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# If Music is Ongoing Experience, What Might Music Theory Be?

A Suggestion from the Drastic

Christopher Hasty

The current opening of musicology to questions of performance and embodied meaning calls for a theorizing of musical experience that would not remain stuck in oppositions of subject and object, mind and body, process and product. If we take experience as essentially predetermined by the musical work or, in cognitivist information processing terms, by rule-governed mechanisms for manipulating internal representations (be these rules syntactic or semantic) we shall not be able to account for the creativity of music and the production of novel meaning. The complexity or messiness of such production may seem an impediment to understanding music – it would seem to lead to the vagaries of the merely subjective, to mere appearance, or to a hopeless relativism that would in the end leave us speechless. In this essay I will take the creativity of experiencing and all the complexity that comes with it as a positive fact that might lure us to think about time and process in music. Such a thinking could open many avenues for connecting theory and practice and for connecting music theory with other disciplines of musical scholarship.

Die gegenwärtige Öffnung der Musikforschung zu Fragen der Aufführung und der ›verkörperten Bedeutung‹ erfordern eine Theorie musikalischer Erfahrung, die nicht in den Oppositionen von Subjekt und Objekt, von Geist und Körper oder von Prozess und Produkt stecken bleibt. Wenn wir Erfahrung als etwas vom musikalischen Werk Vorherbestimmtes ansehen, oder, informationstheoretisch ausgedrückt, als regelgeleitete Mechanismen, die interne Darstellungen manipulieren (seien diese Regeln syntaktisch oder semantisch), werden wir nicht in der Lage sein, die Kreativität der Musik und die Produktion von neuer Bedeutung zu erkennen. Die Komplexität und Unordnung von derartiger Bedeutungsproduktion scheint ein Hindernis auf dem Weg zum Verstehen von Musik zu sein – es scheint zu den Launen des bloß Subjektiven zu führen, zu bloßer Erscheinung, oder zu einem hoffnungslosen Relativismus der uns am Ende sprachlos zurücklässt. In diesem Essay möchte ich die in der Erfahrung liegende Kreativität in all ihrer Komplexität als positives Faktum als Ausgangspunkt nehmen, um über Zeit und Prozess in der Musik nachzudenken. Ein solches Denken öffnet viele Wege zu einer engeren Bindung von Theorie und Praxis, als auch zu einer engeren Bindung der Musiktheorie mit anderen Disziplinen der Musikforschung.

... my musicological habitus inclines me to think about music's fixed, textlike qualities, an inclination that is perpetually at odds with the way my performing self inclines to think about and respond to music. And when I turn to music theory as a tool to help me understand a piece I need to know about, I find that its habitus, too, inclines to focus on music's fixed, textlike qualities.

... besides offering us a set of practices to analyze the syntax and structure of works' textlike qualities, music theory has a long tradition of theorizing about the phenomenon that is music. In the modern era, speculation about music has not been the dominant strand of music theory – but it has never quite gone away, either. And it is in that philosophy-oriented corner of the discipline that I would expect a theory of musical bodies to flourish.<sup>1</sup>

Theorizing music's worldly or embodied character has indeed flourished as musicologists have sought to explore ways of understanding music as situated activity involving performing selves making, thinking about, and responding to music. With this theorizing has flourished criticism of musicologies that objectify music as works, structures, or schemes – self-same, pre-formed musical objects, “fixed” and “textlike” as Cusick puts it. Christopher Small's neologism “musicking” has entered our lexicon to mark this distinction between a substantialized, external form outside the body and an adverbial process of actual and ever changing music-making which is meaningful, embodied, and world revealing. Small asserts that “music is not a thing at all but an activity, something people do. The apparent thing ‘music’ is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it at all closely.”<sup>2</sup> A ‘thing’ can be named or identified with or as a concept, but doing is something else again (though perhaps not something else altogether). Doing, “musicking” makes the identity and the identification of the ‘thing’ problematic. In the doing and in the multiplicity of doings what *stays* the same? Musicking ‘music’ is a way of expanding and complicating the study of music and its theorization.

In one way or another, new developments in musicology<sup>3</sup> have expanded and complicated the ambitions of the field. Repertory has expanded to include popular music, non-Western music, and all sorts of hybrids. Documents now include not only written but also recorded sound and speech. In the course of this expansion traditional boundaries between the sub-disciplines of musicology – history, theory, and ethnomusicology – have become increasingly permeable. With the rethinking of boundaries and the methodological certainties that had kept them in place theory in the broadest sense has become a preoccupation of many scholars of music. In this way the horizons of music theory as a discipline have dramatically expanded. The search for new ways of conceptualizing music brings opportunities for music theory to claim the speculative or ‘philosophy-oriented’ role in research and pedagogy that Cusick calls for. Such a role

1 Cusick 1994, 9–10 and 22.

2 Small 1998, 2.

3 Although Cusick in the above quotation makes a sharp distinction between musicology and music theory, I follow the practice of some other Anglo-American scholars in using the term “musicology” to describe musical studies in general and not simply historical studies.

would involve an examination of the concepts, assumptions, and methods of musicology in light of new musical, cultural, and technological realities. In view of the shifting of disciplinary boundaries and the emergence of new questions for musicology what music theory might become is open. I would hope that music theory does not abandon its commitment to speculating on the organization of musical sound, but I would hope too that this commitment might be deepened and made more productive by seriously engaging the difficult questions of time and process, meaning and feeling, perception and experience rather than resting in comfortable fantasies of fixed compositional structures. Such an opening could make theoretical research far more relevant to the other musicological disciplines (including musical aesthetics, and experimental music psychology), to musical performance and composition (and their pedagogies), and to other humanistic and scientific disciplines.

The search for new theoretical grounding has led to a proliferation of connections to fields outside music – to cognitive sciences, including ecological and developmental psychology and to the full range of cultural studies, including gender, media, and performance theories.<sup>4</sup> Questions of musical meaning have become reinvigorated through connections with linguistics and semiotics.<sup>5</sup> In all these openings is a willingness to enter music's daunting complexity – something that is avoided in an appeal to fixed objects and score-based repertoires (the autonomous musical work, the music itself, the purely musical, 'the notes'). In view of the extent and variety of all this new theorizing the only common characteristic I would identify here is that of an openness to complexity and thus a resistance to the comforts of reduction. This is at the same time an openness of various approaches to one another, a more or less tacit acknowledgement of pluralism in the study of music and a sense of the open, unfinished, problematic nature of such study. In such an opening, music theory as a sub-discipline is free to move beyond questions of 'the notes' and indeed to question concepts of fixed structure represented by notation and thus to join others in addressing questions of musical meaning, communication, and performance. And yet, moving beyond the primacy of structures, forms, and patterns to include the realities of musicking will involve discovering new ways of thinking about music and human experience in general. Any approach that gets stuck in concepts that deny process will fall short of the radical complexity and pluralism that we might expect of a theory of musical bodies. But how can any musicology, old or new, accept the challenge of speaking of music adverbially? Isn't the very speaking or writing a reduction from the full complexity of musicking, a betrayal of process in the vain attempt at a logical, wordy capture of a spontaneous music-making that will itself ever escape the holding, staying grasp of the concept or *Begriff*?

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4 To cite but a few studies, see Bamberger 2005, 2006; Cook 1998, Hisama 2001, London 2004, Narmour 1990, 1992.

5 See Cumming 2000, Hatten 1994, Kemler 2001, Zbikowski 2002.

In a provocative critique not only of the old but also the new musicology, Carolyn Abbate asks the radical question straightaway, “What does it mean to write about performed music [rather than, say, a work apart from ‘its’ performance]? About an opera live and unfolding in time and not an operatic work?”<sup>6</sup> By ‘performed’ or ‘performance’ is here meant music in the process of being made. I would like to expand performance to include any actual making, whether of listening or composing, of speaking or hearing, reading or writing; thus, even the activities of theorizing and analyzing are performative. To perform, from *per-formare* is to really, actually (fully) form or shape. The ‘-ance’ of performance connotes action and process. The thing performed apart from or outside the forming is problematic.<sup>7</sup> Is it a fixed, ideal form above or beyond (transcending), or beneath or behind (founding) the actual doing, a thing that can be known quite apart from the situated knowing itself? Or is it a more or less complex name used to point to some past or future performance and in this way outside a present, ongoing event? But in this case, if the name or concept is actually used, how could it really be outside? Wouldn’t it in its very repetitions itself partake in all the mutability of performance? Like Small, Abbate resists the reification of ‘music’ and the positing of a knowledge placed before, outside, above the performance. To stake out a site of resistance Abbate invokes Jankelevitch’s opposition of the drastic and the gnostic. The drastic or performative insists that “real music is music that exists in time, the material acoustic phenomenon.” The gnostic “encourages us to retreat from real music to the abstraction of the work and, furthermore, always to see as [Jankelevitch] put it, ‘something else,’ something behind or beyond or next to this mental object.”<sup>8</sup> Abbate sets out “to test the [her and others’] conviction that what counts is not a work ... in the abstract, but a material, present event,”<sup>9</sup> and in the course of her testing Abbate finds little support from current musicologies even those that engage questions of performance and body.

The gnostic positing of a pre-formed thing apart from or outside an actual forming is indeed problematic. Performing is thereby denied any creative power – that is, the power to make something new, something that was not there already and something that will not stay there ready to be had again as the same thing. If this newness or nowness is either denied or marginalized as a non-essential supplement then time and people become mere formalities, indifferent and exchangeable slots for the appearance of music. The drastic project of taking the performing musical body into account is itself highly problematic if we allow that living, feeling, thinking bodies are constantly and newly made and remade in time and if we allow that bodies are intricately folding and folded into their worldly environment. But this problematic is an opening, not a denial or foreclosure; moreover, it need not exclude the gnostic positing of concepts, forms,

6 Abbate 2002, 505.

7 In mentalistic terms, rather than of things as external givens we might speak of internal givens, underlying structures or representations conceived, say, along Chomskian lines as a transcendent realm of competence in distinction from performance (the actual linguistic event). The argument that follows will criticize both sorts of fixation.

8 Abbate 2002, 505.

9 Abbate 2002, 506.

structures, or meanings if we recognize that this positing is itself always a performing or creating. After all, we can think about, conceptualize, and theorize the drastic with Jankelevitch and Abbate, and we can do this again and again, in our own ways and in real time – how else? Such an opening does not make knowing an impossibility, but it does open knowing to a complexity that will not rest in a finished known apart from the living, experiencing body.

Abbate writes of the drastic that it “connotes physicality, but also desperation and peril, involving a category of knowledge that flows from drastic actions or experiences and not from verbally mediated reasoning.”<sup>10</sup> These connotations, dramatic as they are, may function to limit the usefulness of the term. Despair need not be at the heart of doing, though we may despair of holding onto and naming the doing. It may be more helpful to note that the word ‘drastic’ is related to ‘drama’ both coming from the Greek verb *dran* – to do, act, make. And yet, the connotations of danger and peril can remind us of the openness of performing and creating to a novelty that precisely to be new or now cannot be predetermined. Another, tamer word, encountered throughout Abbate’s text but not thematized, comes to mind: experience. Like experiment, experience comes from Latin *experiri*, to test or try out – and that from Greek *peira*, an attempt or trial. So peril or danger (*periculum*) is there too. My motive in all this etymology is to use largely forgotten traces of process as a way of hearing something more in these words so that they might work freshly as tools for thinking about process. The word ‘experience’ is in need of some refreshing if it is not to draw us back into “music’s fixed, textlike qualities,” “the apparent thing ‘music’ ... a figment, an abstraction of the action,” or in Abbate’s beautiful phrase, “the cryptographic sublime.” If musical experience is to be understood as creative and genuinely temporal, a continuous production of novelty in actual occasions, we should take note of certain resistances in uses of the word ‘experience.’

Experience can be understood in quite static or atemporal senses: the apprehension or taking in of an external object (an experience *of X*, *of a work* or *of its structure* or *its meaning*), an object timelessly there to be taken in as a datum or given. Or experience can be understood in temporally enigmatic senses: in the past tense sense of an already formed knowledge or skill based on prior encounters with objects, an internally represented experience of an object that we now already have and that itself comes into play in present action. But how – causally, by determining actual, present experience? Are there then two experiences, a past one and a present one? In both these senses there are posited contents of experience, things that we have taken in. Experience thus becomes either synonymous with contents or a sort of receptacle or container. But where does this leave our actual taking, our selecting and making sense *of* these things, and the temporal course of this making? If there are not precisely ‘these things’ prior to our taking and making, where do they come from, how are they made? Are they not made by and with the living body?

To introduce a sense of continuous or real time we might add to experience the qualifier ‘ongoing.’ Or we can follow Eugene Gendlin’s lead and speak of *experiencing* to focus on process rather than product, performing rather than a pre-formed (determined

10 Abbate 2002, 510.

and determining) thing. Gendlin proposes that experience “be thought of as that partly unformed stream of feeling that we have at any moment. I shall call it ‘experiencing,’ using that term for the flow of feeling, concretely, to which you can every moment attend inwardly, if you wish.”<sup>11</sup> Experiencing here adds something dynamic or directional to ‘ongoing.’ It asks that we think of a going on from feeling that has some sort of creative power. To say that experiencing is only partly formed is to say that it is also partly unformed or indeterminate. It thus places us in the process of music being made. As process experiencing is not a container or even a containing. And yet it is always, at every moment full, as full as can be or as circumstances allow. Experiencing could be called feeling, hearing, making sense of what is happening, what has happened, what might happen. In experiencing there must more or less definite, more or less complex or interwoven ‘things’ for there to be a what – these might be sounds, melodic-rhythmic figures, images, the look of the performing bodies, ideas that come to mind, all sorts of things that might be said to be the contents of our experience. Perhaps because they are so palpable the things seen, imagined, or heard can seem detachable from the ongoing stream of feeling and from the sense they make or they sense that is made with them. But clearly their very palpability is inseparable from the ongoing sense making. Moreover, they are all there together interacting with one another in our making the sense we experience. We may focus on one or another aspect of this complexity but that very aspect is itself the interaction of an undivided multiplicity of sensibles and an interaction that is always developing or changing. The vividness and meaningfulness of musical passage is created with such sensibles or signs (symbols is Gendlin’s preferred term) but not without something else – our active engagement with signs in the making of sense or meaning.

I will follow Gendlin in calling *meaning* an emergent property of all experiencing, an emergence that involves both signs or the palpable objects that come to us and the ongoing bodily feeling that is always ready to make something new with the signs that come. Gendlin call this feeling “felt sense” and defines meaning as a functional relationship between felt sense and signs. In working together felt sense and signs create meaning. There is no meaning without both – signs function as such only in experiencing, and there can be no experiencing, no feeling of nothing. Whether the sound-sign is ‘live’ or recorded the living, feeling body is the site of meaning.<sup>12</sup> Like Small’s musicking, meaning here is treated as a verb, an ongoing articulated but continuous process of body-environment interaction. This functional definition, fully dependent on performance, makes meaning no less central to music than it is to language. In both, meaning is the process of living with and through sound or a graphic notation that can bring sound to mind. Musicians work with both not only because language is always with us in our very bodies but also because our musical training involves the learning and use of terms and concepts. There can be no music in itself outside language.

11 Gendlin 1962, 3.

12 Certainly, there are important differences between ‘live’ and recorded music, but I do not follow Abbate in excluding the recorded (or even score-read) from the performative. Indeed, there are also important differences among the many varieties of ‘live’ and among the many varieties of recorded body-environment situations.

If musical experience and musical meaning prove difficult to describe it may be of some comfort to note that the experienced meanings of language are no less difficult to capture. Describing any actual experience is always after the fact and thus a new experience with its own meaning. The only way to escape this problem is to posit something before, outside experiencing that can hold fixed, determinate meanings and to say that this object stands before an experiencing subject ready to determine the meanings that will be experienced. If the subject is unprepared some meaning will be lost. And since subjects are all differently prepared actual meanings will differ. The pre-formed object is self-same; it can be in many places and at many times without loss of identity. For example, the concept of the musical work is an idealized and detemporalized thought of unity/identity in which, as often happens, identity is warranted by origin (the composer's intention) and/or inherent structure (inherent in 'the notes'). In cognitivist music psychology discrete, unitary bits of 'information' are represented and stored or encoded in 'memory' to be retrieved or decoded in *any* present and future through lawful, deterministic procedures (assuming one's body is something like a computer). Musical hermeneutics is similarly representationalist. Ideas or 'meanings,' themselves static and thing-like, are fixed or encoded in the music waiting to be decoded by all alike – all, that is, who already know the codes and can pick up their set cues. In all such models there is the claim not only that traces of meaning have been deposited in the object capable of being transmitted to the experiencing subject but that these traces are legible as such and that the meanings they contain are specifiable according to protocols of the modeling system. Abbate puts it this way: "Faith in specificity and legibility means believing that musical artifacts at later points can be read for exact localizable traces, that once upon a time something left a mark, and that reading such traces for the facts they reflect accesses the proper meaning that one should attach to sound."<sup>13</sup>

Music is indeed artifact and is nothing if not repeatable, but it is also creative. Something new is always being produced in hearing and in talking about or describing hearing; moreover, the hearing and describing change one another in new and unpredictable ways. If this is a problem then it is one to be explored rather than escaped. But before exploring the problem a bit farther I would like to stay with the idea of mental representation and try to bring out something of its implausibility in a couple of ways: first, the temporal peculiarities of identity; and second, the peculiarity of common metaphors for the communication of meaning from time to time and person to person. If we are to try to think of process it will be helpful first to take a critical look at customary ways in which process is denied.

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Music like any art or artifact is made to be repeated. Most remarkable about music is the care with which sound and duration are sculpted for repetition. For this reason music may be an especially useful vehicle for thinking about time and process. Thinking about time and process is surely a useful way of thinking about music and, I would suggest,

13 Abbate 2002, 515.



useful too for thinking about thinking about and talking about music. Whatever we say or hear or learn about musical pattern will change what we make of music. All these patterns or repeatable things – pieces, phrases, figures, styles, images, feelings, ideas of music – are new and immeasurably complex when they are repeated. Our performances are as deep as the past will have made them (or as what they will have made of the past), so complex and so mixed that we cannot separate out all the ‘things’ that must come into play. Indeed, isolating or abstracting one of these things will result in quite a different thing.<sup>14</sup>

There is, however, another, perhaps more familiar, way to think about repetition. This is to imagine a repetition of the same as a way of controlling the multiplicity of repetition and eliminating novelty. Underlying both unity and multiplicity in this discourse is an essential and ideal fixation, a stopping of time or a denial of actual temporal passage. First, unity itself must be protected from degenerating into a many, that is to say, protected from a repetition that would produce difference. The one (*singulus*), same (*similis*), identical (*idem*), is always (*semper*) the same *one*.<sup>15</sup> If there is to be a return of the same then the difference of time and place must be thought accidental – for example, at any time it must be the same objective musical composition with the same objective structure, and the uncountable many different bodies in which the piece (or idea or structure) returns must be merely subjective or accidental.<sup>16</sup> Crucial for the elimination of the temporal is this first moment of *objectification* – the formation of an identity, sameness, or whole that is protected from a repetition in which it would differ from itself and thus lose identity and stability by passing away into a real past in which it could not be raised as from the dead to be made present again. Or we might say, crucial for the musical object as a vehicle for representation is the elimination of time.

Once we have an object that does not pass we can imagine it to be something like a persistent solid body with an inside and an outside. It is one, but it could be composed of many. In this composition we return to the questions of complexity and multiplicity, for now that we have discrete objects we can safely have a controllable, countable many. There is now a second moment of fixity, an analysis in which this whole is resolved into its constituent parts, elements, or factors. To determine the factors leading to or constitut-

14 For a more detailed discussion of difference along Deleuzian lines see Hasty 2010. This essay provides a somewhat different perspective on many of the topics developed here and engages more directly traditional music-theoretical categories.

15 What we call ‘the same’ is, in fact, in this very naming a naming of difference, a repeating *this*, the same as *that*. Since representational or identity thinking comes so easily, it is good to notice that our everyday language shows signs of misgiving in the rather anxious redundancies: ‘one and the same,’ ‘the very same,’ ‘self-same,’ ‘the exact same.’ Notice the similar anxiety in ‘real time,’ a time that is continuous, irreversible, and creative of genuine novelty. Thus Abbate’s “real music” nicely criticizes a musicological fiction.

16 It should be clear here that repeated hearings by a single individual of a single recording cannot truly be a return of the same, otherwise we could not explain learning, or forgetting. The objectification that allows us to speak of a return of the same is an abstraction – a useful fiction, but one that needs to be recognized as such. That there are countless ways of describing or carving up the object clearly shows the relativity of objectification. That some carvings are better than others (carvings at the joint, as Plato put it in *Phaedrus*) shows that experienced meaning itself is quite robust and exacting.

ing a musical object we have to isolate *an* object that would rest still and whole under our gaze. Clearly, there are many ways of thinking the same and many purposes served by such conceptualization. Again, various sub-disciplines of musicology manage this in different ways (e. g., the positing of fixed structures, forms, and operations in analytic theory, of mental representations and schemata in cognitivist theories, codes in hermeneutics, etc.).

An analysis or division of a musical object can proceed in countless ways depending upon what we choose to regard as its constituting elements or factors, how we choose ‘to carve it up.’ But in any carving the parts are necessarily discrete and numerable. Moreover, each part is itself an object, a mini-whole itself perhaps composed of smaller part-wholes divisible until we reach a smallest part. Such parts form a purely quantitative multiplicity of externally related entities and are thus ‘factors’ in the mathematical sense of quantities that divide a given quantity without remainder. If we speak of time here it is of the spatialized pseudo-time Bergson criticized – one where the juxtaposition of before and after replaces the fluid intricacies of becoming and real distinctions of present, past, and future. It is spatialized in the sense that in the absence of becoming and the reduction of succession to instantaneous juxtaposition all the externally related ‘parts’ are treated as simultaneous. We encounter this sort of multiplicity or rather take up this attitude especially in intellectual work involving purely logical distinctions (including those we customarily use in thinking about time). In intellectual work with music perhaps the most striking and explicit example is score-based analysis. We may choose to imagine that the objects of such analysis correspond to our ‘hearing’ – after all, we can identify the unit objects on a score that represents the music. But is the score homologous with music? Does our musical experience or actual making of music come in such discrete units? Isn’t it rather the case that the experience is fully temporal, changing, present? If so, then we should be able to conceive of a different order and a different understanding of multiplicity and complexity. Such an understanding can hardly avoid logic but must be wary of the limitations of the unit-based score-like logic Bergson criticized as “the logic of solid bodies.”<sup>17</sup>

The objectification of meaning as a composition of ideal and timeless self-same units is not just an artifact of Western metaphysics. It is embedded in our speech in the very naming of things that *carry* meaning. Once we have an object of thought the question arises how it can be communicated as the same across different times and persons. As Michael Reddy has pointed out, everyday language finesses this problem in a way that objectifies meaning in order to guarantee its autonomy. In an analysis of randomly selected English sentences that concern meaning and its communication Reddy discovers in approximately 70 percent a logical framework he calls the conduit metaphor: meanings, ideas, thoughts, or feelings are placed inside signals (what Gendlin would call symbols – words, sounds, music or musical works, situations ...) where they can rest to be transported across times and persons.<sup>18</sup> Here are a few of his examples:

17 Bergson 1913, ix. See also Čapek 1971, chapter 9.

18 Reddy 1979, 284–324. For a contrast with Japanese see Nomura 1993.

1. Try to *get your thoughts across* better
2. None of Mary's *feelings came through to me* with any clarity
3. You still haven't *given me any idea* of what you mean
12. The lines may rhyme, but *they are empty* of both *meaning and feeling*
17. That *remark is completely impenetrable*
20. You're reading things into the poem

Reddy brings this quite dead metaphor vividly, even shockingly to life in his subtle analysis. He writes of (1) and (2) that "we do not literally 'get our thoughts across' when we talk .... This sounds like mental telepathy or clairvoyance .... Actually, no one receives anyone else's thoughts directly when they are using language. Mary's feelings, in example (2), can be perceived only by Mary; they do not really 'come through to us' when she talks. Nor can anyone literally 'give you an idea' – since these are locked within the skull and life process of each of us."<sup>19</sup> Reddy distinguishes two forms of the conduit metaphor. The major framework, exemplified by the above sentences implies that: "1.) language functions like a conduit, transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another; 2.) in writing and speaking, people insert their thoughts and feelings in the words; 3.) words accomplish the transfer by containing the thoughts and feelings and conveying them to others; and 4) in listening or reading, people extract *the* thoughts and feelings *once again* from the words."<sup>20</sup> Here for language and words we could substitute music, pieces or parts of pieces, structure, style, etc. (Reddy uses "word" as an abbreviation for all the things that might carry meaning). The minor framework is exemplified by sentences such as the following:

30. That concept has been floating around for decades
31. Somehow, these hostile feelings found their way to the ghettos of Rome

The 'minor' framework overlooks words as containers and allows ideas and feelings to flow, unfettered and completely disembodied, into a kind of ambient space ... it seems that this extension of the metaphor is aided by the fact that, somewhere, we are peripherally aware that words do not really have insides.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond simply identifying and classifying aspects of the metaphor, Reddy criticizes it on logical, social and political grounds and suggests a more realistic and less coercive alternative he calls the toolmakers paradigm. Much of his critique could be leveled against the schema of musical objectification in which the musical object to be *had* by a subject must in some sense contain a meaning that is to be conveyed as the same. In this scenario meanings are simply transferred as the same. There is no sense of their being

19 Reddy 1979, 286–287.

20 Reddy 1979, 290, my italics.

21 Reddy 1979, 291.

made anew and differently apart from their not being properly understood. Creating new metaphors as Reddy has attempted with his toolmakers paradigm might bring more clarity to the process. This would require new language and a sensitivity to the metaphorical character of the language and concepts we have – and a resistance to their constraints.<sup>22</sup>

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I have dwelt on objectification to urge some skepticism toward habits of thought and speech that avoid the complexities of actual experiencing by eliminating the temporal and, what may come to be much the same thing, substituting for an order of irreducible complexity an arrangement of distinct parts or factors (whether serial or hierarchical). Abbate's musicological gnostic seems to name a faith in such reduction. But in experiencing, such complexity cannot be avoided and perhaps especially in the case of "musicking" with its undeniable rhythmic flow and its resistance to representation (apart from 'the notes'). Although theorizing experience and music as a fully temporal process is highly problematic, our performing selves know this process intimately, and even if our musicological selves find such a drastic perspective uncomfortable all our speaking and writing are no less processive or performative. What Small calls a "figment" in the positing a of musical object that we would analyze or describe is the assumption that music comes to us already formed, patterned, and differentiated in all the factors we would name. But our analysis and description need not rest in this assumption or in a forgetting that our logic of patterns and forms is also a musical logicking that is itself part of music. The split between "drastic" and "Gnostic" as between "musicking" and musicology is a real source of conflict, but it may ultimately be no more real or desirable than the split of body and mind. Returning now to the problem of experiencing, I would like to focus on the temporal as a way of staying with process. I will begin with an imaginary scene of a performance.

Let's say you are playing a piece or improvising. You think of, sense, feel, imagine all sorts of things: for instance, you sense your body in all sorts of ways, feel your instrument, value what is happening in light of what has happened and what might. There is no end to the specifics we could think to name. Since you feel *with* your body, there is working also a vastly intricate physiological realm with its long history. All 'this' happens together in ever-changing, non-hierarchical coordination. But for now, rather than attempt to isolate various specifics and try to say how 'they' or such things might work together let's think of the complex ongoingness. Practically, we will be in the production of some event in the making. The event could be a figure, a phrase, a section, or all of these. However we choose to define the scope of the event, we bring to bear in this making all that now bears on its making. This statement is not a tautology because past-into-present (what we bring to bear) and present-into-future (the selection of that 'what' relevant for this making) are not equivalent. What is 'this making?' Here and now, 'this'

22 The field of cognitive linguistics has profited from Reddy's work and has generously acknowledged its importance. And yet, in building on this work linguists have tended toward an objectification of metaphor in the form of image schemata and have largely ignored the critical potential of Reddy's analysis. See for example, Lakoff 1993.

making has never been. ‘This making’ is thus something in the making, not some object-like, static, completed thing, but something that is open to novelty, creativity, becoming. What is brought to bear is everything that can be used at this moment to carry the event forward toward its eventual passing into other events: all sorts of habits or patterns we have learned, not as a repertory of separate things but so mixed up that what we play has never been played before. Such making could not be less score-like. It is exquisitely articulated and utterly fluid, moving in countless dimensions all the time. The making can be tame or adventurous, lax or intense; it may involve a deep or shallow past, may project a far reaching or narrow-range future; and it can vary in these respects from moment to moment. It can involve all sorts of forgetting as well as remembering, losing track and finding, failures and successes. In fact, we may have the feeling at some point that our playing fell short of what was called for, that some possible intensity or meaning was lost; or we might feel some elation at making a new connection or achieving a special intensity or momentum.

In this story, I avoided the word ‘time.’ But much of the language I used evokes the idea of temporal, musical passage. Time’s customary objectification can make it a misleading term for the discussion of process. Although we speak of moving through time and of time passing, time is not a substance or space. As a way of resisting the notion of a substantialized or externalized time, let’s say rather that time is created in all its dimensions by actual events, occurrences, processes. Think of time being made by music, by its flow, changes, resistances, by music’s passage which is human passage. Here we don’t have to think of music and human experience as outside one another or opposed as object and subject. And, in any case, in thinking of experience we cannot think of time and ourselves outside of or apart from one another.

Among the features we might select to characterize experiencing from the perspective of temporality, I have chosen three: duration, unrepeatability, and indeterminacy. These features are certainly not limited to the musical; they characterize all our experience – the eventfulness of our lives and all our efforts after meaning.

The first feature is *duration* – by which I do not mean an objectively measurable ‘time span’ abstracted from the event.<sup>23</sup> Rather, I mean the whole process through which

23 The concept of time-span implies a quantitative-numerical, countable measure. If parts are conceived as time-spans we reach, most problematically, durationless instants – an infinite number of them in any finite time-span. Although the infinite set of such instants can, as a Cantor set, be regarded as ‘uncountable’ (Cantor 1962), each member is separate and discrete, and of course any finite set is enumerable (as are the infinite sets of natural and rational numbers). But from a temporal perspective there can be no durationless instants, no timeless cuts in time (see, for instance, Bergson 1913 and James 1911 for discussions of Zeno’s paradoxes and arguments for real, continuous change). The durationless instant is a mathematical fiction technologically useful for purposes of control, for predicting, saying in advance a future at any time. In this way, the future is already present or available to us. And in this way passage is thought unreal – distinctions of present, past and future are in this way imagined not as distinctions of tense but merely as the distinction before and after (left and right) on a time-line. The fiction rests in putting time and passage aside for the moment – the moment in which we take a measurement. If we recognize the durationless instant as an abstraction from the temporal (an abstraction that takes time to think about and to use) we can acknowledge the continuity or ‘thickness’ of duration and the reality of tense. Putting these two notions together has always been problematic. – How can we divide a continuous present, past, and future? If the

an event comes to last or endure. This happens throughout the becoming of the event during its emergence as an event – and it is extinguished only when the event is extinguished and past. Indeed, to have duration in this sense could serve as a definition of ‘event’ (though not, of course, in the sense that the physicist uses the term ‘event’). Again, think of a musical event like a phrase (or a single sound). The phrase from its very beginning is in the process of attaining duration – the phrase lasts because *it* (as a whole) is going on. One advantage of naming duration is that this naming can be used to counteract the tendency to objectify events as fixed things (the phrase, for example) and to remind us that the things that become are subject to the adventures of their becoming (and also subjects as doers and sites of doing in the grammatical and Whiteheadian senses). Moreover, music, because of its extraordinary eventfulness, can make us keenly aware of duration and, more particularly, of durational quantity.

The second feature is *particularity* or *unrepeatability*. Here by ‘unrepeatability’ I mean *not* repeatable as the same (as I stated above, real repetition always results in difference).<sup>24</sup> This is to say that an experience when past cannot again be made present, cannot be re-presented; for, although experiences on different occasions may be similar in many respects, they are numerically (quantitatively) and qualitatively distinct. Thus, for example, a musical phrase – what we might call ‘the same’ phrase – is always an occasion for unique, particular experience. The phrase will not be the same from time to time or from person to person. (After all, if it were *precisely* the same, there could be no difference of times or persons.) This feature of particularity, aside from being intuitively obvious, is a logical requirement for there to be real temporal passage, for if two events were in every respect alike except for their date, time then would be a mere formality (as it is for many physical scientists and musicologists).

The third feature – *incompleteness* or *indeterminacy in becoming* – is perhaps the most elusive, and perhaps the most important temporal category. Indeed, its elusiveness is tied to its intensely temporal character. This feature is strongly correlative with the idea of duration. If we can speak of an event as something that comes to endure by beginning and ending, then such an event – as it is in the process of emerging must be incomplete, unfulfilled until it has ended or terminated. A determinate event is one that is past – one that has become and is no longer in the process of becoming (*de-*, intensive + *terminus*, end). If we think of the event whole, as something that will eventually attain its proper duration, then there is, in fact, no ‘it’ – no definite, determinate event – until there is a completed, perfected event, that is, until the event is past. An event that is present is thus necessarily indeterminate. While the event is present – incomplete, imperfect and in the process of becoming – there is only the promise of a completed event. Indeterminacy, in this sense, is a positive term that points to the openness of events to novelty and to an *unpredetermined* end. I by no means wish to imply that events are free from context or the

present is thick with duration aren’t there always ‘parts’ of it that *are* (present tense) future and past? Such paradoxes are opportunities to re-think analytic categories in which musical parts or segments are treated as timeless, static entities on a before/after (left/right) time-line.

24 For an argument that repetition is always productive of novelty or difference see Deleuze 1994. Among others, William James 1996, Henri Bergson 1913 (also Čapek 1971 on Bergson), and Alfred North Whitehead 1985 have argued for a similarly temporal, processive understanding of repetition.

influence of an unfathomably deep, determinate and determinative past. Indeed, the past – the personal past, the cultural past, the biological past – is massive in its bearing on the creation of any new event. By comparison the moment of creativity or indeterminacy is tiny; but it is real and responsible for the remarkable fact that the world keeps going on, that world is always new, always now. In this radically temporal sense indeterminacy is dependent upon notions of particularity or unrepeatability and duration. If an event were repeatable as precisely the same it would be pre-determined. Without particularity neither novelty nor indeterminacy would be possible. Likewise, if an event were instantaneous or durationless, there would be no difference of beginning and end, and thus no time for indeterminacy. I place duration first because the second (*unrepeatability*) and third (*indeterminacy*) characteristics are so clearly negative – they argue against received notions of the self-same that work to defeat difference and against the determined that works to defeat novelty or creativity. That these received and “gnostic” notions have in fact limited thinking in ways that do in fact defeat difference and novelty shows the need for more drastic ways of thinking.

These three interrelated features I have described are meant to point to the irreducible temporality and eventfulness of experience. I suggest that much of the interest and meaning of music (and, indeed, of language) comes from the rhythmic play of relative determinacy and indeterminacy as overlapping and complex events emerge for and through our attention. To inquire more closely into process from a temporal perspective, I would like to return to Gendlin’s initial definition of experiencing “as that partly unformed stream of feeling that we have every moment.” The partly unformed speaks of the indeterminacy I have attempted to characterize. The moment, which need not be brief, speaks of duration and seems to place us ‘in’ time, here and now in this emerging moment. It is in this moment or duration that things happen and that meaning is made.

In our story of playing everything happened so quickly we scarcely had time to notice how it was all happening. To slow things down let’s imagine another sort of performance – composing, where we have time to pause and reflect, to make, unmake, and remake. Let’s say you’ve come to a stop and are trying to come up with a continuation. There is a sense of what is needed, but as yet nothing satisfactory has emerged. You go over that you’ve written to refresh this sense to try to sharper it or hold onto it. One or another continuation comes to mind but you reject them. Somehow they don’t fit. You may not and need not know why exactly. You may like one of these in itself and decide to save it for later. And then the right continuation comes. Your problem has now vanished and you move on with all this and more carrying you forward into new problems.

What is happening in this moment of waiting and in the coming of the next compositional move – or in the faster, less paused coming of the new in our imagined playing of music? Gendlin would say that a *felt sense* of what is called for calls forth the new being carried forward.<sup>25</sup> Such feeling or experiencing is always at work in the sentient body and, assuming we have the time, something “to which [we] can every moment attend inwardly, if [we] wish.” In the example from composing we envisioned holding on to and

25 I borrow this illustration from Gendlin’s description of a poet searching for and finding the next line. See Gendlin 1995, 547.

cultivating that feeling. It is something we can attend to and refer to (say, as this idea of what is needed, or this pressure, or tension, or searching). It is not waiting passively for the right move. It is working in the false moves too, to make them and perhaps to learn from them to become clearer or deeper or more focused through the experience. In the case of playing there was less time for reflection but no less a role for experiencing. We can attend to and refer to felt sense, but we cannot take it apart to describe its features or structure. If we try to put it into words (again the conduit metaphor) we find it making the meaning of our words as if we were pulling the words out of it. If we were to say that experiencing already contained differentiated identities or features that could be the same as the things we hear and see we would again be objectifying experience and eliminating time or passage.

From a more conventionally temporal perspective we might view experiencing as an embodied potential or virtual. Both potential and virtual (*potentia*, *virtus*) speak of power, the power of what has become to shape actual (present) becoming. The potential is thus easily assimilated to the past. In the case of the human body this would be an evolutionary physical/biological, cultural, and personal past all mixed together. Or we could call all this memory. We may say that the past is distinguished from the present in being determined or finished (*terminus* is end, limit), a matter of fact. What has become cannot be changed, it is done and past. If you played a wrong note you can't go back and change that. Where is that note now? This seems like a peculiar question, like asking where is the past. If it is in a place it is not a place we can go to as if it were present; we cannot see or hear the past. We can, of course, visit and revisit the past in history, but these are stories we make up and tell in our present making and telling. Objectification is a figment, a pretending that we can have the past as present at any time, or it is a forgetting that we are telling stories. It is, nevertheless, a figment motivated by seeing that the past is in some sense at work in provoking present experience, but how this can happen is something of a mystery.

When I asked how experience happens in the moment of experiencing I could not help opening this question. Somehow what has happened gets into or provokes what is happening. Nothing would now happen if there were not some transfer or connection – time would stop. But these whats are so different. What is happening is palpably differentiated into more or less individual, separate things, the tones we hear one after another. But the wrong note we played a minute ago or last year is not there now for us to hear. It has become meshed in everything that has happened. It may (or perhaps must) have an enduring, lasting effectiveness. We may, with or without noticing it, approach this spot in the piece differently when we play it again, differently that if we had not so botched it before. Perhaps some feeling of this will be with us even in other situations. We can speak of all this, tell ourselves and others about what happened, but the context for this always changing. Then past tone's effectiveness is not it's alone. Indeed, there is no longer an it that could in any sense be alone. Having become past there is no longer a tone, a separated, definite it. If we cannot speak of separate things in the past neither can we speak of their having duration. 'They' do not begin and end. Duration as I defined it is reserved for the ongoing things of the present as they are going on. We are tempted to say that once a thing is completed it has a duration, but when it is completed it is no longer a separate



‘it’ that has a duration. Rather than thinking of potential (or memory) as a thing, a store or container of literally innumerable intricately meshed contents we could think of power, the power of life process or growth. Potential would be in the moment or would be the moment of creating the new or now. It could also be *this* past, the particular past that can at this moment be productive. *This* would be nothing other than the actual. We could thus think the potential and actual together and avoid positing some sort of transmission or communication between two othering things (and thus avoid a point of contact that will lead to the thought of a durationless instant). The potential of the past would be also the potential of the present. And if the present is conceived as ongoing creation of duration, the future would be in the present as the indeterminacy of ever growing duration. Future could be the power of things to be determined and so to pass.<sup>26</sup>

This account has ended with the future as a process of determining or as the promise of the past, of death. (Actually, ‘this’ account is still going on.) But we could have begun here. If past, present, and future are continuous in the way I have suggested, they happen all at once, at the same time. In this scheme there is only one time with three faces or aspects (“aspect” not in the grammatical sense). Time might be imagined as a closing and opening circle. The repeating closing and opening, opening and closing, could be called Rhythm. There are endless ways of thinking about and with this scheme (and beyond this scheme). Here is an attempt to speak of one time, characterizing the three aspects individually using only present tense: In the past time is full, completely full. In this plenum there are no parts, no distinctions, no before and after. Time here is not a container because there are no contents, no things to be contained. In the present aspect time separates out into parts distinct from one another. Their following one another, their overlapping and imbedding one another is their distinction. In time’s future aspect there are no parts or things, no definite possibilities. There is only the power for growth, power to make things and to make them pass. In this scenario potentiality is located in future.

Or imagine a musical passage – say the formation or performing of a phrase: The new phrase comes out of or ends the (now) preceding silence or past phrase. Beginning and ending cannot be separated. There would not be that silence or preceding phrase without the new beginning. They are heard together. All our past (biological, cultural, personal) is there to be brought into play. What of it is brought into play depends on the present situation, what it calls for. And since the present situation is changing, so is changing what is being called forth. We might call this past the context, but if we do so we will also already be speaking of a present making, a making that involves not only the sounds ‘themselves’ but the whole situation – our bodily process, thought, our en-

26 There is a systematic ambiguity in ‘determinacy’ (and ‘indeterminacy’) that should be pointed out here. Determinacy can mean ended and also having definite character(s). Although the past is determinate in the first sense, it is indeterminate in the sense that it has no terms – no (definite) things, no (definite) durations. The past is no thing and has no duration. This is to say we cannot look to the past to find structures, representations, or bits of information. In a critique of the first (and second) cognitive revolution, Horst Hendriks-Jansen criticizes “the notion that thought is given structure before it is actually executed, that it must exist in some predefined form prior to actually being thought ... We feel that structure cannot simply emerge, that it has to be specified before it actually happens. But intricate structure does continually emerge in nature without the need for an explicit plan, and it emerges also in our thoughts.” (1996, 338)

vironment (place, other people ...), our sense of decorum or what is socially called for. In experiencing, the sounds are nothing apart from all this context (con-text as a weaving together). But let's say we are focused on sound. We could at any moment focus on very many other things or even focus directly on our experiencing as in our composing scenario. Focusing on sound is being into sound, and being into (inhabiting, dwelling in, living in and with) sound is essential for being into music. I would argue that the more we are into sound the more into music we are. The individual sounds – tones, voices, figures, phrases, sections – come and go. To simplify, let's say our imaginary phrase is made up of discrete sounds, discrete in that in their sequence each clearly begins and ends. When one ends it is past, 'made past' as it were by the beginning of a successor. But the phrase is not past, and so none of *its* sounds are past. As of now there is only the promise of a phrase, a changing sense of incompleteness that is the mark of the present. In the very perishing that makes it, the sound is already in its successor and in the promise of a present phrase in the making. Its being past (the pastness of its being) is nothing apart from a becoming it takes part in. This account of the unbroken continuity of being/becoming contrasts with the analysis of music into discrete units or parts. This is a problem especially for score-based analysis where parts are laid out as static graphic units and past-present-future disappears in the ever 'present' relations of before and after, left and right. In experiencing things are not so simple.

In a justly famous passage from *Faust*, Part I Mephistopheles taunts the narrow-minded scholar:

Wer will was Lebendig's erkennen und beschreiben,  
Sucht erst den Geist herauszutreiben;  
Dann hat er die Theile in seiner Hand,  
Fehlt, leider! Nur das geistige Band.

"Das geistige Band" inseparable from the living is, in other words, experiencing, musicking. It is there too in recognizing, describing, naming – in the very naming of parts. And if music includes our talking and describing, musicology too is musicking, part of "the phenomenon that is music." The figment or illusion is that there is something outside, *prior to* experiencing that is *to be* experienced. Where is this? Can it be 'in' the past and 'in' the future? The past is not above, outside, behind, before the present. If there is one time the past is not to be thought before as to the left of present on a time-line. It might be before in the sense of appearing in front of, as in say, appearing before a jury. In this sense appearance is not *mere* appearance (a *nur*) hiding the real. Abbate's musicological gnostic is the positing of a real in the form of fixed meanings, structures, concepts embedded in music prior to experiencing. Such meanings are thought to be existent things encoded in the musical material (Reddy's major framework) or free floating in the culture waiting to be incarnated (Reddy's minor framework) either automatically without our necessarily noticing or with a reflective effort using the tools of analysis. The task of such a musicology has been to bring such meanings to light, to name them as identities. Seeing through this illusion, as a task of more adequately theorizing music, would not mean falling silent. We can still have our tools and concepts and logics and continue to use

them creatively. Indeed, if we acknowledge the drastic in their working we might better understand their creativity and allow them to change in response to the complexities of music understood as process. Moreover, since problems of process as experiencing can cross all disciplinary boundaries music might have much to say to scholars outside musicology. If music is experience, a theorizing with music that takes time and process into account might engage all this drastic complexity without the comforts of a gnostic faith in the pre-formed, and also without despair.

Conceived as activity and movement (rather than as an image or representation in the mind) meaning does not come fully formed. It emerges in the course of time and displays the marks of particularity, duration, and indeterminacy-in-becoming that, as I have argued, characterize the temporal. It also involves a strong prospective component and an openness to novelty. We actively seek meaning in music and are lured by a wedding of memory and anticipation (repetition and novelty) to realize the most inclusive, the most gratifying, the most promising meanings we possibly can. We can keenly feel the rhythmic emergence of events overlapping, interrupting one another; expanding, contracting; early, late; dissolving, coalescing. This sensible, visceral, bodily connection, though difficult to describe, is nevertheless palpably there for us to observe. A theory of musical meaning constructed along genuinely processive lines would be realistic (and pluralistic) in working with this observance, recognizing both the variety of actual musical experience and the power of sharing and communicating experience. Such a theory would involve the creation of new concepts and the reevaluation of many of our old ones.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, there are many perspectives from which we could view the production of meaning and the efficacy of value in that production. From a social or cultural perspective we might ask what types of awareness are promoted and which are demoted or repressed, which can be exhibited, by whom, and in what settings. Or we might ask what a particular valuation could tell us about the constitution of the sensorium. Whatever questions we might ask, however, we must keep in mind that meaning is actually, temporally produced in individual acts, though, of course, acts profoundly embedded in the social and historical – that is to say, acts that *do* work from person to person and from time to time.

From a temporal or processive standpoint there can be no question representing particularity or halting passage. But these are not our only options. Rather than look for determinacies, say in the form of fixed structures, of ‘the music itself,’ of information that is encoded and decoded, of subjectivities or ideologies that determine or reproduce behavior; and rather than celebrating the failures of determinacy and the destructive power of indeterminacy, we might turn our attention to the positive meanings of indeterminacy – abundance or plenitude and openness to the future. Such a turn would value the importance of potentiality in musical experience. Multiplicity or difference, rather than being cast as a threat to meaning could then be recognized as that aspect of novelty or creativity that, in varying degrees, informs every experience and every effort after mean-

27 See, for example Hasty 1997 for a rethinking of traditional concepts of musical meter in the pursuit of a processive, experiential approach to musical rhythm.

ing. From this perspective, a piece of music could be understood as an opportunity for meaningful and novel experience.

A speculation on possibilities for musical experience is an inquiry into possibilities for actual music *making*. Indeed, there is a great fund of knowledge – tacit and explicit – possessed by players, coaches, and studio teachers that theorists have scarcely touched (though all theorists began their musical lives as players or singers). A heightened awareness of the possibilities for rhythmic articulation and an ability to take advantage of these possibilities is a primary goal of music pedagogy and essential for strong, effective musical communication. Exploring such knowledge could lead to new theoretical insights and to real contributions to the practise of music.<sup>28</sup> If music is understood as a mode of experiencing, then whatever directions we might want to take in music theory will involve an exploration of experience, a new empiricism (*em-peira*) that would take the human into account. In this way Cuisck's musicological habitus and performing self might find opportunities to converse.

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28 Jeanne Bamberger's work offers deep insight into questions of musical practice from the standpoint of learning and conceptualization, in particular, conceptualizations promoted by Western musical notation.

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