup> Of course, merely saying that music must *have* a function is different from saying what that function actually

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<sup>22</sup> To quickly reiterate, the musical triad consists of musicians/composers, audiences, and the musical work. More precisely, and less elegantly, we might want to say that it consists of aesthetic producers of various types, receptive subjects in a variety of capacities, and the “aesthetic product” if any such thing exists above and beyond the activities of productive and receptive subjects. The triad means to identify the three components we typically want to account for in our definitions of music (or, really, any aesthetic undertaking). To understand what music *is*, we will want a definition that speaks to its production, reception, and anything else that is stable, encoded, or reified in the physical world by the activities of producers and receivers. To say that a definition is multilateral is to say that it engages with more than one component of this triad in its identification of music.

is or how to identify it. Directly, Asma offers three types of remarks toward identifying music: a functional account of what music does, a genealogical account explaining music's continuity across time, and an (extremely limited) intrinsic account explaining what features musical works/performances typically demonstrate. None of these accounts are presented as necessary (or even sufficient) for identifying music. Instead, as we would expect of a common-sense account of music, these remarks all serve to identify certain features of musical performance/engagement that Asma takes as relevant for his evolutionary account of musical cognition.

First, Asma offers a number of what we could call "music is" statements that, collectively, comprise a functional account of musical engagement. He writes, for example, that "music is a form of psychological catharsis and emotional management, a form of communication, a form of recreation, a form of social bonding, and a form of spiritual cultivation and communion" (2020, 169). In addition to these remarks, he also claims that "music is a powerful way to bond independent individuals into a common collective" and "music is an embodied and enactive form of knowing – coming to understand the environment (physical and social) as well as the self" (2020, 169, 170). These comments are hugely important for Asma's larger project. An understanding of the functional role music plays in human community is crucial to supporting his larger argument that music is an evolutionarily advantageous form of embodied cognition. Setting aside his more controversial claims (for example, that James Brown and Paleolithic flute playing are united under the singular category "music") Asma's functional analysis of musical engagement offers a significant number of positive claims toward defining music as the aesthetic and cognitive activity he takes it to be. Music, he claims, affords psychological catharsis, community bonding, communication, and an embodied understanding of one's physical and social environment. These remarks help identify the specific role that music played and continues

to play in human development. However, the primary drawback of this kind of account is how vague these statements are regarding how to differentiate music from other forms of human activity. Music, as an evolutionary adaptation, duplicates the functional role of other kinds of aesthetic (or nonaesthetic) pursuits. At the very least, music is not unique in its affordance of communication, psychological catharsis, or social bonding (all these it appears to share in common with crying, for example). At risk of sounding dismissive, Asma's functional account has not differentiated music from yoga.<sup>23</sup>

Second, to identify music more precisely than the functional analysis alone, Asma offers some remarks about music from a genealogical perspective. Of course, Asma's account is not itself a genealogy in the proper sense. Rather, his claim is that "the component parts of music, or the structural elements, are worth considering when we think about the evolution of music. We can reverse engineer or anatomize any song and find the distinct markings of earlier songs, traditions, and elements" (2020, 171). In two short sentences, Asma provides his readers with an abundance of new information they can use to identify music as distinct from other artistic media. Whatever can be said about music, it is a continuous tradition in which earlier works inform the construction of later works. What makes a specific work musical, according to this kind of genealogical condition, is a similarity to earlier, established musical works. However, for this to be helpful for readers' identification of music, Asma must assume two more conditions. First, for a genealogical identification of music to be helpful, readers must already be capable of

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<sup>23</sup> This is intended to provide both a lighthearted example and a serious objection to Asma's identification of music in this way. I take it that yoga actually *does* provide (1) psychological catharsis, (2) recreation, (3) social bonding, (4) spiritual cultivation and communication, that it can (5) bond people into a community, and that it is (6) an enactive form of knowing in which subjects come to understand their environment and themselves. Issues like this, amusing as it might be to say that yoga is a kind of music, demonstrate the issue with vague functional claims like the kind Asma provides.

identifying established examples of musical works as music. Second, Asma must assume that readers are capable of differentiating between the musical and nonmusical aspects of a work. Without the ability to distinguish between musical and non-musical features of performances, we risk identifying aspects of a performance which are unrelated to its musical nature. For example, it may be true that most classical concerts take place in a concert hall, but the architectural location of these musical performances is not constitutive of the performance's musicality. As such, an independent strategy for differentiating between musical and non-musical components of performances must be an essential part of a genealogical condition like Asma's. Additionally, Asma's condition is unhelpfully vague concerning what constitutes a "distinct marking" of a song such that it could be reverse engineered from contemporary examples. What precisely are these markings? And, granted that we *can* identify them is it possible to reverse engineer *any* song and find traces of old music in it? Or, rather, are some songs simply impossible to analyze in this way? The answers to these and similar questions rest on assumptions we make about what does and does not count as music. (Can we really find "distinct markings" of earlier works in performances of 4'33" or Yoko Ono's "Toilet Piece/Unknown"?)

Third and finally, Asma offers some remarks toward identifying specifically musical features (features we might have called intrinsic in an object-oriented traditional definition) to firmly differentiate music from other kinds of media. He identifies pitch-bending, rhythm, rhythmic entrainment, and recursion as essentially musical features (2020, 171–72). The difficulty in interpreting these remarks, however, is that these features are neither necessary nor sufficient to identify music. For example, Asma claims that pitch-bending might be unique to human musical performances, but it could not be the case that pitch bending is *necessary* for performances to count as musical. Similarly, rhythmic entrainment is certainly a feature of *most* musical



performances, but rhythmic entrainment is not uniquely musical (and, arguably, might not universal in musical works either).<sup>24</sup> Asma's account of music, well-grounded in these specifics, demonstrates the hallmark of a "common-sense" approach to musical definition: it is only as complete as the primary research agenda requires, and since the primary research agenda is *not* to provide a definition of music, one is not provided. What we are left with, then, is a relatively robust account of the functional role of music, and a few remarks concerning the intrinsic features and historical continuity of musical works.<sup>25</sup>

Asma's account, even limited in the ways it is, offers an uncharacteristically comprehensive identification of music for these types of EMC projects. Few projects that rely on a common-sense understanding of music provide accounts that include functional, genealogical, *and* intrinsic conditions. For research that better represents typical 'common-sense' EMC accounts of music, we can turn to Joel Krueger. Krueger offers a paradigmatic EMC explanation of music because, in comparison to traditional definitions (and, to some extent, Asma's account) his work begins with fundamentally different assumptions about music and its philosophically interesting aspects. Previous theories (traditional definitions and most ontologies) treat "music" and "musical works" as similar enough that the two can be considered as more or less identical—

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<sup>24</sup> If rhythmic entrainment were *required* for a performance to count as musical, most listeners would be incapable of engaging with Radiohead on these musical terms. Sure, maybe we can clap along with 10/4 time, but alternating 3 measures of 7/8 with one measure of 8/8 is almost intentionally designed to frustrate the rhythmic awareness that is required for motor entrainment.

<sup>25</sup> Of course, these remarks can be used to construct an implied definition of sorts, but even the strongest implicit definition one could construct is still unhelpfully vague. *Assuming* that readers are capable of identifying noncontroversial examples of music, and *assuming* that Asma is correct when he says that all songs include features in common with previous songs, readers can identify music in a genealogical context. However, this implied definition leaves us with serious concerns about avant-garde music or other experimental works that might not demonstrate enough similarities with previous works to be called *music*.

by “music” these theories typically mean the category that includes all and only musical works.<sup>26</sup> However, Krueger and other committed 4E philosophers begin with the assumption that “music” and “musical performances” are associated in the way that “music” and “musical works” were in traditional philosophy of music. Because music is something we *do*, the philosophically important aspect of music must be its performance, and not the work-object. Krueger’s identification of music, accordingly, is quite different than what we might have expected from traditional definitions. Rather, his work provides a functional explanation of music and musical engagement and not a definition in the strictest sense.

Krueger’s work is littered with small, almost offhand remarks about music and the role it might play in our lives. Grounding whatever account of music one can reasonably reconstruct from Krueger’s work is an account of “musicking.” He borrows the term “musicking” from Christopher Small (1998) “to stress the active character of our musical engagements,” and “to encompass the different ways that we actively engage with – and indeed use – music to animate behavior, cultivate and refine affective experiences, and orient ourselves to others and the world more generally” (Krueger 2014, 1). Setting aside the specific uses of music for later consideration, the important contribution of this passage is a distinction between music and musicking. Musicking is a human practice in which agents actively engage with music and use it as a tool; music, accordingly, just is the tool which affords musicking. Explaining the functional role of music, for Krueger, is simply a matter of explaining musicking in the same way that explaining the functional role of hammer is a matter of explaining hammering. This conceptual distinction

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<sup>26</sup> For example, the reason intrinsic features of musical works could be used to define “music” is because identifying what makes musical works *musical* is the same as identifying what makes the category hang together.

between musicking and music means that Krueger's remarks can be sorted into two broad categories. The majority of his account is focused on providing an account of musicking by identifying specifically musical affordances or modes of engagement. However, Krueger's account also includes a few remarks concerning the nature of music directly.

Concerning music directly, Krueger claims that "on the affordance-based conception of music I am here advocating, music is conceived of as an information-rich perceptual object" (Krueger 2014, 5). Elsewhere, Krueger agrees with Reybrouck's (2012) claim that "music is a structured 'sound-time phenomenon'" in ways that point toward the sound-time phenomenon itself as the object of perception identified in affordance-based model (Krueger 2014, 3). These remarks, combined with Krueger's implicit assertion that musicking is distinct from music itself, appear to construct a relatively traditional account of music. Identifying music as a structured sound-time phenomenon is similar to the central thesis of sonicism, which claims that musical works are sound-sequence events determined by their acoustic properties alone (Dodd 2007). However, I suggest that Krueger's account can be understood as a compromise of sorts between more traditional philosophy of music and the 4E account he aims to construct. Despite his assertion that music is a certain kind of perceptual object Krueger also claims that "music is generally not perceived merely as an esthetic [sic] object for passive contemplation. Rather, we perceive it as a resource we can *use* to do different things" (2014, 1-2). The kind of perceptual object Krueger has in mind, then, must be one that affords active engagement. Traditional definitions of music sought to identify "the music" as separate from its performance to allow for the existence of works and their specific instantiation. Krueger, as I argued, is not committed to this view of musical instantiation in which a musical work is separated from its performance. The perceptual objects he identifies as music appear to be musical performances themselves, and not

an abstracted work in the usual sense (i.e., a written musical score, or a composer's mental construct). So far, Krueger has identified "music" as a specific category of performances, ones that involve acoustic and temporal components, and that appear as perceptual objects that afford certain uses.

Given that Krueger implies musical performances are paradigmatic examples of music, and his identification of music prioritizes this active component, he must provide an account of how humans come to use music as a tool. Musical performances themselves, however, are not the kind of perceptual objects available for use as a tool according to his framework. Rather it is "because music is mediated materially (for example, by aesthetic technologies)," that "we can *do things with it*—including manipulating the spaces of our environments and simultaneously ourselves" (Krueger 2019, 58–59). The fact that humans can interact with and *use* music for our purposes is a feature of music's materialization. For example, music is a powerful tool for structuring the auditory world to "reclaim individual space, block out environmental distractions," create "a preferred auditory environment conducive to work, and provide resources to help manage attention, affect, and energy" (Krueger 2019, 57). These uses of music are only possible because music has been "materialized in an array of portable technologies" (2019, 56). Since "the music" according to Krueger's account just is the musical performance, this account of materialization through technology facilitates music's use as affective and cognitive scaffolding. Recording, broadcast, and streaming technologies all facilitate the use of music by materializing otherwise immaterial "sound-time phenomena" and making performances available for use in the way that other tools are. Now, given this understanding of musical performances and their materialization, Krueger can provide an account of music's particular uses.

To say that Krueger defends an affordance-based concept of music is to say that he identifies music by reference to uniquely musical affordances. If music (here taken to mean musical performances) is a perceptual object it must provide certain extended affordances by virtue of this status. Perception is, according to 4E scholars, an agent's active engagement with certain perceptual affordances of their environment; musical performances, as perceptual objects, must also provide these affordances to be perceived in the first place. However, Krueger also argues that music affords certain uses which are uniquely musical (or at least not due to music's status as a perceptual object, but due to the kind of tool it has become).<sup>27</sup> Identifying these musical affordances explains how "music serves as an external (i.e., outside-the-head) resource that can profoundly augment, and ultimately *extend*, certain endogenous capacities" (2014, 4).<sup>28</sup> This ability to use music as an extended resource follows from the specific modes of musical engagement. Musical engagement, for example, "affords synchronously organizing our reactive behavior and felt responses," due to music's "irreducibly *interactive* dimension [...]" even when

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<sup>27</sup> As an analogy, we might consider the kinds of affordances demonstrated by everyday objects. A hammer affords all the same kinds of perception that any other passive object in my field of vision does. I can, a 4E account would explain, perceive the hammer as having the color it does, or the shape and size it does, by virtue of the hammer's perceptual affordances. However, these are not the only affordances that a hammer demonstrates. All hammers, to be called hammers, afford nail-driving, and most afford nail-removal as well. *These* affordances make the hammer what it is, whereas the perceptual affordances merely make it an object of perception in a passive sense. To identify the hammer, then, we must attune ourselves to uniquely hammer-type affordances. Analogously, that music exists means it must demonstrate certain perceptual affordances, but the affordances that allow music to be used as a tool determine its function and therefore define the art.

<sup>28</sup> The remainder of this passage reads: "When we engage in bouts of musicking, we potentially use music to become part of an integrating brain-body-music system – and within this extended system, musical affordances provide resources and feedback that loop back onto us and, in so doing, enhance the functional complexity of various motor, attentional, and regulative capacities responsible for generating and sustaining emotional experience." In other words, Krueger is articulating a relatively standard view of active externalism *if* music is the kind of emotionally involved practice that he suggests it is, and *if* emotional cognition is the kind of mental capacity that can be extended (which, again, he suggests it is).

‘passively’ listening” (2014, 3). This interactive dimension of music is so important to Krueger that he claims “we thus hear music *qua* music through the motor potentials it affords,” specifically insofar as music “is always *reciprocal* and *interactive*” (2014, 6). In order to experience music *as music*, Krueger claims that an agent must be an active participant in the listening process. This activity need not involve gross motor function, instead, musical interaction rests on sensorimotor *entrainment*, the ability to match “our movements, gestures, and facial expressions [...] with musical elements like rhythm and melody, and in so doing become intimately ‘coupled’ with the music” (2019, 60). We entrain ourselves with music when we move *with* the music, not always in the way we would when dancing, but in the sensorimotor capacities activated as a part of auditory processing. Hearing music *as music* and not mere noise requires that we anticipate the rhythmic and melodic progression of a performance. In other words, “neurophysiological and behavioral entrainment” is required such that the performances can appear as musical to the perceiver.

Bringing these ideas together reconstructs a relatively comprehensive notion of music that grounds Krueger’s research in extended affect theory: First, his understanding of music centrally accounts for musical performances and their materialization through aesthetic technology. Second, mediation through material, aesthetic technology allows music to afford certain uses beyond what we would expect from an “aesthetic object for passive contemplation.” Lastly, these uses are facilitated by the way that music demands interactive engagement and entrains an agent’s behavior through auditory and affective affordances. With these foundational claims in hand, we are better poised to understand the implicit definition of music he offers. He writes,

We hear musical elements like tones, melodies, rhythmic progressions, and textures as meaningfully arranged to hang together in a particular sort of way. This ‘hanging together’ establishes a musical event’s distinctively musical profile, its coherence as a musical event. And it renders music *meaningful* insofar as it

immediately shows up for us not as random noise but as a phenomenologically rich-sounding environment intentionally crafted to invite different forms of perceptual and behavioural [sic] engagement.” (Krueger 2019, 58)

This passage is Krueger’s longest sustained explanation of music (at least as music is considered distinct from musicking). Many of these claims will be familiar already: That music must afford certain forms of engagement just is the claim that music affords musicking. That music must “immediately show up” as something other than random noise just is the claim that music must afford certain forms of engagement (reciprocal, interactive, entrained) and that affording these forms of engagement is what differentiates music from noise. However, this passage introduces two new components to Krueger’s definition of music. First, he suggests that musical performances are “intentionally crafted” to include the affordances that they do. This intentional crafting (also called meaningful arrangement two sentences earlier) is required to establish the event’s “distinctively musical profile, its coherence as a musical event.” In other words, for a musical performance to hang together *as* musical, it must have been intentionally arranged to afford certain forms of engagement. Second, Krueger suggests that there are “musical elements like tones, melodies, rhythmic progressions, and textures” in a way that implies *these* are the building blocks of musical performances, and in order for a performance to count as musical, it should include at least some of these elements. We may already recognize these components of Krueger’s definition as similar (nearly identical) to traditional intrinsic and intentional definitions. In fact, the primary difference between Krueger’s account of musicking and traditional definitions of music is that he introduces these features of musical performances as necessary, but

insufficient for a performance to count as musical.<sup>29</sup> Krueger, then, has offered an embodied, restricted intentional definition of music. Music, on this account, must be intentionally produced to include certain affordances, and should utilize specifically musical elements in that production. It is unclear how this definition would fare better against previously addressed critiques levied against restricted intentional accounts in EMC context. Specifically musical affordances and musical elements, like the ones Krueger identifies, constitute intrinsic conditions that carry the philosophic weight of the definition. Defining music could be a simple matter of determining which intentionally arranged performances include tone, melody, or rhythm such that they afford musical forms of engagement (entrainment, and reciprocal, interactive engagement). While definitions like this cover the majority of composed musical works in the Western tradition, avant-garde works quickly lose their status as musical (whether or not Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*, Tom Wait's *Mule Variations*, or Yoko Ono's "Toilet Piece" counts as musical is a live question according to the standards introduced here).

Here, I would like to pause briefly and mention that despite this critique, Krueger's work is an important aspect of the Intercorporeal Project. Specifically, I disagree with Krueger's treatment of music as a tool that affords musicking in his attempt to describe musical engagement because I believe that musical engagement *constitutes* the music itself. To support this claim, and to develop an understanding of musical embodiment that departs from, but remains rooted in, EMC philosophy I take Krueger's work back up in the following chapter. His insights that

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<sup>29</sup> Of course, I do not mean to imply here that this is the *only* difference between Krueger's account and traditional definitions of music. Only that *if* we gather specifically musical modes engagement and music's materialization under the umbrella of "musicking" *then* his account of "music" is relatively thin. Returning to our hammer analogy, it appears that we have a novel, extended account of hammering, but not a correspondingly novel definition of hammers.



musical engagement is a type of musicking, and that musical works *afford* certain possibilities above and beyond static objects, are crucial to my construction of the Intercorporeal Account. For now, however, we have good reasons to set aside Krueger and Asma as insufficiently concerned with music *qua* music to offer the Intercorporeal Account (or the broader EMC field) a legitimate path toward definitive musical identification.

Ultimately, work like Asma's and Krueger's does not necessarily stand to benefit from a more precise identification of music than the ones they provide. As I argued (in the context of orthodox definitions and their potential adaptation into EMC context) theorists like Krueger and Asma simply are not concerned with the places where a philosophic definition of music breaks down. Traditional definitions, I argued, are often explicitly concerned with mitigating counterexamples and addressing difficult cases whereas EMC research is not. We simply do not need a detailed account of Cage's *4'33"* or Yoko Ono's "Toilet Piece" to understand specifically musical modes of embodied engagement. After all, embodied engagement *with* music (the activity we can call musicking) is the focus of EMC research, not "the music" itself. Bringing accounts like Krueger and Asma's together is a reliance on a common-sense understanding of music. Neither theorist is centrally concerned with providing a comprehensive definition of music, and so neither does. A comprehensive definition simply is not necessary to answer questions like: What are specifically musical modes of engagement? (Krueger 2018) How do collective intentions and group cognition factor into musical performances? (Schiavio & Høffding 2015) What kinds of neurological activity are uniquely human and uniquely musical? (van der Schyff & Schiavio 2017) Provided that we recognize the limitations of the conceptual framework employed it should be sufficient to accommodate so-called central examples of music in research that addresses specific aspects of embodied musical engagement. However, it is precisely this reliance

on uncontroversial musical examples and widely accepted views concerning music that means common-sense-grounded EMC philosophy may not be helpful in constructing an account of music directly. Fortunately, some theorists have taken on the herculean task of constructing a comprehensive account of music (or aesthetics broadly) in 4E context.

### ***Composing from Scratch (Constructive Approaches)***

It seems that “Goodmanian-style” aesthetic projects (ones that aim to provide a comprehensive account of all aesthetic media) have fallen out of fashion, at least with EMC scholars. Theorists like Krueger and Asma are primarily concerned with addressing specific aspects of embodied musical engagement such that a common-sense identification of music and musical works/performances is sufficient for their projects. In fact, almost no EMC theorist provides a robust definition of music “from the ground up” so to speak. However, Alva Noë’s account of music is almost unique in its attempt to define specific types of aesthetic media through the application of a general 4E aesthetic theory. Of course, others address aesthetics in 4E context (Matthen 2015), or work through the problems such an account would need to solve (Nannicelli 2019) but none construct the sort of comprehensive account that Noë provides.

Noë’s account of music is contextualized in a larger 4E aesthetic project which attempts to define aesthetics as a type of enactive, metacognitive activity. Art, he claims, seeks “to bring out and exhibit, to disclose and illuminate, aspects of the way we find ourselves organized [...] all the arts are organization, or rather, as we shall see, *reorganizational* practices” (Noë 2016, 16 emphasis original). In plain language, the purpose of art is to show us what we take for granted in our interactions with the world, it is “a practice for bringing our organization into view” (2016, 29). Our participation in natural, nonaesthetic activities (what Noë appears to mean when he says “our organization”) relies on the activation of specific sensorimotor contingencies (SMCs)

proper to the activity in question. For example, according to enactivists like Noë, visual or auditory consciousness has the character it does by virtue of the SMCs it employs. These SMCs, when they are operating properly, fade into the background such that an agent would not perceive their activation. In fact, a longstanding theory in 4E philosophy is the view that an agent only recognizes the structure of perception when something ‘goes wrong’ (Clark 2013; MacKay 1992). Art, according to Noë, is the aesthetic process of intentionally disrupting our ordinary perceptual systems such that the organization of our experience appears as relevant.

Art accomplishes this goal by reorganizing the “first order” activity proper to each media. Noë suggests that writing is to language as choreography is to dancing, or photographs are to picture-making; the relationship between each of these pairs is the relationship between a *reorganizational practice* (an aesthetic medium) and the first order practices it reorganizes (2016, 46–47). The claim is that an art is the reorganization of certain first-order activities that we would expect to observe in natural human behavior. When we use language, for example, we rarely attend to the language *itself*. Using words to convey meaning is so natural to us that we focus on the meaning *of* the words and not the words themselves in ordinary activities (like having a conversation with a friend), but poetry puts words on display and reorganizes language in ways that force language *qua* language to appear as relevant. Decontextualizing words or using them for their sonic (as much as their communicative) properties disrupts the SMCs we typically employ when engaging with language. Language, in a poem, is no longer transparent to our attention but appears as meaningful on its own grounds. What differentiates poetry from other aesthetic media (like music) are the first order building blocks that each reorganizes. Poetry reorganizes language, photography reorganizes picture-making, and choreography reorganizes dance. To define music, on Noë’s account, we must know what first order activity it reorganizes.

Identifying the first order activity that music takes for its building blocks is a lengthy project because Noë first distinguishes between “music” and “pop” such that the one counts as music and the other does not. By “pop” Noë means to identify “rock, rhythm and blues, soul, hip-hop, top forty [and] reggae” (2016, 168). This art, he claims, can be engaged with “in a serious way, without engaging with it as *music*” because it “looks like music, but it isn’t” (2016, 168). In fact, “pop music isn’t primarily music. It’s an art of display. In particular [...] pop music is the art of personal *style*” (2016, 177).<sup>30</sup> The claim is that pop music is fundamentally different from what we might call art music, serious music, or simply “music,” full stop. This intuitively describes the difference we might experience between pop music and classical music—the fact that of personal style is the focus of “pop” allows for the existence of covers in a way that classical music does not. What makes a song a cover is that someone other than the original performer performed a version of that song and usually, although not always, we believe that some knowledge of the original is necessary to appreciate the cover (Magnus et al. 2022). However, this distinction between covers and originals does not appear in classical music. When the authoritative component of the aesthetic activity is taken to be the materialized score, we speak of versions and performances, but not covers. This is because pop takes personal style as its aesthetic building blocks, and so differences between the original and covers matter to us because the

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<sup>30</sup> As a brief aside: although I’m sympathetic to Noë broader 4E aesthetic framework, I fundamentally disagree with his separation of pop and music into distinct categories. It worries me that all the feminine examples Noë mentions count as “pop” rather than music, and it worries me that he has sorted historically black-influenced genres similarly (except for jazz). The politics of examples aside, however, I primarily disagree with the way that Noë has made pop into a bodily art, and music into a mental art (at least insofar as that distinction can be thought in 4E context). This distinction tracks a larger pattern Noë believes exists in the world where ordinary listeners separate music and pop into distinct categories tracking this body/mind separation. The examples, then, might reveal more about how ordinary audiences perceive music, and not necessarily Noë’s own views. Regardless of the source of this distinction, I argue that it runs counter Noë’s enactivist commitments.

differences between performers matter too (Johnny Cash’s “Hurt” is a very different song than the Nine Inch Nails’ original and the two are not interchangeable). However, for the genres Noë calls “music” this distinction between an original and a cover is meaningless.

“Music,” as opposed to pop, reorganizes auditory perception (Noë 2016, 190). While pop reorganizes fashion or style in performance, *music* takes the first order organizational practices of hearing as its building blocks. Because Noë and other 4E theorists are committed to the essential embodiment of hearing and auditory perception, they must be careful to distinguish views like this from the “acousmatic ideal”: the belief that so-called serious music is primarily or exclusively concerned with sound (and not the embodied performance). Noë claims that “the idea that music is just sound, detached from making activity, detached from performance” is a fantasy in the way that the disembodied mind is a fantasy according to 4E theorists (2016, 188). Despite the popularity of acousmatic approaches to music (due, Noë suggests, to the wealth of recording technology available in the modern age) music is not *just* the sounds that a musician produces. This rejection of the acousmatic ideal “leaves intact a humbler and more reasonable version of the view. Namely, that with music—as distinct from pop music—it is precisely the music that concerns us and not the particular character of the performers” (2016, 190). This account of music should provide us with a way of differentiating between the simultaneous musical nonmusical aspects of a musician’s performance.<sup>31</sup> The light shows, costumes, stage makeup, and

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<sup>31</sup> Certainly, it could not be that actual components of a performance are *that* different between pop and so-called serious music. While the costumes, light shows, and audience participation of pop music *looks* very different from what we would expect in (for example) classical music, the same components exist in both genres: ball gowns instead of bedazzled outfits, theatrically dimming the house lights instead of a light show, (near obligatory) encore applause instead of clapping and dancing. (I would argue that solo violinists’ facial contortions rival even the most ambitious rock musicians’ acrobatics in terms of theatrical performance.) The suggestion here is that music is not *about* these features of the performance, but pop is.

acrobatics common in pop music concerts are not part of “the music,” according to Noë, because this kind of embodied reorganizational practice is shared in common with other kinds of performances that reorganize personal style (theatre, drag, fashion, etc.).

Now differentiated from pop, and distanced from the acousmatic ideal, Noë’s account is that “music, as an art, puts these structures of tone and timing and intention and melody themselves on display” and in so doing reorganizes natural auditory perception (Noë 2016, 188). This definition of music appears to reside in a middle ground between the acousmatic ideal on one end and pop music on the other. It is not the case that music is *just* about the sounds (tone, and melody) and music is also not *about* the performer (despite the performer’s necessary involvement in musical production). The account of music Noë provides is just that, a general account of musical performances and how they are differentiated from pop or other performances that involve music. Unfortunately, *defining* music requires more specificity than this account provides. Specifically, Noë’s claim that “with music—as distinct from pop music—it is precisely the music that concerns us” points toward two possible definitions of music implied by this account (2016, 190). First, it could be that “the music” is an aspect *of* performances as the passage implies; music is involved in both pop and musical performances (and ballet, drag, etc.), but we call performances *musical* when they primarily concern “the music.” Second, it could be that “music” is a category of performances that are primarily concerned with reorganizing timing, tone, intention, and melody. Neither of these potential interpretations results in a cohesive or thoroughly extended definition of music.

Perhaps it is the case that music is an aspect of many performances, but the central focus of musical ones. If this is the case, *musical* performances are those performances that focus on the reorganization of tone, timing, intention, and melody and *music* is the focal aspect of these

performances.<sup>32</sup> One problem is that this appears to offer an intrinsic definition of music. Reorganized tone, timing, intention, and melody are all observable in materialized musical performances that *do* conform to the acousmatic ideal. These features of a musical performance can be observed (at least in potential) in the score, heard in a recording, or even produced from memory if one has sufficiently memorized a piece of music. In other words, these features pertain to how the music *sounds* and stand in conflict with Noë's rejection of music as "just sound, detached from making activity." When we consider music as an aspect of performances, that aspect is separable from performances such even if performances are necessarily embodied "the music" need not be. This is most apparent in performances that utilize, but do not focus on, the musical aspect: in ballet, for example, "the music" often (almost always) conforms to the acousmatic ideal, and audiences are encouraged to engage with the musical aspects of the ballet in disembodied (or merely trivially embodied) ways.<sup>33</sup> Calling music intentionally reorganized tone, timing, and melody is therefore too intrinsic, too disembodied to count as a viable EMC theory. Rather, an account of embodied performance must be a part of a successful definition of music.

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<sup>32</sup> There is some ambiguity in the original text about whether music reorganizes intention itself (or ways of perceiving intention), or intentionally reorganizes other musical features. In other words, there is a question about whether intention is the subject of, or the motivational force behind, the reorganization involved in music. In either case, music shares this feature in common with other aesthetic projects which are either produced intentionally or aim to demonstrate the reorganization of intention within the aesthetic realm. The fact that intention is not uniquely *musical* means that embodiment in intentionality would count as trivial embodiment according to the EMC thesis. Embodied intention would appear as a general feature of human aesthetic engagement and not as a feature of musical engagement specifically.

<sup>33</sup> Some amount of embodiment is necessary to hear music *as* music, or to hear at all on a 4E account. However, the kind of embodiment involved in listening to a pit orchestra while attending to a ballerina's proprioceptive/bodily reorganization is shared with ordinarily auditory perception and so cannot count as properly musical embodiment in a nontrivial way.

Alternatively, we might rely on the attentional component of Noë's account to provide a definition of "music" as a category of performances. He claims that "with music—as distinct from pop music—it is precisely the music that concerns us and not the particular character of the performers" (2016, 190). At first glance, this claim appears circular: What does it mean to say that "with music [...] it is the music that concerns us"? But perhaps this is not so damning for his theory because this passage differentiates pop from music. We can say that "music" is a category of performances that involve both sartorial/stylistic and musical components, but pop and "music" are separated by their focus, the first order building blocks they reorganize. With "music," as opposed to other kinds of performances that use musical components, it is the reorganization of time, tone, intention, and melody that concerns us. The issue for an account like this is that Noë is still on the hook for explaining why pop and music share so many components in common, what unites these kinds of art as opposed to others, and where to draw the line between pop and music. A genealogical account could answer some of these questions—if, for example, pop is an aesthetic medium that developed as part of (and later separated from) music then we should not be surprised that it shares most of its component parts in common. Drawing the line between pop and music, though, is not as simple as providing an evolutionary or genealogical account of the medium. If music is distinguished by our focus on "the music" and pop by a focus on the performer's "particular character" there appears to be significant overlap between the two arts. As two perspicuous examples, consider Radiohead and Yo-Yo Ma. It is uncontroversial that Radiohead has produced music worthy of consideration on its own merits, and not merely as a result of the band's popularity (Malawey 2012), and their performances allow and encourage engagement with "the music" rather than the "particular character" of band members (Osborn 2017). Here we have an example of a pop music group that nonetheless



produces what Noë's account must call music, period. One reason Radiohead provides such a powerful counterexample to the pop/music framework is because they, as a popular group, have taken direct steps to decenter themselves from the art they produce (Kelly & Rodriguez 2022). Not only are the albums Radiohead records worthy of consideration as *music*, but the band's extramusical efforts are often aimed at reducing the cult of personality that characterizes pop. Although Radiohead is a particularly visible example of a pop group that primarily concerns themselves with "the music" they are far from unique in this regard. From the other direction, there are (albeit fewer) classical soloists who have risen to such fame that their performances should count as pop on Noë's framework. Yo-Yo Ma stands as an example of a classical musician whose cult of personality has grown so large that he appears to count as pop on this framework. He has achieved such popularity that the Associated Press (and innumerable secondary news outlets, often decades later) covered his loss and eventual recovery of a Stradivarius cello in the back of a New York cab in 1999. While we might typically believe that Yo-Yo Ma performs classical music, his popularity quickly makes him a candidate for a pop musician. When we attend a concert and see soloists as famous as Yo-Yo Ma, we are often paying more attention to the performer than "the music" itself. If this happens regularly enough that we can say the "particular character" of a classical soloist concerns us more than the piece they perform, then their performances are no longer "music" but pop. (Yo-Yo Ma's performance of "Amazing Grace" at President Biden's 2021 inauguration might serve as evidence that a Yo-Yo Ma performance is not about the piece he plays, but the fact that *he* is playing it.) The overarching issue with this attentional distinction between pop and music is that it potentially makes *any* performance musical and *any* performance pop depending on what "concerns us" about it. Further, it would seem that there is little to distinguish music from other kinds of performances

that include musical elements *if* the audience's attention is properly directed toward "the music" and not other aesthetic components (for example, attending the ballet to close one's eyes and listen to the pit orchestra could allow the performance to count as music instead of choreography). Claiming that "music" is a category of performances determined by the existence of musical aspects and specific attentional requirements makes this a subjective definition of music. For a variety of reasons, intra- and meta-methodological, subjective definitions are undesirable, even when they include intrinsic components as this account does.

Noë's account of music, then, is difficult to endorse. Despite providing a surprisingly comprehensive overview of aesthetics in 4E context, his identification of music is left with serious problems. These issues are caused by distinguishing between music (as an aesthetic activity) and "the music" which he claims involves reorganizing tone, timing, intention, and melody. His account provides all the resources necessary for constructing a traditional (intrinsic or subjective) definition of music but does little to centrally address the role of embodiment in "the music" itself, or to differentiate music from the other arts. Noë's attempt to leave "intact a humbler and more reasonable version" of the acousmatic view means that the account of embodiment required for his understanding of music is, in a sense, trivial. Embodiment is necessary for musical production and engagement insofar as performing *anything* and auditory perception *in general* require embodiment, but nothing in Noë's account shows "that embodiment is more than just an effect of music on action" (Leman and Maes 2014, 236) or that "sensorimotor engagement is essential to both [the] production and perception of music" beyond ordinary auditory perception (Matyja 2016, 1). The kinds of embodiment Noë highlights are essential in making sense of performances, but the strong distinction between pop and music characterizes pop as essentially embodied (in musically desirable ways) and music as essentially cognitive.

Ultimately, we should reject Noë's account as a viable path toward understanding music as an essentially embodied aesthetic project.

### **A Performative Solution?**

Our discussion thus far has centrally addressed the ways in which theorists, both traditional and EMC-committed, account for the existence of music. On the one hand, traditional definitions proved too unilateral to properly define music, and merely attaching an account of embodiment to these accounts fails to satisfy the demands of EMC philosophy. On the other hand, EMC philosophers treat music in its embodied, multilateral context but almost no theorist supplies an intelligible, robust account of music that could satisfy the desiderata of a musical definition. Of course, determining what those desiderata are is a project unto itself (the methodology of balance only goes so far) but given that traditional and EMC accounts of music are either incomplete or unsatisfactory, it is now time to construct a novel account.

In the following chapter, I will explore some of the specific barriers to an account rooted in EMC alone and recommend the incorporation of phenomenological resources in constructing what I have come to call the Intercorporeal Account of music. For now, allow me to quickly explain why merely adapting or constructing an EMC account of music remains undesirable: EMC accounts fail to address all three aspects of the musical triad, and fail to account for music's embodied, active, and relational aspects *as part of the art*. EMC theories demonstrate a huge amount of ontological ecumenicism in their treatment of music as contextualized in human life and their focus on human engagement; however, this humility is precisely the reason EMC theorists rarely address all three aspects of the musical triad. Work in EMC philosophy tends to focus on musical *engagement*, often at the expense of a robust account of music directly. Common sense approaches like Krueger's and Asma's sidestep the question of musical identification in

favor of other concerns, and constructive projects like Noë's are few and far between, and often highly esoteric in undesirable ways. What these approaches share in common, however, is a commitment to the functional explanation of music and a disregard for musical definitions in the usual sense. As such, EMC approaches to music tend to sidestep a real definition in ways that fail to address the third part of the musical triad: the aesthetic work or activity itself. At risk of sounding redundant or trite, EMC philosophy is interested in musical engagement and therefore focuses on the agents who engage *with* music and not the music itself. This focus recommends examining music from the perspective of composers/musicians or audiences (or both) but rarely addresses music as a standalone practice, separate from the ways that we engage with music's materializations in recordings or performance.

Without a robust account of what musical works are *made of*, what sorts of entities they might be, we are at a disadvantage in our attempt to explain musical works themselves. EMC resources support in-depth examination of the human agents involved in musical production and reception but determining precisely what this "music" is that we engage with is a tangential, and insufficiently developed, project. More worrying for a complete account of the musical triad are the ways that EMC typically treats music from the perspective of listeners *or* performers, and rarely the two in conjunction. Music is an art that powerfully connects us, so perhaps Alva Noë is right to say that, in the case of pop music, we are concerned with artists themselves. To claim that the same is not true of other genres, however, would mischaracterize "music" as a disaffected, cognitive practice (similar to mathematics) in ways that square poorly with lived experience. Music, inclusive of pop music and other genres, *is* about the people involved in its production, but a concert is not merely the work of performers or composers; a performance is a collectively constructed event that requires an audience, performers, often composers, and a host

of others that contribute (perhaps tangentially) to the musical event. For these reasons, I construct the Intercorporeal Account of music: music is best understood as a corporeal, performative art, constituted by the relationships necessary to produce musical performances and works. Because the Intercorporeal Account focuses on the relationships that I claim constitute musical works and the relational activities that constitute music, it is inherently multilateral and *must* address all three aspects of the musical triad. To speak meaningfully about music as a relational practice means that I will have to account for both parties involved (the subjects that I claim relate through the medium of music) and the relationships themselves (what we call musical works). Where EMC treats music as a tool for use by musickers, I argue that music is the relationship that musickers build when they engage with one another in certain ways, meaning the Intercorporeal account *must* be multilateral if it means to explain this relationship in any detail. The account is rooted in EMC insights, queer musicology, and phenomenology, but only makes sense considered as an explanation of musical production, reception, and relation as parts of the whole that is music. In other words, I will argue that these aspects of the musical triad are interconnected and are not isolatable from each other in the way that orthodox definitions or the EMC tool/use paradigm imply. The following chapter is an attempt at explaining what, precisely the Intercorporeal Account means by “corporeal,” and “performative,” how we can take EMC philosophy a step further toward accurately and inclusively identifying music, and why music is best understood as an activity or category of relationships, rather than a category of work-objects.

## PREFACE TO CHAPTER FOUR

## INTERMEZZO

*or, Reinventing the Wheel to Run Myself Over*

First, intrepid reader, thank you for bearing with me thus far. Some explicit meta-commentary might be helpful at this point to reorient ourselves, enmired as we are, within a shifting landscape of musical terms and debates. Hopefully the running symphonic analogy in chapter titles has not proven too distracting, Chapter Four is where this clever (trite?) musical rhetoric transitions into more than wordplay. Allow me to explain: Symphonies are often organized in four movements, and I borrowed that structure to organize the chapters of this dissertation. In addition to providing us with clever titles, symphonic form also operates as a metaphor for the broader arguments of each section. Symphonies usually begin with a movement in sonata form, in which themes are introduced for eventual use throughout the whole of the symphony as musical motifs. In this analogy, Chapter One is a broad overview of the general methodologies and questions that emerge in analytic philosophy of music; these themes are given a quick examination, partially developed, and set aside for use later in the project. The second movement in symphonic form is the “slow movement.” Less rigidly designated than the first, this movement gives listeners and performers some metaphoric breathing room. Analogously, Chapter Two is a slow and steady examination of traditional definitions of music; perhaps this discussion was not especially creative, but understanding where, how, and why traditional definitions fall short provides imperative guidance moving forward. Movement three in symphonic form almost always takes the form of a minuet or scherzo; the tempo picks up relative

to movement two, and this change in tempo is usually accompanied by a change in time signature (from 4/4 to, usually, 3/4). Chapter Three analogously “changes tempo” by transitioning from traditional philosophy of music to EMC and 4E cognition as potential solutions for the issues faced by disembodied, unilateral definitions.

Chapter Four, in this running analogy, should be a triumphant return to the themes and issues that concerned us throughout the preceding sections, it should bring these themes together into harmony. In a sense, this is precisely what Chapter Four is poised to do: the arguments address musical praxis and embodiment, return to an examination of the musical triad, and engage with the EMC literature to demonstrate the advantages of a relational account of music. All this, however, we could have predicted in a philosophy project. It should not be surprising that the final chapter addresses themes developed in the first three, and it may not have been difficult to see that we jumped into the argument feet first, slowed things down in the second chapter, and returned to an energetic discussion before tying together loose argumentative threads and concluding the project.

More important than this running symphonic analogy, however, is that Chapter Four, just like many fourth movements, is organized in sonata form. In their simplest structure, sonatas include three sections: *exposition* (with an A and B theme, the A in tonic and the B usually in the relative minor key), *development* (in which the two themes are explored, brought together, and contrasted), and *recapitulation* (in which the A and B themes are repeated, this time with the B theme modulated into tonic) in which the sonata comes to its musical conclusion. Often, although not always, sonatas include a *coda* after recapitulation. Codas are, despite all their beauty, not conceptually important in the development of musical themes. Sonatas cadence

(finish, structurally speaking) at the end of recapitulation, and musical motifs in the coda serve to reinforce tonic and re-perform the recapitulation's cadential movement.

When I say that the whole of Chapter 4 is organized in sonata form, I mean that the argument contained within the chapter mirrors a sonata's musical development in the argumentative structure. The exposition introduces (in the case of a fourth movement, re-introduces) the themes of the work, explaining what we can expect from later sections, and acknowledging that these themes are unfinished, waiting for modulation during recapitulation. The exposition section of Chapter 4 picks up from where we left off in our discussion of EMC: We might initially wonder if a properly constructed EMC account might help address some of the shortcomings of Noë's theory, and thus better account for music as a multilateral, active aesthetic project. In essence, the exposition section is a critique of EMC approaches to music, broadly speaking, *and* an attempt at preserving some of its key insights. EMC provides a deeply contextual, praxis-oriented framework for examining music and musical engagement, but usually runs into some difficulty explaining strong experiences with music, the way that music exceeds the mundane, and its near-universal aesthetic appeal. In this philosophic exposition we will hear an "A theme" that we will import directly into recapitulation (an understanding of music as an embodied *activity*), and a "B theme" that will require modification, modulation (a lackluster account of music's particular embodiment). These themes are directly taken up in the development section (as they are in a sonata) in order to explain *why* any account of music must address its corporeal aspects, and what this corporeality consists of. Part of developing these themes into a robust account of music requires that we methodologically modulate from analytic philosophy into continental phenomenology to explain musical corporeality and (I will argue) relationality. I hope that this methodological shift will not be so strange as it might seem, given



the strong connections that already exist between 4E philosophy and phenomenology. Next, in recapitulation, a sonata revisits the primary themes, and we hear our themes modulated into tonic (both the A and B themes now in the “home-key” of the piece). Analogously, section three is a recapitulation of previous themes, but viewed through a decidedly continental lens; Judith Butler’s work on performativity and their critique of Merleau-Ponty’s theory of intercorporeality and sexuality provide a framework for this analysis. Recapitulation helps us understand music’s relational and corporeal nature more concretely: music, if it is an actual human practice in the way most musical realists believe, is a performative activity. Finally, in the coda, I will not introduce any novel themes, rather the coda is an attempt at importing this claim that music is a performative art from continental philosophy *back* into the context of analytic philosophy of music. The coda demonstrates the advantages of addressing music as a relationship (and musical works as sets of relationships) consistent with EMC philosophy and the performative theory that grounds the Intercorporeal Account. *D.C.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D.C. in musical notation stands for *Da Capo*, a musical marking meaning “from the beginning” which tells performers to return to measure one and play through until they reach either the sign to stop (*al segno*, stylized: *S*) or to the end (*al fine*). Chapter Four is a metaphoric return to the beginning, reminding us of the project’s motivations and beginning the original argument in earnest.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE INTERCORPOREAL ACCOUNT (PRESTO)

*or, Both Sides Now*

To begin discussing music, I suggested in Chapter One, is to discuss ontology. From a certain (analytic) perspective, this is absolutely true. Wherever we discuss music and musical works, we implicitly make claims about its existence. Even simple statements of preference reveal implicit ontological commitments. If I were to say, for example, “I don’t care for Arthur Rubinstein’s version of Schumann’s *Carnival*; I much prefer Mitsuko Uchida’s” then I have imported *quite* a large number of ontological assumptions about musical works. Musical works must, for this statement to be literally (and not metaphorically) true, *belong* to the composer, permit of *versions* ascribed to performers, and must be *variable* in order for two versions of the same work to sound different but remain *of* the same work. Simple statements of preference like these, in fact, typically imply that musical works are abstract objects in some sense. Fortunately, an ontology of music need not mirror these statements *exactly* in order to satisfy the pragmatic constraint, or the methodology of balance. A proper musical ontology is, of course, “beholden to our artistic practices—the ways we talk, think and act in relation to art,” but a one-to-one correspondence between *all* the ways we talk, think, and act in relation to music would be impossible; instead, our goal is “some rational reconstruction of these” and we often rely on paraphrase (Rohrbaugh 2003, 177). The methodology of balance merely requires that an account of music properly explains praxis (ordinary engagement and discussion), allowing that we quite often talk metaphorically about music and musical engagement. Besides, it is no great

stretch of the imagination to believe that most folks<sup>1</sup> do not imply much of anything, in an ontological sense, when they express musical preferences. Unfortunately, parsing a coherent ontology from diverse collections of metaphoric and literal statements is a nontrivial undertaking.

Complicating matters further is a background philosophic desire to flatten our discussion of music and musical engagement to their rationalizable elements. Michael Gallope speculates that music “attracts, at the same time that it resists, interpretive scrutiny” because music, unlike (for example) poetry, “does not sit there [...] passively following the semantic boundaries of poetic language. The music has its own peculiar agency and effects, like a glass of wine that brings poetic words to life” (2017, 5). This is a rather fanciful way of saying that music has a certain influence over us as human beings, that there is something about music that resists categorization. Philosophers, however, are often reticent to discuss music in this way; we philosophers are perhaps more cautious than most in our attempts to explain its “ineffable impact,” its “stunning force,” its “complex and duplicitous effects.” Gallope argues that we might believe these aspects of musical experience, music’s affective, poetic, complex, and contradictory qualities are, in principle, explainable by musical experts, just not by us as amateurs (2017, 4). Philosophers such as ourselves are interested in music, but few of us have become experts in the field; if only we were musical experts (so the line of thinking goes) we might also be capable of explaining, in precise terms, these strange musical effects.<sup>2</sup> However, the more expert we become, the less clear things appear. Gallope wonders, “if Aristotle were a virtuoso on the aulos

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<sup>1</sup> At least, those of us not already engaged in what Suzanne Cusick calls the sometimes “hopelessly boring” project of traditional musicological analysis.

<sup>2</sup> One PhD is certainly more than enough work to keep a person occupied and dissuade us from pursuing yet another advanced degree in music theory.

or the kithara, would he have plunged confidently into a scientific treatise on the specific effects of particular melodies, harmonies, and rhythms? The musician in me suspects that he would have refrained” (2017, 4). His claim is that musicians, as musical experts, are in no better position than amateurs to explain these puzzling aspects of musical experience.

Even experts, it turns out, are ill equipped to provide a specific account of music’s complex role in human life because the problem philosophers of music encounter is not epistemic, but ontological (Gallope 2017, 6). Philosophic approaches to musical ontology tend to flatten music into its rationalizable elements because, unsurprisingly, providing a “rational reconstruction” of ineffable musical praxis addresses only rationalizable elements of it. Primarily, the problem with this approach is that we (musical nonexperts and experts alike) tend to think the ineffable aspects of music are what make it unique and are therefore precisely what an ontology *should* account for—music simultaneously attracts and resists scrutiny because its distinguishing characteristics are precisely those that we cannot rationalize, the aspects philosophers typically punt to expert analysis. Secondly, this rationalized approach tends to accidentally bracket out expert opinion from philosophic accounts. By associating the ineffable in music with expert opinion, philosophers have a readymade reason to focus on nonexpert (often perceptive or receptive) musical engagement. What might an account of music look, or sound like if it centrally addressed, in the limited way philosophy can, these puzzling, poetic, potentially ineffable aspects of musical experience? What might an account sound like if it were led by expert opinion into this sense of musical wonder? As an alternative to the traditional bracketing and formal analysis of musical works that characterizes analytic philosophical approaches, the Intercorporeal Account sets out to (re)emphasize precisely these aspects of musical experience so often left aside in academic contexts.

What *should* interest us about music is precisely its powerful, romantic, intoxicating quality because these qualities are exactly what distinguishes music and musical experiences from ordinary objects and banal engagement with them. For example, Kivy, in articulating his strictly Platonic ontology of music, argues that *Tristan und Isolde* is merely a set of mathematical relationships (1983). However, our experience of the opera is quite unlike our experience of a mathematic proof and this divide appears even more clearly as we imagine what it must be like to *produce* the opera. Granting that listening to a symphony and a lecture on mathematics might be equally interesting to the right audiences, a divide persists in the case of musical production: What it must be like to engage with the embodied, affective, intoxicatingly beautiful experience of *singing* Wagner? What interests me about music, what I aim to illuminate and explore over the course of this sonata-form chapter, is the way that music holds a special position our lives as musicians and listeners, as musically embedded subjects. What I claim, what the Intercorporeal Account means to explain, is that these philosophically tricky aspects of music are best explained by understanding music and musical works as (respectively) a certain kind of relational activity and the relationships that these activities comprise. Live, embodied, beautiful, intimate, and intoxicating musical performances are irreplaceable or irreplicable by recording for precisely the same reason that video calls, letters, and text messages cannot substitute for a real, embodied, beautiful, intimate, and intoxicating relationship.

### **Extension (Exposition)**

Given that the Intercorporeal Account means to explain music as an embodied and powerfully human *activity*, it would appear that scholarship in extended musical cognition can provide sufficient resources for this project. EMC offers a multilateral approach to address musical reception *and* production and engages with phenomenology to account for music's

affective and emotive capacities. To illustrate the advantages and limitations of EMC philosophy generally, I will return to Krueger's work, keeping in mind the critiques I levied previously, and its limitations. Krueger's theory of music as affective cognitive scaffolding provides an especially powerful example of EMC philosophy for two reasons: First, Krueger addresses the role of *musicking* as active engagement with musical works, demonstrating music's embodied, active qualities. Second, Krueger takes up Merleau-Ponty to demonstrate how music structures auditory *space* as a soundworld, and thus affords the affective engagement we hope to explain. Ultimately, however, EMC scholarship runs into a significant problem: EMC scholars (including Krueger) maintain a music/musicking division, partially due to a methodological, disciplinary focus on musical engagement as the tool-like use of music by listeners, that ought to be dissolved on 4E grounds. In this exposition of sorts, I will review Krueger's work once again as an example of an especially well-constructed, phenomenologically-inspired EMC theory, and explain the challenges that it and other EMC theories face.

To set the stage, and to be as clear as possible about my critique: I take it that the tool/use paradigm of EMC philosophy is internally inconsistent because there are good 4E reasons to collapse the music/musicking divide analogously to how extended mind philosophers collapse the mind/body divide. To remain fully committed to the (admittedly esoteric) commitments of 4E philosophy, I believe that EMC philosophers should claim that music *is* musicking. However, I also believe that this is not a particularly worrying problem for EMC theorists simply because my questions are not their questions, and the research agenda of most EMC theorists may not directly benefit from the paradigm-shift the Intercorporeal Account demands. EMC as a field takes musical *engagement* as its subject, and this focus naturally recommends centralizing the role of human interaction with *something* that we call music, or at

least engagement with the *things* that encode, materialize, or otherwise concretize musical activities for ordinary engagement (as in the case of listening to an album). I want to be transparent that I believe a thoroughly active approach to music *as* musicking would be beneficial to the theories housed under the EMC umbrella, but that this accuracy might not be a meaningful concern for EMC theorists considering the variety of research they conduct. Often, the most convenient or expedient way to conduct (for example) an fMRI study on motor-cortex involvement during musical listening is to treat songs and albums as *objects* in a way that squares poorly with my music-as-activity or music-as-relationship position. While I maintain that it would be more accurate and consistent for EMC philosophy to treat music as a relational activity, the critiques I raise are not aimed at making a substantive theoretical change in that field. In this metaphoric exposition, I briefly review EMC philosophy to offer a critique for the purpose of constructing the Intercorporeal Account, and not to intervene in EMC philosophy directly.

### **Highway 61 (Krueger) Revisited**

The claim that music might be an activity, like *musicking*, rather than merely a category that contains static musical works is already a radical claim in the context of traditional philosophy of music. The concept of the work-object is so deeply rooted in the philosophical tradition that even fictionalists find it difficult to break from this framework. The central contribution of Lydia Goehr's philosophy, for example, is a dismissal of the popular assertion that musical works are a kind of object, even though she refrains from discussing them in this capacity. She writes that her "major methodological transition is a move away from asking what kind of object a musical work is to asking what kind of *concept* the work-concept is" (2007, 90). Goehr's rejection of the work-object paradigm is precisely what sets her work apart from the majority of her interlocutors who tend to agree that works, if they exist, are a type of object.

While notable exceptions exist, traditional (analytic) philosophy of music treats musical works as objects, separable from human engagement.<sup>3</sup> In a traditional context (and often intuitively) we believe that works like Beethoven's *Eroica* exist independently of their performance so that we can say these works exist even when they are not actively being performed and that they permit of multiple performances and versions. However, this paradigm only proves intuitively useful in the case of relatively well-established, scored or recorded musical works. Although it might satisfy our pre-reflective intuitions to claim that a symphony exists in the way that physical objects exist, it is less intuitive to claim the same about improvisational works or works outside the Western classical compositional paradigm. Jazz performances, for example, point away from the work-object paradigm insofar as improvisational works intuitively *do not* exist until their performance, and the improvisation we take as central to the work ceases once the musician puts down their instrument (Kania 2011a). Would a note-for-note reproduction of an improvisational jazz performance be a *version* of the original performance, or of the original work? In what way could Charlie Parker's solo in "Koko" be said to exist before his drug-fueled performance? Perhaps traditional ontological perspectives can accommodate these difficult cases, but they are hardly designed to explain improvised music in the work-object framework.

In contrast to the traditional work-object paradigm, EMC philosophers address music in its embodied, active context. Kruger claims that "music is generally not perceived merely as an aesthetic [sic] object for passive contemplation" by explaining that music is a part of active, cognitive and affective processes, and that, in fact, "we perceive it [music] as a resource we can

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<sup>3</sup> Some exceptions include action theorists like Currie (1989) and Davies (2003), or genealogists like Goehr (2007). Although, it is worth noting that only a few of these folks would self-describe as analytic philosophers, further supporting the claim that very little of analytic philosophy steps beyond the work-as-object paradigm.



use to do different things” (2014, 1–2). To call music a “beyond-the-head resource” is already a huge step toward understanding it as a process, and not a collection of objects, in light of the 4E theory that Krueger and other EMC theorists rely on. Clark and Chalmers, as foundational 4E philosophers, claim that “the human organism is linked with an external entity in a two-way interaction, creating a *coupled system*” and “all the components in the system play an active causal role, and they jointly govern behavior” (1998, 8). If, as Krueger claims, music is a beyond-the-head resource, and given Clark and Chalmers claim that these resources are best understood as active components of cognitive processes, then we have good reason to believe that musical works are best understood as processes or, at least, parts of processes. Music is quite unlike painting or sculpture in that we do not typically encounter music as an object available for passive contemplation; perhaps it would be better to say that music is more like architecture, in that it is *potentially* available for this kind of contemplation but is typically experienced as affording certain uses.

Of course, a good amount of the extended mind’s external scaffolding is comprised of objects in the usual sense, so there must be something about music that separates it from other types of cognitive scaffolding. For example, Otto’s notebook (an illustration of extended memory for Clark and Chalmers) would be difficult to reconceptualize as a process.<sup>4</sup> However, a traditional understanding of musical works as objects, even in this sense, is inconsistent with what

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<sup>4</sup> It would be *difficult* although not impossible to reconceptualize Otto’s notebook as process. We could say, for example, that language is a process and Otto’s notebook is an example of memory-as-process in the way it materializes process-based-language-use in memory formation. Arguments of this type, however, are extraordinarily rare and only a few theorists (e.g., Hutto and Myin 2012) believe that extended cognition scaffolding is procedural rather than object-based. A better explanation of the notebook under a cognition-as-process model might be to claim that either objects are involved in processes, or objects serve as cognitive *scaffolding* and not a part of cognition directly.

EMC philosophers claim about music and extended musical cognition. In a relatively flat-footed sense, the work-as-object paradigm suggests that *the music* is a set of mathematical relationships, or the instructions for active performance, but is not the performance itself. Meanwhile, EMC philosophers claim that *the music* must be actively performed for us to experience it because music “affords synchronously organizing our reactive behavior and felt responses,” due to its “irreducibly *interactive* dimension [...] even when ‘passively’ listening” (Krueger 2014, 3). Krueger points out the way that our experience of music (the ways we “talk, think, and act” in relation to it) is not of a static object. Rather, music demands our attention and motor entrainment even when we experience ourselves as “passively” listening. Music, at least the ways we encounter and experience it, cannot be an object in the usual sense because “it is always *reciprocal* and *interactive*” (2014, 6). In order for music to be *music* in an important sense (and not mere noise, or mathematics) requires a back-and-forth between musician and listener, an interaction between the auditory perceiver and the ongoing construction of a musical environment by performing musicians.

Again, however, we might still believe that music is more objective than EMC theorists suggest. After all, just because music requires these types of *interaction* does not mean that music *itself* is similarly active. Driving a car, for instance, does not require that the *car* is an activity, but that our engagement with the car is an active, and indeed *interactive*, process in which we guide the car to its destination and respond to changes in the car and our broader environment.<sup>5</sup> However, music is unlike other objects in our perceptual world because it *actively* creates an

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<sup>5</sup> Philosophers of mind, especially, might recognize that I borrow this example from O’Regan and Noë (2001) and their discussion of qualia as the sum total of sensorimotor feedback we experience when driving (in their example) a Porsche.

auditory, spatial environment. Krueger argues that our experiences of *music*, and not our experiences of mere noise, rely on active, sonically constructive processes on the part of the musical producer. We can return to a previously quoted passage of his to explain:

We hear musical elements like tones, melodies, rhythmic progressions, and textures as meaningfully arranged to hang together in a particular sort of way. This ‘hanging together’ establishes a musical event’s distinctively musical profile, its coherence as a musical event. And it renders music *meaningful* insofar as it immediately shows up for us not as random noise but as a phenomenologically rich-sounding environment intentionally crafted to invite different forms of perceptual and behavioural [sic] engagement.” (Krueger 2019, 58)

This passage from Krueger may not be terribly specific about what constitutes a musical work (or what separates music from ballet) but it points to what I call the doubly-active status of music in the 4E framework—music is not merely something we *actively* engage with through musicking (the way active engagement makes Otto’s notebook part of his memory), but musical performances are intentional crafting of sound, an activity. 4E scholars like Krueger often distinguish in this way between music’s encoding and its appearance *as* music. On the one hand, we have the objects which encode musical events (typically scores, but any notation system could operate in this way). On the other hand, there are events where these notations are brought to life, enacted in time and space to create music.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, engaging with the *score* of a work is like reviewing the blueprint of a house, reading the scorecard of a baseball game, or taking a peek into Otto’s notebook; the notational system *guides* our activity or provides us insight into the behavior we see. The objects in question are mere objects, used as cognitive tools by those who

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<sup>6</sup> Whatever *is* happening when we read a score, the score itself (or our silent reading of it) is not involved in creating an auditory sound-world that affords inhabitation in the way Krueger suggests it does. That is, not unless we accept the wildly unpopular view called musical idealism: the belief that musical works are best identified as brain-bound mental entities such that reading a score (and imagining the instrumentation) is identical to the performance *of* the score (in which we *hear* the instrumentation).

can interpret and mobilize the instructions they contain. Krueger's suggestion is that musical *events* are also used as tools of the extended mind, and that their use is always active in some capacity. Even when we materialize performances in recording (digital, analogue, a player-piano scroll) it is the *performance* that affords affective and cognitive use by musically extended minds. In a certain regard, this makes perfect intuitive sense: When we engage with music *qua* music it is because we are *listening* to it in some capacity (even as performers). We cannot access the musical event, or see how it coheres as musical, without its performance.<sup>7</sup>

Krueger explicitly defends music's status as active by explaining its precise uses by the extended mind. If music is a tool then "music is something we do things with," and he claims that "one of the things we routinely do with music is construct and organize *space*" (2018). Music is in the business of creating and organizing "musically-structured environments that we experientially inhabit, explore, and manipulate" (2018). In order to organize space, both locationally (*Where* is the music coming from?) and structurally (*What* is this musical space that has been created, and *how* do I investigate it?) music must be active in some sense because a score (objects generally) cannot create an auditory *world* in the way that a performance does. Krueger engages Merleau-Ponty to explain that there exists an "inner *structural* space of music" and music "is perceived as a structurally organized soundworld that can be *inhabited*, experientially, in a way many other sounds cannot" (2019, 58). Perhaps this is starting to sound a little poetic—it seems

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<sup>7</sup> This understanding of the score as notational and the performance as musical is not uncommon and helps us address some weird cases of musical composition. Paganini, for example, is said to have composed violin concertos that were literally unperformable—were those compositions *music* if they have never been heard, and could never be without super-human performances? Perhaps a young composer writes music for an instrument they never performed, and without realizing it notate pitches outside the instrument's range (perhaps that young composer was me, about 20 years ago). Is the score this aspiring composer wrote *music*? There seems to be something about the score's *use* that produces music, but to say that the score alone *is* music is intuitively strange.

that Krueger is running into precisely the issue I described earlier. This feature of music, its construction of a soundworld, is somewhat mysterious *and* precisely what he believes makes music special. Music is distinguished from mere sound precisely because we cannot *inhabit* ordinary sounds in the way a musical performance opens itself up for inhabitation and exploration. The specifics of this Merleau-Pontian approach to the musical “soundworld” are, for now, tangential to the claim that musical works are best understood as activities (extended processes) in an EMC sense, but we will return to Merleau-Ponty in discussing musical corporeality. The humbler claim to extract from this passage is that musical works must be comprised of active processes in order to demonstrate this world-building capacity, and that engaging with or constructing these musical works/worlds is a similarly active process, one Krueger calls *musicking*.

It is because music is active in these two senses—it is both an active component of listening engagement *and* made of active processes on the part of musicians—that I call music “doubly-active.” Music is not *just* active in the sense that our listening engagement requires interactive and reciprocal processes of feedback between the agent and the musical work or producer (usually a recording or performer), but musical works are also comprised of *musicking* activities undertaken by musical experts (in this case, musicians) and *must* be comprised of the activities in order to construct a “soundworld” for auditory exploration. Of course, this is not an insight unique to Krueger, and we could replace the phrase he borrows from Merleau-Ponty (*soundworld*) with a different term (e.g., *soundscape* or *set of auditory affordances*) to see this same insight reflected throughout EMC philosophy and beyond. The key contribution to carry forward will be this understanding of music as both *affording* active engagement on the part of listeners and *comprised of* active musicking processes on the part of musicians.

### The EMC Double-Bind

The doubly-active nature of music (within the 4E/EMC framework) is quite an odd puzzle, since it appears that extended mind theorists have good reasons, *prima facie*, to collapse these two activities (active musical production and active musical reception) into a singular category, *musicking*. Krueger, as I discussed, borrows the term “musicking” from Christopher Small who originally claims musicking is the activity of engaging with a musical performance by “performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, [or] by providing material for performance” (1998, 9). However, Krueger borrows the term “to stress the active character of our musical engagements,” and “to encompass the different ways that we actively engage with – and indeed use – music to [...] orient ourselves to others and the world more generally” (2014, 1). Krueger’s comments reveal that his theory focuses on musical reception as paradigmatic of musical engagement. His emphasis on “musical engagements” and his explanation of the “ways we actively engage” with musical performances through recordings imply that the musicking he discusses is active as a feature of extended or enactive perception on the part of *listeners*. I worry that this emphasis on musical reception masks a deeper issue in EMC theorists’ accounts of music: a distinction between *the music* on the one hand, and musicking as engagement *with* music on the other that is difficult to explain within the 4E framework.

A focus on musical perception, of course, is not damning to EMC theories, but an emphasis on musicking as tool use is easier to understand in musical reception. As Krueger’s theory exemplifies, EMC treats “the music” as conceptually separate from musical engagement. After all, Krueger’s identification of music as “information-rich perceptual object” reveals his focus on music as an *object* of perception, and separate from the active practice of musicking that constitutes engagement with this object (2014, 1, 5). EMC accounts, like Krueger’s, identify

music as a tool that affords “musicking;” analogously, a hammer can be identified by its affordance of “hammering.” These accounts imply that tools are identified by, but not identical to, the engagement they afford (it sounds trite, but this simply means hammers are not *hammering*, they are objects that afford active uses). This conceptual distinction between music and musical engagement is appropriate for EMC projects because it could be that the activity and the tool are also distinct in practice—*musicking* must be embodied in the way that *hammering* is embodied, but tools are separable from the activities they afford (using a hammer as a paperweight does not necessarily mean it ceases to be a hammer). But even if music is not practically distinguishable from musical engagement (i.e., that all music requires distinctly musical embodiment) EMC philosophy still retains the view that the two are conceptually distinct. Analogously, we might say that an account of hammers requires an account of hammering to be intelligible, but this does not imply that hammers *are* hammering. It is exactly this distinction between music and musicking that troubles EMC philosophy. The issue is not that musical works, materialized in performance, are not made available for use as tools by *listeners* (they absolutely are, just as Krueger and others convincingly argue); the issue is this identification of music only really works from a listener’s perspective.

From the listener’s perspective, musical works are made available for musicking engagement due to their materialization in aesthetic technologies like recording (Krueger 2019, 56). Musical recordings are, in this way, like other cognitive tools in a 4E framework: a specific recorded song can literally be nostalgia in the same sense that a notebook *is* memory, and a GPS *is* a sense of direction. Proper engagement allows these ordinary physical objects to function as active causal components of extended cognition. For example, consider Otto’s famous notebook as an instance of extended memory. Otto’s notebook functions as both an object *and* a part of his

mind, but only because its objective existence precedes its cognitive use. As a static object, notebooks do not require extended, cognitive engagement to afford certain uses (as a paperweight, for example, or an especially pretty object for one's bookshelf). Otto engages this physical object in the active cognitive processes that constitute his memory and so makes the notebook *his* memory, literally. Using the notebook *as* memory requires certain types of cognitive engagement: the information contained in the notebook must be consistently and directly accessible, and must have been consciously endorsed in the past such that it is immediately and unquestioningly endorsed in the present (Clark and Chalmers 1998). A notebook alone is not an example of extended memory, but Otto's particular use of *his* notebook makes it part of his mind. Standard 4E theories suggest that objects are *made* active components of cognition through proper engagement. Similarly, in EMC, Krueger suggests that musical works are materialized in aesthetic technology for use as objects in precisely this way. We might play a particularly energetic song while working out to help us perform better, a sad song when we need catharsis, or a fondly remembered song to feel nostalgic (we might use a vinyl record as an especially pretty object to display on one's bookshelf). Listeners use music as a tool of the extended mind the way Otto uses his notebook, and musicking is the process of engaging *with* these tools in the way Otto engages with his notebook.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Worth noting is that there is nothing inherent in the EMC framework that would recommend treating music as an object (and, in fact, Krueger mentions in his article that the music we listen to is actively created but that we encounter it as materialized in objects). What I mean to point out here is that the way EMC philosophers discuss musical engagement (primarily concerning musical engagement with music materialized in scores or recordings) implies that musical works can be reduced to objects. This is not *de facto* damning the framework, since 4E philosophy suggests that we can interact with other minds even when we treat others' minds as objects, but EMC's focus on this type of engagement means music is rarely discussed in contexts where it has not been (for lack of a better word) objectified.



However, this tool/use analysis of music/musicking falls flat in the context of musical performance because the musicking undertaken by musicians is decidedly unlike the tool-use that listeners exhibit. From a listener's perspective, musicking is engaging with musical works in their materialization and includes certain types of behavioral and motor entrainment, and the exploration of music's soundworld; accordingly, music is that which affords musicking in the way that a hammer is that which affords hammering (Krueger 2019, 59). From a musician's perspective, identifying music as the tool that affords musicking is rather unhelpful. What tool affords the musicking we observe in musical performances, composing, or rehearsing? On the one hand, musicking in performance requires certain concrete, physical tools, but these are poor candidates for "music" in an EMC framework. On the other hand, musicking in performance may engage with "music" as an abstract tool that guides these performances. Unfortunately, neither of these options is especially convincing or helpful and EMC philosophers have good 4E reasons to collapse the work/performance distinction and claim that music *just is* musicking.

The extended processes we call musicking in performances often (although not always) include more than one musician and rely on the use of specific materials (instruments, a score, the physical location of the performance). In Western classical music, where musicians perform according to a notational system (the score), we might say that musicking just is proper engagement with other musicians and these material aspects of performance. However, we typically do not believe that other musicians, instruments, or scores are "the music" as the tool/use metaphor for music and musicking would imply. Further, it is unclear what these tools even are in the case of, for example, improvised performances or acapella singing. As an analogy: to maintain the music/musicking distinction we would want to say that musical works are concrete objects used in active musicking processes (performances) the way that Otto uses his

notebook in active cognitive processes (memory). But this analogy identifies Otto's notebook solely by its objective existence—Otto's notebook is a tool for cognitive processes because it is *literally* an object that affords certain uses, like writing down the address for MoMA. The problem for EMC philosophers, is that no concrete objects in the world stand to be identified as “music” to musician's “musicking” in the way that notebooks are tools for extended cognition.<sup>9</sup> Besides, as we discussed, in EMC context music must be an active process to afford its particular uses; it cannot be an object like a notebook.

If music is not a concrete tool, like notebooks are, then perhaps it is an abstract tool. But this is a deeply troubling concept to import into EMC philosophy because it implies that performances are musicking activities that engage with abstract objects. These abstract objects, either musical works in a traditional sense or musical concepts mobilized in improvisation, are analogous to Cartesian mental entities: just as the mind is nonphysical and instantiated in the body for Cartesian philosophy, musical works or concepts would be nonphysical entities instantiated in bodily performance (musicking). It might bear mentioning that this is not such an issue for traditional definitions of music that have recourse to abstract objects and nonphysical mental entities, but on 4E grounds, EMC philosophers cannot endorse this kind of work/performance division to explain their music/musicking distinction. A work/performance split between abstract works and their bodily performance, in traditional philosophy of music,

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<sup>9</sup> To identify music as a set of concrete objects is either dangerously close to antirealism or nominalism in musical ontology, where music and musical works are nominally identified categories of concrete objects and performances. This is, in an EMC framework, immensely unhelpful because music must be active or performed in order to afford the entrainment and interactive engagement it does. Even if such objects were available for identification, they are unlike the objects that listeners engage with according to the same process of musicking. We would be forced to say that musical performances, materialized in recording, are music in the same way that instruments and the written score is music because these are the objects that afford musicking.

produces a Mind/Body division similar to the one in Cartesian philosophy of mind (Cusick 1994).<sup>10</sup> A cartesian division would imply that the musical work itself, understood as an abstract object or set of concepts, is an ideal that performers aspire to faithfully reproduce; the performance, meanwhile, is a wholly bodily undertaking that represents this work in physical, auditory space. For Cusick, this division produces a problem of musicological prioritization, and the solution is a concept of musical works that include performers' bodies. EMC philosophers, however, have good reasons to simply collapse this divide altogether, rather than re-explain it in musical context because 4E philosophy suggests that mental processes *are* their embodied activities.

Just as 4E philosophers suggest we should treat Otto's notebook *as* his mind due to its active contribution to his cognitive processes, EMC should recommend treating music *as* musicking (the embodied activities required to produce music). Analogizing music not to Otto's notebook, but Otto's cognitive processes explains how memory and musicking involve physical objects as part of the process (musicians use a score, Otto uses his notebook), and how these objects become part of the process through certain kinds of engagement (consistent, immediate endorsement and use of a notebook, or careful, expert mobilization of the activities a score notates). Collapsing the music/musicking distinction also addresses the difficulty of improvised performance. Memory happens in Otto's notebook, but inside Inga's brain; musical performances sometimes happen according to the use of certain physical objects (as in Western classical concerts) and sometimes without these any of these objects (in improvised acapella performance, for example).

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<sup>10</sup> My discussion here is brief, in part because we will dwell on Cusick's argument in the development section and our discussion of corporeality.

The takeaway from this discussion of EMC and the music/musicking divide is that defining music as a tool that affords musicking treats it as an object in ways that square poorly with EMC's commitment to music's active status. Music is not merely notes on a page or grooves in a record because it must be performed to afford its particular uses but treating music as a tool *for* musicking immediately reintroduces a static and objective concept of music and musical works. EMC philosophers get away with this philosophic-slight-of-hand because listeners often (almost always) encounter music in its materialization, but a tool/use distinction is difficult to maintain in the case of performance. EMC theorists face a double bind: Either music is identified as an object that affords active use in musicking (in which case it must be either abstract or concrete and neither of these options are satisfying) or abandon the music/musicking distinction altogether and claim that music must *be* the active process of musicking itself. Given their focus on musicking as a type of tool-use, we have good reasons to move past EMC theories that use this framework to maintain a music/musicking divide. Where EMC treats music as a tool that affords musicking behaviors, the Intercorporeal Account takes the position that music just is the embodied, human activity of musicking.<sup>11</sup> In other words, *music is a kind of activity*.

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<sup>11</sup> Briefly, I may need to say that musical performances are not exhaustive of musical works because not all musicking activities occur in the context of a performance directly. Musicking includes listening (potentially to a recording), composing, rehearsing, and even dancing. Besides, a single work can be performed multiple times, after all, so it cannot be that each performance of (for example) Beethoven's *Eroica* constitutes a new and unique musical work. In the sense that singular performance is not the complete set of activities that make up a musical work, performances are not synonymous with works. Rather than understanding musical works *as* performances, we can say that musical performances are *of* works in the sense that they belong to, make present, or bring about musicking activities. If, as the Intercorporeal Account claims, musical activities are relational, then perhaps musical works are analogous to marriages in the way that a wedding (or the renewal of vows) is a performance and is part of, makes present, or brings about a marriage. It is not that a marriage is an object that demands activation within certain contexts, but that the relationship is an active process, a way of being in relationship with another. The total assemblage of activities that comprise the marriage are not contained in a single demonstration *of* that relationship, but these demonstrations hold a special status because these activities are how the

### **EMC Insights, In the Key of E(xtension)**

The primary advantage of EMC philosophy, I argued, is its ability to address music in a multilateral capacity. Traditional definitions only addressed one aspect of the musical triad comprised of listeners, musicians, and musical works. EMC philosophy, meanwhile, has the resources to address music in both its receptive and productive capacity, even if a common tool/use distinction between music and musicking confuses our understanding of productive musicking. However, if we reinterpret the music/musicking distinction as a helpful fiction rather than a statement of literal fact (i.e., that there is no such thing as *music* besides the activities that produce it) then it appears that EMC has reduced the musical triad into a musical binary—if music just is musicking, then there is no need for a mysterious third entity in the triad, no “musical work” to which musicians and audiences need to appeal. The problem for a straightforward EMC account of music along these lines is that reducing the musical triad to a musical binary is deeply counterintuitive. When musician and listeners alike engage with music, we typically believe we are engaging with something that is not merely the activities that belong to it. We typically believe musical works exist in the absence of their performance analogous to the way Otto’s notebook exists even when he is not actively using it. His notebook actually *is* an object that he and others can interact with even if its status as extended memory is wholly tied to its particular use. Understanding music as an activity, however, does not necessarily reduce the musical triad to a binary so long as we understand music as a specific type of relationship, or

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idealization of this relationship becomes real. A wedding is not the same as a marriage, and neither is a wedding a faithful reproduction *of* the marriage. Rather, in the case of musical works and marriages alike, performances are best understood as *parts* of the larger assemblage of activities that comprise the relationship or work in question. Even if this analogy is not yet convincing in its entirety, we should extract the claim is that musical works and performances cannot be synonymous because musicking happens outside the context of live performances.

relational mode. This relational aspect may not announce its appearance in ordinary instances of musicking in which listeners use music in its materialization as a tool (for example, playing music while driving alone), but music is a deeply social activity. We perform, rehearse, listen, attend concerts, compose, and improvise *together*. If music is not merely an abstract mental entity, then it is something we *do* and more importantly, something we *do together*.<sup>12</sup> In the development section, I will explore some reasons for believing that music necessarily includes this type of relational component.

To preface the upcoming argument, let me say: Art is never created in a vacuum, and (I will argue) music is a relational and often social experience. If this is true, then this third thing in the musical triad, what we typically call the musical work, can be reimagined as the relationship that exists between musicking subjects. It may turn out that musical works are assemblages of people, objects, and events that constitute “the work” the way that other codified and institutionalized relationships are constituted. In this way, music is like a marriage: it is not that marriages include a mysterious third thing in addition to two spouses, some *object* that connects people.<sup>13</sup> Rather, marriages are particular relationships, a specific way of being in relationship with another individual, and the third “thing” that we call the marriage is constituted by the activities that its relational and institutionalized structure affords (jointly filing taxes and

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<sup>12</sup> We will take up an in-depth discussion of musical relationality and corporeality in the following section. The claim for now is that musical activities have the potential to form relationships between musicians and audience members, and potentially the materialized aspects of performance in addition to the embodied subjects that performances require. You might consider this discussion of musical relationality as the B theme of the sonata: here we see it articulated in a way that might not make perfect sense to us or may not be properly contextualized. Listen for its reappearance in development and recapitulation, where this relationality is directly addressed and supported by phenomenological evidence.

<sup>13</sup> For the sake of space, rather than scope, I here omit an extended analogy in which I argue that musical works are quite like baseball games for all the same reasons that they are like marriages. If the marital analogy is unconvincing, I would rather enjoy the chance to pontificate on baseball, ontology, and music.

exchanging rings, but also the deepening of an intimate relationship). In a technical sense, a wedding is the performative bringing-into-being of a marriage, but a marriage is about much more than a single day's ceremony. Similarly, musical performances are often the bringing-into-being of a musical work, but musical works exceed the boundaries of a single performance.

Perhaps disanalogous to marriage, however, musical activities often include explicitly nonhuman components. The relationships in question are not necessarily between musicians and listeners alone (although I will argue that both are necessary components at *some* point in musicking relationships), but we form relationships with instruments, favorite songs, and perhaps even the sounds themselves. To modify Small's claim for the Intercorporeal Account, we might say that *musicking* is taking part in (entering into) musical *relationships* "whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance" (1998, 9). These relationships are often temporally dispersed and materialized. We typically enter into these musicking relationships (we *musick*) to greater or lesser degrees by engaging with the physical products and accoutrement of musical relationships (listening to recordings, analyzing scores, practicing scales, crafting or playing a new instrument, or composing).

In the section that follows, we will take up the embodied experience of music addressed in EMC and its emphasis on music's active nature to develop these concepts into an understanding of musical corporeality. Our discussion will begin with an examination of musicology and musical performance, and transition to Merleau-Ponty's *intercorporéité* as a conceptual framework for understanding musical activities as irreducibly relational and corporeal.

### **Corporeality (Development)**

A sonata's development should introduce tension and intrigue and it should develop the themes articulated by the exposition. Importantly for our purposes, development is where features of previous themes are taken up in a new light, often modulated from one key to another. For our purposes, this development section takes up EMC's focus on embodied musical engagement and develops these concepts to explain the importance of corporeality and relationality in musical activities. It is worth noting, also, that the whole of the philosophic argument concludes, hopefully not *too* anticlimactically, at the end of development just as the vast majority of a sonata's musical development concludes at the *medial caesura*, a similarly anticlimactic half-cadence, marking the end of the (aptly named) development section. Throughout this section, we will explore the themes of corporeality and relationality originally raised in exposition and will attempt to understand the nature of musical embodiment such that musical works include and are constituted by embodied activities. Our central question in articulating this theory of musical embodiment will be whether and how this embodiment points toward music as a relational activity, toward musical works as relationships of a certain sort.

Initially, I should explain that "music" will be used to refer to the embodied activities that comprise "musicking" in Small's sense: listening, rehearsing, practicing, and composing activities (among others). Despite relying on EMC theory to provide some theoretical framework, the Intercorporeal Account refuses an understanding of musical activities as primarily tool-like in their affordances. Krueger seems correct to claim that music is "not perceived merely as an esthetic object for passive contemplation" but his, and his field's, focus on music as a tool of the extended mind repositions the contributions of EMC philosophy toward active engagement, and away from the *interactive* dimension of performing music (2014, 1–2). I will begin where exposition



left off, with the assertion that music *is* an active process on the part of musicians and listeners alike and that there is no need to posit a mysterious “third entity” in the musical triad beyond what is constituted by the actions of musicking subjects.

Of course, if music is just the activities that comprise it, then we would expect to see two primary changes to our understanding of music and musical works. First, we would expect musical activities to carry the meaning of musical works, more than what is available from an analysis of the score or idealized components of performance. Musicking activities exceed the score’s instructions and even the auditory components of a performance, so we would anticipate an understanding of embodied action to better explain music and musical works than musicological analysis alone. In other words, it would have to be the case that musical works include the corporeal bodies and activities that constitute them. In a certain sense, this develops the understanding of musicking found in EMC literature into a concrete theory of music and musical works. Second, if musical are not merely activities but *relational* activities, we would expect reports of musical experiences to support a joint account of music’s corporeality and relationality. On the one hand, this is a phenomenological claim that our experience of music *is* an experience of a relationship (even if the relationship is with music’s materialization and not directly with other subjects); on the other hand, this is a claim that there are specific ways of *doing* music (musicking) that mirror our behavior in other relationships. If this is sounding a little poetic (or a little continental) know that the shift is purposeful. While I have addressed continental resources in previous sections and chapters, the bulk of the Intercorporeal Account’s background is in analytic philosophy of music. Here, I begin to move past EMC resources and their analytic grounding, and toward a deeper (more direct) examination of continental and musicological resources to construct the Intercorporeal Account.

The Intercorporeal Account argues that music or musical activities are a specific way of being in relationship with one another and, in this sense, is not providing a traditional, analytic definition of music. From an analytic perspective the Intercorporeal Account gestures toward a definition by constructing a theoretically ecumenical ontology (or meta-definition, depending on how these claims are interpreted). From a continental perspective, the account is quite definitionally focused because identifying music as a relational activity centralizes an account of “the music” like analytic philosophy of music typically does. In a brief methodological aside, allow me to explain why and how the Intercorporeal Account plays these separate roles drawn from analytic and continental philosophy of music, and how this might inform our understanding of the account’s goals.

### **Interlude: Methodology**

To *finally* return to the matter of methodology and ontology, I should say that our previous discussion concerning methodological balance and the pragmatic constraint still applies to our discussion of both continental and analytic philosophy of music. Continental philosophers are perhaps less likely to appeal to these principles explicitly, but both continental and analytic philosophy of music believe that an account of art is “beholden to our artistic practices—the ways we talk, think, and act in relation to art or at least some rational reconstruction of these” (Rohrbaugh 2003, 179). What this means is that both analytic and continental philosophers are interested in providing a theoretically sound and consistent account that adequately explains real-world musical praxis.

Admittedly, the analysis of the continental/analytic divide in philosophy of music I take up (Tiger Roholt’s, which I endorse in support of the Intercorporeal Account) *is* focused on the methodological distinctions between the disciplines, but both foundationally rely on a

methodology of balance and the pragmatic constraint despite other differences between the two approaches. To explain what the methodological differences are between continental and analytic philosophy of music, and to demonstrate how these distinctions are often a matter of focus, we can examine Roholt's overview.

Roholt's distinction between continental and analytic philosophy of music rests (at times quite heavily) on D.E. Cooper's (1994) and Simon Critchley's (1997) accounts of the general continental/analytic divide in philosophy. Cooper and Critchley identify continental philosophy as involved in issues of cultural critique, praxis, and anti-scientism, but this content-focused identification of continental (contrasted with analytic) philosophy is unhelpful for philosophy of music. After all, philosophy of music takes *music* as its subject, and so we would not expect to see a huge discrepancy between the content of continental and analytic *philosophy of music*. Instead, Roholt's contention is that analytic and continental philosophy of music are divided by “*contrasting methodological tendencies*” (2017, 49 original emphasis). He claims that “it is a *methodological tendency* of continental philosophers of music to resist methodological detachment” and “a methodological tendency of analytic philosophers of music to detach” (2017, 56 original emphasis). Roholt disambiguates two types of contextual detachment characteristic of continental philosophy,

First, continental philosophers of music tend to believe that (1) it is ineffectual to examine music or some feature of music by detaching it from its context; depending on the philosopher, the context emphasized may be (1a) historical, (1b) sociopolitical, and/or (1c) a context of engaged experience. [...] Second, it is a characteristic methodological tendency of continental philosophers of music (2) to take *their own* contexts into consideration in framing and carrying out their investigations — where, again, the context may be (2a) historical, (2b) sociopolitical, and/or (2c) context of engaged experience. (Roholt 2017, 56)

Continental philosophers of music begin their projects with the assumption that music's context (historical, sociopolitical, and/or experiential) is essential to an understanding of the art, or the

assumption that *their* context will matter greatly to the type of account they offer. By contrast, Roholt believes that analytic philosophers of music tend to “detach *in one or both* of these ways” (2017, 56 original emphasis). To illustrate these differences, Roholt examines work on musical experience, music and the emotions, and musical ontology. I take up his discussion of musical ontology partially because it is precisely ontological and definitional issues that concern us, and partially because his ontological discussion helps us understand how methodological attachment or detachment may *also* contribute to minor differences in content between analytic and continental philosophy of music.

Concerning musical ontology, Roholt claims that Levinson’s (1980) musical Platonism is an example of analytic philosophy of music in that “he maintains that musical works are abstract objects” and “works are *created* abstract objects” because he must preserve the intuition that artists engage in creative activity, and therefore composers must be in the business of creating the works they compose (Roholt 2017, 53). Examining Levinson’s claims and methodology, we can properly say that his approach to music (if the whole account is consistent and compelling) satisfies the methodology of balance and does not (*prima facie*) run afoul of the pragmatic constraint. Levinson’s account allows for musical instantiation consistent with common intuitions: if musical works are abstracta they can be instantiated multiplied times in performance, so, when we attend a performance of Beethoven’s *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony*, we do not encounter a unique *work*, merely a unique performance *of* the work. However, he takes the fact that musical works are *created* “to be a nonnegotiable, pre-ontological intuition” (Roholt 2017, 53). This appeal to pre-

ontological intuitions differentiates Levinson's analytic approach from Lydia Goehr's genealogical (Roholt says continental) account of the work-concept.<sup>14</sup>

Levinson (as an analytic philosopher) is concerned with what can be said about musical works *themselves* separate from the concept *of* musical works. Meanwhile, as an example of continental philosophy of music, "Goehr's key methodological maneuver is to endeavor to construct an account of the emergence and function of the *concept* of the musical work in musical practice" (Roholt 2017, 53). The account of music (the work-concept) that Goehr constructs is deeply contextualized as a matter of methodology. Her investigation into the work-concept is a genealogical account of musical practices and the concept *of* musical works. Roholt explains, "the methodological point I want to emphasize is that, according to Goehr, if we want to understand the meaning of the concept of the musical work, as well as the related, pre-ontological issues Levinson invokes, we cannot methodologically detach our target of examination from its *historical context and development*" (2017, 54). This methodological attachment to, or detachment from, issues of historicity and concept-development is precisely what Roholt identifies as the difference between continental and analytic philosophy of music. Where Goehr concerns herself with the development of the work-concept, Levinson and other analytics set aside the issue of genealogy to rely on (Roholt claims *informed*) intuition alone.

However, specifically in the example of musical ontology, Roholt's claim (that analytic and continental philosophy are primarily distinguished by methodology) seems incomplete.

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<sup>14</sup> Previously, I provided Goehr (2007) and Attali (1987) as examples of philosophers who practice "ontological deflection" because Goehr (and others) set aside musical works themselves to focus on other issues. While I was concerned with what authors like Goehr say about musical works *directly* (which is precious little), Roholt's analysis focuses on the methodological differences between continental and analytic philosophers of music and uses these philosophers as exemplars of the continental tradition.

While I believe his methodological assessment is correct, Levinson and Goehr are also concerned with different *content*. In fact, the reason I called Goehr's work a form of ontological dismissal is because she does not provide an account of *musical works* at all, merely an account of the *work-concept* and its development. Levinson, by contrast, is concerned with what works *are* and not with how the concept *of* a musical work. A better way to interpret Roholt's distinction might be that analytic and continental philosophy of music are (at least slightly) different in content *as a result of* the two primary methodological detachments that continental philosophers resist. To explain, we can return to Goehr and Levinson. Goehr, as a prototypical continental philosopher providing a genealogical account of the work-concept, is committed to engaging with music's "(1a) historical" context. Meanwhile, Levinson is committed to the idea that a clear discussion of musical works *should* avoid contextualization (both personal and global) in service of an "objective" account of musical works. Roholt's claim is that continental and analytic philosophy of music are separated by methodological tendencies, but in some cases these methodological differences produce content differences as well—a commitment to musical autonomy will, inevitably, recommend a different set of research questions than those available to a thoroughly contextual account.<sup>15</sup> For continental philosophers like Goehr, methodologies that emphasize musical context mean that the question "What *is* music?" is often implicitly treated as the question "What are musical *practices*?" Meanwhile, for analytic philosophers like Levinson, the question "What *is* music?" is often treated as the question "What might be the metaphysical status of musical works (such that

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<sup>15</sup> This difference in content may only be this great in the context of ontological and definitional projects. In addition to ontological projects, Roholt discusses two other kinds of research in philosophy of music: "musical experience" and "the relationship between music and the emotions" (2017, 49). In the case of experience- or emotion-focused projects it appears that continental and analytic philosophy of music often *do* share enough content-overlap that the two fields are primarily methodologically distinguished.

they afford the activities we observe as musical practice)?” Analytic and continental philosophy of music almost always overlap content-wise, but in the case of musical definitions and ontology this methodological difference *also* distinguishes the disciplines in terms of content.

The Intercorporeal Account, then, is a bit of a mutt. Definitional and ontological projects are usually housed by analytic philosophy of music insofar as they attempt to provide an account of *the music* itself and not music’s (or the account’s) broader socio-political, historical, or personal context. However, the Intercorporeal Account of music, in treating music’s context as integral to its identity, works toward collapsing this continental-analytic distinction and claims the best way to understand “the music” is an examination of context and praxis. The account’s philosophical, disciplinary ecumenicism could manifest in two separate ways, so allow me to explain what the Intercorporeal Account provides, and (perhaps more importantly) what it does *not*.

In an analytic sense, if the Intercorporeal Account claims that music is an activity, specifically relational activities, then a defense of these claims would demonstrate the advantages of this perspective. *Assuming* that music is a relational mode and not a set of abstract, mathematically-constituted, musical works, could be shown to provide substantial benefits beyond traditional definitions *after* we have identified the specific extended affordances, corporeal modalities, and performative norms that condition music’s enactment in human life. Given this type of defense, the Intercorporeal Account could stand with a foot in both the analytic and continental traditions; providing a balanced, pragmatic account of music that demonstrates significant advantages beyond its counterparts *but* relying on continental resources to make that argument.

However, the Intercorporeal Account is not especially well poised to provide this kind of fine-grained identification of extended affordances or performative norms. Too many

philosophers have tried and failed to identify music in a strict definitional sense for the Intercorporeal Account to, lemminglike, follow in their footsteps. Instead, the goal of the account is to convince readers that music (however we identify its particularities) is *best understood* as a specific kind of relational activity, regardless of the affordances or norms that differentiate it from other aesthetic endeavors. In an analytic sense, the account provides a relatively loose ontology of music, one that is (metaphorically) quite fuzzy around the edges. Just as some philosophers claim that music is a type of sound sequence event that demonstrates “musical features” the Intercorporeal Account claims that music is better understood as a relational mode, one that obtains between corporeal “musical subjects” and produces assemblages of relationships we call works. I am not interested in identifying necessary and sufficient conditions with which to identify musical works but identifying the *stuff* from which musical works are made. Recalling our example of ontological dismissal, cleaning house, the Intercorporeal Account is not quite an attempt to name and explicitly identify all those objects which belong in the “music room” and maybe not even an attempt to comprehensively identify which objects belong in the music room and which belong elsewhere. Instead, the Intercorporeal Account, a step removed from traditional analytic ontology, is an argument about the sorts of things that belong in the “music room,” a checklist that we can consult to see what belongs here, and what might best be housed elsewhere.

In a continental sense, then, the Intercorporeal Account could be interpreted as a kind of meta-disciplinary commentary. The argument that music is a relational mode helps guide further discussion, refocusing our attention away from musical works and onto the norms that condition musical performativity, the affordances that are involved in *musicking*, or the corporeal elements through which musical relationships are materialized. The work of identifying *specific* musical



norms, affordances, or materializations will necessarily be historically and culturally rooted because musical practices are so bound up in political, socio-cultural, and historical moments. Perhaps Gregorian chant and Ornette Coleman have very little in common (and we ought not be surprised to find that monks and avant-garde jazz musicians produce quite different sorts of “music”); the Intercorporeal Account aims to identify what *is* common between these musical practices, even if that identification is relatively limited by the wide scope of praxis it accommodates. Said differently, the Intercorporeal Account’s claim is not that music appears in the same way across time and cultures, but that any practices we identify as *music* must include corporeal relationships, otherwise the differences between *those* practices and musical practices are too great to unify them in a singular aesthetic medium.

The remainder of this chapter means to explore the reasons for understanding music as a particular relational mode that obtains between musicians and their audiences. My claim is that an analysis of musical engagement on the part of musical experts (musicians) and audiences alike supports the idea that musical experiences are typically active and relational in ways that are difficult to accommodate in a work-as-object paradigm. I argue that this relational understanding best explains its position in human life, *and* the role of philosophy of music as describing and constructing the musical norms that condition its existence. At heart, the goal is to convince readers that music happens whenever and wherever we perform it, that music is not abstract, and that music is primarily about the people involved and how we relate to one another.

### **Interlude: Musical Terms**

Before we begin discussing corporeality, and with a new understanding of the Intercorporeal Account as disciplinarily ecumenical, we should address some ambiguity that exists in musical terms. So far, we have played a little fast and loose with the terms “music,”

“musical,” “musical performance,” and “musical works” but a *ritardando* is in order. Analytic philosophy (and much of our discussion) permits some ambiguity between “music” and “musical works” because the former just is the category which contains all and only the latter. An analytic ontology of musical works should explain *why* musical works belong to the category they do, and a definition of music should identify all and only instances of musical works. Once analytic philosophers have established that musical works are (for instance) created, abstract objects then “music” becomes a specific category *of* abstract objects, and “musical performances” are how those abstract objects are materialized in performance. However, the Intercorporeal Account is slightly more complicated than this.

To simply say that “music” is an activity, category, or institution that enacts, includes, or legitimizes “musical works” is, for lack of a better word, messy. But we should not be too surprised by some ambiguity in terms, especially if the concept “music” is an assemblage: what Anna Tsing calls a “patchy landscape” involving “multiple temporalities, and shifting assemblages of humans and nonhumans” (2021, 19). I suggest that “music” is an assemblage in the way Tsing describes, both as a concept used to identify (and reify, reinforce, or endorse; norm) certain types of musical behaviors, *and* as the collection of actual embodied, corporeal, human practices that musical activities or relationships include. “Music,” in this sense, could indicate a motley collection of concepts and practices, ideas and materialized objects that coalesce under the singular term. In fact, Tsing herself raises idea that music (by which she seems to mean works or performances) is often an assemblage. She raises the idea that assemblages are polyphonic by comparing them to Baroque compositional practices, and notes that defining an

assemblage is often a matter of “flattening” this polyphony into more easily comprehensible monophony.<sup>16</sup> She writes,

Polyphony is music in which autonomous melodies intertwine. In Western music, the madrigal and the fugue are examples of polyphony. These forms seem archaic and strange to many modern listeners because they were superseded by music in which a unified rhythm and melody holds the composition together. In the classical music that displaced baroque, unity was the goal [...and now] we are used to hearing music with a single perspective. When I first learned polyphony, it was a revelation in listening; I was forced to pick out separate simultaneous melodies *and* to listen for the moments of harmony and dissonance they created together. (Tsing 2021, 24)

Tsing uses music as a metaphor, suggesting that the polyphony characteristic of baroque composition is analogous to the polyphonic assemblages that appear in (and comprise) ecosystems. The reason she compares assemblages to polyphonic composition is because contemporary musical and ecological methodologies tend to “flatten” or otherwise unify this theoretical or environmental polyphony into monophony. Just as our desire for monophonic music helped replace baroque compositions with classical and eventually romantic music, our attempt to understand ecosystems in anthropocentric terms is similarly a “flattening” of the very differences that make the system an assemblage in the first place. The Intercorporeal Account I propose runs this metaphor in the opposite direction, suggesting that what we mean by “music” is a polyphonic assemblage of interrelated terms, material, and practices, many of which overlap, intertwine with, and otherwise influence the others such that a clear and concise definition of “music” is as difficult to provide as a clear and concise definition of “nature.” Perhaps it is even that our analysis flattens an otherwise polyphonic assemblage of musickings into a monophonic

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<sup>16</sup> Admittedly, the subject of Tsing’s book (what she calls an assemblage of ruminations) is an assemblage of matsutake mushrooms and their intertwining in pericapitalist systems, not music, but the conspicuous example supports a real connection between assemblages and music or musical works.

definition or ontology of “music” and yet the goal of the Intercorporeal Account is to provide just such an account.

Whatever account I offer to describe “music” will need to collect a wide variety of behaviors, objects, sounds, and ideas together under a single umbrella, into an *assemblage*. Because the boundaries between these terms and the practices they identify are relatively vague (and because the boundaries between music and other arts, or other aspects of lived experience are *also* quite vague) we might experience some ambiguity in our definitions. My goal, the Intercorporeal Account’s goal, is to identify music as a type of relational activity, and musical works as a type of relationship; these musical activities relationships will likely interact with, rely on, be shaped by, or otherwise involve a collection of material objects, concepts, and institutionalized practices and structures that comprise an assemblage of musical activities, concepts, and objects. As a glossary of sorts for the upcoming discussion, let me explain that I will attempt to distinguish between *music* (a relational activity, I claim), *musical works* (specific assemblages of relationships that cohere into a singular collective undertaking), *music the institution* (comprised of concepts that guide, inform, or otherwise norm our musical praxis), and *musical materializations* (individual performances, scores, physical objects, and people who contribute to the construction of musical works, the enaction of musical activities, and the reification of institutionalized musical norms). In the discussion that follows, please forgive me a wrong note or two; I just ask that you keep the cymbals on their stands, and not aimed at me.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In a now-infamous anecdote, Philly Jo Jones throws a cymbal at Charlie Parker when the Bird tried improvising beyond his skill and led the whole of the Count Basie Orchestra to a (literal) crashing halt.

**Corporeality (A Theme)**

Building on our discussion of music *as* embodied musicking from EMC philosophy, our discussion of corporeality reinforces the claim that “the music” is not a third entity in the musical triad, connecting listeners and musicians, but that listeners and musicians *themselves*, their embodied activities, constitute the music. While the Intercorporeal Account holds that both listeners and musicians are corporeal musickers, my discussion here primarily addresses music from the perspective of performance, arguing that music includes performers’ bodies as part of the musical work itself, just as we would expect if music were an embodied activity. Suzanne Cusick’s landmark work “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem” (1994) supports my claim that the meaning of a musical work is at least partially constituted by the bodily actions of performers because she demonstrates how listeners lose a full understanding of musical works when they consider “the music” as a cognitive or auditory product. Additionally, according to Cusick, we do a disservice to musicians and composers, on feminist grounds, when we treat musical works in their purely intellectualized or cognitive capacity. While Cusick’s argument, the one I mean to import into the Intercorporeal Account, is not explicitly feminist (and she freely admits this) it is important for us to begin where she did, in a feminist analysis of gender in musical composition and the implicit gender-coding of musical roles. The claim that musical works include, in their meaning, the bodies and embodied activities of performers, is intelligible only because a rift exists between feminist and patriarchal musical norms and analysis—Cusick argues that explicitly masculine approaches to musical performance are coherent, but fundamentally mistake the contributions of performers to the meaning of musical works. In a certain manner of speaking, it would be accurate to say that Cusick identifies an infraction against the pragmatic constraint, but that this issue only becomes apparent when we

bring feminist analyses of gender to bear on musical concerns. Accordingly, my discussion begins as Cusick's does, in a conversation about gender rather than music directly. Foundationally, the Intercorporeal Account takes up Cusick's underlying and universalized argument that musical works include, in their meaning, the embodied activities of performers and are therefore not identical to a score or auditory product.

Cusick begins her project with a discussion of Fanny Hensel's Trio in D minor, op. 11 and the ways in which, she believes, gender and gender performance is inscribed in the performance of the work. She calls attention to "the weird relationship of the piano and the strings, amounting to a really striking imbalance in roles that is resolved at recapitulation," as "somehow the site where difference has been inscribed, described, or reconciled" (1994, 13). The argument, at least initially, is that this "site of difference" (on her Butlerian analysis, the site that conditions gender performance and construction) appears *in* the music. Music is, in Cusick's initial articulation, partially a *project of* and partially a *metaphor for* gender performance. Cusick's remarks hinge on a similarity she identifies between musical performances and Butlerian performativity. She asks:

If gender is constituted by bodily performances, and metaphors of gender are constantly circulating through discourse, might not elements of all bodily performances be read as metaphors of gender even when they seem to be performances of other things?

and answers,

If bodily performances can be both constitutive *of* gender and metaphors *for* gender, then we who study the results of bodily performances like music might profitably look to our subject as a set of scripts for bodily performances which may actually constitute gender for the performers and which may be recognizable as metaphors of gender for those who witness the performers' displays. (1994, 14)

Cusick's article (published in winter 1994, taking up work in *Gender Trouble* but likely not *Bodies That Matter*) relies on Butler's early work to claim that if gender is comprised of reiterative and

consistent performances, then musical performances might be an example of these performances. Audiences, Cusick argues in this passage, are in a position to witness musical performances as metaphors for gender and its performance, whereas performers are in a position to experience musical performances *as* gender performance (1994, 14). In interpreting Hensel's work, specifically, along these musicological lines, Cusick asks: "Is there evidence in the physical actions and interactions of the parts that gender is either metaphorically or *actually* enacted by performers of Hensel's score?" (1994, 15). Her first interpretation of the composition treats the score as a set of instructions that acoustically encode gender performance, and musicians as participating in a type of gender performance directly. The piano's role in the tonal and thematic development of the sonata movement might function as, Cusick suggests, an auditory representation of feminine gender performance, and the pianist's embodied activity is a direct performance of femininity (1994, 15). However, Cusick says that this analysis of Hensel was "hopelessly boring" not because it was unsuccessful or uninformative, but because it reinforced the musicological assumption that scores are constitutive of musical works (1994, 15). She concludes that interpreting the acoustic or notational aspects of a work as representative of gender performance is mistaken; a Mind/Body problem<sup>18</sup> implicit in her methodology, in musicological analysis itself, prevented her from fully understanding the role of gender and performers' bodies in Hensel's composition. In focusing on the score and instruments' roles, Cusick claims she implicitly treated music as if it were merely a mental entity, contained within Hensel's mind and translated into musical notation as the score.

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<sup>18</sup> Cusick shares a term with the traditional "Mind Body Problem" in philosophy of mind, but her interest in the problem is not its philosophic puzzle (How do these substances interact?) but how this dichotomy in philosophy of mind becomes gendered in its adoption elsewhere (like musicology). While the contemporary mind/body divide in musicology owes its intellectual lineage to the traditional dilemma, Cusick takes up *her* Mind/Body problem as synonymous with the *problems that emerge from* a mind/body distinction that codes the mental as masculine, and the body as feminine.

She writes that musicologists who treat music as if it were just a score, “as if it were a *mind–mind* game [...] have taken a position in one of our civilization’s most fundamental and enduring philosophical dilemmas, the so-called Mind/Body problem. In effect, we have rescued music for inclusion in the realm of the privileged position” (Cusick 1994, 16). This “rescuing” of music for *mind–mind* analysis ignores the feminine in musical performance by privileging the mental aspects of a musical work, composed scores, which are “always gendered masculine” because “the composer has come to be understood to be *mind—mind* that creates patterns of sounds” (1994, 16). Musicology’s focus on the score and composer at least implicitly (and often explicitly) privileges the masculine, mental aspects of musical works and hinders a full understanding of, or engagement with, *the* music. Cusick claims that “when music theorists and musicologists ignore the bodies whose performative acts constitute the thing called music, we ignore the feminine” (1994, 16). In other words, it cannot be that a textual analysis of Hansel’s composition is sufficient to understand the gendered performances that it encodes. Attending to the composition as merely textual, as a mental construct encoded in the score, both ignores the full meaning of the musical work and dismisses the bodily/feminine aspects of the work as a legitimate subject of musicological inquiry.<sup>19</sup>

Cusick’s modified argument relies on a re-application of something akin to Butlerian performativity: she claims that a musical work is constituted by performers’ bodies and actions in

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<sup>19</sup> To note a similarity here, both Cusick and most 4E scholars argue that “the thing called music” is constituted by embodied activities, the “performative acts” of musicians and audience members who engage in the construction of a musical work or performance. Additionally, in Cusick, we might see how music could be a *relational* activity insofar as performativity is not isolatable, but always exists within the context of social norms and situations they condition. However, Cusick isn’t *yet* at the point of describing music as a relationship or even relational in a robust sense; she appears to believe that these activities constitute music insofar as a relationship between musicians and composers can be *performed* (in a non-Butlerian way) for observation by an audience.



addition to the score. It is not that scores encode gendered performances, but that the composer/score is *always* masculine juxtaposed with the *always* feminine performer. This line of argumentation is perhaps tangential to Butler's work because Cusick does not import a readymade, complete understanding of performative gender but extracts the idea that certain sorts of embodied performances can constitute what they purport to represent. In the case of gender, Cusick understands Butler to mean that embodied subjects bring their gender into being through the performances that constitute it; subjects do not merely perform gender roles as pre-given scripts, but these performances *constitute* gender. Cusick, analogously, claims that musicians bring a musical work into being through their performance; musicians do not merely perform a script given to them by the score, but their performances *constitute* the musical work. The embodiment that Cusick discusses is importantly drawn from Butler's work in *Gender Trouble*, but after an initial pass at using performative theory to analyze Fanny Hensel's Trio, Cusick walks her argument back to the claim that musicians are *coded* feminine, and composers are *coded* masculine. Cusick suggests that a truly feminist music theory, given this altered claim, would address works as including "the performer's mobilization of previously studied skills so as to embody, to make real, to make sounding, a set of relationships that are only partly relationships among sounds" rather than theorizing the enaction of gender by musicians and composers (1994, 18). Cusick arrives at the claim that performers' bodies are involved in the enaction of musical meaning and that musicology must include an analysis of physical, corporeal performers as integral to the full meaning of musical works. Now, we can interpret Cusick's argument as a claim that we *should* attend to the bodily actions of performers as *part of* musical works on feminist grounds, but for evidence that musical works include these embodied activities as a matter of metaphysical fact, we need to address her example, Bach's *Clavierübung*.

Cusick suggests that attending to the body as partially constitutive musical meaning is grounded in a feminist project but provides “an example that is not explicitly feminist” in her discussion of Bach’s *Clavierübung*, Part III, BWV 686. Western classical paradigms of composition and performance lend themselves to the idea that the “cocomposing listener” is in the best position to understand musical works like the *Clavierübung* because these works are understood as abstract mathematic entities encoded in scores. Listeners who properly attend to the auditory aspects of a musical work as it is performed are said to create, in their “mind’s eye,” a reproduction of the score and thereby fully understand the work itself. However, Cusick’s contention is that musicology should “include in its notion of musical meaning things which could not be heard by even the most attentive cocomposing listener” (1994, 20). For the Intercorporeal Account, this assertion must be true in at least a trivial sense: given the 4E work that grounds EMC and the Intercorporeal Account, there *cannot be* a “mind’s eye” in which to store the cocomposed work, and no musical “work” in the absence of the musicking that constitutes it. In a more robust sense, Cusick aims to disenchant us from the belief that astute “cocomposition” could be sufficient for musical understanding because, she claims, musical works are partially constituted by the embodied activities they include. I will briefly address Cusick’s example to explain why corporeality, musicians’ bodies, are so important to an understanding of music and musical performances.

To demonstrate what, precisely is at stake in the reconceptualization of music as an enaction of gendered performance, and what is at stake if we ignore the role of the body, Cusick offers her own performance of “Aus tiefer Not” from Bach’s *Clavierübung* as evidence. She explains *her* experience of the *Clavierübung*’s climactic moment which is decidedly not the same

experience *or the same passage* as the cocomposing listener would identify as the piece's climax. She explains that her experience of the piece's climax is of a profound imbalance,

Neither foot can rest long enough to balance the body, neither hand can rest long enough to balance the body. For these few terrifying measures (terrifying in the organist's experience), one might as well be floating in mid-air, so confused and constantly shifting is the body's center of gravity.

However,

None of this is audible, except possibly as wrong notes [...] neither harmonic nor contrapuntal analysis would identify this little passage as critical to the work's meaning, much less as what it is to the person playing the piece, the climax. (1994, 18)

In other words, the performer's body constitutes at least some of the meaning of the musical work insofar as the work climaxes, for the performer and composer, separately from where a harmonic analysis (the analysis available to a cocomposing listener) would indicate as the climax of the piece. There is nothing in the passage, musically or harmonically, to suggest that the piece has reached its perilous summit, but the musician's body carries that meaning. Cusick's argument here is relatively simple, and easily adapted outside of feminist or queer musicology and into philosophy of music more broadly construed: harmonic analysis of at least some musical works (of which the *Clavierübung* is an example) diverges from musicians' experience of those works in ways that are musically significant. To better understand this claim, please permit a brief aside to address the passage of the *Clavierübung* Cusick supplies as evidence.

The image shows a musical score for a selection from Bach's *Clavier-Übung III*. It consists of two systems of music. The first system features a piano accompaniment on the left and a vocal line on the right. The vocal line has the lyrics "[ Send me the grace my" and an arrow pointing to a note on the fifth beat of the third measure. The piano part has two red circles highlighting specific notes. The second system continues the piano accompaniment and the vocal line with the lyrics "spi - rit needs ]".

Figure 1. Selection from Bach's *Clavier-Übung III*. Reproduced from Cusick (1994), containing Cusick's markings (in black) and the author's markings (in red).

Cusick indicates the point of imbalance with an arrow, at beat 5 of the third measure above.

This particular part of the *Clavierübung* is based on the traditional hymn “Aus tiefer Not schrei’ ich zu dir” that paraphrases Psalm 130 and contains, in the passage above, the psalmist’s call for grace and recognition of their inadequacy (here coded as instability) in the face of the divine.

Cusick’s contention is that although the musical notation indicates nothing significant, the body of the musician constitutes part of the aesthetic work insofar as the musician’s imbalance is integral to an understanding of the imbalance and uncertainty that characterizes the psalm.

To explain the connection between this analysis and the musicological point that Cusick forwards, we only need a brief understanding of musical development and cadences. To start at

the beginning: The majority of Western classical music is built on harmonic movement, and musicians, music theorists, musicologists, and composers often speak about pieces of Western classical music as an auditory journey from somewhere, to somewhere else, and back to the beginning. Most Western compositions move from tonic (the I chord in harmonic notation) to a dominant chord which introduces auditory tension (almost always some variant of a V chord) and resolve that tension when the piece cadences (moves from dominant harmony back to tonic). The climax of a piece, then, is precisely the moment where the current passage stands in the *most* musical tension with tonic, when the piece has moved as far away from the “safety” of tonic as the style and genre allow.<sup>20</sup> In nearly all Western music the dominant chord plays an important role in this climax by prefiguring tonic: the V Major chord, a prototypical example of dominant harmony, contains the “leading tone” (a note one half-step below tonic, G# to the key of A, or D# to the key of E), which, to ears accustomed to the 12-tone scale (like ours), *must* resolve to tonic. The leading tone found in dominant harmony is an inherently unstable scale degree, and (almost without exception) resolves upwards; but composers often reinforce the work’s harmonic climax by refusing listeners the catharsis of this musical resolution until the last possible moment. In a sense, the climax of a piece happens when we are forced to ask: “Is it even possible to return to the stability of tonic from this strange and unfamiliar position?” and it concludes when the composer brings us “home” safely. Good cadences bring the piece back to tonic without

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<sup>20</sup> I say “as far away from tonic as the style and genre allow” because how *much* tension is acceptable is a large part of what differentiates the periods of Western classical music from one another. Early compositions from the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods often introduce tension and dissonance only in certain, rigidly designated situations; later works from the Romantic period, by contrast, introduce and resolve tension and dissonance according to much looser guidelines than their predecessors. Precisely how far, musically speaking, a piece strays from tonic often helps us categorize it as an example of one or another period of Western classical composition.

disrupting the listener with messy jumps or imprecise voice-leading between lines, *great* cadences make the movement from the profoundly unfamiliar back to tonic sound natural, almost like the experience of walking out of the woods, lost and confused, searching for a road or path, and then being surprised to find your house directly in front of you.

Given this (overtly, but hopefully not overly, poetic) way of understanding musical climax as the moment we feel most displaced, most outside ourselves and the familiar, Cusick's argument might now appear more straightforward: if the climax of a work of music is when the performance is most imbalanced, most at risk of losing itself and never finding its way back to stable ground, then there is nothing to suggest that a musical climax must be auditory. When Cusick says that performing the piece produces *physical* imbalance or tension, she means to indicate that this tension *is* the climax of the piece for the same reasons that the *auditory* tension is the climax of the piece according to harmonic or contrapuntal analysis. This talk of climaxes and losing oneself might carry some suspiciously erotic connotations (at least it does to my ears), but this is no accident. For reasons I will explicitly (although, not *too* explicitly) discuss in the following sections, it might be helpful for us to think about the climax of a piece of music in precisely this context. A connection between the musical and the erotic might better demonstrate why the frenzy of losing oneself auditorily or physically constitutes the piece's climax, and why this frenetic energy, pleasurable in its own right, nevertheless drives with such force toward catharsis, resolution, the comfort of the familiar. For our current discussion, know that the experience of imbalance and uncertainty that precedes catharsis and collapse constitutes the work's musical climax, and that Cusick's contention is that musicians experience a work's climax differently than harmonic analysis would indicate. We are now in a position to turn to a harmonic analysis of the

passage for a demonstration of Cusick's claim that the meaning of the work cannot be found in the work if not in the performer's body.

The passage Cusick identifies in the *Clavierübung* is one of very few in the piece that calls for double pedals in the organ bass line, and the point of unbalance it produces stands in direct tension with the moment's notational implication. The phrase Cusick quotes tonicizes A minor: the G#s in the first two measures (circled in red) operate as leading tones to the tonic (A), and the sharp- and flat-less key signature indicates that this is A minor.<sup>21</sup> The interesting part of this passage for my analysis is the momentary resolution (if not a real cadence, then movement that approximates one) exactly at this moment of unbalance. Bach, as he tonicizes A minor, lets this phrase rest in the relative key of C Major. This cadence sounds natural because minor keys tend toward their relative major—without leading tones (present in modified minor scales, and all major scales; the G#s in this passage) minor keys are inherently unstable and tend toward the III chord (the relative major, C Major in this passage). Here, Bach lets the piece reach a kind of momentary resting place, the chords fall a 5<sup>th</sup> from a G Major chord to a C Major chord, from the dominant to the tonic just as we would expect in a cadence *in the key of C major*.<sup>22</sup> To summarize what this means for my analysis: harmonically, the passage comes to a sonic *rest* at

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<sup>21</sup> Here, I say “tonicizes” rather than “is in the key of” because key of the piece itself is difficult to determine. The piece cadences in E minor but the sharp- and flat-less key signature would indicate A minor or C Major. This passage, the accidentals indicate, is in A minor but the rest of the *Clavierübung* is not. Accordingly, I say that this passage “tonicizes” A minor because harmonic analysis of this passage *by itself* suggests that a cadence would resolve to A minor.

<sup>22</sup> Of course, there are a few caveats: Neither the G Major nor the C Major chords are in “root position” (where the lowest note is the first note of the chord, C for C Major), at least not for very long. Additionally, both chords include some dissonance and resolve that dissonance before the beat or chord concludes. Both these techniques are useful for Bach to de-emphasize what would otherwise sound like a very strong cadence, but neither contradicts an interpretation of the passage as musically “stable” during this movement of physical imbalance for the organist.

precisely the point Cusick identifies as the “perilous” imbalanced climax, the moment of *most* tension for the performer.<sup>23</sup> Cusick explains that there are two messages about grace encoded in the work, one that is available to the cocomposing listener in which the passage modulates and cadences, and one (conspicuously absent from the notated score) available through an interpretation of the organist’s body as delaying this stability, operating on a different time-scale than the piece’s sonic components (1994, 19). The tension between bodily and sonic interpretation is an important part of Cusick’s argument because it demonstrates how the cocomposing listener (specifically listeners who are not already familiar with the conventions of Baroque era organ performance) could not hear Bach’s “second message” about grace, even if the purely auditory one was available to them. Bach offers, in the *Aus tiefer Not* passage, a statement filled with tension as the passage holds the listener at the very moment it sets the performer adrift. It might very well be that by attending to the body *and* sound we understand a message about the Christian antinomy of body and mind and its reconciliation within the divinely ordained whole. Regardless of Bach’s intent throughout the passage, the musicological fact of the matter is that something quite important happens for the performer that remains conspicuously absent from any harmonic analysis of the score.

Cusick’s claim that the organist’s body is integral to understanding the passage is, of course, supported by the inadequacy of harmonic analysis to explain the musical significance of this “climax.” Not only does the piece unbalance the performer, but the score indicates the *exact*

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<sup>23</sup> Perhaps it is important to note, at this point, that the imbalance that Cusick claims characterizes this passage *is* written into the score, just not in a way that the cocomposing listener would recognize. Organ music contains (as you might see in the measures above) a second bass line, instructing the organist to use their feet on the “pedals” of a *third* keyboard operated by the musician’s feet. Bach, as an organist himself, would certainly know this imbalance he produced in the performer, even if the audience could not *hear* the imbalance in a harmonic sense.



*opposite* is happening sonically. The piece cadences in C major, coming to rest and providing catharsis during what Cusick calls climactic and “terrifying measures.” The cocomposing listener could not *hear* what has happened or understand its significance simply by reading the score. It is only in considering the performer’s body as *part of* the musical performance, part of “the music” itself, that we understand what has happened right under our ~~nose~~ ears. Cusick’s analysis, then, is an argument for the inclusion of bodies as part of the music, directly refusing the “acousmatic ideal” of musical performances (in which the sound and sound alone is important to the work).

There are two major theoretical building blocks in Cusick’s argument that the Intercorporeal Account takes up. First, in addition to this refocusing musicological analysis on performances and bodies, Cusick’s example demonstrates how musical works are best understood as a set of actives materialized, demonstrated, or otherwise put on display during performance, exactly as we would expect if music was constituted by musicking activities. It cannot be that the performance merely instantiates an abstract, or objective acoustic work because the embodied activities of performers constitute at least part of the work’s musical meaning.<sup>24</sup> Her initial treatment of musical works as the encoding of gender performance helps us understand why an analysis of performers’ bodies is so rare in musicology and music theory, and yet integral to a full understanding of musical works: The musicological appearance of the Mind/Body divide

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<sup>24</sup> Worth noting here is that a proper harmonic analysis of a score, especially Baroque era compositions, treats the notes as mere notes and not as instructions for musicians. The reason Cusick is so insistent that harmonic analysis is inadequate to explain the *Clavierübung* is because harmonic analysis does not take into consideration the instrument used to perform the work. Often, harmonic analyses serve a very practical purpose in that they interpret the musically (sonically) significant aspects of a work for the composition of new arrangements. For example, whether a chord is spelled as a German augmented 6<sup>th</sup> or as a dominant V<sup>7</sup> (sonically identical chords, merely respelled in the case of a Ger+6) matters to arrangers who need to know what *role* the chord plays. This type of harmonic analysis, however, does not consider the *actions* that performers will need to undertake in performing the piece, just the functional role of the *sounds* that musicians produce.

obscures the role of feminine-coded performers and highlights the role of the masculine-coded score. When we treat musical works as abstract entities (sets of sonic instructions, a score) we lose an understanding of the work as it concretely appears precisely because musical works are enacted projects, activities, and not mere idealizations. In this way, Cusick's argument supports my 4E-aligned argument that music is a kind of activity, and musical works are assemblages of these activities. The musical meaning of works is grounded in the activities of musicians in ways that a purely sonic approach to musical interpretation misses.

Second, I take Cusick's argument to mean that music *must* include an account of the bodies that actualize, enact, or otherwise materialize musical instruction—this music is an *embodied* activity from the start, and not merely an embodiment of otherwise-intellectual activity. Cusick demonstrates that music necessarily includes human, corporeal subjects whose bodies and embodied activities constitute the music. In other words, music is *essentially* embodied because the bodies of musicking subjects are an integral part of “the music” itself.<sup>25</sup> This is slightly different than saying that music is constituted by activities, because (outside a 4E framework) it might be that these activities are only trivially embodied, bodies might be a convenient tool but nonessential to musical performance or interpretation. However, Cusick's claim is that performers' bodies *are* part of the music in that they carry musical meaning in the same way that the chords, notes, and sounds do. This is a stronger claim than merely saying that music is an

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<sup>25</sup> To again briefly raise the idea that music might be relational (and to return to our heteronormatively charged analogy) we might analogize music to marriages in that these relationships are not merely between individuals who *happen* to have bodies, but are intimate, corporeal connections between embodied subjects. It might be trivially true that relationships require embodied subjects because how else would we interact with the world and others if not through embodied activities? The separate claim here, however, is that the relationship itself might be grounded in the embodiment of its participants. That the (or an) important part of the relationship itself is the embodied and bodily interaction between selves.

embodied activity, this is the claim that bodies are fundamentally *part of* the music. Cusick's account reaffirms both the EMC-rooted claim that music is an activity and the claim that *embodied subjects* are part of musical works in a nontrivial sense.

### ***Embodiment and Corporeality***

The primary shortcoming of Cusick's analysis of embodiment or corporeality, as I understand it, is a lack of sustained discussion concerning the kinds of bodies involved in musical activities. It is clear, in employing Butlerian performativity to explain the gendered roles of performers and composers, that Cusick is not talking about *literal* physical bodies. We know this because "the composer is masculine *not because so many individuals who live in the category are biologically male*, but because the composer has come to be understood to be *mind*" (1994, 16). This claim does not receive significant uptake in Cusick's discussion of bodies and musical performance because the majority of her argument is grounded in, but does not directly examine, this assertion. This should come as no surprise, since Cusick primarily addresses the *implications of a* Butlerian approach to musicology, rather than offering a sustained argument that the bodies found in performance *are* performatively constituted and consequently gendered. However, Cusick's assertion that gender *is* at work in musical performance, and that bodies are gendered as a matter of performative constitution (and not biology) forms the basis of her musicological analysis. It must be true, in the context of Cusick's analysis, that the gendered subject is not identical with the biological body.<sup>26</sup> The body we are interested in, we might say, is *corporeal* but

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<sup>26</sup> I admit that "not identical with" is an imprecise and unfortunate turn of phrase, but the Butlerian analysis that supports Cusick's assumption is difficult to summarize succinctly (physical bodies are conditioned, delineated, and constructed by performative activity set against the circulation of gender norms; they are at least not the same as or derived from biological bodies), *and* the body that Cusick employs in her analysis seems less Butlerian than her use of Butler would imply.

not physical, not merely a vessel for the mind but not reducible to matter either. Cusick claims that “there are theological, moral, and class implications to this denial of the flesh in an art which cannot exist without the flesh” (1994, 16) and it is clear that this “flesh” is the flesh of bodies and musicians. But *this* flesh, the flesh that Cusick sees bracketed out from musicology is an active, embodied flesh.

The body in Cusick is not merely a physical body, but neither is it a purely Butlerian, performatively constituted body. While Cusick explicitly takes up Butler in “Feminist Theory, Music Theory,” she does not dwell on a performative analysis of musical works *or* gender and embodiment. Her initial analysis of Hensel’s Trio quickly evolves into to her argument that musical works always *metaphorically* encode gender performance insofar as musicians are always *coded* feminine and composers are always *coded* masculine (1994, 17–19). The body in Cusick is not, at least in this early iteration, a fully Butlerian, performatively constituted body. Besides, a purely Butlerian approach to embodiment is less than ideal for both Cusick and the Intercorporeal Account. The Intercorporeal Account has its sights set on a less methodologically siloed concept (even though it is tempting to simply import a performative theory of embodiment) to explain musical corporeality. At a certain level, the various concepts of embodiment that ground 4E scholarship, Cusick’s queer musicology, and Butler’s performativity theory are all tuned and adjusted to the demands of each respective discipline. However, an advantage of the Intercorporeal Account (I claimed, and must now demonstrate) is its theoretical ecumenicalism, by which I mean widespread adaptability into a variety of ontological, metaphysical, and philosophic systems. For this reason, I aim to articulate an account of embodiment that these fields might reasonably agree on, a concept that could (at least hypothetically) comfortably ground both Cusick’s and Krueger’s understandings of musicking.

Metaphorically, if each of these fields (poststructuralism, queer musicology, and EMC respectively) constitutes a branch in a river, I suggest that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is upstream, feeding the waters in which these theorists swim. First, Merleau-Ponty stands to contribute to our understanding of Cusick because the nascent version of performativity Cusick took up in 1994 was grounded in Butler's work on (or, in conversation with) Merleau-Ponty.<sup>27</sup> The flesh that Cusick invokes is a corporeal, contextualized, historicized body and I believe that this "flesh" is conceptually linked to (or at least compatible with) Merleau-Ponty's flesh, the flesh that appears in his discussion of corporeality. Second, Krueger's assertion that musick must be materialized to afford its tool-like use rests on an explicitly Merleau-Pontian understanding of the actively-inhabited soundworld that musicians construct.<sup>28</sup> What I mean to briefly illustrate is that I rely on Merleau-Ponty to ground my discussion of the musical body not because it is the easiest or most straightforward way of approaching the concept, but because it is the most ecumenical, and I believe most accurate, way of explaining embodiment in musical performance.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy offers the Intercorporeal Account a significant step beyond 4E approaches to embodiment and helps bridge a theoretical gap between performativity and extended mind frameworks. Throughout the project, I have discussed music

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<sup>27</sup> Of course, Butler's performativity theory is partially grounded in their *critique* of Merleau-Pontian embodiment, but I will address these critiques and their specific implications for the Intercorporeal Account in recapitulation.

<sup>28</sup> A brief aside about 4E and phenomenology: although it is still a subject of intra-disciplinary debate, most 4E scholars understand their work as a natural extension of phenomenology in line with either Husserlian anti-Cartesianism, or Heideggerian contextualism. As a specific example, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is taken up by five separate authors in the EMC anthology *Music and Consciousness 2*, and four authors in the original *Music and Consciousness*; Husserl, meanwhile, is indexed 18 times in the same book. Of course, these statistics are not definitive, but should help to contextualize work being done in EMC as grounded in classical phenomenology. The reason for this overlap may be a joint emphasis on context and lived experience as essential components of an account of music and musical engagement.

as an embodied activity, but it is unclear how Cusick's claims in *this* article support an account of musical activities as relational in the way the Intercorporeal Account claims they are. Merleau-Ponty' elegantly explains how relationality is a necessary component of phenomenological experience because the constructed body is constructed *against* something, and he describes this process of embodiment as *intercorporeal*. This theory of intercorporeality, which we will discuss presently, moves us (theoretically speaking) from Cusick's claim that music is an embodied activity, to her later assertion that musical works are also relational activities. Considering these genealogical issues, to illuminate the role of the body/flesh, the *corporeal* self in Cusick and my account of musical activities (and keeping in mind that this is perhaps an imperfect analogue, meant to tie together analytic and continental accounts of music through phenomenological resources) I will address the corporeal (and intercorporeal) self in Merleau-Ponty.

In the section that follows, I argue for an understanding of corporeality that includes active and *interactive* dimensions to demonstrate that music is a corporeal and relational activity. To gain a clearer understanding of the musical body and music's relational capacity I will be moving in a theoretical circle of sorts: starting with Merleau-Ponty's historicized and corporeal body and returning to Cusick's own work on the gendered, relational, and sexual subject that appear in musical performance.

### **The Audible and the Inaudible: Phenomenological Corporeality (B Theme)**

There is, in any musical activity made available for audience engagement, some physical element. In a musical performance, performers with *physical* bodies and instruments (in the traditional sense) materialize a set of relationships in physical space. Physical instruments and bodies serve to manipulate the world in order to produce the sounds that listeners have access to. Listeners, for their part, often engage with music through physical objects: a copy of the score,

vinyl records, analogue tapes, the physical vibrating air that transmits sound; even digitized music and scores take up *some* amount of physical space and must be materialized through speakers and headphones to be heard.

However, these physical objects and *physical* bodies are not the bodies that the Intercorporeal Account claims enact musical activities—the bodies of musical performance are flesh-and-blood of a different kind, they are not merely physical. This body, the Butlerian body that Cusick takes up (and, to some extent, the 4E body that Krueger discusses), is rooted in a Merleau-Pontian understanding of corporeality. The corporeal body, Merleau-Ponty poetically explains, “is not matter. It is the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body, which is attested in particular when the body sees itself” (1964b, 146). The flesh in this passage is not the literal material from which bodies are made, but the flesh of the phenomenologically constructed body, the body of vision and touch, of exploration and activity. Not only is the phenomenological body a body *of* vision and touch and sensory exploration, but it is *constituted by* this active engagement with the agent’s environment. Because this active, intentional reaching out of self-to-world and world-to-self comprises the corporeal body, subjects experience their embodiment as “consecrated to actions” (Merleau-Ponty 2013, 147). This “consecration” of the body to the actions it affords points beyond the material body, to what Merleau-Ponty calls the *corporeal* body. Already, we might notice some similarities with 4E philosophy, specifically the idea that bodies are typically experienced as affording certain behaviors, ways of actively exploring and interacting with the world. The musical body that Cusick discusses, the body that grounds Krueger’s work, and the body that Butler responds to are conceptually derived from this phenomenological body, the body as a way of being, thinking, and performing.

To explain the phenomenological body in greater depth, Butler notes that the corporeal body in Merleau-Ponty, is “a ‘historical idea,’ [...] a ‘place of appropriation’ and a mechanism of ‘transformation’ and ‘conversion,’ an essentially dramatic structure” and that it is “a modality of existence, the ‘place’ in which possibilities are realized and dramatized, the individualized appropriation of a more general historical experience” (2022, 175–76). The fundamental shift Butler describes in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is a move away from the biological and scientific body and toward the historicized, constructed, and conditioned body. The phenomenological body is, in this sense, a body of action and interaction, one that supersedes the physical body in our experience of the world. In a flat-footed sense, all this means is that the body is not experienced as a *body* as we would find in medicine and science, but as a way of moving through the world, that which conditions our thought and behaviors and not merely an object. In a more robust sense, Butler’s comments illuminate the way that the body is a socially constructed and conditioned mode of existence; the body, as we experience it, is not pre-given but constituted within and against historicized possibilities. What the corporeal body literally *is* and how it functions in the world is a matter of contingent, historicized fact, and this constructed and contingent body conditions our possibilities for worldly engagement. To say that a body is consecrated to action means that the (corporeal) body is experienced in its perpetual construction and reconstruction, as a changing and mutable realm of possibility. Borrowing this theological language, we could say that the Merleau-Pontian body is always consecrated to action, but its particular benedictions and blessings, the specific corporeal ordinations, are socially constituted and condition the way we move through the world.

In Butler’s analysis of Merleau-Ponty we see bodies, the norms that condition their appearance in the world, and their embodied affordances begin to coalesce into a singular



concept, the corporeal body.<sup>29</sup> This corporeal body, experienced as a locus of possibilities, is what Cusick appears to mean when she claims that bodies are indispensable to our understanding of music. It is not that a *literal* body imported from biology or medicine that is important to the meaning of musical works, but the corporeal bodies of performers (and the possibilities they afford) that are essential to music and musical activity. Cusick's argument relies on understanding the body not as a physical entity through which compositions are instantiated (otherwise *any* physical instantiation might be sufficient to carry musical meaning), but the body as "consecrated to action," the body considered as a set of corporeal affordances for embodied musical engagement. If this is sounding a little vague or a little poetic, what I mean to imply is that the body in Cusick and Butler is remarkably similar to the body considered from a 4E perspective, and that all these concepts stem from a common phenomenological concept of embodiment.<sup>30</sup> To explain with a well-worn example, the corporeal body is a part of musical works the way Otto's notebook is a part of his mind. Bodies and notebooks have an undeniable physical dimension, but this physicality is not experienced as mere *stuff*, but as a set (an assemblage) of contextualized, historicized affordances and corresponding actions.

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<sup>29</sup> We will return to a sustained discussion of Butler and performativity in the next major section, the sonata's recapitulation. In this passage, Butler illuminates Merleau-Ponty's understanding of corporeality, an understanding reflected (after heavy critique of its gendered implications) in their own explanation of performatively constituted subjects.

<sup>30</sup> I would be more than happy to pontificate at some length on the relationship between phenomenological embodiment(s) and 4E embodiment(s) as two sides of the same coin. To summarize what could be a lengthy digression (a chapter unto itself even) I can say that a great deal of 4E work is explicitly grounded in phenomenology, but that 4E philosophers tend to take a significantly more experimental approach. Theorists in both fields seem interested in how it is that humans think *through and with* their bodies, how the self and body are one and the same (or at the very least co-constitutive), and the implications of this view for anti-Cartesian perspectives on the body and mind as identical entities. But where phenomenologists take personal experience (sometimes psychological surveys or research) as their "raw data" 4E philosophers usually rely on neurological data and scientific experiments.

However, I contend that the corporeal body that hovers in the background of Cusick's and Butler's work and that Krueger directly addresses, is not *just* a body of action and affordances (not *merely* a body that interacts with the world) but a body that is constituted by its relationship to the world and to others. Granted, this relational concept of embodiment departs, slightly, from what Cusick and Krueger explicitly address in their work; the two are primarily concerned with what the body *does* and how it *functions* and less with its constitution. In the following sections, I attempt to flesh out an understanding of what I will call the musical body, or the embodied musical subject, in line with Butler and Merleau-Ponty because explaining the body solely in functional or musical terms is insufficient—the functional body that grounds Cusick's queer musicology and Krueger's 4E aesthetics cannot have appeared *ex nihilo* and a *corporeal* body best grounds these discussions of embodiment. Understanding how this corporeal body comes to be and what it affords not only illuminates the concepts operating in the background of Cusick and Krueger but allows us to reconceive of the body as an inherently relational entity.

To demonstrate the relational nature of the corporeal body, I begin with Merleau-Ponty's theory of corporeality, specifically the concept of *intercorporeality* and corporeal constitution developed in *The Visible and The Invisible* (1964b). I aim to explain how Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercorporeality (*intercorporéité*) grounds my claim that music is, from the start, a corporeal and embodied activity in two senses: First, the concept of intercorporeality illuminates precisely how and why music is a corporeal activity, a bodily undertaking, and the specific understanding of bodies that supports Cusick's analysis of musical performance and relationality. Second, intercorporeality helps explain the relational nature of corporeality in musical experiences, how this notion of corporeality developed in EMC and Cusick's Butlerian analysis implies that music is inherently relational. It is not just that the Merleau-Pontian body is corporeal and therefore

more than its physical parts, but that the self is always the product of an *intercorporeal* confrontation between the self and the world. This confrontation, this “enjambment” provides the conditions for the emergence of a corporeal self, that is, an inherently a relational and expressive self.

### ***Intercorporeality & Embodiment***

Intercorporeality is, at heart, a theory of subject-formation and corporeal embodiment—what I aim to prove through my discussion of Merleau-Ponty is that musical engagement and expression are necessarily and essentially corporeal activities. Cusick’s argument establishes that bodies are a necessary component of musical engagement, that performers’ bodies and embodied actions are part of *the music*. It may be helpful, here, to distinguish between necessary and essential musical embodiment because if embodiment is merely a necessary feature of musical expression *as we experience music today*, then it could be that bodies are only pragmatically necessary for musical engagement.<sup>31</sup> What I suggest in the following section is that the concept of embodiment operative in Cusick, the phenomenological and intercorporeal body, supports the stronger claim that embodiment is an essential (i.e., irreplaceable) component of aesthetic activity.

To begin, I turn to Thomas Csordas’s specifically musical example for help explaining intercorporeality. Csordas traces the conceptual development of intercorporeality in phenomenology from its roots in intersubjectivity, through Walter Benjamin’s reflections on language, finally to Merleau-Ponty’s articulation of *intercorporéité* in *The Visible and The Invisible*

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<sup>31</sup> I imagine the objection would be to claim that folks like Nick Bostrom are right; minds might be substrate-independent, and bodies might merely be an expedient, but imperfect and temporary solution to the problem of direct mind-to-mind communication.

(Benjamin 1999; Merleau-Ponty 1964b). While Benjamin’s work primarily focuses on language, Csordas argues that Merleau-Ponty raises the issue of musical intercorporeality in “The Intertwining—The Chiasm” by articulating a concept of linguistic intercorporeality grounded in a joint musical/linguistic *sonorous* corporeality. Csordas explains this sonorous corporeality with a lengthy musical example:

A Navajo chanter of my acquaintance will declaim for extended periods against the contemporary travesty of tape recording sacred songs as a means of learning how to conduct ceremonies [...] my initial understanding of why tape recording is unacceptable and inauthentic was in terms of the textuality of the songs and their appropriate treatment. It was a violent taking out of context, an *arrachement* [...] Then the chanter told me something that changed my understanding of his objection. He said that the way it used to be, and the way it should be, was for the person learning the songs to be sitting close enough to the chanter to see his lips move as he sang. With the invocation of moving lips, the song emanating from the bodily portal, power passing by force of breath through the gap of the lips, the apprentice focusing on the action required to bring the chant into intersubjective being, my understanding shifted ground from textuality to embodiment. It careened from context and technological medium to lived spatiality and physical proximity. (2008, 117)

This example illustrates the difference between a contextual authenticity, and the corporeal embodiment that his acquaintance identifies as important to ceremonial Navajo chanting. The problem with tape recordings is not that the songs forcibly removed from their proper context like auditory Elgin Marbles (although this *arrachement* is a travesty), but that the chants are essentially embodied practices, and their disembodiment precludes a student’s ability to properly understand or learn the ceremony’s corporeal enaction. The power of the chant, its proper ceremonial role, hinges on its corporeal presence and not merely social or historical contextualization. In other words, intercorporeality in this musical context means that the song *itself* includes a corporeal dimension that is irreducible to the auditory, and that the body is more than a mere conduit or context for the ceremony; the chanter’s embodied actions *are* the chant,

and the auditory products *of* these actions are insufficient to carry the same meaning as the chanter's body.

In this pertinent (albeit lengthy) example, Csordas illustrates intercorporeality as a feature of music that directly and essentially includes corporeal bodies, the phenomenological "flesh" of the agents involved. It may also be apparent, from the example Csordas provides, that this understanding of the intercorporeal self takes a substantial step beyond traditional approaches to 4E philosophy, and toward a robust and phenomenological understanding of embodiment. It might be perfectly consistent to describe the embodied activities of Csordas's acquaintance in terms of sensorimotor contingencies and affordances but identifying the body as a "portal" through which the song emanates is a different phenomenological claim. To say that there is "power communicated by force of breath" between student and teacher identifies the experience as more than the mere sum of its embodied affordances, its constitutive sensorimotor activations. Returning to Cusick's *Clavierübung* example, we are well-positioned to understand how embodiment is a necessary and essential component of musical meaning. Csordas's example demonstrates how *the chant* is literally constituted by the embodied actions of the chanter in the way that the *Clavierübung* is similarly constituted by the embodied actions of the organist. Embodiment, on Csordas's reading of Merleau-Ponty, is about more than the enaction of motor skills, it is about the way that meaning (and its imbrication with power circulation) is constructed in and through corporeal activity.

We should note, however, the slight differences between the intercorporeality Csordas discusses and the concept developed by Merleau-Ponty. Csordas's example focuses on the *communicative* nature of music, and the way that intersubjective encounters facilitate this subject-subject interaction. Ceremonial Navajo chants are learned through this embodied communication

because they are more than the sounds they produce; for students to understand what they witness requires that they attend to the corporeal performance of the chanter. The emphasis in this example is on the way that education and the communication of musical meaning rests on subjects' corporeal engagement with one another. However, Merleau-Ponty's concept of incorporeality is a confrontation between the self and world that allows for *expression*, not necessarily (as Csordas's example illustrates) communication between subjects. Intercorporeality, as Merleau-Ponty explains the concept, is the interactive process between body and the world that allows for the two to become phenomenologically distinct.

As Merleau-Ponty discusses it, intercorporeality provides the conditions for a relationship between self and "things" in which each reciprocally constitutes the other. It is accurate, if a little reductive, to say that intercorporeality is how merely physical bodies become corporeal selves. By confronting objects in the world as different from the body the self recognizes itself as a "thing" that exists in corporeal space and further recognizes itself as separate from other "things" that inhabit the corporeal world.<sup>32</sup> Merleau-Ponty calls this feedback process a confrontation that allows for the possibility of others, of "things" and selves at all. Merleau-Ponty writes, "le corps n'est rien de moins, mais rien de plus que condition de possibilité de la chose" (1960, 172).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> This is imprecise language, of course, to say that objects, bodies, or selves are "things" in the corporeal world. My intention in using the word "thing" is both to mirror Merleau-Ponty's own language and to be faithful to his philosophic commitments. By the time Merleau-Ponty articulates a coherent theory of intercorporeal being, he has also committed himself to the dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy of Husserlian phenomenology. His use of the word "things" ("choses" in the original French) is a reflection of this commitment. It is not that a *subject* sets itself apart from *objects*, but that a *self* sets itself apart from the things that make up the *world*. The subjectivity of the self is a separate issue, as is the objectivity of the world. Merleau-Ponty's world is shimmering with meaning, reaching out to the self as the self reaches back, and an active participant in the emergence of the self as a self. Our world need not be quite so mystical, but our discussion of Merleau-Ponty should be careful not to import subject/object language into a subject- and object-less world.

<sup>33</sup> "The body is nothing more, and nothing less than the condition of possibility for things."

Here, this means that the condition of possibility for corporeal entities (literally: “things”) is nothing less, and nothing more than the body itself—the corporeal body’s “enjambment” with the world provides the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the world as such (things qua things). Our self-aware existence and our existence in a world of meaning hinges on this difficult tension between the self’s existence and the world’s encroachment on that existence, the world’s *reaching out* to the self in its corporeal existence. We only become aware of ourselves due to “a kind of propagation, encroachment, or enjambment” between the body and the intersubjective “thing,” between the self and other (Merleau-Ponty 1964a, 172).<sup>34</sup> *Intercorporéité*, as I suggested earlier, is a theory of relational, corporeal subjectivity. To recognize oneself as a self, we must be confronted with the corporeality of the other.

Merleau-Pontian intercorporeality begins in this enjambment between self and world, but it does not end there. The corporeal world is constructed through the body’s recognition of its own existence and appears when “the body sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching the things, such that, simultaneously, *as* tangible it descends among them, *as* touching it dominates them all and draws this relationship and even this double relationship from itself, by dehiscence or fission of its own mass” (Merleau-Ponty 1964b, 146). This “dehiscence or fission” of the corporeal body moves the self from undifferentiated pre-intercorporeal existence (unity) *with* the

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<sup>34</sup> A different way to understand this may be the counterfactual: without a bodily confrontation between the self and the world, Merleau-Ponty suggests, we would have no way of recognizing ourselves as separate from the world, as *selves* in the first place. The reason we experience ourselves as separate from the world is because we encounter it, corporeally, as an other against which the self can be constructed. To explain this confrontation, this enjambment in 4E terms, we would say that the self is constructed by its interaction with the world and the recognition that the world is not available for manipulation in the pre-reflective way that the body is. The body affords certain uses, uses that rely on SMCs and do not necessarily require conscious thought to mobilize. The world, by contrast, does not afford the same pre-conscious manipulation that one’s own body does, and it is through this recognition (*a bodily* recognition, not a conscious theoretical recognition) that the world is not within our immediate pre-conscious control that the self is separated from external things.

world, into the differentiated self-world relationship that allows for expression. Intercorporeality is marked by this self-world relationship (and the double relationship between the self and world, and between the self and the body which *is* the self) as a condition of expression as such. This emphasis on expression is perhaps concealed in Csordas's example because, according to Merleau-Ponty, intercorporeality does not just allow for communication between chanter and student but allows for the emergence of a chanter in the first place. The first relationship that exists in Csordas's example, Merleau-Ponty might argue, is the relationship between chanter and song.

For Cusick, as well, this relationship between self and world (between self and music, in her case) is a primary point of subject formation. Although a theory of subject formation is conspicuously absent from her work in the mid-90s, she takes up the topic in "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music" (2006). Her remarks reveal a belief in an "I" *a priori* of her socially constructed identities, an "I" that is not musician, lesbian, or woman. This "I" first appears in an encounter with music, "a music which seemed palpable, shining, like silver air, a music through which one could pass out of the bewildering world and into reality" (2006, 69). This musically recognized subject in Cusick is incredibly similar to the intercorporeal self from Merleau-Ponty, both appear out of a corporeal/tangible (Cusick says *palpable*) confrontation between world and self, and the recognition of the self *as a self* hinges on a tension between self and world. For Merleau-Ponty, this tension is an enjambment between self and world, a difficult confrontation that opens the possibility of corporeal existence. For Cusick, this tension is a rupture between the self and music that the self yearns, erotically, to repair. This *corporeal* body that appears in Cusick is grounded in this understanding of the non-physical body, the body that is recognized and



constructed by an enjambment between the self and the world, the body that is consecrated to action, the body that is *from the start* in relationship with the world.

However, just as Csordas's communicative example may have hidden an emphasis on the self-world distinction that allows for expression, Merleau-Ponty's discussion of corporeality as driving toward expression may similarly obscure some socio-political implications of corporeal embodiment. The corporeal body that appears in these passages is an inherently relational entity, at least including a relationship between one's own self and the world but Cusick and Csordas both emphasize the way that musical relations are at least partially involved in the circulation of power. Cusick addresses the dimension of musical communication and power in her discussion of the mind/body problem as it appears in musicology—the mind/body problem in philosophy of mind refers to a metaphysical dilemma (How can abstract entities like the mind enter into causal relations with physical objects like the body?), but her treatment of the problem squarely addresses its social and academic implications and the way that the mind/body dichotomy is often used to reinforce and reify power relations along gendered lines. Csordas, for his part, explicitly discusses chanting as “power passing by force of breath” from the chanter to the student. In both cases, sonorous or musical intercorporeality is about more than just a self-world relation, it is about the circulation of power among selves. Narrowly, in the context of the Intercorporeal Account, the claim I mean to extract is that intercorporeality is nearly always a matter of self-recognition within social context, and that the musical body is not *just* a corporeal

self constituted by a confrontation with the world, but that one's *musical* existence is a politically, socially mediated identity.<sup>35</sup>

That intercorporeal existence is a political matter should not come as a huge surprise, after all the corporeal world most of us move through *is* a social world. The constitution of the self is often a matter of social negotiation, of recognizing oneself as different from other selves, or the artifacts and materializations of human existence, and not just other “things” in a naturalistic sense. For example, Gail Weiss argues that, “to describe embodiment as intercorporeality is to emphasize that the experience of being embodied is never a private affair, but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and nonhuman bodies” (1999, 5).

Given that we are discussing a phenomenological body, a *corporeal* body in other words, means that we are discussing a body constructed by specific corporeal interactions between the self and world, and these interactions are not private, but matters of public discourse and construction—the body is always, already and from the start, *political*.<sup>36</sup> Flat footedly, this means the corporeal

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<sup>35</sup> As an illustrative example: The intercorporeal self that Merleau-Ponty describes appears to confront *himself* as separate from the world in an isolated, self-contained moment of fission. We might imagine that Merleau-Ponty's prototypical “self” awakens to an austere beautiful and uninhabited world, a world in which the self is continually probed, pulled, called to by the world in the very moment that it recognizes itself as separate from the world. This is a tempting picture, one that plays to a certain individualist (masculine) fantasy of the self, but this picturesque image of the self has strayed a bit far from reality. What I mean to emphasize by mentioning Cusick and Csordas's discussion of power dynamics is that intercorporeal selfhood is involved in the circulation of power, and that the self is a culturally and socially mediated construct. I do not mean to imply that this conclusion is unreachable from within the context of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology, but to demonstrate the difference in focus between discussions of *musical* corporeality (or intercorporeality) and Merleau-Ponty's directly phenomenological approach. Perhaps because music is a social affair, and perhaps because intercorporeality is itself always social, musical intercorporeality must be political.

<sup>36</sup> Here I use the term political to directly identify the public nature of selves, and the impossibility that they are constructed in complete isolation (in complete privacy). This has, of course, socio-political implications in the way Weiss describes in her work, but the real distinction between Weiss (and Cusick) and Merleau-Ponty's own analysis is a direct attendance to the public, socially-imbricated nature of the intercorporeal self.

bodies that exist *in* the music for Cusick are always constituted in (and against) a certain socio-cultural context.

At first glance this is a natural extension of Cusick's claims that musical works are metaphors for gender performance; insofar as gender is an aspect of one's public existence and informs the way one relates to other human and nonhuman bodies, music must also include this kind of public activity. However, Cusick takes her understanding of the intercorporeal self in a different direction, emphasizing the way that this public aspect of musical performance opens the possibility that this relationality, this "enjambment" between self and world or self and other, develops into a genuine relationship (or, at least, is experienced as one). To emphasize the public, and therefore politically imbricated, nature of the corporeal self, Cusick discusses the ways that one's politicized identities appear in musical performances as a kind of relationship between musician and work. As I will discuss, Cusick claims that (as a musician, and I argue a musical subject of any kind) the musical self is constituted as a public, gendered, and erotic/sexual subject. For the purposes of the Intercorporeal Account directly, Cusick's claim that music *is* a sexual activity (and the widespread acceptance of this idea) recommends theorizing music not just as an active, corporeal artistic undertaking that includes self-world interaction, but as a type of relationship or relational mode.

### ***Salt-N-Pepa***

The idea that expressive or communicative auditory activities, language for Merleau-Ponty and music for Cusick, are like sex (or literally *are* sex) is a well-established analogy (or claim). Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the intercorporeal self as sonorous *already* implies this erotic dimension. Intercorporeality, Csordas suggests, "exposes the [erroneous] presumption that language is immaterial rather than being a sonorous presence" (2008, 118). The "sonorous

welcoming” that Merleau-Ponty identifies as linguistic reception is a fundamentally corporeal, bodily activity in which subjects *touch* one another through linguistic expression. Csordas “to spin out some of the implications of this line of thinking” explains,

the filaments of intentionality that crisscross between and among us humans take sensuous form in language. Speaking is a kind of sonorous touching; language is tissue in the flesh of the world. Or, to be more graphic, think of language as a bodily secretion; and if there is a suspiciously erotic connotation to this proposition, I can only remind you of how we refer to speaking as intercourse, and the double meaning contained therein. (2008, 118)

Of course, Csordas’s emphasis, even in his example of Navajo chanting, remains linguistically centered and metaphoric. Language is not *literally* sexual but has a “suspiciously erotic connotation” because it is a type of intercorporeal, tactile intercourse. Insofar as sexual expression and intercourse are relational activities (and constitute a type of relationship) language establishes this kind of connection between selves for Merleau-Ponty. However, music is less clearly relational in this sense—we typically believe language is a medium of communication, and music (at least as we have discussed it so far) is expressive, but not necessarily communicative. To support the Intercorporeal Account’s claim that music is not only corporeal, but relational, we can (re)turn to Cusick, this time taking up her argument in “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight.” Here, Cusick provides an alternative account of this erotic intercorporeal existence as a feature of musical performance. Just as the intercorporeal self in Merleau-Ponty emerges from the self-world confrontation, Cusick’s musical subject appears in her relationship with the musical performance. Cusick’s argument supports the claim that music is not just an intercorporeal, but a relational undertaking, and points toward the ways in which music is a highly politicized social activity. In other words, if (as we have claimed) music is an activity, then Cusick suggests this activity is experienced as an affective, potentially erotic *relationship*.

Cusick calls her essay an attempt “to speak publicly and truly about my own musicality (as private a part of me as my ‘sexuality’—and frightening to speak of for that, but more frightening still because it is more completely a part of me than that which the world calls ‘sex,’ being also the fabric of my public life)” (2006, 67). The essay begins in Italian and describes her experience of “having great fear” of the project she has undertaken, a project she says (in Italian) would be easier to complete in a language she speaks free of the illusion of “naturalness” that English carries for her.<sup>37</sup> Her essay is an attempt to shed these illusions and to theorize the place of the gendered, sexual subject in musical performances, to unite the musician, musicologist, and lesbian in her experience of music as “the transcendent joy of being alive, not dead, and aware of the difference” (2006, 69). It is this experience of music, of its transcendental vivacity, that (as Gallope remarks) demands and repels intellectual scrutiny (2017, 5). Cusick’s account of the imbrication of music and sexuality is less a coherent analysis of musical experience than a geodic cracking-open of the musical self. For the Intercorporeal Account, these first glimpses into the musical subject support my claim that music is a relational activity, and that the public, political, and politicized self is an integral component of these relational activities.

Cusick reflects on the question: “Does this [my lesbian identity] or any other ‘sexuality’ constitute so profound and pervasive a part of one’s life that it might be an identity, inextricable from the “I” which listens, performs, or thinks about music?” (2006, 70). By way of an answer, Cusick defines sexuality and illustrates four ways that one’s sexual identity might simultaneously constitute a musical identity. Sexuality, she claims, is a “means of expression and/or enacting

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<sup>37</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that the *lingua franca* of musical notation is Italian, and Cusick expresses, *in Italian*, her desire to think the lesbian and the musicologist together as inseparable, potentially identical components of her “self.”

relationships of intimacy through physical pleasure shared, accepted, or given” and these include an element of *power* as well, insofar as sexuality “allows movement within a field defined by power, intimacy, and pleasure” (2006, 70–71). Concretely, Cusick claims that sexuality is a way of enacting intimate relationships within a field of power and pleasure because she intends her definition to be inclusive of non-heteronormative sexualities and explain the sexual nature of situations not explicitly marked as erotic. Given this queer definition of sexuality and the erotic, we might see sexuality make an appearance in musical contexts in the way subjects: (1) choose “an intimacy/pleasure object”; (2) establish a relationship with this object; (3) enact this relationship publicly as scholars, performers, or audience members; and (4) even in the initial choice “to *be* a musician” (2006, 71). This is Cusick’s way of gently engaging her readers, offering a common-sense version of the deeper phenomenological and metaphysical claims that follow. Cusick’s assertion that sexuality or sexual behavior appears in musical contexts through our choice of and engagement with pleasure-objects is not a unique claim, but it bears examination since her analysis of this connection veers away from traditional approaches.

For example, a not insignificant part of Cusick’s initial argument, this redefinition of sexuality and pleasurable relationality in musical context, sounds as though it could have been written by a parallel-universe Theodore Adorno. Of course, Cusick never cites Adorno and explicitly avoids the hierarchical distinction he makes between “serious” and “entertaining” music, but to say that music is a pleasurable and potentially erotic experience places Cusick’s comments closely in line with Adorno’s in “On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening” (1985). To jump in front of the obvious misalignment, I do not mean to imply that Adorno’s discussion of musical fetishization is a discussion of *sexualization* or *sexual* fetishization: The important connection I see between Cusick and Adorno is the way in which both authors

discuss music as a pleasure-object unto itself. Adorno remarks that, when it comes to audience engagement “it no longer makes any difference whether it is to Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony or to a bikini” (1985, 278). The point of this remark, for Adorno, is to illustrate the way in which musical works have become fetishized commodities, and audiences react to them according to a sort of implicit collective agreement about the work’s cultural importance. Beethoven and bikinis are functionally the same to contemporary audiences because the *content* of the work no longer matters to the fetishizing symphony attendee, only the work’s position as a cultural phenomenon. Cusick’s initial remarks point toward a related understanding of the role music plays in contemporary life: the pleasure-objects we choose, the way we enact our relationship with them, and even the choice to become a musician (or “serious” musical listener) is a matter of public discourse and relies on culturally mediated listening norms. The four ways that Cusick claims we might understand gendered and sexual engagement with musical works would be right at home in Adorno’s analysis of musical engagement, only he would likely maintain that our choice of a pleasure/intimacy object and the enaction/establishment of our relationship with it often ignores the content of the musical work in favor of engagement with the cultural *idea* of the work.<sup>38</sup> This

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<sup>38</sup> I am, hesitantly, uncomfortable with Adorno’s distinction between fetishized music and “serious” music that may or may not succumb to fetishization. My thanks to Gina Lebkuecher and Claire Lockard for a brief conversation about Alva Noë, Jaques Attali, Walter Benjamin, Theodore Adorno, and the common tendency of self-professed musicophiles to distinguish (I believe erroneously) between “serious” and “entertaining” music. I take it that this is a natural, if often unsavory, desire to distinguish between (at its most extreme) art and propaganda. Noë remarks that there must exist some distinction between music that is about *the music* and music that is about its performance. Adorno mirrors this sentiment with his remarks concerning the fetishization of certain musical works, practices, and types of engagement; there is fetishized music in which cultural capital and one’s impression *of* the work (as impressive, important, special) is prioritized over the work itself, contrasted with serious music in which technical skill and the work itself is prioritized over cultural capital. Meanwhile, Jaques Attali distinguishes between music that reifies cultural norms, and music that is uniquely “composed” in opposition to dominant power structures. All of these contributions seem to have something to do with what Benjamin writes about technical

difference is an important point of departure for Cusick (and my discussion of her work) because, unlike Adorno, she claims that engaging with a musical work and enacting a relationship of power, pleasure, and intimacy is a result of engaging with the work's content. By contrast, for Adorno, the fetishization of music relies on a rupture between the work's content and its cultural function and is reinforced by regressive and infantilized listening habits; musical works become fetishized pleasure objects *because* audiences cannot engage with the content of the work. The opposite is true of Cusick's analysis, and she argues that a serious engagement with music *produces* and supports our experiences of musical works as pleasure-objects (specifically sexual and sexualized pleasure objects).

For Cusick, it is not just that one's sexuality appears in musical contexts, or that one's sexual identity informs their musical choices and behaviors, but that the experience of music *is* a sexual experience. Cusick suggests that "if sex is free of the association with reproduction

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reproducibility and the difference between auratic and technologically reproduced art during the rise of the Third Reich.

What we apparently *want* to say about music (all art, really) is that there is a difference between *art* and *entertaining artifacts* that is not captured in talk distinguishing between "good" and "bad" art. We feel uncomfortable saying that propaganda is "bad art" or that muzak really is *music*, just bad music. We *want* for there to be a metaphysical distinction between art that forces us to think (what Sartre might have called "committed" art in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*) and art that reinforces cultural norms and prejudices, and that this metaphysical distinction is not merely a difference in degree, but kind. What I worry is that this distinction, perhaps for the reasons Cusick mentions in "Feminist Theory, Music Theory" carries its own cultural prejudices and reifies its own set of oppressive systems and beliefs. In later work, I would be thrilled to explore these distinctions between "serious/art" and "pop/entertainment" music as the appearance of gendered, classed, and racialized differences in musical practices, and the way that *these* distinctions are not only encoded in "high" and "low" art distinctions, but often mask their own appearance by purporting to subvert the very power systems they reify. Adorno's claim, for example, that so-called fetishistic, regressive musical listening practices are harmful because they support culturally dominant narratives about what is and is not "good" music, eventually becomes the claim that regressive/fetishistic musical practices undermine "serious" music like Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Toscanini. Adorno's own argument demonstrates the role of fetishization in the construction of a musical "canon" while actively reifying a notion of canonicity in distinguishing between musical fetishization (and the works that permit of this engagement) and real listening (and the works that demand this type of engagement).



enforced by the so-called phallic economy [...] if it is then *only* (only!) a means of negotiating power and pleasure and intimacy through the circulation of pleasure, what's to prevent music from *being* sex?" (2006, 71). From this assertion, that sex might *be* music and *vice versa*, Cusick launches into a series of rhetorical questions about what this might imply for musicology and musical performance with the overarching intention of suggesting that music and sex are just ways of negotiating what she calls the power/pleasure/intimacy triad (2006, 71). The way in which one negotiates this triad determines the kind of partner that one is and, importantly, her argument that music is sex hinges on a non-heteronormative (potentially anti-heteronormative or de-heteronormative) understanding of sexual power dynamics. Cusick's claim is that musical experiences *literally are* sexual in that being (or coming to be) a musician and a sexual subject both involve one's continued negotiation power, pleasure, and intimacy in relationship with an other. The argument boils down to the phenomenological claim that a musical work can be a sexual other in more than a metaphoric sense, and that one's sexual subjectivity can therefore be identical to one's musical subjectivity. Cusick supports this claim with a personal experience of lesbian sexuality and its reversal of power roles in musical performance.

An important aspect of romantic/sexual relationships (especially non-heterosexual ones) is the transference of power roles between lover and loved and Cusick claims this power dynamic appears in our encounters with music. At times, we exist in a position of power over the music we are listening to or performing, but this power relation is often reversed, and music "gets the better of us." When we are overwhelmed either as performers or listeners by this "transcendent joy of being alive, not dead, and aware of the difference," we experience a shift in the structures that constitute our powerful, intimate, and pleasurable relationship with the music (2006, 69). Cusick cites her experience playing Bach as evidence that musical performance is a "sexual act"

that includes negotiating what she calls the power/pleasure/intimacy triad (2006, 78). She writes that during her performance of Bach's *Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel hoch*,

I love using my body to release the power of the uncanonic melody's climax [...] I especially love the climax because it is at that moment that the music gets away from me, at that moment *she* is on top in the sense that because of my hands' work *she* has all the power, and I am reduced to rapture. (2006, 79)

Cusick's experience of musical performance is not intellectual, passive, or even merely expressive. She experiences musical performance *as* a sexual act, one that is no less intimate or sacred for being enacted in public. As evidence, she points to the ways that music can, and potentially should, be understood in sexual terms. She asks a few rhetorical questions to point in the direction of the erotic in musical experience:

What if hands are sex organs? *Mine are*. [...] If music IS sex, what on earth is going on in a concert hall during, say, a piano recital? [...] Does it help account for the swooning over Liszt (in an 1840s construction of public group sex), over Elvis (in a 1940s construction of the same thing), over... Madonna... over, in the long-gone 1970s, Holly Near? (2006, 79)

Her goal with these questions is not to reinforce a claim that there is a particularity to *lesbian* musical experiences, but to reinforce the broader point that music is fruitfully (even, more-accurately) understood as a sexual, erotic experience.<sup>39</sup> What I hope to export from Cusick is the claim that our experience of music is active and relational in the way that sexual encounters are active and necessarily relational. Since this experience is a feature of musical praxis, our

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<sup>39</sup> If you will allow me to briefly interrupt myself with an aside: I am sure that some of my readers are, as I occasionally am, prepared to dismiss Cusick's claim as hearsay. However, the methodology of balance and the pragmatic constraint demand that our musical theorizing is tethered to praxis, and Cusick is in a unique position, as both a theorist and expert musician, to explain the musical praxis our theorizing must accommodate. The point of discussing Cusick's strong claim that musical activities *are* sexual activities is to later temper this claim into something the Intercorporeal Account can address: if musical experiences are *like* sex in the ways that Cusick explains, then we likely have work to do theorizing the role of gender and subjectivity in musical engagement, *and* the role of the "Other" (capital-O) in musical relationality. (And I have been tempted, throughout the development of this project, to digress into a discussion of Levinas and music as the face of the Other.)

ontologies should account for it but if this is a widespread experience of music (widespread enough that it should influence theorizing in philosophy of music) then we would expect to see Cusick's claims corroborated by others. (Fortunately, we do.)

Cusick's argument that musical activities are sexual activities, while perhaps shocking in an academic context, is far from unique. Mimi Schippers noted that, in the Chicago hardcore scene, "women's sexual desire was not limited to women and men but was extended to the sound of singers' voices, the sound of the guitars, the syncopation of instruments, and other tonal experiences" (2000, 753). By her account, sexual experiences with *the music* are not the exclusive purview of musicians who are corporeally involved in musical production but include audience members as well. She writes that women say they want "to 'fuck' the music" and that these comments "were made toward and about the music as an object of desire and as sexually gratifying" (2000, 753). Cusick's experience playing Bach is corroborated by audience members at Chicago hardcore shows: the music itself is often positioned as an object of pleasure and sexual desire. Meanwhile, Gabrielsson and Radbury corroborate these accounts with an impressively comprehensive collection of interviews that concern strong musical experiences. These interviews reveal that ecstasy, love, intimacy, and sexuality appear as running themes in our commonplace discussions of musical experiences (Gabrielsson 2011, 271). Even Noë's enactivist approach to aesthetic experiences suggests that music and sexuality are closely aligned (even part of the same human behaviors) due to their performative dimension. He writes that it is "possible to distinguish between things we simply do and the actions that, in doing, we perform," and that "when we perform, as distinct from merely acting, we act in view of the evaluation or standards or rules and norms of others" (Noë 2016, 179). He explicitly argues that music and certain other aesthetic activities are like sex in that they demand a performance on the part of the subjects

involved, a performance that is evaluated by oneself and others in light of certain norms and expectations. These reports of musical praxis, in collected interviews and ethnographic research, combined with Noë's claim that music is a performance similar to how sex is a performance, corroborate Cusick's assertion that music *is* (or, at least, is like) sex.

Here, I should draw out two implications of this analogy for the Intercorporeal Account: First, we can understand Cusick's claim as compatible with intercorporeality as a way in which musical subjects encounter, in suspiciously erotic ways, *the music* just as the Merleau-Pontian self encounters the world through this erotically-charged confrontation. In this sense, what Cusick offers is a distinctively musical approach to subject formation, an explanation of how subjects come to be through their intercorporeal confrontation with the world (of music). For both Merleau-Ponty and Cusick the self comes to be through this enjambment between self and world that allows for the recognition of the self and the construction of a corporeal body as a historicized site of possibility; only Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the role of language in becoming a self-aware subject, and Cusick emphasizes the role of music (and power negotiation) in becoming a gendered, sexual subject.

Second, perhaps more foundationally, we can understand Cusick's claim as an assertion that music is a relational activity: Music is not just something we do, but something we do *together*, and we can't do it alone. For music to be a performance, Noë explains, means that this *performance* must be evaluated in light of standards, rules, or norms; in other words, performances require a communicative component insofar as they are *evaluated* and therefore expressed to a co-constitutive evaluator. Now, finally, the Intercorporeal Account has the resources to claim that music is, like sex, a relational and corporeal activity. With a little theoretical "translation" what Cusick offers is a theory of music as a relational activity: Her initial treatment of music in

“Feminist Theory, Music Theory” suggests that music is constituted by the embodied activities of performers, and her later argument in “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music” identifies the experience of music as erotically charged. Together, these claims recommend the view that music is an activity synonymous with musicking (at least on the part of musicians), and that musicking is a sexual act. When musicians and audience members alike engage in *musicking* we are engaging with one another and with the product of this engagement, what we might be tempted to call “the music” but is more accurately described as the “product of musicking activities” (i.e., one aspect of the musical performance we produce or witness). While I shortly suggest that this product is a relationship, the takeaway from Cusick is a theory of musicking as inherently relational, a practice that involves negotiating power, pleasure, and intimacy *with something* in public, politicized space. Cusick’s argument is corroborated by a wide variety of phenomenological, EMC, musicological, and sociological resources that all claim *this* is our experience of music. Because Cusick’s claim that music *is* sex is so well-supported by expert and nonexpert musical experience, proper accounts of music must accommodate these experiences at least analogically.

### **Medial-Caesura**

As we conclude our discussion of corporeality, we can begin listening for the sonata’s *medial caesura*. For my analogy, we will need to know that the medial caesura is a cadence that marks the conclusion of a sonata’s development section in which expositional themes have been sequentially explored, and that the cadence itself is almost never an *authentic* cadence in which dominant harmony resolves back to tonic. Most often, medial caesuras are half-cadences which resolve *to* a tension-filled dominant chord (a chord that “wants” to move back to tonic) and prefigure a return to the sonata’s A theme in recapitulation. This medial caesura (this section) is a

moment to reflect on the sequential exploration of corporeality and relationality that characterizes this section of the project and explain where the Intercorporeal Account stands before “resolving” into a discussion of performativity. For the purposes of this project, and commonly (although not universally) in sonata movements, conceptual development ends here. Recapitulation will re-examine the themes raised during exposition and development, but besides modulating our understanding of relationality toward a performative account of music and relationships, the Intercorporeal Account concludes at this medial caesura.

Our discussion of EMC philosophy introduced (in this sonata/chapter, if not the dissertation as a whole) the theme of *embodiment*, and the Intercorporeal Account relies on the work of 4E and EMC philosophers to claim that music is an embodied human activity. In discussing EMC, I argued that the most consistent way for EMC theorists to understand “music” is not (as many do) as a tool, but as an activity itself (what Small calls *musicking*). However, merely understanding music as identical to musicking activities poses a problem for EMC accounts in that it appears to collapse the musical triad (musician, audience, and musical work) into a musical binary that includes only musicians and their audience. This, I suggested, would be best explained if music turned out to be a kind of relational activity because the relationships that these activities constitute would *be* musical works in the way that activities and performative utterances constitute a marriage; there is no third “object” that exists between spouses or between musicians and audiences.

After a brief methodological and terminological interlude, I returned to embodiment (to *corporeality*) and discussed whether or not music *just is* musicking, and whether or not these musicking activities are relational (and if so, in what way). Suzanne Cusick’s analysis of musical performance (specifically in light of the Mind/Body divide that 4E and EMC philosophers

dismiss in cognition) suggests that corporeal agents are indeed *part of* the music in the way we would expect if music just is musicking activities. To clarify musical embodiment, we turned to Merleau-Ponty (and Butler's remarks on his work) to clarify that the body in Cusick's work is a *corporeal* body and pivoted to discuss the implications of understanding embodiment as corporeal. A corporeal notion of embodiment, for Merleau-Ponty, already implies that subjects are relational in some capacity (requiring, at least, a body-world relationship in order for agents to appear as distinct from the world). Cusick's analysis of musical identity as inextricably linked to sexuality supports the claim that musical activities are relational not just in the way that Merleau-Ponty suggests (i.e., as offering the conditions for expression and self-construction) but in a literal sense in which musicians enter into relations/relationships with musical performances and works. If we buy Cusick's claim that music *is* a kind of non-heteronormative sexual activity, then we would say that music is constituted by the activities of corporeal agents and that it is a way of being in relationship with oneself and others, a certain mode of relationality in the way that sex or sexuality is a certain way of relating with the other(s) who participate in that activity/relationship. Even if we are not convinced by the strong construction of Cusick's claim, the weaker construction of her claim (as an analogy) is corroborated by a wealth of literature, and it seems that music *must* include a relational element.

At this stage there are two issues left unresolved (two reasons this medial caesura is a half cadence and not an authentic cadence): First, Cusick's analysis of music as sex has the potential to reintroduce an objective concept of musical works into our discussion. Second, Merleau-Ponty's corporeality is an imperfect analogue for musical embodiment because (Butler argues) it reinforces problematic gendered binaries, and (Weiss and Cusick imply) it sidelines the socio-political dimensions of musical embodiment.

To explain the first of these issues: Cusick reports that the “uncanonic melody” is “on top” in the sexual relationship she experiences with Bach’s *Vom Himmel hoch* variations, but the melody *itself* cannot be an object in the usual sense, because Cusick understands musical works as activities that mobilize instructions in a score (or just activities, in the case of un-scored works). However, Cusick describes her experience of performance by asking who is *playing* who in the music/musician relationship. She writes that “in all performances that gives me joy, the answer is unclear—we are both on top, both on our backs, both wholly ourselves and wholly mingled with each other. Power circulates freely across porous boundaries; the categories of player and played, lover and beloved, dissolve” (2006, 78). Clearly, we are at a bit of a loss for words; it is difficult to say exactly what constitutes this relationship as sexual rather than masturbatory unless we are operating with a work-object paradigm (and Cusick is decidedly *not* using this framework) but it sounds decidedly strange to suggest that one has a sexual relationship with an activity.

There are, as I see it, two potential ways to resolve this issue, both of which point beyond a literal analysis of music as a sexual relationship with sound. On the one hand, we should remember that the *all* the materialized aspects of music (recordings, performances, compositions, musical instruments even) are the product of corporeal, embodied activities. Thinking about the subjects that produce the whole of a musical work means thinking about a host of minor characters who traditionally remain hidden in musical performance, but these individuals are potentially the subjects to whom Cusick’s musician relates through the sexual activity of musicicking. These contributors to a musical work might include past performers, luthiers, composers, conductors, audience members, even piano-tuners, and (perhaps to a lesser degree) all those who facilitate musical performances. Cusick herself even claims that she fosters a lesbian, sexual relationship, through musical performance and musicology, with the composer



Francesca Caccini (2006, 79). If music is a sexual *activity*, then it stands to reason that the other subjects involved are those who partake in the same activities. To be fully transparent, this is what I believe to be true: in a personal capacity, I think that musical works are relationships we foster with all those involved in the production, circulation, and reification of these assemblages of connections. Potentially, however, this is unsatisfying since we can think of instances where musicians appear to perform by and for themselves. Besides, it sounds (for lack of a better word) *weird* to say that Cusick is literally having sex with Bach when she performs his compositions, even if that *is* her explicit (ha!) claim about Caccini.

On the other hand, then, musical activities might be relational through a corporeal “dehiscence or fission” of the self *from* itself, through what Merleau-Ponty identifies as the “double relationship” latent in intercorporeality: the relationship one has with oneself (1964b, 146). As a particularly poetic gesture toward an answer here, we might think of Maggie Nelson’s comments on her intimate experience of weeping. She writes, “I confess to a friend some details about my weeping—its intensity, its frequency. She says (kindly) that she thinks we sometimes weep in front of a mirror not to inflame self-pity, but because we want to feel witnessed in our despair. (*Can a reflection be a witness? Can one pass oneself the sponge wet with vinegar from a reed?*)” (2009, 35). This is precisely the question that I believe troubles Cusick’s analysis of sex as an intimate negotiation of power and pleasure, just from the opposite side of the affective coin: Can we witness ourselves? Can we be an *other* to and for ourselves?<sup>40</sup> Surely indie-folk musician Justin Vernon would have some remarks on this topic after his own musical weeping on *For Emma*,

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<sup>40</sup> Hopefully the evocative imagery of the sponge wet with vinegar, its ecstatic/religious connotations are already suggestive of the connection between the intimacy of ecstatic religious experience and the type of corporeal ecstasy that Cusick has in mind.

*Forever Ago* which he composed in a remote cabin during his illness and a lonely Wisconsin winter.

If, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, we are capable of *seeing* ourselves, of recognizing our corporeality both as a self and an other to which the self relates, then Cusick's claim that music is sex comes clearer into focus—music can be a sexual activity with oneself, but with oneself *as* an other. Music, as a corporeal activity, affords this dehiscence of oneself *from* oneself and allows us to ask, as Cusick does, “Who's on top?” but the subjects in question are not subjects or selves in the usual sense, but the product of corporeal fission in musical performance. Perhaps we are not, as musicians, having sex with the sounds (even if this *is* our experience of it) but with one's own corporeally-sundered self. In either case, music appears as a kind of activity, one that produces relationships either with oneself (in a sense) or with the others involved in musical activities, and the performance of musical works are (this framework suggests) the enaction of specific relationships or sets (assemblages) of relationships built by musicking activities.

We have arrived at a moment of uncertain, impermeant stability: Cusick's work, supported by a richer understanding of Merleau-Ponty's (inter)corporeality in the background, provides us all the resources I need to support the Intercorporeal Account's central claim that music is a particular sort of relational activity, a way of enacting and establishing relationships similar, we might say, to marriage or sex; specific musical works, on this framework, appear as specific relationships or assemblages or relationships, comprised of musicking activities the way specific marriages or sexual relationships are comprised of similarly intersubjective/relational activities. This broad definition of music as a relational activity, and musical works as relationships *is* the thesis of the Intercorporeal Account, and I hope that it provides a novel, helpful point of departure for analytic philosophers of music.

But I call this a medial caesura (a *half* cadence that concludes with the tension-filled dominant harmony) because this definition retains some unresolved tension from our discussion of corporeality. If music is (or is *like*) sex, then our account of music should explain how musical works (analogous to sexual relations/relationships) come to be and should speak to public/political nature of these relationships, their mediation and construction within certain sociopolitical contexts. In other words, this is the moment where Merleau-Ponty's contributions to musical corporeality begin to come up short and where we must leave "development" behind and move into "recapitulation," into a critique of Merleau-Pontian corporeality from a Butlerian perspective. Merleau-Ponty helps us understand music's corporeal dimension and adequately points toward the way that musical experience is often erotic, but Cusick's discussion of sexuality is less well supported by a Merleau-Pontian understanding of sexuality than her discussion of embodiment was by his theory of corporeality. To address this gap, I turn to Butler because, on the one hand, they offer a direct and sustained critique of Merleau-Ponty's concept of sexuality; and, on the other hand, Butler provides insight into the socio-political dimension of gendered, sexual (and therefore musical) subjectivity.

For Cusick to say that music is like a sexual relationship implies that musical works are performatively constituted by subjects of a certain sort. Addressing Butler directly, rather than mediated through Cusick's analysis, refocuses our attention onto the musical subjects who perform these activities. This Butlerian analysis of the corporeal subjects whose activities constitute music should help us understand why accurately identifying instances of music in the world (especially on this relational/corporeal framework) is so difficult, and simultaneously address the socio-political and gendered dimension of corporeality conspicuously absent from a Merleau-Pontian theory of sexuality and subjectivity. In the section that follows I address some of

the potential issues for a purely Merleau-Pontian understanding of corporeal sexuality, suggest that musical subjects (and their relationships) are performatively constituted, and address some of the difficulties for identifying specific examples of music in this contextualized, politicized, and corporeal capacity.

### **Performativity (Recapitulation)**

First, in recapitulation, I should address the role of the body in Butler and Merleau-Ponty since, up until now, we have primarily concerned ourselves with the phenomenological body as common theoretical ground between EMC philosophy and Cusick's discussion of musical embodiment. It is not that the phenomenological body was a misleading or inaccurate way to understand musical embodiment, but that Merleau-Ponty's takes us *up to* the point of discussing the politics of corporeality and sexuality, and these are topics that Butler explicitly addresses in their critique. Equipped with an understanding of the corporeal body in Merleau-Ponty we are well-situated to understand Butler's critique of the implicit gendered norms inscribed in his discussion of sexuality and corporeality.<sup>41</sup> In a sense, we are tracing Cusick's own trajectory from the *corporeal* self implied by her dissolution of the musicological Mind/Body divide to the *sexual*, performative subject implied by her discussion of lesbian, musical relationships. Additionally, theorizing the corporeal self in musical performance as a *performative* self through this Butlerian lens affords the Intercorporeal Account a few key analogies: that music is, in one sense, like gender in that it is our activity within a delimited field of conceptual norms constitutes the

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<sup>41</sup> The critique of theirs that I take up is cited from their 2022 chapter in *Feminist Philosophy of Mind*, but originally appeared in *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* from 1989. Clearly, Butler was interested in Merleau-Pontian phenomenology at the same time they began articulating a theory of performativity. There are, as I read it, several passages in these early essays that prefigure their later, sustained discussion of performativity and gender.

“thing” in question; and that music is, in another sense, like marriage, in that it is a specific and highly-normed relational mode between subjects of a certain sort (gendered/sexual for marriage, sexual/musical for music). To reiterate, this recapitulation of corporeal and relational themes should not reveal anything shockingly new about music or musical activity; rather, the goal of recapitulation is to iron out some of the wrinkles that exist in these themes and provide closure before the perfect-authentic cadence of the sonata’s “essential structural closure.”

### **Pointing in a Crooked Line (A Theme)**

Initially, we should retrace some of the conceptual ground that bridges Cusick’s work in “Feminist Theory, Music Theory” with her work in “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music.” I suggested that, despite not explicitly relying on Merleau-Ponty to ground her work, Cusick’s dissolution of the Mind/Body divide in musical performance implies the existence of a phenomenological, corporeal body. Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the corporeal body, specifically his assertion that the self is intercorporeal, helped us understand Cusick’s claim musical works are auditory *and* bodily aesthetic works. We might, then, believe Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of sexuality would be sufficient (or at least thematically appropriate) to illuminate the corporeality of the sexual self in Cusick.<sup>42</sup> However, Merleau-Ponty is less than helpful in

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<sup>42</sup> To briefly reiterate: Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology supports EMC philosophy insofar as theorists often use, or are sympathetic to the inclusion of, phenomenological resources and some theorists (including my argument’s exemplar, Krueger) explicitly take up his views on embodiment and/or music. Meanwhile, Merleau-Ponty’s influence on Cusick’s work is more clearly identified insofar as she employs Butlerian performativity, and Butler’s theory is grounded in a critique of Merleau-Ponty. Cusick uses Butler’s work to ground her claim that musical works can enact, as a different type of “performance,” gender for the musicians involved but walks back a wholesale adoption of Butlerian performativity into a much different sense of gendered embodiment that looks more traditionally phenomenological than performative. For these reasons, Merleau-Ponty provided a kind of theoretical common ground between the various theories that ground the Intercorporeal Account, but I argue that his theory of sexuality and embodiment is insufficient to ground the claim that music is a *relational* corporeal activity because his theory of sexuality, Butler claims, sidelines sexuality’s relational dimension.

understanding Cusick's theory of sexuality at least in part because *his* theory of sexuality suffers from some theoretical ambiguity (as does his account of music). To better understand the sexual/musical self we can begin by clearly articulating Cusick's own remarks on sexuality directly, then address why (according to Butler) Merleau-Ponty's theory of sexuality falls flat, and finally examine Butler's own theory of sexuality and its influence on Cusick's analysis of musical performance. What I mean to demonstrate through this discussion is that the theory of sexuality that grounds Cusick's claims concerning music and sex implies the existence of a relational, political self that is constituted simultaneously with their culturally embedded identities.

One of Cusick's central questions concerns the nature of the relationship between the self and one's sexuality and musicality: *Is there any overlap between one's sexuality and musicality? Who is the "I" that is a lesbian, and who is the "I" that is a musician? Are these the same "self" or does a self take up separate musical and sexual identities or roles at different times?* To begin an answer, Cusick (as I discussed previously) identifies sexuality as "a way of expressing and/or enacting relationships or intimacy through physical pleasure shared, accepted, or given" and discusses her own sexuality in terms of the "power/pleasure/intimacy triad" (2006, 70, 71). She reconceptualizes sexuality as a *way of being* (or as a specific way of negotiating one's existence) within "a field" defined by power, pleasure, and intimacy and an agent's particular sexuality just is their manner of negotiating power, pleasure, and intimacy with and for others. Importantly, at least in musical contexts, this negotiation is not merely a cognitive task—the musical, sexual self is a *corporeal* self. Cusick remarks that to fall in love with a piece of music, is to "*become* the music [...] attending to its messages with ears, heart, and mind" and reports that in performing "I used my own body to release those messages again into the air for the pleasure of my own ears and mind, and of others' ears and minds" (2006, 77). The power, pleasure, and intimacy that Cusick

negotiates in musical experience are *bodily* or corporeal because her experiences of intimate pleasure of musical performance are auditory and manual. The difficulty for this account of the sexual self in musical performance, however, is accounting for corporeality as an essential feature of sexuality in addition to musicality. Of course, corporeality is a necessary component of *musical* performance because the meaning of musical works is at least partially carried by the embodied activities of performances, but Cusick's essay does not explicitly make the case that sexuality is corporeal outside this musical context. Because her discussion of sexual corporeality is implicit, we might worry if her definition of sexuality adequately responds to her own concerns about musical embodiment. I argue that her response is adequate, but implicit, and invokes the corporeal self as the common origin of both sexual and musical activity.

Cusick's critique of associating music with *mind* is that by ignoring the body in musical performance "we have changed an art that exists only when, so to speak, the Word is made Flesh, into an art which is only the Word. Metaphorically, we have denied the very thing that makes music music, the thing which gives it such enormous symbolic and sensual power" (1994, 16). Here, Cusick expresses her worry that our understanding of music as a cognitive activity ignores the very parts we believe are definitive of it. *My* worry is that her definition of sexuality has the potential, especially removed from the original context of the essay, to reproduce this same attentional misdirection away from the body and toward cognition.<sup>43</sup> Cusick begins with the claim that sexuality is a way of enacting intimate relationships "through physical pleasure shared, accepted, or given," and develops this into the claim that sexuality is a "practice that

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<sup>43</sup> I should note, this is not an issue for Cusick, but for the Intercorporeal Account. Her account of music as a sexual activity assumes (appropriately for her context and audience) that sexuality is a corporeal activity without needing to make that argument explicit.

allows movement with a field defined by power, intimacy, and pleasure,” before eventually articulating her thesis that sexuality is “a way of structuring relationships” (2006, 70, 71, 73). Sexuality, over the course of her essay, becomes less and less about the bodies involved and more and more about agential decisions and the relationships they create/maintain. Of course, this account is important for her claim because she argues that both musical and lesbian sexual experiences are “free of the association with reproduction enforced by the so-called phallic economy” (2006, 78).<sup>44</sup> In other words, *specific* bodies are accidental and not essential to one’s expression of their sexuality; but this is not to say that corporeal existence, bodies as such, are not an essential component of sexuality and sexual identities. An account of sexuality as merely a way of structuring relationships refocuses our attention away from its essential corporeal existence—where, in structuring a relationship that involves power, pleasure, and intimacy, are the *bodies*? The sexed and sexual bodies that are necessarily involved in sexuality and sexual experience are conspicuously absent except in Cusick’s discussion of musical performance. This is adequate for Cusick because music *is* sex, but, for those of us more sympathetic to an analogical construction of this claim, where might we find bodies in Cusick’s sexuality if not in music?

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<sup>44</sup> There are, I believe, a number of interesting connections between Cusick’s articulation of sexuality as outside the “phallic economy” and Butler’s chapter “The Lesbian Phallus and The Morphological Imaginary” in *Bodies that Matter* (1993a). Butler’s discussion of Freud and Lacan addresses lesbian sexuality in inherently corporeal terms, addressing the social construction of the sexed body and the role of the phallus in heteronormative and contra-heteronormative sexualities. Cusick’s articulation of sexuality as a way of negotiating the power/intimacy/pleasure triad is an explicit rejection of the phallic economy and, specifically, its association of biological (re)production with sexual activity. The two theorists take different approaches to similar questions, both examining the role of the phallus in orienting sexualities in relation to heterosexual normativity, and both providing answers that explicitly address Lacan and problematize psychoanalytic theory as an appropriate way of describing sexed, sexual development. Cusick’s idea that one “plays” at being a lesbian in the way that musicians play music is even a mirroring of Butler’s discussion of sexual identity as play in “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (1993b).



Merleau-Ponty, unfortunately, cannot be as helpful in explaining sexual corporeality as he was for an explanation of musical corporeality, but for the sake of thoroughness, it makes sense to start with his comments on sexuality and subjectivity. For Merleau-Ponty, sexuality is “coextensive with existence” and is “an essentially malleable quality, a mode of embodying a certain existential relation to the world, and the specific modality of dramatizing that relation in corporeal terms” (Butler 2022, 176). This understanding of sexuality in Merleau-Ponty appears, *prima facie*, to reinforce Cusick’s claim that sexuality is a way of organizing one’s intimate, pleasurable, corporeal relationships. Additionally, understanding sexuality as coextensive with existence makes it clear how corporeal sexuality might appear in musical contexts. In Merleau-Ponty’s famous organist example, Amy Cimini explains, “the organist’s body and the organ itself constitute a network of musical and expressive possibilities that are reducible to neither the body as such nor the specific features of the organ itself. The body calls the organ to a collection of sonic possibilities, the organ calls the body to certain kinds of movement” (Cimini 2012, 362). The self and body are, in this initial articulation, part of the same active process of moving within a field of historical, cultural, or sonic possibilities. Insofar as sexuality is a feature of existence, the organist’s corporeal dramatization of his relationship with the instrument can be read as a sexual activity in this phenomenological sense. We can see, here, how Merleau-Pontian sexuality might appear in musical activities if both music and sex are corporeal activities. However, Merleau-Pontian sexuality and musicality suffer from the same issue: both are marked by a strange cognitive essentialism that Cusick rejects, despite his assertion that the self is inherently corporeal.

Butler remarks that Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of sexuality in *Phenomenology of Perception* “reveals the cultural construction of the masculine subject as a strangely disembodied voyeur whose sexuality is strangely non-corporeal” and, potentially due to “the prevalence of visual

metaphors in Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of normal sexuality" in his account, it "sometimes appears as if sexuality itself were reduced to the erotics of the gaze" (2022, 182). Discussing sexuality in a visual capacity sidelines the role of the body and, Butler claims, reduces masculine sexuality to a perceptive, visual *seeing* and feminine sexuality to a receptive, objective existence that merely affords this voyeuristic gaze. Here we might begin to see Merleau-Ponty's corporeality pull apart from Cusick's embodied musician—this emphasis on sight is not only antithetical to Cusick's corporeal, auditory focus but reifies "a relation of domination between the sexes" that Cusick's discussion of queer sexuality explicitly rejects (Butler 2022, 185). Cimini's remarks, also, help illuminate the issues for Merleau-Ponty's understanding of sexuality, especially in a musical context. She claims that "Merleau-Ponty binds that relationship [between organist and organ] to a score-based conception of music in which music remains autonomous from the relationships it brings into existence. While Merleau-Pontian painting begins and ends with the body, Merleau-Pontian music seems to begin and end with the score" (2012, 362). Here again we see the primacy of vision and how it contributes to the disembodiment of musical (and sexual) activities. The *painter* brings his body into the work and the painting is a corporeal product, but the musician merely instantiates a scored musical work. According to Cimini, Merleau-Ponty reinforces the Mind/Body dichotomy Cusick identified and understands the composer as *mind* and performer as *body* along implicitly gendered lines. In both sexuality and music, then, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the body is reduced to the seeing, interpreting self. The sexual (and musical) body in Merleau-Ponty is not a corporeal, aural, or erotic body in the way Cusick claims they are.

Further, Butler claims, Merleau-Ponty only loosely articulates the relationship between sexuality and the subject; his theory of sexuality simultaneously relies on *and* rejects the existence

of a “naturalized,” biologically teleological, pre-subjective sexuality (2022, 181). This difficult theoretical tension exists between an “I” that precedes the intersubjective embodiment of sexuality (the “I” that *expresses* its sexuality in intercorporeal performance), and the *necessarily* intersubjective embodiment of sexuality (the “I” that *constitutes* its sexuality through intercorporeal performance). This tension appears in Cusick as well, but her resolution of this tension places her theory closely in line with a Butlerian analysis of sexuality and gender performance and differentiates her account from this antinomic perspective.

### **Imitation and Musical Insubordination**

Cusick begins “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music” in Italian as an effort to think outside the implicit structuring of thought that exists, for her, in English. She speaks in “la lingua più-che-materna, la lingua nel quale io vivo la mia vita più interiore, nel quale parlo coll’io che esiste a priori dell’io musicista, l’io americana, l’io donna, anzi l’io lesbica” (2006, 67). Loosely translated, she says that she speaks in Italian because it is her “more-than-mother tongue” and the language in which she speaks *to* the “I” who is a musician, American, woman, and lesbian. The reason Cusick turns to Italian in these opening remarks is because she is having trouble, in English, theorizing the difference between the “I” who exists *a priori* of the lesbian, the musician, or the musicologist, and the “I” who *is* these identities through her performative actions. This is the tension that Cusick aims to resolve through her work in the essay and it appears similar to the tension that Butler has identified in Merleau-Ponty. Is it that the sexual self exists *before* the self becomes thought its enjambment with the world? Or, does this sexual self come into being only after the intersubjective self has successfully emerged? Butler takes up precisely this tension between what we might (imperfectly) call pre-subjective or post-subjective sexuality in “Imitation and Gender Insubordination.” They write,

The prospect of being anything [...] has always produced in me a certain anxiety, for 'to be' gay, 'to be' lesbian seems to be more than a simple injunction to become who or what I already am. [...] To write or speak *as a lesbian* appears a paradoxical appearance of this 'I,' one which feels neither true nor false. (1993b, 307)

Both Butler and Cusick, then, are concerned with the way that their lesbian identity corresponds to or with their existence as a "self" potentially (to use Cusick's words) *a priori* of the lesbian, the musicologist, the philosopher. This tension motivates both Butler's and Cusick's theories of sexuality as attempts to explain the difference between the "I" who speaks in Italian (the "I" who undertakes the project of *performing* their lesbian identity) and the "I" lesbian or "I" musician who has always existed.

These similarities persist through Butler's and Cusick's remarks on how their lesbian identities are something they "play" at, but not in the usual sense. For Cusick, being a lesbian is something that involves "scrambling the usual components of 'man' and 'woman' [...] *playing* with them in a game in which everyone can play every position" (2006, 73). Here, Cusick's sexual identity (and I ought to be careful about calling it an identity, at this stage, since I mean this analogically as much as literally) is a way of "playing the game," of negotiating one's corporeal existence in intercorporeal space, with and for human and nonhuman others.

Similarly, Butler asks,

When and where does my being a lesbian come into play, when and where does this playing a lesbian constitute something like what I am? [...] This is not a performance from which I can take radical distance, for this is deep-seated play, psychically entrenched play, *and this 'I' does not play its lesbianism as a role*. Rather, it is through the repeated play of this sexuality that the 'I' is insistently constituted as a lesbian 'I.' (Butler 1993b, 311)

Butler articulates, in this passage, an understanding of sexual performativity in which one's sexuality is co-constituted with the self. Their lesbian identity is not a role, taken up *ex post facto* after the self has been fully and corporeally constituted, but this identity is constituted

simultaneous to the self by its own performance. For both authors sexuality is a way of being in the world, a way of *playing* with these identity categories and constituting one's identity through embodied performance *of* that identity. Cusick's remarks on her lesbian identity in sexual/musical performance imply this type of gendered, sexual subject. It is not, as we might have seen on a certain reading of Merleau-Ponty, that the sexual self exists biologically, *a priori* of the self which expresses that sexuality. Rather, as Butler explains, the *self* performatively constitutes itself *as* sexually identified through this continual, repetitious play that is performative and not mere performance. The lesbian self, in Butler and Cusick, is constituted by her repeated construction of and engagement with that role, not by some "hazy biological form that is somehow *expressed*" by the self (Butler 1993b, 317).

The performative self in Butler, the sexual self that Cusick seems to take up, is a performative and therefore politicized entity because these performances only exist within a historicized and normatively delineated context. For Butler, "if the body expresses and dramatizes existential themes, and these themes are gender-specific and fully historicized, then sexuality becomes a scene of cultural struggle, improvisation, and innovation, a domain in which the intimate and the political converge and a dramatic opportunity for expression, analysis, and change" (2022, 188). One's performatively constituted sexual self is never merely a private construct, but a matter of negotiating the norms and cultural conditions that circumscribe these performances. In other words, the performative self is not an individual construct because the identities that this self takes up, enacts, and so constitutes are always responses to a broader cultural "script" that contains the idealization of these roles and delineates "acceptable" performances of these identities.

Just as Cusick's musician is at once in an extremely intimate and highly public relationship *with* the music, the performative self in Butler is simultaneously an intimate and publicly/politically constituted self—the self is intimately constituted because these identities are more than merely the public activities and displays that they recommend, they are a way of being in private as well as public; but the self is public and political because these identities are unavailable to the self except through their cultural mediation. For Cusick we would say that there is no “woman,” no “lesbian,” even no “musician,” except as these identities have been constructed and normed by broader socio-cultural scripts, and that these scripts are appropriated, reified, critiqued, modified, twisted, and *queered* by those who take them up for their own performance. In this way, performative identity construction is not an individual choice, but a collective project. Butler remarks that the reading of “performativity as willful and arbitrary choice misses the point that the historicity of discourse and, in particular, the historicity of norms (the “chains” of iteration invoked and dissimulated in the imperative utterance) constitute the power of discourse to enact what it names” (Butler 1993a, 137). Performativity is, at heart, a theory of discursive identity construction but this discourse is not private or willful choice; this discourse is always public and political. It is because performative identities are publicly normed and mediated that they have the power to constitute what they name. It cannot be, as Merleau-Ponty suggested, that a sexual self exists *a priori* of the gendered, intercorporeal self; rather, Butler shows, the self *is* a gendered, sexual, performatively constituted self.

Here, the sexual subject in Cusick's work comes more clearly into focus: if the sexual self found in musical performance is *performative*, and not merely intercorporeal, we have already answered Cusick's question about this lesbian, musician, feminine, “I.” The self comes to be through this corporeal negotiation of norms and politicized identities, and, insofar as sexed and

sexual norms circulate through musical performance and activities, the musical self *is* a sexual self. It is not that the “I” lesbian *influences* the “I” musician, but that the “I” which engages with music in this way performatively constitutes *both* identities simultaneously. Butlerian performativity is an essential component of this answer because it concretely connects sexuality to corporeal, worldly, and political existence. Because one’s sexual identity is performatively constituted, it must be comprised of certain repetitious, iterative corporeal performances. Sexual identity for Cusick (and by extension, the Intercorporeal Account) cannot be, as it was for Merleau-Ponty, a perceptual mode or biological fact; sexuality is constituted through and by embodied, corporeal activity. With performativity theory, we can more accurately explain Cusick’s sexual subject as the product her corporeal performances and as affording certain ways of “structuring relationships” with human and nonhuman others. Bodies become integral to an expression of sexuality insofar as it is *bodies* and intercorporeal existence that allows for the self to emerge and identify itself as a sexual being.

### **Musicians Just Want to Have Fun (B Theme)**

By this stage, we have moved far afield from our “home key” of analytic philosophy of music and musical ontology. Our discussion of sexuality in Cusick and Butler has hopefully illuminated the way in which Cusick believes music *is* sex(ual); but the Intercorporeal Account merely claims that music is a corporeal and relational activity. To circle back to music directly, and perhaps clear up some confusion surrounding this discussion of sexuality, I would like to readdress Cusick’s claim that one’s musical and sexual identities are co-constituted. Her essay “On a Lesbian Relationship with Music” purports to describe just that, her *lesbian* relationship with music—she claims that there are particular queer ways of engaging with music because musicality and sexuality are both parts of the performative self, both are constituted by their own

enaction in a Butlerian sense. Here, it is important to distinguish between a Butlerian and Merleau-Pontian self because Cusick takes up the former to explain how the sexual self *is* musical and *vice versa*. Cusick's remarks in Italian reveal a belief that there is a self which performs its own musicality and sexuality in a remarkably similar (identical, she claims) field of power, pleasure, and intimacy. The self is constituted by its own performance set against this field of possibilities, and the possibilities that exist in sexual relations are identical to the possibilities that exist in music; or so claims Cusick. As I suggested earlier, the Intercorporeal Account is committed to ontological ecumenicalism, at least insofar as that is possible given the highly specialized discussion of sexuality that seems to ground Cusick's claims (and, by extension, the account's evidence that music is a corporeal, relational activity). What I hope to borrow from this discussion of sexuality in Merleau-Ponty and Butler is the idea that one's identities, musical and sexual, are a matter of corporeal and relational constitution and that there is nothing *underneath* these identities to which one must be authentic. What Butler contributes to the Intercorporeal Account is the claim that gender is constituted by its (re)iterative performances set against a field of norms and narratives, and that this performance is not *of* anything but constitutes its own existence. If Cusick is right that sex and music are (at least) remarkably similar experiences, then the analogical claim would be that there is nothing *underneath* the musical performance, and that performances are not *of* anything but constitute their own existence.

To make the Intercorporeal Account's stance clearer: On even an analogical reading of Cusick's argument, combined with a properly Butlerian understanding of identity constitution, music *is* a performative art in the way that one's sexuality or gender is performatively constituted in a Butlerian sense. Cusick argues for this position partially because she believes musical activities literally are a negotiation of power, pleasure, and intimacy and musical identities are



constituted in the same way that sexual/gendered identities are. I take it that (perhaps counterintuitively after my long digression into performativity and sexual corporeality) this claim is widely adaptable in musical ontology at least in part because music, unlike gender, carries with it a recognition of its own artifice. For philosophers committed to a substance-based ontology of gender (an ontology of gender that suggests there is a “fact of the matter” that is performed, but not constituted by, gendered subjects) Butler’s poststructuralist approach is either difficult or impossible to accommodate without substantial theoretical compromise. Fortunately, Cusick’s claim that *music* is a performative activity is acceptable on a wide variety of ontological positions because, for a wide variety of sociocultural reasons, music is more clearly an artificial construct than gender. If there is nothing *behind* a musical performance, then our intuition about what music *is* does not suffer greatly; it is already an intuitive claim to say that an unperformed or unperformable score is not, properly speaking, music but a set of instructions for *potential* music. All this requires is that we think about music more like architecture than math: blueprints and scores are not *the thing* in question until they have been brought to life in corporeal space. This claim is compatible with (my interpretation of) the 4E position that music is an activity, and Cusick’s claim that music is a corporeal and performatively constituted activity.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, as I will now discuss, identifying music and the musical self as performative allows us to analogize

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<sup>45</sup> To riff on the performatively constituted musical self, I take it that this is *already* how we typically discuss music and musicality. To be a musician, or a listener of certain genres, is to actively and consistently engage with the behaviors that would demonstrate (or constitute!) this identity. Pianists likely need to have regular access to a piano in order to call themselves a pianist, rather than someone who occasionally plays a piano. Similarly, we might be suspicious of someone who called themselves a metalhead but only listened to Top 40. To accommodate performativity into this discussion we would only need to reject the idea that there is a “fact of the matter” behind these behaviors; rather than believing that one’s piano playing or metal-listening *demonstrated* an underlying identity, we would only need to say that these behaviors *constitute* the identity of the subjects in question. Because most of us do not suffer under the delusion that *musical* preferences and behaviors are a matter of biological fact, musical performativity is an easier sell than Butlerian gender theory.

music to gender, or to specific gendered relationships like marriage.<sup>46</sup> My claim is not that music *is* a performance of gender (or that music *is* marriage) but that music and gender are similar in some important ways. In the passages that follow, I attempt to run through the implications of these analogies and fruitfully speculate about a performative theory of music.

These similarities are apparently on Butler's mind already: they address Aretha Franklin's "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" as an example in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" and, central to my claims, they raise the possibility that gender performances are like stage performances in "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (1988; 1993b). They write, "the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts," and "gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make us of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again" (Butler 1988, 521, 526). There are, even in these brief passages, a number of analogies to draw out: Music, like performative gender, makes use of a script (implied or literal) that musicians must enact to actualize or reproduce the work as a *real*, active process in the world. Music and gender are, in this way, constituted by the active performances of the agents involved. It is not that there exists some abstract musical work that musicians instantiate any more than there exists some abstract "gender" that specific gendered subjects instantiate—music and gender are activities that we *do* and not merely concepts that subjects work to instantiate or faithfully, authentically reproduce. Further, music and gender are,

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<sup>46</sup> Out of an abundance of caution, I should note that when I say marriages are "gendered relationships" I mean to imply that marriage, as a normed, politicized, historicized institution is built on and around a foundation of gendered thinking. Marriages considered as specific relationships need not be involved so explicitly with social gender norms, but the institution of marriage reinforces these even if not every individual marriage includes traditionally understood masculine or feminine subjects.

on this understanding, corporeally and socio-politically constructed. No instance of music or gender exists without corporeal subjects to enact these performances. This, I take it, is the key insight to draw out from this analogy between music and gender performance: *there is no such thing as music that exists in the absence of the corporeal subjects whose actions constitute it*. Of course, these activates are in response to a script, implied or literal, but *music* and *gender* are not merely the script. Music and gender, in this analogy, are constituted by the corporeal activities that cultural (or literal, scored) scripts afford.

To reinforce this analogy between music and gender, we might turn to Butler's remarks on drag and Alva Noë's comments on pop music. Butler claims that *all* gender is like drag in that drag performances reveal that there is no underlying "authentic" gender that cisgendered individuals merely instantiate in their embodied lives. "Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation [...] *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*" (Butler 1993b, 313). In other words, drag, in its all-too-perfect (re)presentation of what cisgendered "gender presentation" *purports* to be, reveals the way in which *all* gender is merely a performance for which there is no original, a simulacrum of nothing right from the start. For Butler, the explicit copy of the so-called original helps reveal the original as itself an imitation. We might be reminded of Noë's remarks that pop music "looks like music, but it isn't" because, he claims, "pop music isn't primarily music. It's an art of display. In particular [...] pop music is the art of personal *style*" (2016, 168, 177). His claim is that pop music *looks* like music, that it (like drag for gender) is merely an imitation *of* an original, and that it is actually a performance of a different sort. Pop music appears, as Noë has identified it, analogous to drag (or *actually* drag) in that both performances purport to be imitations of so-called "real" or "serious" performances.

For Butler, understanding all gender as a type of drag allows us to claim that “hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations” (1993a, 85.). To import this argumentative move into a Noë’s musical context would reveal that so-called “serious music” is no less an art of personal style and display than pop; and this is precisely the claim that began in our discussion of Yo-Yo Ma. It is not that pop and music are separate entities, but that pop reveals something about music in the way drag reveals something important about gender: that music is, always and from the start, an embodied, performative art about people and not the sound. Pop and “music,” we could say, are two different ways in which music is performed within our Western classical paradigm in the way that performances of cisgendered identities and drag are two different ways of performing gender. The structures and norms of “art music” are not natural but constructed *as* natural in their differentiation from the “imitation” clearly seen in pop (or, literally drag performances).<sup>47</sup> In both cases, the “thing” in question (music for Noë, gender for Butler) is revealed as nothing more than the iterative, imitative performances that serve to reinforce its idealizations. However, Butler is (and we should be) careful to understand these analogies to stage performance as *analogies* and not literal claims about gender or performativity. Gender is *like* stage performance or music insofar as there exists a script (metaphoric or real) that agents rehearse and so make real in their performance. But (and this may be obvious) gender is unlike stage performance and music insofar as subjects are *always*

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<sup>47</sup> It may be worth mentioning, for the first time since Chapter 3, that I believe Noë actually *is* talking about drag in a literal sense when he discusses pop music. His claim that pop performances are about style and charisma, about the performers and not *really* the music, is quite an accurate description of what happens when a queen walks on stage. Of course, we are not primarily interested in whatever recording of Shania Twain, Carly Rae Jepsen, or Chere might be playing over the speakers. During drag performances we really are primarily interested in the queen on stage, and how she owns her performance. The difficulty for Noë, perhaps, is that I believe this *is* a musical performance in the way Butler believes drag *is* gender, in a certain sense.

gendered and engaging in gendered performances, but actors and musicians are not *always* acting or performing music. Perhaps, for this reason, we might more helpfully analogize music to a specific kind of performative or relational activity, like marriage.

I suggested before that music might be like marriage in some important ways: first and foremost, music is like marriage in that music establishes specific kinds of relationships between musical subjects and between these subjects and musical objects. This analogy is, potentially, a softening of the claim that music *is* sex into the claim that music *is* the activities that constitute certain kinds of relationships. We might helpfully think of music, like marriage, as a specific relational mode that connects subjects. With this analogy, we might see why we treat musical *performances* as musical works even though musical works self-evidently exceed a singular performance, just as we equate marriages and weddings, even though the relationship exceeds a singular ceremony. We might even see how musical relationships are said to include physical objects in the way that a deeply romantic relationship might *also* include physical objects in its enactment: musicians form relationships with their instruments, with the sounds, and with their audience in much the way that marriages include deep connections to specific objects (rings, love letters, dresses, wedding gifts), a certain attitude (love, even?) toward the mundane activities of cohabitation, and (within certain paradigms) relationships with one's children/other family members, *all as part of the marriage*. The key aspect of this analogy for the Intercorporeal Account is the claim that musical works, like marriages, are relationships constituted by continual, corporeal activities, and scaffolded by certain materializations of this relationship, and human others. Music is even like marriage in that both are (if we buy Cusick's argument, even analogically) sexual in a certain sense and enacted by gendered subjects.

Of course, if either of these analogies hold up, then we would expect to run into some difficulty in actually *defining* music just as we encounter difficulty in *defining* marriage or gender in a Butlerian sense. Butler explains, “just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives.” (1988, 526). These “confines,” “restricted corporeal” spaces, and “already existing directives,” constitute the norms and cultural scripts that exist to regulate and encode corporeal performance *as* gender performance. The reason gender can be performatively constituted in the first place is because the performances that constitute one’s gender always stand in relation to certain norms and expectations. Similarly, I argue, we might fruitfully think traditional definitions of music not as providing necessary and sufficient conditions, but as pointing toward the norms and practices that regulate our musical behavior. To return to an earlier passage, Butler writes, “to claim that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that ‘imitation’ is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations” (1993a, 85). My contention is that this argument regarding gender performance would work equally well in the context of music and the heterosexual performance that is marriage.

I take this analogy between music and gender or marriage to be a refusal of ontological certainty, and a call for performative interpretation of musical definitions as musical norms. The pageantry of drag is not an exception, but the norm, which, in heterosexual performance, carefully conceals its own performative nature. A robust examination of music as marriage-like might point to the way that certain *literal* scripts are required for both an authentic marriage to

occur in a wedding ceremony and for an authentic performance of Western classical music to happen during a concert. This analysis might even identify the way that specific marriages are performatively constituted as analogous to the way that specific musical works are constituted. We might conclude by reflecting on the way that “marriage” operates as an institution to norm and regulate individual relationships that fall under *and* outside the traditional confines of religious marriages and analogize this to the way that Western classical “music” operates in similar, albeit (often, though not always) secular, ways. We might even say that marriage and music, given this analogy, are constructed within and for specific socio-political contexts.

This analogy, however, is starting to sound a little poetic and a *lot* speculative. My goal with these analogies is perhaps not to claim that music *must* be interpreted in these Butlerian ways, but that understanding music as a corporeal, relational activity affords these kinds of projects, even within relatively traditional musical paradigms. These analogies can even help us see what might be so troubling (or inaccurate) about a distinction between so-called “art music” and entertainment; they can help us witness the power that music has, and the ways musicians, musicologists, and philosophers direct, circulate or otherwise wield that power. Specifically, I believe that a Butlerian analysis of musical performance as similar to gender performance (or marriages) helps reveal the ways in which Western classical paradigms of musical performance pervade our academic discussions and conceal their own performative constitution with the illusion of naturalness. However, these analogies are not essential to the Intercorporeal Account’s argument just as, after introducing the sonata’s themes in recapitulation, the section moves toward its “essential structural closure” with interesting, but musically nonessential passages.

### Essential Structural Closure

The essential structural closure (ESC) of a sonata is the ultimate cadence, the moment that the whole piece has been moving toward from exposition, through development, to recapitulation. The ESC is an authentic cadence, usually a perfect authentic cadence, that dramatically concludes all musical development in the piece. In sonata, as in this dissertation, the ESC does not conclude the piece, but just the theoretical development *of* this movement. While we will explore the implications of understanding music as a type of relational activity in the coda, our goal in this section is to reach a stable conclusion after the frenzy of theoretical (speculative) development that marks the end of recapitulation. The arguments that music might *be* sex, gender, or marriage constitutes the great conceit of the Intercorporeal Account. These arguments substantially reinforce, but are not essential to, my central thesis: music is a corporeal, relational activity, and musical works are therefore particular assemblages of relationships.

In the interest of transparency, I count myself among Cusick's sympathetic interlocutors. I believe that music *is* sex(ual) in the way she describes, in part because *I* have shared her experiences. I recognize a part of myself in Cusick's essay when she reports that her first memories are of being bewildered by the categories of the adult world, and her experience of music in her dreams at night as "palpable, shining, like silver air, a music through which one could pass out of the bewildering world and into reality" (2006, 69). *This* is the music that compelled me to begin this project, the music has the power to bring me to tears and ecstasy, to tear a person apart from the inside out. But romantic platitudes about music aside, I do not expect that everyone will be so compelled by an account of music as (like) sex, or gender, or marriage. What I hope is that these arguments have changed your mind, a little bit, about what music *is*; perhaps you are more sympathetic to the idea that music is not an abstract



mathematical relationship between notes, that it is not about the sounds, but that *music is about people*. Whatever we say about music in our ontologies, in our definitions, should take into account the way that we encounter music in practice, and while abstract theorizing about music certainly recommends the view that music itself is abstract, this is *not* the experience of musicians or those of us who have found music to be more than an object for disaffected aesthetic contemplation. *My* experience of music, an experience that is not uncommon, is an experience of love and of music's profound power to love me back, of music's corporeal presence *in* and *with* me. *This* is the music that I hope I have accounted for.

Of course, it needs to be said that I have not defined music, at least not in the way I set out to. Articulating necessary and sufficient conditions with which to identify musical works is a project of a different sort, it turns out, one that will need interdisciplinary resources from sociology, anthropology, and philosophy to examine whether and how music is a universal human endeavor. What the Intercorporeal Account *does* claim is that music is best understood as a corporeal, relational activity; that it manifests relationships between the self and world, and between subjects; and that musical works are quite likely the enaction of specific relationships. I arrived at this conclusion beginning with an understanding of music as a multilateral undertaking in ways that recommended EMC philosophy as a viable approach to identifying music in the world. When EMC proved insufficient to address music's active status, the way that musicians understand their own performances, I turned to Cusick's account of embodiment as part of musical works and attempted to develop a phenomenological understanding of these bodies. However, a phenomenological understanding of musical corporeality helped explain music as an expressive, if not communicative art; in other words, Merleau-Ponty helped us understand musical corporeality, but not the sexuality that marked music as a kind of relationship. Here, I

moved to Butler and Cusick's to claim that music is not just a corporeal activity, but a certain kind of relational and performative activity. Cusick's assertion that music *is* sex was reinterpreted as an analogy: musical activities *seem like sex* because they enact relationships between sexual/gendered subjects. These arguments all support of the view that music is an active, corporeal, relational activity and that musical works/performances are the dramatization and enaction *of* these relationships (even if, at this point, we still have little to say specifically about these activities or relationships). If this seems like a banal claim at this stage, I might be inclined to agree, music is quite like a number of other aesthetic (and non-aesthetic, human) activities. The Intercorporeal Account is (only or merely?) an argument that music should hold a place alongside friendship, marriage, or love as a way of enacting relationships; that this view of music best accounts for the ways that we talk, think, and act in relation to music outside an academic context; and that this view of music is coherent and desirable given a performative understanding of musicality.

### **Coda**

Our philosophic equivalent of a coda ought not say anything unique; codas reinforce the resolution of the sonata's themes with relatively mundane musical phrasing. Usually, codas are a long string of cadences, moving from dominant harmony (V chords, usually) to tonic (I chords, usually) over and over again. We could say that codas, for sonatas, are *tonicizing* passages in that that tension is merely resolved and not introduced and, in this way, are not musical denouements, but always happen after the piece's tension has been dissipated through the essential structural closure. They are a composer's "closing remarks." Of course, these are closing remarks for the chapter, for our philosophic sonata (this movement) and not for the whole of the dissertation. For *that* conclusion, we will need to wait for an encore. This coda, instead, offers a

few remarks about the Intercorporeal Account and its implications for analytic philosophy of music.

**Take V (Dominant Harmony)**

The Intercorporeal Account developed from an insight in analytic philosophy of music, the observation that most musical ontology treats music and musical works as abstract objects despite the fact that almost no musicians talk about music in these terms. What I suggest, in analytic terms, is that music is best identified as (1) a human activity that necessarily includes (2) corporeal and (3) relational components; and musical works are best identified as a kind of relationship. I arrived at this “definition” of music by leveraging the observation of EMC philosophers that music is an active process, and through testimony and analysis drawn from musicology and phenomenology. This definition, I hope, points us toward a fruitful understanding of musical works in the analytic tradition that centralizes the active role of musicians and audiences in *doing* music and building musical works. Since a great amount of work done in analytic philosophy is even grounded in intuition and pragmatic considerations, it should be possible to import this understanding of musical works into ontologies far afield from those used in the Intercorporeal Account. The Intercorporeal Account’s position that musical works are relationships, and that music is an embodied activity could be accommodated in almost any ontology that posits the existence of relationships. To explain the account’s ecumenicism, and perhaps more clearly articulate the insight of the Intercorporeal Account, allow me to review each of the three conditions above, in turn, as an analytic, tripartite definition of music.

(1) The Intercorporeal Account claims that music just is a kind of activity, not that musical activities somehow instantiate, bring into reality, or make auditory an abstract musical

work separate from the performing, composing, rehearsing, and listening that constitutes musical engagement. This is, I take it, already a relatively radical claim within the context of analytic philosophy of music because most aesthetic ontological theories treat music (any art that Goodman would call allographic) as more or less comparable to autographic arts like painting. Some aestheticists treat music like painting because they are guided by an implicit privileging of vision that directs our attention toward the perceivable work-*object* perhaps similar to how Merleau-Ponty's privileging of vision in sexuality reinforces the idea of an *object* of desire. Still, treating music as an activity tracks practice more closely than most theories that posit a work-object. Not only does musical reception rely on the *activity* of musical performance in order to be intelligible, but a music-as-activity framework better explains musical praxis from the perspective of musicians. Rather than positing a separate "thing" that is produced *in* performance, we have good 4E reasons to collapse the music/musicking divide, and good phenomenological evidence from Cusick to suggest that music is about performances and performers' activities rather than the score's notational content. I call this a radical claim because the Intercorporeal Account refuses the idea that there exists music or musical works separate from the activities of musicking subjects. Similar to how Butler claims that gender is a performance for which there is no original, the Intercorporeal Account claims that music is always a performance and never a performance *of* anything.

(2) The Intercorporeal Account, in line with EMC philosophy and Cusick's argument for musical corporeality, claims that musical activities essentially include embodied subjects. From a 4E inspired EMC perspective this must be the case because no clear distinction exists between the cognitive agents who *musick* and the agents' bodies; agents *are* a brain-body-environment system and the activities they undertake are not just the mobilization of a mental plan made

physical, but the agent is constituted by the brain-world system that undertakes musical performance. Cusick, meanwhile, supplies a different corroborating account of musical corporeality from a musician's perspective; musicians' bodies are *part of* the music because the score cannot contain the whole meaning of a musical work. Musical works are therefore understood as an agent-world mobilization of a certain set of implied or explicit instructions. According to both arguments, it is not just that music is an activity that musical subjects *perform*, but that music is a performative art constituted *by* these actions.

As a caveat, I do not mean to imply that the Intracorporeal Account is a type of action theory. David Davies explains that according to action theory, "a work just is the performance whereby a work-focus is specified" (Davies 2003, 147). In the case of classical music, he claims that there are two works of art produced, one by the composers' actions and one by the performers' actions (and only one in the case of improvisational music, of course). Davies, however, runs into a problem differentiating between the artistic and non-artistic actions that causally contribute to the existence of the work-focus (the "coffee break" objection)—does Picasso's coffee break count as part of the aesthetic work? The intercorporeal account also claims that music just is the activity of musicking subjects but is more specific (if only slightly) about the kinds of activities that count.

To concretely differentiate music from action theory, I claim that music is (3) relational, not just in that it requires agent-world interaction as Merleau-Ponty suggests constitutes *all* subjectivity (self-emergence), but because it establishes *relationships* as its product. If a musical work is what musicking activity produces, what connects musicians and audiences in the musical triad, then musical works must *be* these relationships since we have already rejected the existence of a work-*object* beyond the activities of musicians and listeners. This also provides an elegant

solution to Davies' action theory dilemma: Vivaldi's coffee break cannot be *part of* the work he produces because it does not constitute part of his relationship with musical subjects. By identifying music as a relational activity, one that produces certain kinds of *relationships*, we can rule out non-artistic activities without succumbing to circularity in attempting to differentiate between artistic and non-artistic activities that causally contribute to the existence of a work. In our marriage analogy, we might say that eating causally contributes to the marriage in that it sustains both subjects and allows them to literally survive and maintain their relationship; this would not be *part of* the relationship because it causally contributes to the agents' existence, but not to the relationship directly. Meanwhile, we might imagine that if one is in the habit of eating on their drive home from work, to avoid being hangry for the health of their marriage, we *could* call these activities relational in that they directly contribute to the relationship that both subjects enact with one another. Analogies aside, the Intercorporeal Account means to claim that musical works are what musical activities produce, and that what musickers *do* is not productive of a mysterious abstract entity or an object of any kind, but that what musickers are most often *doing* is building a relationship. This is apparent in Noë's account of pop music, and vividly apparent in Cusick's account of music as sex, even in its analogical construction. What may be unique about the Intercorporeal Account is that it identifies musical (necessarily relational, corporeal) activities as *the music*, and denies the existence of musical works as objects of any kind. This, I take it, is the major insight of the account that analytic philosophy might be poised to take up: that music is necessarily active, relational, and corporeal; that musical works are relationships and not objects.

### **Tonic (Resolution of Dominant Harmony)**

The one thing the Intercorporeal Account has not done, however, is speculate about how to identify specific instances of music in the world. From the EMC perspective that we began

with, then, what might we say about how to identify musical works in the world? Because EMC suggests that music is governed by a particular set of sensorimotor contingencies (SMCs), it might make sense for the Intercorporeal Account to gesture toward what those SMCs are. Of course, many EMC philosophers have already suggested what these contingencies consist of, but few provide a viable path to identifying music. Krueger, to return to a familiar account, claims that musical world-building relies on “iterative cycles of motor entrainment and synchronization unfolding in response to musical features” (2019, 60). While this sounds ontologically or definitionally ecumenical in desirable ways, Krueger’s conclusions punt to intrinsic definitions through reference to the “musical features” which entrainment and synchronization respond to. It might be correct that musical worlds are created via iterative cycles of entrainment (already this sounds like an intrinsic condition), but the addition of “in response to musical features” makes us wonder precisely what these musical features are. This is a relatively common problem in EMC theories broadly; identifying certain musical features helps theorists narrow down the type of engagement that they believe counts as musical, but these features often only address central cases of music in the way that overly restrictive intrinsic definitions usually do. If music must afford cycles of motor entrainment, then music can be identified by the intrinsic features that contribute to these affordances. However, if we think of music as a circle, or musical definitions as drawing a circle around existing works, with widely accepted examples at the center and debatable cases at the fringes, then we might say that EMC’s insights fade as we move further toward the outer limits of the musical circle. Identifying specific SMCs is not so helpful at deciding where the circle stops, and where other arts begin. This approach is relatively successful at identifying musical works the closer toward the “center” we are, given that traditional, widely accepted instances of music are likely to afford traditional, widely accepted types of musical

engagement. Perhaps starting in the center and working our way out is the appropriate methodology for this type of identification.

In most cases, instances of music are identifiable to us through common sense. With the overwhelming volume of truly bizarre music, established and well-explored traditions offer us a theoretical respite. Thus, answering the question of properly musical SMCs is not necessarily a matter of philosophic speculation but will rely on a relatively robust framework of sociological inquiry and neurological experimentation. Which SMCs or combinations of SMCs are properly musical is, at least partially, an empirical question but framing this question is undeniably the work of a more basic investigation into musical practices (whether that project is genealogical, sociological, or philosophical). It is my contention that music is a historically variable artistic tradition, and requires sociological, philosophical, and historical work to identify. We should expect to see historical variability between musical epochs in the same way that new sensorimotor contingencies develop to accommodate new experiences. To lean on O'Regan and Noë's famous Porsche example, we might know that the phenomenological experience of driving a Porsche is the sum total of sensorimotor contingency feedback that the driver participates in (2001). The phenomenological experience of *driving*, however, is as varied as there are types of cars, and wildly different across the history of automobiles. Driving a Model T is different than driving a modern Porsche and driving in the United States is different than driving in the United Kingdom, or Japan (or anywhere folks drive on the lefthand side of the road, or according to different traffic conventions, for that matter). The sensorimotor contingencies that an agent activates in order to drive a vintage Model T are significantly different from the sensorimotor contingencies required to drive a Porsche despite the fact that we call operating both machines



“driving.”<sup>48</sup> The same variability between cultures and across history applies to music. To suggest that Gregorian chants are *music* is a strong claim, and that assertion is similar to claiming that operating a Model T Ford is “driving.” Intuitively, however, we accept that when we drive a Porsche we are doing something similar (or importantly related) to driving a vintage car. Both have four wheels, an engine, a clutch, and seats, both carry us forward on roads, and are understood in legal and sociological contexts as cars. The goal of this extended analogy is to suggest that music cannot and should not be identified without sociological and historical inquiry. Deciding what counts as driving is a matter of historical inquiry *coupled with* SMC research to identify the specific modes of engagement proper to driving. These projects are mutually reinforcing in that identifying the SCMs activated in central cases of driving will help us make decisions about difficult cases (Do we *drive* go-karts? Riding lawn mowers? Motorcycles?) and difficult cases (historical examples unlike modern driving, cultural variances) will force our identification of “driving SCMs” to expand to fit praxis. In the case of music, these projects should also be mutually reinforcing. A historical, genealogical approach to identifying music should challenge and expand our ideas about which SMCs appear in musical engagement and identifying musical SMCs will help us decide whether or not difficult cases count as music.

These issues, I take it, are also apparent in a performative account of music in which music is performatively constituted *against certain cultural norms, scripts, and expectations*. Rather than

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<sup>48</sup> Quick gearhead aside: Model T fords used three pedals on the floor, much like modern manual cars, but they controlled hi/low gearing, reverse gear, and the brakes. Meanwhile, on the steering column, two levers control spark timing advance and throttle position. The clutch and emergency brakes in a Model T were *both* linked to a hand-lever mounted in the floor to the left of the driver’s seat. When I say that driving a Model T shares almost nothing in common with driving a modern Porsche, I mean that the embodied habits by which drivers operate their cars *are not* transferable from one vehicle to the other as a matter of fact. The specific SCMs that we use to drive modern cars, then, is a contingent fact that could have been otherwise if manufacturers had not standardized pedal layouts in the way they did.

undertaking the same type of explanation for performativity as EMC identifications, I will merely say that identifying cultural norms is a similar project to identifying SMCs. The methodologies will be drastically different, of course, but defining music in either field is a project of sociological inquiry and the philosophic decision to either unite or separate disparate cultural, historical practices under the same umbrella term. As a humorous example, I will consider the Violent Femmes' question: "Do you like American music?" I wonder, when I listen to the song, what they mean by "American music." Is there something distinctive about American music as it stands against other musical traditions, as a genre? Or is there something distinctive about American music that sets it apart from other musics *as an aesthetic medium*, in the way that painting and sculpture are different arts? This, on a performative account, might be like asking if there is something distinctive about marriage between cultures and across time. Even the *kind* of answer we provide to the Violent Femmes will be different based on how we understand these practices in socio-cultural and historical context, and our answers will change when new practices evolve, and new concepts emerge. I believe this might be a strength of the Intercorporeal Account, however, because this kind of historical variability is a feature of human activities, music included. I claim that music is a corporeal, relational activity, and what I mean by this is that the right place to look for a proper understanding of music is *in the world* and not the intrinsic, subjective, or intentional features of musical works considered as sounds or objects for analysis. What is important to us about music will be, will always be, about the people and not the noise.

### **Tonic (Reinforced)**

I hope that the extended symphonic organization of this chapter has not led us too far astray, and I hope that my speculating about music has proved helpful for more than just my own edification. Most of all, I hope that my readers are more sympathetic to the view that music

is not a performance *of* anything but rather that music the institution *and particular musical works* just are what we make them. Of course, to say that music *is* anything carries ontological implications that I ought to address. In my first discussion of musical ontology (yes, all the way back in Chapter One) I suggested that a primary disadvantage of traditional ontologies was an overlap between musical ontology and ontology broadly. I further suggested that it might be wise to set aside a discussion of ontology directly in favor of definitional projects. The disappointing fact of the matter is I *still* maintain that musical ontology need not take a hardline stance for or against any particular theory. Even antirealist approaches *might* be accommodated by the view that music is a type of relationship (if, of course, one took a similarly fictionalist or eliminativist stance toward relationships). However, the Intercorporeal Account smacks of nominalism, and I admit that the account is perhaps uniquely sympathetic to nominalist approaches to musical ontology.

Musical nominalism claims that musical works are nominally identified as sets (I would argue, assemblages) of concrete objects. This standard position faces some serious objections because if musical works are nominally-identified sets of concrete objects “there are no musical works of the kind implied by our musical practices, since those practices imply that musical works are abstract” (Kania 2013, 208–9). To ameliorate this worry, I suggest that some of Butler’s insights might be adapted into (what I have been tentatively calling) “Performative Nominalism” even without the wholesale adaptation of their ontological stance. If we are willing to admit that concrete objects can encode, reinforce, and otherwise concretize norms, expectations, and cultural discourse then we might be able to see how to address standard objections against nominalism. Kania, for example, is preoccupied with the idea that nominalism introduces mistakes into musical works. If works are sets of concrete objects, then it is illegitimate to appeal

to an abstract concept of the work/score to correct the “mistakes” that performers inevitably make. However, Butler’s analysis of gender as an imitation of an untenable, unattainable original helps us understand how performances are *always* imperfect as they relate to the cultural concept that norms them. Perhaps musical works are never perfect, and perhaps musical works themselves (and not just their performances) are partially constituted by these mistaken, imperfect presentations. This is an acceptable conclusion for a performative analysis of music because performances do not purport to perfectly represent an abstract original, but they *are* measured against the norms that condition these performances. Rather than treating the score as “the work” as Kania recommends, we might better understand the score as a norming device that provides explicit standards by which to judge specific performances.

Nominalism also faces a challenge in determining what constitutes an essential and nonessential feature of musical works. If musical works are nominally collected sets of concrete objects, then how do we distinguish between essential and nonessential members of the set? Again, *performative* nominalism sidesteps this issue by suggesting that the essential features of a musical work will be determined by the participants in it, all those that have a stake in its legitimization and performance. On a purely ontological level, a performative analysis of gender suggests that there are no essential features of gender because gender is not a *thing* but a culturally-normed concept enacted by gendered subjects. Similarly, we might say that there are no essential features of musical works (or even, *music* generally), but musicians and listeners have the ability to determine the necessary and sufficient conditions for musical belonging not as a matter of ontic fact, but as a matter of cultural discourse.

The solutions to both of these critiques point toward an ontology of music that is grounded in a nominalist approach but borrows insights from performativity theory to suggest

that the concreta included in nominally identified sets (specific works, or music generally) are constituted by their enaction and organized or regulated according to sociocultural norms. If music is, as I suggested, (1) a human activity that necessarily includes (2) corporeal and (3) relational components; and musical works are best identified as a kind of relationship, then it is at least partially up to us to decide what constitutes and regulates these activities and relationships. That, I take it, is our job as philosophers of music: to speak to the cultural norms and standards by which music and musical works are judged, to push these boundaries in new and inclusive directions, and to weigh in on what *we* think music is. It is a strange feature of analytic philosophy of music that theorists usually purport to weigh in on what music *actually is*, and I admittedly indulge in this practice: I believe that music *is* a relational mode, and that musical works are specific relationships we build between musicians and audiences. But I want to play both sides in this debate, I want to suggest that if music is a relational mode, then there is nothing we can properly say about its foundational, mysterious ontological existence. How we define music, as much as how we define gender or “human beings” likely says more about us as theorists, than about our supposed subject. If music is a relationship, then music just is what we make it, not arbitrarily or willfully, but collectively and collaboratively.

## CONCLUSION

### (ENCORE)

*or, The Deepest Sighs, the Frankest Shadows*

As much as I love first lines, I hate endings. I feel like quite the curmudgeon when I admit that I am not a fan of the near-mandatory standing ovations that end most symphonic concerts, the applause that musicians expect (and allow to continue just a little too long) before returning to the stage for an encore. I find myself annoyed at the second curtain-call that soloists, exceptional *and* mediocre, now take for granted; and I feel cheated when pop musicians save their hits for after the concert purportedly ends. Returning to the subject of first lines (and paraphrasing of Melville) I suspect that this distrust of encores and adulation is a vice of mine, a “damp, drizzly November in my soul.” My goal in this encore, then, is not to save the best material for last or take bow after bow while my reader ponders the not-altogether-brief argument contained in the body of this philosophic symphony—instead, I will conclude, briefly with a summary of the argument and a short reflection on music and musics.

### **The Operatic Prelude Returns**

The Intercorporeal Account claims that music is a (1) corporeal, (2) relational, (3) activity (in analytic terms) and that musical works are therefore sets or assemblages of relationships. With Butler’s philosophy in the background, my original claim might make slightly more sense: music, I argue, is best understood as a normatively circumscribed relational mode, a way that audiences and musicians express/communicate to/with one another, and not merely an art that produces static “works” in the traditional sense. It is a background belief of mine that *no* medium produces

static works as we typically imagine, but I acknowledge that it is easier (and therefore, potentially theoretically advantageous) to say that a painter produces a static object as the “work of art” in question, a painting. Traditional analogies between the plastic arts, broadly construed, and music tend to obscure the differences between the media in ways that confuse our understanding of musical works. Rather than imagining that musicians and composers produce musical works in the way that painters and sculptors produce “works” I offered professional baseball as a better musical analogue: musical works are constituted by composers, musicians, and audiences in the way that baseball games are constituted by umpires, players, and fans. On this analogy, “music” is what musicians and audiences are *doing* in a concert hall in the same way that a “baseball” is what players and umpires are *doing* on the field.

The primary issue for the Intercorporeal Account, I suggested, is a longstanding belief among philosophers and ordinary folks that musical works exist in a traditional, objective sense. However, I believe that this intuition is preserved if we imagine that musical works are performatively constituted in the way that a baseball game happens when the umpire declares, in an Austinian sense, “Play ball!” It is not that the baseball game is *imaginary* or somehow a *performance* just because it cannot or does not exist without the participation and wholehearted buy-in of the subjects involved, but rather I suggest that things like baseball games and musical works are brought into being by the actions that constitute them. Of course, positing this analogy between performatively constituted sports and music only gets us so far. Spelling out why and how this analogy makes sense was the larger project of this dissertation.

In Chapter One, my allegro movement, I offered a brief overview of ontology of music. I explained that the majority of work in the field operates according to a methodology of balance between revisionist and descriptivist projects, and that the pragmatic constraint served to guide

philosophers of music away from truly counterintuitive claims. The Intercorporeal Account, I believe, satisfies the pragmatic constraint and properly applies the methodology of balance because my claims are consistent with musical praxis (especially from the perspective of musicians) and address music in ways that are already familiar to us in other contexts (as analogies to gender, sex, and baseball demonstrate). One way to defend the Intercorporeal Account would be to demonstrate its theoretical and practical advantages over other musical ontologies, but my performative account of music and musical works is poorly situated for this type of robust defense. Rather, I rely on what I called ontological dismissal to suggest that work in musical ontology need not start “from scratch” in order to be considered a viable alternative to existing theories. Traditional musical ontologies (especially popular ones like musical Platonism and nominalism) import a larger number of broader ontological commitments that philosophers of music may or may not be amenable to. Instead, I suggest that musical works might be properly categorized without a pre-existing ontological framework beyond what is necessary to explain music itself. The Intercorporeal Account claims that musical works are a type of relationship, something we *do together*, and for this reason is easily accommodated by any ontology that posits the existence of relationships. Saying that music is a corporeal, relational, activity merely requires that our ontology makes room for bodies, relationships, and activities and allows that the product of activities may be constituted by the activities themselves (as in the case of human relationships). This minimalist approach to musical ontology means that the work-as-relationship paradigm can be accommodated in a wide variety of existing ontological frameworks, and for this reason I call it “ontologically ecumenical.”

Chapter Two, my *larghetto* movement, helps situate the Intercorporeal Account in the shifting landscape of musical definitions. The claim that musical works are corporeal, relational,



activities is partially an ontological claim *and* partially a definitional claim. Saying that musical works are corporeal and relational activities can (in some, limited ways) identify instances of musical works in the world. In comparison to intrinsic accounts, the Intercorporeal Account does not specify necessary and sufficient conditions by which to identify music, and thus is neither overly-restrictive nor overly-liberal in its identification of musical works. Of course, the Intercorporeal Account does not explicitly identify *anything* as musical in the way that intrinsic definitions do, but rather the account focuses our attention away from specific works and onto the norms and expectations by which we judge works and their belonging in the category “music.” In this way, the Intercorporeal Account is similar to subjective definitions in that whatever we *collectively* agree is music *just is* music. However, to say that the Intercorporeal Account is a flat-footed subjective definition would be inaccurate just as it would be incorrect to say that gender is purely voluntary on a Butlerian account. Instead, the Intercorporeal Account reveals that the way we discuss music, our norms and cultural expectations about the aesthetic medium, merely guides musical praxis and definitions, and does not constitute the belonging of individual works. Because subjective definitions argue that voluntary belief *constitutes* musical belonging in the case of individual works, these definitional strategies produce undesirable consequences: subjective definitions beg the question, often in socioculturally problematic ways. The Intercorporeal Account can address these issues in two ways. First, my account suggests that music is a relational, corporeal activity and therefore requires that human beings are engaged in creating the work in question (i.e., not just *anything* that sounds musical can be). Second, saying that strict musical definitions (either intrinsic or subjective) contribute to musical *norms* means that these definitions are not constitutive of musical belonging, but offer the set of cultural expectations against which performances are measured. Often, specific musical works defy our

expectations about what is or is not “music” and yet we are compelled to call them musical anyway by virtue of their participation in, with, or against the cultural norms of musical performance. Additionally, the Intercorporeal Account enjoys theoretical advantages over intentional definitions in that most of the objections to intentional definitional strategies just are the objections raised against intrinsic and subjective definitions. Because the Intercorporeal Account avoids the objections raised against intrinsic and subjective accounts, it also avoids the objections raised against restricted and unrestricted intentional accounts. Finally, the Intercorporeal Account is properly multilateral in that it draws on work from Extended Musical Cognition to address the role of the musician/composer, audience, *and* the relationship which constitutes the musical work. Unlike orthodox definitions, my account can and does discuss the role of musical engagement in production/reception neutral ways with a focus on *musicking* and offers a plausible account of the musical work itself.

In Chapter Three, the vivace movement, I addressed emerging work in Extended Musical Cognition (EMC) and argued that no satisfactory definitions of music exist in the field. Further, I suggested early in Chapter Four that EMC philosophy faces a significant issue in that scholars ought to collapse the music/musicking distinction for the same reason that 4E philosophy collapses the mind/body divide, but that no current work takes on this project. However, the Intercorporeal Account borrows the key insight from EMC that music is an active process, something that embodied humans *do* and not a free-floating set of abstract objects ready for discovery and instantiation the way that abstract ideas might be to Cartesian philosophers. Given the importance of this insight in the Intercorporeal Account, it may not be inaccurate to say that my account is an EMC-compatible definition or ontology of music. Of course, I want to acknowledge that EMC and performativity theory are two separate, viable strategies for

interpreting human behavior and the social construction of meaning and identity. When I say that the Intercorporeal Account is EMC-compatible, I mean to imply that it is compatible with a wide variety of ontological or theoretical frameworks, especially those that are amenable to treating aesthetic objects as relational entities or even relationships themselves. I am under no illusions that one *must* accept Butlerian performativity to accept the Intercorporeal Account or that one *must* believe that the mind is extended beyond the body. Rather, I mean to identify these two theories as particularly welcoming to the view that musical works are corporeal, relational activities, and the view that musical works might be examples of relationships established by these activities.

To that end, Chapter Four (a presto movement in sonata form), makes the argument that music and musical works can (and should) be understood as activities consistent with insights from EMC, and that these activities are corporeal and relational. To support the claim that musical works are corporeal, I rehearsed Cusick's argument that musical meaning is carried by the bodies of performers and suggested that this view is directly in line with EMC insights into the essentially embodied nature of musicking activities. To support the claim that music is a relational activity, I suggested that the type of bodies that EMC and Cusick implicitly identify as musicking subjects are relationally constituted in a Merleau-Pontian sense. Further, I argued that these relational bodies engage in relationships during musicking, supported by Cusick's experiential evidence and corroborated by a host of scholarship and lay intuition. Finally, I suggested that if music is a corporeal, relational activity and musical works are types of relationships, then we might profitably take a performative approach to explaining music as an institution and a relational mode.

Ultimately, my goal in this dissertation was to demonstrate the “going rate” in traditional philosophy of music, and make an impassioned case that music is better, more inclusively and accurately, understood as a relational mode, a way of connecting audiences and musicians with one another in ways that ordinary language might not. Most definitions and ontologies of music rely on the intuition that musical works are objects like any other, and that there is not a significant difference between music and the plastic arts. I hope that I have challenged this assumption in productive ways and pointed toward understanding traditional definitions and ontologies as norming devices rather than descriptive claims about reality itself. I hope I have proven that music is best identified without a reliance on visual media analogues, that it is as an activity that *we* perform together. Altogether too often we dismiss the ways we talk about music as too poetic, not concrete enough, but what if what we *feel* about music were literally true? If our ontologies and definitions are beholden to praxis, the ways we think and talk, then the Intercorporeal Account accommodates the less-analytic ways of understanding music, it explains what it is that comes to us in dreams, and moments of quiet—it helps account for the feeling of being *known* the best music provides.

### **On Music and Musics**

A good part of my early life was spent on a stage or in a pit, behind the comforting screen of large-print sheet music, mobilizing the instructions contained within a score so as to make sounding and real musical works; and a good part of my life since has been spent in concert halls, open-mic cafes, basements, and opera houses, listening to *whatever* it is that the musicians before me perform. Two things puzzled (and still puzzle) me about these experiences: First, I am not sure how analytic philosophers have managed to find, in music, the abstract and strangely instantiated musical works that they claim exist. The Intercorporeal Account is a first pass, a

sightreading of sorts, at working through alternative ways of understanding music, ways of speaking and thinking about music that make sense to the “I” who is a musician, a musicker, a musicophile. Second, these disparate experiences puzzled me in their sense of unity. An earlier version of this project began and ended with an account of listening to Negative Scanner and Brahms. At the one concert, I arrive in a leather jacket layered to the nines so I can survive a cold January walk from the Blue Line to Reckless Records and my ears are ringing seconds into the performance; my friend smiles at me from behind the mic and her scream melts the Chicago cold from my insides out. At the other concert, I sit down quietly and place my overcoat on the back of the chair before idly leafing through a brochure before the cacophony of an orchestra tuning brings me to my senses and *Symphony No. 2 in D Major* washes over me like a sunrise; I grab my armrest and try to breathe as the symphony continues. I wonder, at times more seriously than others, whether or not these experiences share anything in common; how is it that we have decided that DIY punk and Brahms belong in the same category? Why is it that my intense experience of yearning (*of eros*) tells me in my bones (*in my body*) that these are the same? And, unfortunately, this is a question that I have not yet found an answer for. Whether music or musics exist is still, in my mind, a live question.

What, then, might be left to say about music in its corporeal, relational, and active dimensions? Its “strange and duplicitous” ability to simultaneously invite and reject scrutiny seems most apparent in an understanding of music as like any human relationship because, like relationships in a certain manner of speaking, there are as many kinds of music as there are people. I want to address a few words from Primo Levi’s *Bear Meat* about a certain truth of human relationships. His narrator explains, “I exchanged a few words about the weather and our plans for the following day. This is standard conversation, like the classic opening moves of a

chess game, where what matters, much more than what one says (which is brief and obvious), is the tone in which one says it” (Levi 2007). What matters most to us about music is not *what* it says, but *how* it says it. Covers of covers, oft-repeated chord patterns, the *umpteenth* version of Beethoven’s *9<sup>th</sup> Symphony* are all say something “brief and obvious,” but what compels us about these iterative performances are *how* each one says what it says. Music’s specific character, *how* it says what it says, is not just what makes music *music*, but what makes music what it is for us.

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## VITA

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