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Tripartite Subjectivity in Music Listening

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IN THIS ESSAY I want to examine the nature of subjectivity when listening to music, and I want to do so in terms of what we can provisionally think of as the *first-person*, *second-person*, and *third-person* components of subjectivity. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal something about the normally hidden complexity of our subjectivity in listening to music and how this complexity shapes musical experience and the construction of musical meaning.[1] While this topic involves profound philosophical and psychological issues, my interest here is more pragmatic. After describing the idea of tripartite subjectivity, I describe how this plays out in undergraduate music theory pedagogy, where it shapes the thinking of those who become music scholars and thereby helps to perpetuate our dominant epistemology. The view of subjectivity described in the following pages offers an expansion of this epistemology by way of a different view of our relationship with music.

Introduction

First-, Second-, and Third-Person—Initial Pass

Corporeally, performers are in the first-person position, while listeners are in the second-person position. The third-person position in this context refers to reflection and the position of observing or picturing wholes: a position from which one compares disparate musical

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[1] "Subjectivity" here refers to the experience of self—of being a subject—in relation to an external stimulus—the "object," or "other," or "not-self." It is not meant in the more colloquial sense of "being subjective" ("semi-irrational") versus "being objective" ("rational").

elements, with or without the aid of a score, or from which one reflects on one's experience as it is occurring. The overall issue concerns how a listener's subjectivity combines something of all three of these positions, roughly simultaneously, in a continuously changing blend.[2]

As listeners, we experience the subjectivity of being in the second-person position: listening to someone else making sounds, and experiencing the impact of these sounds upon our more or less continuously changing state. But listeners also recognize, categorize, and reflect on the music while listening, and as a starting point we can think of this as "moving" us outward into a quasi-third-person position. In addition to this, I will argue below that listeners vicariously take part in the performance, in various ways, and so we might think of this as "moving" us inward into a quasi-first-person position. The subjectivity of listening can thus be understood as combining these three kinds of subjectivity.

In trying to understand this combined subjectivity, I initially conceived of it in terms of a more or less continual migration among positions, but it became clear that such spatial representations hinder as much as they help. The problem is that the three subjectivities mutually infuse one another, and this infusion is continuous and simultaneous; a notion of occupying positions undermines this sense of infusion and the paradoxical aspect of experiencing three semi-distinct subjectivities at once.[3] Since this blending of subjectivities is crucial to the view we are considering, as an alternative, I will speak instead of three *components* of a listener's subjectivity, which, although it still bears some

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[2] We can compare the corporeal position of the performer, which is likewise tripartite to the extent that, as performers, we also listen and conceptualize.

[3] At the level of neurological function, I imagine that the three subjectivities involve a combination of shared and distinct processes. For example, second-person processes would involve the auditory system and familiar perceptual matters such as transforming pressure waves into the pitches that we hear (see, for example, Brian C. Moore, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Hearing*, 5th ed. [Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2004]), while quasi-third-person processes would include explicit conceptualization of pitch information, as in naming chords and identifying modulations. Quasi-first person processes are largely distinct from second-person processes, and they are partly distinct and partly integrated with quasi-third-person conceptualization, as I discuss below. As a whole, however, much or most of these processes are nonconscious, so that what we experience consciously is more of a mélange of the three, even while normally we are simultaneously unaware of its components.

residue of spatiality, will better facilitate thinking of three variables that blend together and shape the overall listening experience.[4]

The title of this essay thus refers to a generic tripartite subjectivity that is abstracted from the blended subjectivity that continuously changes during the course of a listening experience. At a level above this continuous change, individual listeners likely experience a general balance of the three components that typifies one's personal engagement with music as a listener; however, this general balance can change greatly over the course of one's life, especially as a result of implicit and explicit education in college. When we speak of music listening, then, we should keep in mind both levels of this fluidity.

Related Issues and Theories

This examination raises questions about the nature of consciousness and subjectivity that we will only barely explore.[5] It is also related to C. S. Peirce's *firstness*, *secondness*, and *thirdness*, but the relationship is too complex to be properly explored in this context.[6] Similarly, the notion

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[4] I confess that I nevertheless find it challenging to completely let go of the notions of positions and migrations, and I suspect that this is due to the corporeal basis of my experience of first-, second-, and third-person subjectivities; the spatiality is integral to these experiences in everyday life. This spatial residue is reflected in the notions of *putting yourself in someone else's shoes* (quasi-first-person), and of *taking a step back* to gain perspective (quasi-third-person). Although the notion of positions, and even the visually biasing notion of *perspectives*, can in fact be heuristically useful in coming to understanding the three components, ultimately the fiction of *positions* is more likely to impede, as it were, understanding of the paradoxical aspects of the tripartite, or triune, subjectivity under consideration here.

[5] Two sources that explore musical subjectivities in detail are Naomi Cumming, *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), and Jairo Moreno, *Musical Representations, Subjects, and Objects: The Construction of Musical Thought in Zarlino, Descartes, Rameau, and Weber* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[6] For Peirce's multiple descriptions of his terms see Mats Bergman and Sami Paavola, *The Commens Dictionary of Peirce's Terms: Peirce's Terminology in His Own Words*, accessed December 1, 2012, http://www.helsinki.fi/science/commens/dictionary.html. There is a connection between firstness and the quasi-first-person component, and similarly between secondness and second-person, and between thirdness and third-person, and there is a connection between the subjectivity of the third-person component and Peirce's "firstness of thirdness." See Cumming, *The Sonic Self*, for a thorough application of Peirce's ideas to musical experience and meaning. The present essay can be understood in

of three listening components overlaps with Edward T. Cone's essay on three ways of hearing a Brahms intermezzo,[7] except that the blending of all three components occurs with every hearing, including the first, even if the blend is shaped by repeated hearings. Finally, although I will not pursue the point, the blend of subjectivities that we will be considering occurs in comprehension of the performing arts generally and perhaps in the plastic arts, and in athletics and in any context in which we take an aesthetic interest in the behavior of others.

The Quasi-First-Person Component

The quasi-first-person component is probably the least familiar, but the basic idea begins with the notion that when we listen to music performed directly by human exertions, we experience a kind of physical empathy. This has been described in various ways by different scholars, including my own description in terms of a "mimetic hypothesis."[8] According to the hypothesis, we comprehend musical sounds in part by feeling what it would be like to make the same or similar sounds, with the result that we vicariously take part in the performance. We can think of this as "mimetic comprehension."[9] The sources drawn upon

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part as an extension of Cumming's exploration of Peirce's "firstness," if not in terms of its semiotic implications. The tripartite subjectivity of music that I describe here is distinct from Cumming's version primarily in the quasi-first-person component. In this regard it can also be understood as complementary to David Schwarz's *Listening Subjects: Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), if not in terms of psychoanalysis.

[7] Edward T. Cone, "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—Or A Brahms Intermezzo," in *Music: A View from Delft*, ed. Robert P. Morgan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 77–93.

[8] A sampling includes: Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), Chapters 6–8; David Lidov, "Mind and Body in Music," *Semiotica* 66, no. 1 (1987): 66–97; Naomi Cumming, "The Subjectivities of 'Erbarme Dich'," *Music Analysis* 16, no. 1 (1997): 5–44; Andrew Mead, "Bodily Hearing: Physiological Metaphors and Musical Understanding," *Journal of Music Theory* 43, no. 1 (1999): 1–19; Rolf Inge Godøy, "Motor-Mimetic Music Cognition," *Leonardo* 36, no. 4 (2003): 317–19; and Marc Leman, *Embodied Music Cognition and Mediation Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008). Arnie Cox, "Embodying Music: Principles of the Mimetic Hypothesis," *Music Theory Online* 17, no. 2 (July 2011), http://www.mtosmt. org/issues/mto.11.17.2/mto.11.17.2.cox.html.

[9] This use of *mimetic* is thus more or less the opposite of its more familiar use in which, roughly speaking, art is understood to mimic aspects of life. See

in support of this hypothesis leave little doubt that our understanding of observed actions generally, in music listening and otherwise, involves covert and occasionally overt simulation or imitation, so that this applies to seeing and/or hearing someone else swinging a baseball bat, swinging a drumstick, or singing a song. When we take an interest in the actions of others, we implicitly ask *"What's it like to do that?"*, along with the corollary question *"What's it like to be that?"*, and part of how we answer these questions is via mimetic comprehension.[10] What the hypothesis does not specify is the precise nature of a given mimetic response, which varies among individuals and for a given individual according to context. Of the numerous variables of the hypothesis, the most pertinent for the purpose of this essay fall into the following two categories:

1. Mimetic comprehension combines the following three variables:
    - it can be overt (e.g., air guitar, singing along), but often it is covert (mental simulation)
    - it can be conscious, but often it is unconscious
    - it can be intentional (voluntary), but often it is unintentional (involuntary)[11]

2. Mimetic comprehension takes three forms:
    - intra-modal (e.g., finger imitation of finger movements)
    - cross-modal
        a. sound-producing (e.g., vocal imitation of instrumental sounds)
        b. non-sound-producing (e.g., dancing and head-bobbing)
    - amodal: the abdominal exertions that anchor intra-modal and cross-modal vocalizations and limb movements

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Max Paddison, "Mimesis and the Aesthetics of Musical Expression," *Music Analysis* 29, nos. 1–3 (March–October 2010): 126–48, for a potent and helpful discussion of the various meanings of the term and, more significantly, of its role in meaning construction. Although put in other terms, his essay can be understood as exploring a similar tripartite subjectivity.

[10] This is broadly equivalent to the notion of *projection*, except that the hypothesis specifies the processes that underlie projection.

[11] As I explain in "Embodying Music," ¶31, "All combinations of these three variables are possible except nonconscious-intentional (on the premise that intentional actions and thoughts are necessarily conscious)."

The first set of variables matters here for the most part in distinguishing mimetic comprehension from the everyday meaning of "imitation," the latter of which commonly refers to intentional and overt mimicry (emulation; simulation) and, often, a lack of originality. Mimetic comprehension includes such cases, but it also includes *mimetic motor imagery*. Motor imagery is imagined action, and mimetic motor imagery is imagined action that mimics an observed action. We can also refer to it as mental simulation and as a kind of mimetic representation (a representation in neurological activity), but two of these variables in particular are crucial.

First, when we attend to an action, whether seen and/or heard, the observed action is automatically simulated, which is to say that intention is not required. One result of this is that, when listening to music, we can experience a quasi-first-person subjectivity, as a vicarious performer, whether we intend to do so or not. Second, mimetic motor imagery occurs whether we are aware of it or not. For example, I can become aware that I am singing along in my head, enacting mimetic subvocalization, but mimetic subvocalization can occur whether I am aware of it or not. One consequence of this is that "I," as an organism, can enact a quasi-first-person subjectivity, or mode of being, while "I," the conscious portion of myself, remain more or less completely unaware of my mimetic engagement with the music. This bi-level subjectivity is part of the complexity of music listening, but the main issue at this point is that mimetic engagement and mimetic comprehension include not only overt, intentional, and conscious mimetic behaviors, such as trying to learn a dance step or to learn a song by ear, but also automatic processes that occur only in imagery and that do not necessarily emerge in full consciousness. The subjectivity that results from our mimetic engagement is not something extrinsic that is imposed upon music; it is intrinsic to musical experience.

The second set of variables deserves somewhat more extensive consideration, which I offer in the rest of this section.

Three Physical Modalities of Mimetic Engagement

We can distinguish three modalities of mimetic engagement that correlate in various ways with three modalities of musical performance: limb exertions, vocal exertions, and abdominal exertions. All three modalities can be both intra-modal and cross-modal (for example, toe-tapping is most often cross-modal, as is any vocalization of an instrumental melody), and each of these contributes a different quality to

the quasi-first-person component. There are too many subtleties to consider in this context, but we can gain at least a basic idea of their contributions.[12]

Limbs, Hands, and Feet

In everyday life we use our hands to physically act upon objects through grasping, manipulating, and controlling. We use our legs to move our bodies from place to place, and our arms to maneuver our hands into position to act upon entities. In music, these entities are most commonly musical instruments, which are sometimes acted upon by our feet as well. Limb and hand movements are visible and public, and in musical contexts they demonstrate one's ability to use tools to express oneself and to have an effect upon listeners. Audience members, in addition to attending to the sounds produced, are in a position to see more or less precisely a performer's ability to manipulate an instrument. Via mimetic motor imagery, we take part in this mode of enacting a subjectivity to varying degrees, as we come to comprehend something of what it is like to do and be what the performer is doing and being. The strength and accuracy of one's mimetic comprehension depends upon one's experience with the performance medium involved, and so the contribution of this modality to one's quasi-first-person subjectivity varies accordingly. With virtuosic performance this includes in particular the opportunity to imagine transcending one's limited abilities—to feel not so much what it would be like to be the performer but to be a different version of oneself; a melding of the performing persona presented by the performer and one's own vicariously performing self.

In addition to such intra-modal mimetic engagement, listeners also practice two kinds of cross-modal imitation: sound-producing and non-sound-producing. With cross-modal sound-producing exertions, the sounds of a different instrument or a singer's voice are comprehended in terms of one's own instrument, as in a pianist listening to either a violist or a singer and feeling something of what it would be like to make the "same" sounds on the piano. In the big picture this form is probably relatively rare, even if it may be common among some musi-

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[12]The complexities that we are passing over include those involving the domain of linguistic gestures of the voice and hands. More basic than this, however, are the phenomenologies of musculoskeletal movement, and for a fuller treatment of some of these see Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primacy of Movement* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999).

cians; more common are cross-modal exertions that are not primaily sound-producing, such as toe-tapping, dancing, and other kinds of actual or imagined movements. (In some dancing, such as tap dancing and clogging, sound production is of course integral and even co-primary.) These kinds of exertions involve imitating the pattern, rate, and something of the strength of exertions evident in the music—what is usually loosely called "the beat." Toe-tapping and dancing are modes of joining in with the performers and thus adopting a quasi-first-person subjectivity, not at the specific level of vicariously performing the sound-producing exertions but at the more generic level of pattern, rate, and strength of exertions. For many listeners the feeling of such cross-modal mimetic participation is a central reason for listening to music, even if this reason is only implicit.

<div align="center">Voice</div>

We use our voice to express ourselves and to communicate with and without words. Whereas the hands manipulate entities tangibly, the voice trades this ability for the ability to affect entities that are out of reach. Although the hands can have a similar distal effect via the mediation of instruments, the interiority of the voice, plus the fact that this mode of sound production is shared by most humans, make it a more intimate and direct form of communication.

When we sing along with heard vocal sounds, it is intra-modal, and when we sing along with instrumental sounds, it is cross-modal. Much like most *external* instruments, the voice is also capable of mimetically representing the pitches and rhythms of any sound source to some degree of fidelity. While intra-modal mimetic engagement with instrumental performance is somewhat specialized—e.g., clarinetists listening to clarinet music, or brass players listening to brass music—intra-modal mimetic engagement with vocal performance is less specialized in that most of us sing. (Various forms of singing are of course specialized, but the proposition is simply that the use of the voice is less specialized than the use of instruments with respect to mimetic comprehension.) This makes mimetic vocalization and subvocalization generally more communal and thus overall a more significant form of mimetic engagement.

As important as overt mimetic singing in real time may be in establishing a quasi-first-person engagement, mimetic *subvocalization* is probably even more important. Subvocalization, both mimetic and non-mimetic, centrally involves imagined vocalization, including

speech, song, and nonverbal vocalizations. It thus includes the voice in one's head when thinking and when recalling a song, but it also includes the motor imagery related to the muscles involved in vocalization, such as the abdominal, throat, tongue, and lip muscles. Just as with overt vocalizations, we can be conscious of our subvocalizations and we can subvocalize intentionally. In the case of mimetic subvocalizations, this combination of awareness and volition is consistent with a traditional view of imitation: it is something that one decides to do. However, mimetic subvocalization also occurs without awareness and without volition. Now consider this once more: if *I* am mimetically subvocalizing (singing along in the head) but *I* am unaware of this, what does this imply for the subjectivity of "I," and what does it mean for my relationship with music? The unity of my-self when listening to music is a conglomeration, an amalgam, of multiple modes of being in relation to a musical stimulus, and yet my conscious self can imagine that the only relevant portions are the second- and third-person components. At a practical level, the inclusion or exclusion of the quasi-first-person component then shapes two distinct general epistemologies, which we will consider below.

Abdomen

We do not act upon the environment directly via the abdomen, but the abdominal muscles anchor limb movements and vocalizations and so are fundamental to all music performed via the voice and via instruments in which human exertions are more or less directly responsible for sound production. This includes "acoustic" instruments as well as, among other things, electronic music produced live via hand controllers.

Because abdominal exertions are the most interior and invisible they are also the most private and they are in this sense the most subtle contributors to musical experience. Their contribution to musical subjectivity is significant in at least three ways: 1) since abdominal muscles are activated in all musical performance, they become generally relevant to music listening via mimetic engagement; 2) these muscles play a central role in our emotional life; and 3) most often we are unaware of their activation during mimetic engagement, so that they affect us

surreptitiously.[13] To the extent that muscle tension correlates with emo-
tional tension and abdominal muscles are central to our emotional life,
mimetic activation of these muscles and/or their neural correlates is a
crucial element of musical experience. To the extent that we are unaware
of this element, however, all that emerges in awareness is a sense of
"tension," "excitement," and so forth. Ultimately, as we will consider
below, to the extent that we are unaware of the relationship between
mimetic muscle tension, emotional tension, and musical tension, we
implicitly reason that we have simply perceived (or, worse, *recognized*)
musical tension as second-person listeners with help from quasi-third-
person conceptualization.

　　Abdominal exertions are a specific modality, but I am referring to
them as amodal because they underlie both instrumental performance
and vocal performance. The balance of the three modalities will vary
according to context, including both the music in question and the lis-
tener in question at one time and then another. The variability in the
strength and nature of mimetic engagement, according to the two sets
of variables we have been considering, informs the variability of the
quasi-first-person component of one's tripartite subjectivity and then
the tripartite subjectivity itself.

Mimetic Comprehension of Electronic Music

　　If mimetic engagement involves imitation of human exertions
in the modalities we have just considered, then we should ask about
mimetic engagement with electronic music in which the sounds are
not produced directly by human exertions. We can start by noting that
mimetic comprehension of *non*-electronic sounds divides into two
forms: imitation of the sound-producing actions, and imitation of the
sounds produced. When imitation is intra-modal, these two forms go
hand-in-hand, as in the case of subvocal imitation of vocal music, where
imitation of vocal sounds involves imitation of the vocal muscle move-
ments. But when imitation is cross-modal, imitation of the sounds pro-
duced separates from the particular modality of exertions. Recalling that
cross-modal imitation divides into sound-producing and non-sound-

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　　[13] On the physical-emotional correlations, see Antonio Damasio, *The
Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New
York: Harcourt, 1999). On the usual lack of awareness of abdominal tension, see
for example Mead, "Bodily Hearing." Mead's story is centrally about breathing,
but since vocalizations are contingent upon abdominal exertions, this enfolds
the abdominal muscles.

producing exertions, we can mimetically comprehend violin music, for example, not only in terms of the voice or some instrument other than violin, but also via any other physical modality that matches the pattern, rate, and strength of the violinist's exertions, whether overt swaying or toe-tapping or imagined congruent movements (cross-modal mimetic motor imagery).

With electromechanical sounds, *intra*-modal imitation is normally not possible for biomechanical audience members, but cross-modal imitation of the sounds produced is certainly possible and even common, whether vocally, subvocally, or via some other instrument. Non-sound-producing cross-modal imitation, such as overt and covert dancing, is likewise possible and even common with some music, and such cases are in effect human imitation of electromechanical sounds at the schematic level of pattern, rate, and intensity of energy transformation.[14]

With electronic music performed live via hand controllers and other body-activated controllers we have a hybrid that allows for intra-modal imitation of the sound-producing exertions of the performer. This stands in contrast with classic electronic music (*musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik*), which does not offer us imitable human gestures. For many listeners, this dissociation between sound and source is central to the appeal of such music, even while it is simultaneously central to its *lack* of appeal for other listeners.[15] With human gestures effectively eliminated as an avenue of mimetic engagement, this leaves only mimetic engagement with the sounds produced.[16]

In considering the imitability of sounds, instead of a binary of imitable/inimitable, we can think of two parallel continua: the imitability of the sound in principle, and the mimetic abilities and proclivities of individual listeners. In the first continuum, imitability never attenuates to zero, but in the second continuum a given sound may fall below

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[14] With biomechanical exertions as one form of energy transformation, and electromechanical production of sounds as another form of energy transformation.

[15] As Simon Emmerson and Denis Smalley put it, Pierre Schaeffer "intended that sounds should be perceived and appreciated for their abstract properties rather than being attached to meanings or narratives associated with their sources and causes." "Electro-acoustic music," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online,* Oxford University Press, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/08695.

[16] Note that the matter of imitability is distinct from the composer's intention and from a given listener's preferences and proclivities; whether one ought to foster mimetic comprehension of this music is a separate matter.

the threshold of a given listener's ability to comprehend it mimetically. With music such as Stockhausen's *Elektronische Musik Studie I*, overt mimetic behavior is presumably rare (even though it certainly *could* be choreographed), but covert mimetic motor imagery is another matter. Part of the pleasure that I find in this and similar music involves automatically subvocalizing the sounds and exploring the limits of their imitability and transcending my everyday sound-producing experiences. There is of course more to my experience, but the quasi-first-person component is an integral part of the story.

Whether and how commonly mimetic motor imagery ever attenuates beneath the threshold of measurability is an empirical question, and it may be that in fact some people can listen attentively, to electronic or other music, without activation of any measurable mimetic motor imagery. Although I believe this to be rare, if it does occur then it bears at least the following implication for tripartite listening subjectivities: whether contingent upon a particular kind of music (such as the Stockhausen) or as a general feature of their musical experience, this would then result in a listening experience in which only the second- and third-person components were available. In considering this, bear in mind that it is however quite common for people to be *unaware* of mimetic engagement and, therefore, to believe that at least some music listening is non-mimetic.[17]

Mimetic Comprehension of Beethoven's Music

With respect to mimetic engagement, much of Beethoven's music is quite different from classical electronic music in that it offers regularly recurring patterns of events at rates that facilitate mimetic engagement. Consider for example the Scherzo of his third cello sonata (Example 1). In listening to this, I might consciously feel something of the specific cello-playing exertions, especially if I have played the piece before, and the same goes for the piano part; but I might also feel the music in analogous exertions in one or more other muscle groups: I can easily sing the pitches and rhythms of the melody, and I would likely find

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[17] If one were to study brain activity during music listening and not find activation of motor-related areas, we would want to check, if possible, that it was not subtracted as a result of mimetic motor imagery during the control test. According to the full version of the mimetic hypothesis, it may be easy to miss some forms of mimetic motor imagery.

myself tapping my toe or bobbing my head and torso.[18] Any singing along in the concert hall would of course likely be covert (subvocal) and any overt movements, if there were any, would likely be subtle; I might in fact sit perfectly still, focusing on conceptualizations of the music (such as the form) or reflecting on the quality of the performance, and my conscious self might be completely unaware of any quasi-first-person engagement.

EXAMPLE 1: Beethoven, Cello Sonata no. 3, Scherzo

One variable that shapes mimetic comprehension of the Beethoven, as well as music in general, involves familiarity. This relates to the *mere exposure effect*, as discussed by David Huron in relation to music,[19] according to which repeated exposure to a temporal aesthetic stimulus increases our implicit ability to predict events, and consequently increases understanding and pleasure. As I argue below, repeated exposure to a given musical work also increases the strength of mimetic engagement: we get better not only at predicting what will happen next, via our second- and third-person subjectivities, but also what we will vicariously do next in the form of quasi-first-person engagement. The strength of the quasi-first-person component of experience thus depends in part on familiarity with the work or style in question.

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[18] This can also be understood as entrainment. For a view of entrainment that does not happen to emphasize a mimetic component, see Justin London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Meter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[19] David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 131.

Recall as Reenactment

One of the principles of the mimetic hypothesis is that mimetic motor imagery occurs in recall as well as in real-time listening. The basic idea is that recall is partly rehearing, or re-listening, and since listening activates mimetic motor imagery, so does re-listening: we enact mimetic participation in real time, and we reenact it in recall. In fact, without the external stimulus present, it may be that we rely upon mimetic motor imagery more in recall than we do in real time. Be that as it may, to the extent that recall is reenactment we reenact our quasi-first-person subjectivity along with our second- and quasi-third-person subjectivities whenever we recall music (such as the Beethoven scherzo). To put it another way, *musical imagery* is thus partly *motor imagery* because thinking about music necessarily involves imagining performing music and/or performing analogous exertions.

The Second- and Quasi-Third-Person Components

The core of the second-person component is the experience of making oneself receptive and even vulnerable to music. In considering this component, a question arises as to whether there might be a "pure" second-person subjectivity, by which I mean one that is independent of quasi-first-person and quasi-third-person components. I believe that normally there is not but that there can be the *illusion* of a pure second-person engagement and that this illusion has its own real subjectivity. This illusion can occur when one is unaware of quasi-first-person mimetic engagement and when one is not engaged in deliberate conceptualization—in other words, when the quasi-first- and quasi-third-person components are not salient in consciousness, so that what remains in awareness is only second-person subjectivity. But we should consider whether there might be a non-illusory pure second-person subjectivity. This would require that mimetic engagement attenuate below one's ability to become aware of it, and below our ability to measure it empirically. This should be rare, but we can grant the possibility for the sake of argument. The quasi-third-person component is another matter, however, because of the problem of distinguishing between nonconceptual and conceptual listening and the role of implicit analysis. For a careful exploration of this issue and its implications

for music epistemology, I refer the reader to Mark DeBellis.[20] For the present argument, we can bracket off most of the details and substitute the notion of a continuum of attention.

At one end of the continuum would be complete attention on the stimulus, without any form of analysis and without comparison to prior experience. This should be hypothetical because analysis and comparison are automatic, if only at the level of awareness that one is in the presence of an external stimulus (*I like this music [that I am listening to]*), and in implicit, marginal, or full awareness of cognitively low-level details such as instrumentation (*That's the brass section; That's a children's choir*), genre (*This is techno; This is "classical"*), metric organization (*This is a waltz*), pitch organization (*This sounds like "atonal" music*), and so forth.[21] It may be common for such low-level conceptualizations to quiesce momentarily throughout a listening experience, perhaps even for extended moments, but what is more important is that the low level and momentariness of such cognitive processes allows one to feel as though one's attention has remained immediately upon the musical sounds as they are occurring.

Toward the other end of the continuum is our discipline's notion of "active listening," or "analytical listening," which is to say *theoretically informed listening* and which in this context means intentionally conceptualizing what one is listening to.[22] Because such conceptualizations are of what one is presently listening to, especially when "the present" is only loosely defined,[23] it can seem perfectly reasonable to imagine that one remains appropriately immersed in the music while recognizing particular chords, dissonance types, formal features, and genre types. But many non-theorists balk at, or are leery of, such conceptual activities, and I suspect that this is because they find that it pulls them out of the immediacy of the experience and substitutes *thinking about*

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[20] Mark DeBellis, *Music and Conceptualization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). In this connection, see also Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

[21] See Chapter 5 of Kivy, *Music Alone*, for an exploration of what amounts to the same continuum.

[22] See DeBellis, *Music and Conceptualization*, Chapter 5, for a helpful discussion of this.

[23] See the discussion of the *specious present* in Robin Le Poidevin, "The Experience and Perception of Time," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, last revised November 17, 2009, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/time-experience/.

for *listening to.* The theorist's response is that such conceptual processes enhance "the listening experience," implicitly defining "listening" to include explicit and intentional conceptualization of what one is listening to. One way to understand the issue here is in terms of the *work* involved in explicit analysis and how this shapes one's subjectivity.

Practicing explicit analysis can result in fluency and ease of comprehension. A theory instructor has no difficulty recognizing a suspension by ear, while first-year students must learn to distinguish suspensions from passing tones, neighbors, and appoggiaturas. The effort of giving attention to conceptualization distracts attention away from the ongoing stimulus, motivating a sense of a distinction between "analyzing" and "listening."[24] The ease that theorists acquire creates a different listening subjectivity: one need not "go far" to connect what is heard with a conceptualization of it—that is, to make a comparison with other examples and/or with a category, model, or schema based on other examples. This "distance" corresponds to temporality and effort, and until fluency is acquired the effort of conceptualization can divert attention away from second-person listening and into quasi-third-person observation. Education can then be understood as fostering a subjectivity that blends the second- and quasi-third-person components into a more closely unified experience. That this nevertheless still involves a blending of second- and quasi-third-person experience is, in a practical sense, irrelevant to the illusion that one can, for example, *hear* musical form: the conceptualization process is so fluent that it is *as if* one hears form. This is a subjectivity that can result from theoretically informed listening, and the next subsection considers some of the details that would seem to produce it.

Relations Between the Quasi-First- and Quasi-Third-Person Components

Reflecting on music and musical experience is of course integral to our profession. It is also common to argue for the validity of one's conceptualizations according to how they either reflect or inform "the listening experience" and to invoke some form of the claim "*I hear it this way.*" Such claims are usually implicitly based on the broader sense of "listening" discussed above. I am going to argue that what is normally meant by "hearing" is more properly *feeling;* that this feeling

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[24] See Jerrold Levinson, *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), on the problem of determining what counts as genuine music listening.

comes in part from mimetic engagement; and that in some respects this only incidentally involves the auditory system. I am also going to argue that our conceptualizations are largely conceptualizations of quasi-first-person experience, so that *I hear it this way* (second-person) more properly means *I think of it this way* (quasi-third-person), which is based on what one feels via mimetic engagement with what is heard (quasi-first-person). In using "I hear it this way" we respect the listening (auditory) component of musical experience, with "hear" thus standing for the whole experience. While we could make a rough taxonomy of quasi-first-person *feeling*, second-person *hearing*, and quasi-third-person *thinking*, it is the various blendings of these that shape a listener's subjectivity. Let us return to the syncopations in the Beethoven Scherzo and consider how quasi-third-person conceptualizations are based on quasi-first-person engagement.

The concept of SYNCOPATION is of course based partly on the sound of musical syncopations, but its meaning involves more than the sound, rather like the meaning of COFFEE involves more than its appearance and smell. I like to think that most music theorists would agree that *feeling* the syncopations in the Beethoven is integral to the experience of the music and to its meaning, however ineffable this aspect of its meaning may be, rather like the flavor, temperature, texture, and stimulating effect are integral to the meaning of COFFEE. What is commonly unclear is how we come to feel syncopations in the first place and what the nature of this "feeling" may be.

A brief review: the mimetic hypothesis holds that, in music performed directly by human exertions, we imitate the pattern, rate, and strength of exertions evident in the music, in one or more physical modalities, and to some degree of fidelity. Overt imitation can involve the specific exertions of cello playing and piano playing, but it can also involve any other congruent exertions. More important here is that our mimetic response can be even more subtle than something like toe-tapping, and we can divide this subtlety into two aspects. One involves the fact that our mimetic response can be confined to nonconscious motor imagery, so that all that emerges in consciousness is the feeling that results from nonconscious processes. The other aspect has to do with the multimodality of mimetic motor imagery. Because it can be both intra-modal *and* cross-modal, its locus can be diffuse, thus making it even more subtle. Furthermore, the "amodal" exertions of the abdomen are less visible than those of the limbs and head, and are commonly "invisible" even to many performers, so that these are more mysterious than

other exertions.[25] Activation of the abdominal muscles, rather than being interpreted as such, is more likely to be interpreted as a vague feeling, or as a definite feeling with a vague locus that is largely or completely ineffable.

The subtleties and vagaries of our mimetic response fit well with what we call "feeling the beat." One would not assume that this would require any specific exertion or overt movement like tapping or conducting; instead, we somehow simply "feel the beat" and, if we like, we can also move to it. The mimetic hypothesis offers an explanation of the "somehow," and it accommodates the vagueness, the definiteness, and the covert and overt forms of response. Since syncopations involve juxtaposition with a beat (or pulse), let us first focus on feeling the beat.

According to Huron, we distill or infer the beat via nonconscious statistical analysis: these are the moments when there is most likely to be a note onset.[26] From a mimetic perspective, these are also the moments when there is most likely to be an event to mimetically engage with. Given a listener's proclivity to engage mimetically, these offer us an imitable pattern, rate, and strength of events that will foster the greatest success in mimetic comprehension. The pertinent result is that we do not simply *hear* the beat, we also *feel* the beat in the form of vicarious performance, whether covert or overt. Music with multiple auditory streams then motivates multiple patterns of engagement, including the phenomenon of syncopation.

With the Beethoven scherzo, the pattern of exertions in the pianist's left hand motivates a congruent mimetic response in one or more physical modalities. The response can be confined to imagery, it can elude full consciousness, and its locus can be diffuse, but the result is that we feel what it would be like to exert in this pattern, at this rate, and with something of this measure of strength. Concurrently, the offbeats of the right hand and of the cello motivate a similar response, but one that is offset from the pianist's left-hand chords. Performers enact the metric conflict and listeners experience this vicariously: in a bottom-up process, the sounds (and sights) of the exertions come in through the auditory system, are mimetically felt and implicitly comprehended in the musculoskeletal system and in motor-related brain areas, and then

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[25] These exertions contribute to the vague sense of "gut feelings" that guide decision-making. See Antonio Damasio's *somatic marker hypothesis* in *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon Book, 1994). The main difference here involves the focus on the relationship between abdominal, limb, and vocal exertions as part of mimetic comprehension.

[26] Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*, 176–77.

the sounds and the vicarious performance are explicitly conceptualized in higher brain areas. In a complementary top-down process we begin with the concept ("Today's lesson is on syncopation"), and the meaning is then fleshed out via genuine first-person and/or quasi-first-person enactment.[27]

The same applies to most if not all musical concepts: quasi-third-person perceptions and conceptualizations are informed by quasi-first-person experience. Explicit awareness of this enhances the relationship and strengthens the meaning of our concepts.[28]

Projection, Being the Music, and Being Lost in the Music

Consider David Lewin's notable description, in introducing his book on transformational theory, of projecting oneself from a third-person subjectivity into a first-person subjectivity: "…instead of regarding the i-arrow on figure 0.1 as a measurement of extension between points s and t observed passively 'out there' in a Cartesian *res extensa*, one can regard the situation actively, like a singer, player, or composer, thinking: 'I am at s; what characteristic transformation do I perform in order to arrive at t?'"[29] This kind of intentional "projection" into the fictional world of the music is not directly mimetic (as described above), since it involves imagining *being* the performer and not imitating a presently heard performer, but the result is the same as mimetic engagement in that one imagines what it would be like to "do" the music and to thus enact a quasi-first-person subjectivity.

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[27] The contribution of first-person experience to quasi-first-person experience is addressed in Principle 16 in the full version of the mimetic hypothesis (Cox, "Embodying Music," ¶59–60).

[28] Compare David Lewin's remarks on the inseparability of perception and imagined action in "Music, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1986), 388. For most audience members, what one hears is also inseparable from the performance actions that one *sees*, and both are crucial to mimetic comprehension, but in this essay I am focusing on the auditory component.

[29] David Lewin, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), xxxi.

But now consider T.S. Eliot's description of *...music heard so deeply / That it is not heard at all, but you are the music / While the music lasts.*[30] How could such a subjectivity be possible? Near the beginning of this section I suggested that the quasi-first- and quasi-third person components could in effect be "subtracted" from consciousness, leaving, at the level of awareness, only second-person engagement. Here, I will describe two other kinds of blendings within a listener's tripartite subjectivity that might produce the feelings of "being" the music and of "being lost in" the music.

Mimetic comprehension involves imagined *performance* of the music but not imagined identity with the sounds produced ("being the music"). However, this imagination is not necessarily conscious; it is *imagery* and an act of imagination that occurs automatically, which may also be performed intentionally. When my attention is given to Rudolph Nureyev dancing, or to Dara Torres swimming, or to Maria Callas singing, I feel something of what it must be like to do what they do and to be what they are.[31] But it would require an additional step or two to feel what it would be like to be the dance, or the swim, or the song. With Yeats's conundrum in mind,[32] we can note that, in the case of music, the invisibility of sound facilitates a separation of the singer from what is sung. I can listen to a recorded aria without knowing who is singing, and I can listen to a string quartet without caring who is performing. In such cases, while my mimetic engagement remains contingent upon the actions that produce the sounds, my attention is on the sounds produced. To the extent that the performers and my mimetic comprehension of their actions thus become "invisible," I can then become a musical agent, like the dancer dancing the dance, in a virtual world in which I can perform "transformations" that

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[30] *The Dry Salvages* (1941), third of the *Four Quartets*. Compare Suzanne Cusick's description of a desire to *be* the music in "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch*, 2nd ed., ed. Philip Brett, Gary C. Thomas, and Elizabeth Wood (New York & London: Routledge, 2006), 75–76.

[31] The accuracy of my imagination is irrelevant to the subjectivity of this mimetic engagement. Also, in this context I am passing over the distinction between the performer (Callas) and any persona that they may enact (Tosca), even though at some level this is crucial to the subjectivity of aesthetic experience.

[32] "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?" The concluding couplet of *Among School Children*. I am passing over disanalogies between the cases of dance, athletics, and music.

take me to different state-locations, or where I can "stand on the dominant" and "arrive at the recapitulation." My attention is not on imitating someone else, and so what emerges in consciousness is the feeling of doing what "the music" does and thereby "being" the music, even if I do not explicitly describe the experience in such terms. "The music" here is the series of sound-states that are the sounds of action, the evidence of an imaginary being that is known through its sound and the contingent sound-producing actions as mimetically comprehended. The invisibility of the actual performers creates an unoccupied space for my projection into the virtual world, and the invisibility of my mimetic engagement promotes a fusing of my identity with "the music." This is a fusing of one's identity with that of the external stimulus, putting oneself "in the music's shoes" as it were, feeling something of what it would be like to do and be *that*. An implicit (or explicit) desire for such fusing with another is arguably integral to aesthetic appreciation of the performing arts in general, but the separability of musical sound from its source, fostered by the invisibility of sounds, allows for a unique fusion and resulting blended subjectivity.

The somewhat ambiguous expression of being "lost in the music" is another matter. As with all engaged music listening, it is a tripartite blend of subjectivities, but while "active listening" emphasizes the quasi-third-person component, and "being the music" emphasizes the quasi-first-person component, "being lost in the music" would seem to accommodate various blends that have in common only a deep immersion and a temporary loss of one's everyday subjectivity. One form might involve an attenuated mimetic engagement—a quieted body and mind—while another might involve overt dancing; a different form might involve attenuated conceptualization, while another might involve a strong component of explicit conceptualization. For myself, my experience of being "lost in the music" is deeply mimetic, which is partly like the sense of *being* the music except that overall I maintain greater awareness of the otherness of the music—the sense that I am engaged with an other, as my attention, my awareness, oscillates between second- and quasi-first-person engagement.[33] But I can imagine many kinds of immersion that might be referred to in terms of being lost in the music, and I believe that the imprecision of the term reflects the multitude of balances of the three components that are available in immersive listening.

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[33] Of interest in this regard is Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

Music that "Seduces" and Music that "Resists"

I want to apply these ideas to some additional musical examples, and I want to begin by noting that visual representations of music (score excerpts) would bias the situation in favor of the third-person component. Even if one "hears the music" when reading the score, this imagined performance is not the same as being in the presence of a performance (live or recorded), and, most importantly, it also further hides the component that needs the most attention in this context, mimetic engagement. With this in mind, I have chosen examples that are either familiar enough for most readers to recall a performance or to access via the internet, or that are generic enough to afford the substitution of other examples with even better results, since one's favorite music and performances will highlight the issues at hand. If this nevertheless involves picturing the score for some readers, this is unproblematic because it is in fact one of the ways that musical subjectivities are formed. Although I am focusing on Western classical music, the principles apply to other music as well.

The overall idea here is that music in effect offers an "invitation" to move and/or sing in some congruent way.[34] When listening to human performance, our mimetic response is congruent with the human exertions that produce the sounds. When listening to music that is not directly produced by human exertions, as in Subotnik's *Silver Apples of the Moon*, our mimetic response is congruent with exertions that would produce *similar* sounds—"acoustic analogs," if you like. There is no guarantee of the strength and nature of the mimetic response, but in some cases it can be as if the music seduces us or compels us to engage, while in other cases it can be as if the music resists or challenges our engagement.

The first example that I have in mind is the Sanctus from John Taverner's *Western Wind Mass* (as performed by the Tallis Scholars), but you can substitute your favorite sacred vocal work by Tallis, Byrd, or one of the continental composers. The idea is that comprehension of this music includes feeling what it would be like to sing in the manner of the performers and/or what it would be like to perform analogous exertions in another physical modality (such as swaying). Of course,

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[34] This notion of responding to a mimetic invitation is very much the same as that described in Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music," 75–76. In many cases the experience can actually be more like responding to an imperative.

one's attention would normally be on the product of these exertions (the sounds), and perhaps on third-person conceptualizations of pitch, rhythm, timbre, or form, but in a fundamental sense, in the context of listening each of us is one human organism comprehending the vocal behavior of other human organisms (even when mediated by recording and playback devices).

To *not* empathize with the vocality of this music would be to miss something crucial; however, to be *unaware* of this physical empathy would be normal. Similarly, to not feel the syncopations in the Beethoven cello sonata example (above) would be to miss something crucial, while not understanding this to be partly contingent upon mimetic engagement would be normal. With the Beethoven, while the sounds are vocalizable, limb movements become equally congruent: toe-tapping here feels "natural" (congruent) whereas toe-tapping with the Taverner feels somewhat less so in part because "the beat" is less salient, and in part because the absence of relevant limb movements in the production of this vocal music makes cross-modal toe-tapping farther removed.[35] One difference between the Taverner and the Beethoven, then, involves the differences in the kinds of congruent exertions that they invite and the kinds of vicarious physical experience that results.

As different as the Taverner and Beethoven examples may be, they share something with the majority of Western classical music, which on the whole could be said to invite listeners either to sing, or to dance (to perform some kind of congruent movement), or both. There may be exceptions, or at least apparent exceptions, such as the unmetered preludes of the French Baroque, but by and large a certain ease of mimetic bodily engagement is characteristic of the listening experiences offered by tonal music. By contrast, in the post-tonal period there is a greater percentage of music that offers a less straightforward kind of mimetic engagement. A notable case is Ligeti's *Atmosphères* (1961), which we might describe as seeming to "disinvite" mimetic singing and movement. But as soon as one says this, some people naturally imagine how they might sing along with or otherwise move to this music, which brings us back to an important claim: the mimetic invitation never attenuates to zero and, for engaged listeners, no matter the music, this en-

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[35]The sacred context of this music's composition, and the relatively quiescent limb movements that typically correspond to music listening in this context, likely contribute to a sense of incongruity. One certainly *could* tap one's toe to this music, and so the issue involves combinations of cultural norms and relative physical congruency.

gagement will always be at least partly mimetic; aesthetic engagement, attention, and mimetic motor imagery go hand-in-hand.

As with all music, the subjectivity offered by the Ligeti is shaped by the feeling of what it would be like to make these sounds, vocally or instrumentally, and/or to move in some congruent manner, including the exertions of holding a pose or moving very slowly. It would be a strange experience to sing in this way; the dense and largely undifferentiated initial sound is about as far from what a single human voice could produce (in real time) as any sound could be. The same applies to mimetically "playing" it—not the individual parts within the micro-polyphony, but the composite mass of sound—and to otherwise moving in a congruent way; these are not common ways of experiencing the motor (musculoskeletal) portion of our subjectivity. When it then comes to evaluating the music, some listeners might find the strangeness of this mimetic invitation to be especially appealing, while others might find it to be especially *unappealing*, to the extent that they cannot relate to the music in more familiar bodily ways: people commonly like a "tune" to sing or a "beat" to move to, even when they do not overtly sing along or dance, and those who find that the music does not afford this might not care for the music in part because of this attenuated mimetic participation. In terms of tripartite subjectivity, the musical experience is "over-balanced" in favor of the second- and third-person components. By the same token, for a third group of listeners the absence of a familiar meter and a singable tune can foster a focus on the sound-as-object: attenuated mimetic engagement can increase attention to the acoustic "material" of music, resulting in a special kind of musical subjectivity. The responses of all three kinds of listeners can thus be understood partly in terms of the degree to which one finds the music to be "singable" and/or "danceable," and since this proves to be fundamental to listening subjectivities, I turn to this next.

"Singability," "Danceability," and Continua of Imitability and Mimetic Abilities

We can use the Ligeti to mark one end of a continuum of kinds of bodily engagement invited by music. To gauge this continuum, we can use the parameters of "singability" and "danceability" and the following working definitions: easily singable music is mostly stepwise and diatonic, with a limited range and fairly simple rhythms, while easily danceable music features a regularly repeating pattern of events (pulse and meter) at a rate (tempo) that humans can efficiently emulate

(mimetically engage with). Of course, what counts as easily singable will vary from one person to another, and we must try to distinguish the objective facts of the stimulus from the subjective experience of it. Music is *found to be* singable or not and danceable or not, and the interpretation, whether explicit or implicit, is thus doubly contingent upon the details of the acoustic stimulus and the mimetic proclivities of a given listener. Since all sounds are imitable to some degree of fidelity and in one mode or another, including no-sound (silence) and the congruent "no-action" action of holding oneself quiet, in principle singability and danceability never attenuate to zero; however, the mimetic engagement of a given listener may initially be negligible, and this will shape one's experience and aesthetic evaluation of the music. Such negligible bodily comprehension is remediable via exposure, as mentioned above and as discussed below, with significant implications for one's relationship with a given musical example and with music in general.

  In the vicinity of the Ligeti on the continuum are works such as the Andante of Ruth Crawford Seeger's *String Quartet* (1931) and Schoenberg's *Farben*, op. 16, no. 3 (1909). Near the other end of the continuum would be music with a "melody" that is easy to sing and/or a "beat" that is "infectious." This includes the celebrated themes of Western classical music alongside the music of Cole Porter, The Beatles, and most folk songs, children's songs, and hymns.

  I hope it is plain that observing the tunefulness shared by folk, pop, and portions of classical tonal music is not the same as making an aesthetic evaluation. The fact that a given example affords easy mimetic participation is not necessarily a basis for aesthetic evaluation; however, I believe that in practice, among both amateurs and professionals, it *is* in fact an implicit basis for both favorable and unfavorable evaluation. Such a basis should not be implicit, at least among professionals, and awareness of the role of mimetic engagement puts us in a better position to recognize its influence on our musical preferences. I return to this issue below.

Additional Means of "Seduction" and "Resistance"

  If the slow rate of change in the Ligeti, Crawford, and Schoenberg examples attenuate mimetic engagement (relative to other music), music can also seem to "resist" mimetic engagement by inviting us to make sounds or to otherwise perform patterns of exertion that are found to be disagreeable for one reason or another. For example, the *Sprechstimme* in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* is relatively easily imitable, even on a

first hearing, but a given listener might find the quasi-first-person experience unrewarding or even ludicrous. Something of the same can occur in a first exposure to any unfamiliar style of singing: in addition to non-mimetic factors, an unfamiliar manner of singing invites listeners to enact an unfamiliar subjectivity, which some might find attractive and others might find unattractive. This then extends to instrumental timbres and to rhythmic organization: whatever non-mimetic factors there may be, part of the appeal of, and aversion to, music lies in the experience of producing various timbres and enacting various rhythms.

An additional factor that shapes the sense of seduction or resistance is one's ability to "follow" the music, which is to say one's ability to predict non-mimetically what will *happen* next and mimetically what one will vicariously *do* next. As Huron makes plain, in everyday life successful prediction is positively valenced (it feels good) and failure to predict is negatively valenced, whereas in aesthetic experience one can enjoy both a challenge and a failure to predict.[36] Tolerance for inability to predict in aesthetic contexts, and the corresponding inability to mimetically engage, varies among individuals, so that one's first hearing of, say, Charlie Parker performing *Donna Lee* might be found to be an agreeable challenge by some and a disagreeable challenge by others (and of course no challenge by still others). But no matter the music, through repeated exposure the body finds a way to comprehend the music as action, and because successful prediction and successful mimetic engagement both are positively valenced, this can increase both comprehension and appreciation.[37] This malleability of musical subjectivity has implications for music theory pedagogy, and so I turn to this and to a couple of other implications in the final section of this essay.

Pedagogy and the Construction of Epistemologies

Our general music theory pedagogy, at least as represented in our undergraduate textbooks, can be understood as focused primarily on

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[36] Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*.

[37] In theory, successful mimetic engagement is positively valenced because we have evolved to rely upon it. "The body" here includes the nonconscious operations of the motor-related areas of the brain as well as covert and overt actions of the musculoskeletal system. The "way" that the body finds to comprehend music mimetically varies according to the body in question and the music in question.

second- and quasi-third-person subjectivities.[38] In this section I offer some examples of how awareness of quasi-first-person engagement and the resulting tripartite subjectivity offers a different view of meaning construction and a different way of understanding "how music works."

Tense Leading Tones

Let us consider again the question of whether mimetic comprehension *ought* to play a role in our conceptualization and appreciation of some music—or of any music. In caricature, the question is whether bodily exertions ought to be permitted to "sully" or trivialize musical meaning or to otherwise distract from what is assumed to be crucial. In the context of this essay, the pertinent question is the reverse: whether and to what extent conceptualization and meaning actually depend upon quasi-first-person experience.[39]

We can begin with an example of how we paradoxically rely upon and yet implicitly deny the quasi-first-person component. This example involves norms of harmony and voice leading, expectation, and "tonal tension" in a typical cadential progression, such as I—vi—IV—V⁷—I (Example 2, below). In this scenario, the instructor stops on the dominant, with the leading tone in the soprano, and asks the class, "Can you hear how that note wants to resolve? The expected answer is "Yes," but

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[38]This is to say that quasi-first-person engagement is not a primary focus of most of our teaching, if it is attended to at all. When it comes to listening, the emphasis is on "active listening," which, as we have considered previously, highlights the quasi-third-person component. For example, we find the following textbook discussion of chromatic modulation: "Listen to Example 22.7 [Schubert, String Quartet in B♭ major, D. 36, juncture between the Menuetto and the Trio], in which Schubert juxtaposes D major (I) with B♭ major (♭VI). Even though there is no hint of the upcoming motion to ♭VI, the pitch D in the violins is common to both keys: It is *heard* in retrospect as 1̂ of D major and is reinterpreted as 3̂ in B♭ major" (Steven G. Laitz, *The Complete Musician: An Integrated Approach to Tonal Theory, Analysis, and Listening* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2012], 444, emphasis added). This kind of "hearing" involves explicit conceptualization of what is heard, and while it is of course fundamental to our discipline, an exclusive emphasis on this disguises the role of the mimetic component, as I explain below.

[39]The following analysis is closely akin to a perspective described by Diana Raffman in Chapter 3 of *Language, Music, and Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991) and to that of Marion Guck, "Analysis as Interpretation: Interaction, Intentionality, Invention," *Music Theory Spectrum* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2006), 201–2.

EXAMPLE 2: Cadential Progression

$$I \quad vi \quad IV \quad V^7 \quad I$$

a more accurate answer is "No, notes do not have volition. Notes do not want *anything*, let alone wanting to resolve."

We could reshape the question into "Can you hear how *you* want that note to resolve?" But the answer is still "No" because the note cannot resolve since it is no more tense than any other note. (If one wanted to pursue the issue and consider physical tension in the sound source, the higher note to which the leading tone resolves could in many cases paradoxically involve greater tension. Notes resolve only in the fictional world that we have come to rely upon, and it is the structure of this fictional world that we are analyzing.) We could try a third form of the question, "Can you hear how you want *your own tension* to resolve?" This is more honest, since it acknowledges that the tension is in the listener, but the answer is still "No," because a listener's tension normally cannot be heard. Finally, we can then ask some version of the clumsy yet more accurate question, "Can you *feel* how this note, in this context, creates a feeling of tension in you and makes you want resolution?" The answer here is "Yes," and it leads immediately to the further questions of 1) how a musical note can create tension in us, and 2) why we would misattribute our own tension as a property of the music.

One way to answer the first question comes from Leonard Meyer's and David Huron's studies of expectation.[40] I say "one way" because they both focus primarily on the second- and quasi-third-person components. To the quasi-third-person component of expectation we should add two ingredients: desire for particular states of affairs, and the quasi-first-person component of expectation and desire with regard to what we will vicariously do next. Accordingly, in the context of Example 2, a normal response involves not only expecting the tonic but also wanting and desiring the tonic, and this desire-infused expectation is tied not only to a concern for what will happen "out there" in the sounds, but

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[40] Leonard Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*.

also for what we will vicariously *do*. We vicariously achieve (perform, create) the desired tonic and thereby experience satisfaction and relaxation in connection with our covert vicarious exertions—all in addition to any non-mimetic successful prediction and resulting satisfaction. The resolution that listeners experience thus involves a combination of quasi-first-person and second-person engagement, with some measure of quasi-third-person conceptualization enhancing the experience.

With regard to the question of why we might misattribute our own tension to the external musical stimulus, David Huron offers a helpful answer.[41] The basic idea is that we have an affective response in a given context and then attribute its cause to the most salient stimulus present. In the present case, feeling the satisfaction and relaxation of a cadence, we mistakenly infer that the sounds have caused this feeling in us because, so the reasoning goes, there is tension in the sounds, we hear this tension, and hearing tension and feeling tension go hand-in-hand. In addition to an explanation in terms expectation we can highlight the roles of desire and mimetic participation, which then allows us to observe the paradox that *this mistaken inference is made possible in part by the invisibility of mimetic participation*. A lack of awareness of mimetic motor imagery results in a lack of awareness of its contribution of muscle-related tension to expectation and desire in generating musical tension. Accordingly, to speak of musical tension as something that is audible is to risk disguising not only the role of expectation but also the roles of desire and of quasi-first-person engagement, and thereby to produce fictions, or illusions, such as "tense" leading tones.

We can understand such musical fictions as part of a broader habit of understanding other entities according to their effect upon us, as with "cold" and "warm" people, who are not objectively cold or warm in the sense intended, but who leave us feeling something like cold or warm.[42] Although their "warmth" is contingent upon objective features of their behavior, it is equally contingent upon our subjective experience of these people. Similarly, the "tension" of musical sounds is contingent not only upon their objective features but also upon our subjective experience of them in a given cultural context.

But old habits die hard, and we might still want to ask whether this is not simply anthropomorphization, along the lines of car engines

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[41] Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*, 136–39.

[42] In music, these also take part in the tradition of "analytical fictions" discussed by Marion Guck in "Analytical Fictions," *Music Theory Spectrum* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 217–30.

that do not want to start and other inanimate entities that seem to have a will of their own. We can begin to respond by noting that we attribute similar properties to music on a regular basis, so that anthropomorphization, if we want to call it that, is not an occasional and superficial activity but is integral to how we make meaning from musical experience. This applies to any attribution of agency, including any actions that the mysterious entity *The Music* performs such as "going," "arriving," and other motion-related verbs. To put it another way, it explains little or nothing to say that we are simply anthropomorphizing the music. Anthropomorphization is a logical result of quasi-first-person engagement combined with second-person subjectivity: imagining "doing" what the music does while (more or less) simultaneously remaining aware that we have not actually produced the sounds, and then implicitly reasoning in a rudimentary way that we have just perceived something "in the music."[43] If *The Music* includes tense leading tones, and notes and other phenomena "arriving" and performing other actions, then "the music" includes a combination of the objective details of the stimulus *and* our tripartite listening subjectivity. When we assert that "Here, the music *does x* or *has property y*," we are most often referring to this combination of stimulus and mimetically engaged "perceiver."[44]

In acknowledging the contingency of tonal tension upon sound, cultural context, and mimetic engagement, I am not sure that it follows that we must or ought to abandon such fictions entirely. In my teaching I still occasionally slip into the familiar habit of ascribing fictional properties to the music; however, my students usually catch me at it because early in the semester I use the cadential example to make them aware of their role in the feeling and logic of such concepts. By not only becoming aware of such illusions, but also gaining a basic understanding of how they work and why we are inclined to rely upon them, we transform illusions into fictions that we can use as a convenience. This puts students and teachers in a different relationship with music, and it fosters what I believe is a more beneficial foundation for understanding

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[43] The qualification of "more or less simultaneously" relates to the ontological problem that arises in attempting to resolve the dual subjectivities of the quasi-first and second-person components of perception into a single "I"—the "one" who is "simultaneously" vicariously performing and listening to the performance.

[44] To put it another way: The intentional musical object, observed from a quasi-third-person position, includes our mimetically participating self, or, in recall, the residue of this self infused into the residue of the sounds under attention.

how musical meaning is constructed.[45] The basics of mimetic comprehension, upon which the fiction depends, are not difficult to introduce, and since it is integral to the pedagogical issues I am exploring, I want to describe how I integrate it into my own courses.

Integrating Mimetic Comprehension into the Classroom

Becoming aware of mimetic engagement and the quasi-first-person experience that it contributes involves becoming aware of mimetic motor imagery in real time and in recall. The preceding example of "tense leading tones" is a good way to introduce the matter. To help understand the role of mimetic comprehension in everyday life and in aesthetic experience generally, there is a 14-minute PBS video on *mirror neurons*, available online, which introduces the role of imitation in human cognition at a level that requires no specialized knowledge of science.[46] Whether viewed in or out of class, it has the advantage of offering an empirical foundation for the basic idea. While it also has the disadvantage of oversimplification, one can add any qualifications that seem appropriate, and the two sets of variables described earlier help clarify how this general cognitive feature applies to musical experience.

One can also share the findings of a couple of studies of mimetic responses to music and invite students to investigate their own mimetic engagement.[47] One useful exercise involves recalling a well-known instrumental melody and examining the nature of this recall. Any "singable" theme will do, such as the first theme in the finale of Brahms's first symphony, or the English horn solo in Dvorak's "New World" symphony. With a little inquiry, most find some form of activation of the vocal musculature (subvocalization) and/or activation of the musculature related to their own instrument.[48] Based on this, I then offer the following principles: recall is partly reenactment, real-time listening involves mimetic participation, and musical imagery—recall, planning,

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[45] Or more plainly: Reliance upon an illusion without knowing that it is an illusion puts one in a relatively weak position, while acquiring awareness and understanding of an illusion puts one in a position to use it instead as a heuristic fiction—a convenience used with full awareness.

[46] Julia Cort, "Mirror Neurons," *Nova*, aired January 25, 2005, SWF video, 14:00, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/body/mirror-neurons.html.

[47] See Cox, "Embodying Music," for summaries of a few relevant studies.

[48] The power of suggestion almost certainly plays some role here, but the evidence for the mimetic hypothesis and related theories indicates that such an exercise primarily makes salient those processes that are normally hidden.

and otherwise thinking about music—is partly *motor* imagery. Students become more aware of the extent of this in the days and weeks after the introduction and find themselves in a different relationship with music and with basic music theory.

There are numerous ways that one might introduce this, but I spread the introduction across several days, not necessarily in suc-cession, and I return explicitly to mimetic engagement once or twice during the term as a refresher. Such occasions usually involve the very same sort of attribution as in the "tense leading tones" example, and the remedy is a very brief reminder: "*Who* is tense?" Altogether it requires very little time relative to the potential benefit.

The principle of tripartite subjectivity, even though I do not refer to it in quite this way in my first-year course, becomes integrated into students' thinking early on as part of their understanding of dissonance, resolution, and other basic features of music. Since the second- and quasi-third-person components are part and parcel of traditional music theory instruction, it amounts to simply incorporating the quasi-first-person component. In a practical sense, for the most part it involves two things, the first of which is deliberate covert singing and/or playing along with performances and recordings used in class, as a complement to the overt singing that is commonly practiced.[49] The second involves using "feel" at least as often as "hear," as in the difference between feeling tonal tension and hearing tonal tension, or feeling syncopation and hearing syncopation. I return to this distinction at the end of this essay.

One Thing that Happened in the 20th Century

If it is reasonable to say that the majority of Western classical tonal music is highly singable or danceable (or at least "toe-tappable") or both, then acknowledgment of this can help with the study of post-tonal music. Singable and danceable music certainly continued to be composed in the 20th century, as in the music of Shostakovich, Barber, and many others, but at the same time there emerged a practice of com-posing music that we could say challenges mimetic engagement. Even though this music, such as the Ligeti and Subotnik examples that we

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[49] Many instructors teach deliberate subvocalization in real time and in recall, at least in aural skills courses. The difference here is the explicit connec-tion to mimetic engagement generally and the tripartite subjectivity to which it contributes.

considered above, also challenged and continues to challenge second-person experience and quasi-third-person conceptualization, the attenuated mimetic attraction, if we can put it this way, can be understood as surreptitiously weakening the motivation for some listeners to engage with the music at all. In other words, without easy mimetic participation there is for some music lovers less motivation to listen and, *a fortiori*, less of a basis for conceptualizing the music beyond superficially categorizing it as *music I don't care for*. While this does not apply to everyone, it applies to enough people to be an issue worth addressing, and understanding the issue in terms of a challenge to quasi-first-person engagement suggests a means of education and remedy.

A first step is to make students aware of the normal role of mimetic engagement and the ease with which this occurs in the majority of music. A second step is to note that music such as Webern's *Bagatelles*, Op. 9, may initially be felt to "resist" mimetic engagement, leaving us with only the second- and quasi-third-person components and seeming to preclude many people's favorite component of music listening. From here we can go in two directions. In one, we note that it is more accurate to understand such music as inviting a more subtle or otherwise less familiar kind of mimetic engagement, and that this music is still singable, danceable, and/or "gestureable," but in a less familiar way. This direction leads to intentionally enhanced mimetic engagement and arguably a stronger anchor for the usual conceptualizations of pitch organization and other features. The other direction involves noting how attenuated mimetic engagement can create a different kind of experience that involves an appreciation of the sounds as such—less as stimuli to be comprehended mimetically, and more as acoustic "material" to be appreciated in its own right. Preference for either of these is a matter separate from simply recognizing not only that both are available but that both are implicitly involved in different approaches to explaining and appreciating music.

Notice that this distinction between these two approaches is an analytical convenience since repeated listenings will enhance mimetic engagement regardless of our intention and awareness, so that quasi-third-person appreciation will gradually become ever more infused with quasi-first-person engagement even if our primary attention remains on the sounds themselves. Still, however, the fact remains that some music will be more efficiently and comfortably comprehended mimetically than other music, in relation to personal and cultural habits of exertion. Accordingly, no matter how mimetically engaged one may be with music such as the Webern, this engagement will be near the end

of the continuum opposite the more normatively singable and dance-able music. Let me clarify this point by exploring the Webern a little more closely and then exploring Subotnik's *Silver Apples of the Moon*.

I recall being fascinated by Webern's *Bagatelles* the very first time I heard them. I am not sure to what extent this involved mimetic engage-ment, but I recall, in terms of the present argument, that the experience was dominated by the second- and quasi-third-person components. As music that is less normatively "singable" and "danceable," these pieces offer a relatively stronger sense of "regarding" a special auditory object. I find this object-oriented subjectivity especially compelling in the case of Webern's music, and yet this music is nevertheless singable, and I now find my experience of this music to be a strange blend of objec-tive appreciation and subjective mimetic engagement. I suspect that my fascination with the sounds-as-such encouraged repeated listenings and thus increased mimetic comprehension. However, many first-time lis-teners are not fascinated by the sounds and simply have a neutral or an aversive response (with "aversive" responses including derisive, dismis-sive, and other reactions). Familiar remedies include repeated listen-ings (in or out of class) and explicit analysis of the pitch, motivic, and formal organization. While this may work for many students, to various degrees, attention to the role of mimetic engagement offers several ben-efits.

By recognizing that mimetic engagement is a normal, and a nor-mally hidden, component of musical experience, one can explicitly un-derstand one of the challenges of this music—the challenge of finding a way to mimetically engage with and comprehend the sounds. Dalcroze eurhythmics, which in effect involves comprehension via intentional overt mimetic behavior, from this perspective is not something added on or imposed from outside but is an amplification of a normal part of music comprehension. Alexandra Pierce's use of movement, although primarily in the context of tonal music, is a similar amplification of mimetic comprehension.[50]

At a more abstract level, simply understanding that the Webern offers a different kind of experience, in the specific way of offering a different kind of quasi-first-person experience, tells us something about the change in practice that this music represents. Just as importantly, it offers students a way of understanding something about themselves and one another in their different responses to this music: it is one

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[50] Alexandra Pierce, *Deepening Musical Performance through Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

thing not to enjoy a particular musical work or kind of music, but it is another to understand more precisely *why* one has a neutral or aversive response. We can then return to the possibility of enhanced appreciation via the mere exposure effect, so that repeated listenings are in part opportunities to find ways of mimetically comprehending the music and to thereby expand the quasi-first-person component of experience. It is helpful in this regard for students to notice the discontinuities of pitch, contour, and rhythm of the Webern, in combination with the strange timbres, and how all of this invites us to do something out of the ordinary. The music is challenging to follow at first, both mimetically and non-mimetically, because of the schematic unpredictability relative to the more normative tonal practices.[51] In addition, the relative strangeness of the timbres is also challenging, both mimetically (in being a a challenge to simulate) and non-mimetically (in not fitting easily into more familiar categories). If we then bear in mind the fact that the Webern is nevertheless the sound of very specific human exertions, then live performance and audiovisual recordings can enhance mimetic engagement and comprehension. As with any music, excellent recordings, with or without video, are also helpful because the performance shapes the mimetic invitation: excellent performances not only sound good, they also feel good, because the sounds of artistry are the sounds of artistic sound-producing exertions. With enhanced mimetic engagement, the quasi-third-person conceptualizations of pitch organization, form, and timbre are then more solidly grounded in quasi-first-person musical experience, because we are conceptualizing not only the objective sounds but also our subjective experience of living the sounds.

If the Webern is still the sound of humans performing gestures, we should ask what happens when human exertions are not directly involved in the sound production. If we take Subotnik's *Silver Apples of the Moon, Part A*, as an example, from one perspective we can imagine that mimetic engagement again would be relatively attenuated, at least initially, especially if we reason that humans seldom imitate machines, let alone the hidden electromechanics of synthesizers. However, in my own experience and in the experiences that others have reported, this music certainly elicits mimetic subvocalization. This is consistent with the principle that all sounds are vocally and subvocally imitable to some degree of fidelity, and with the principle that humans automatically comprehend sounds of interest in part via mimetic representation.

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[51] See Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*, 225, on schematic expectation.

Notice that, from a different perspective, we might want to say that some elements of the Subotnick mimic human-made sounds (in the more familiar sense of *mimetic*) and that this accounts for any mimetic subvocalization on the part of listeners. This would then be even more true of the theremin and of synthesized human voices, and yet I am not sure what this perspective explains. It suggests the tautology that we are more inclined to imitate sounds that we find to be more imitable. I find it more informative to think of the Subotnik as offering listeners the chance to experience two kinds of subjectivity: a quasi-third-person regarding of a fascinating acoustic object, and a quasi-first-person subjectivity that extends beyond our everyday first-person subjectivity. Any "voice-like" sounds are voice-*like*, not vocal, and mimetic comprehension of them takes us beyond everyday experience. While this could be said of cross-modal mimetic comprehension of most instrumental music, the Subotnik, like the Webern *Bagatelles* and Ligeti's *Atmosphères*, takes us further beyond familiar first-person activities—but the Subotnik takes us one step further, because any mimetic engagement in this case is not imitation of human exertions but of electromechanically produced sounds. Whatever else we might say about how this music works, it works in part by offering us a chance to feel something of what it would be like to be an entity capable of making these extra-human, electronic sounds.

Subjectivity, Affect, and Meaning

Each component of the tripartite subjectivity of music listening contributes its own affective dimension—what it feels like to engage mimetically, what it feels like to make oneself receptive to musical sounds, and what it feels like to conceptualize the experience. These components overlap temporally, which contributes to the bewildering complexity of affect generation, but out of this complexity we can identify three avenues whereby mimetic engagement shapes the affective dimension of a listener's tripartite subjectivity.[52]

The first of these is the feeling of mimetic participation, which divides into two sorts. One involves the mimetic exertions and motor imagery that occur in response to particular musical examples. Each of the works that we have considered previously, for example, offers the experience of exerting or imagining exerting in ways that are congruent with the sounds; one's experience of the Taverner, the Beethoven, or the

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[52] I am using "affect" here to subsume emotions, feelings, and sensations.

Webern includes what it feels like to perform intra-modal and cross-modal exertions that are congruent to some degree of fidelity. The other sort is the reward of successful imitation and joining in, which applies to mimetic comprehension as a general feature of human cognition as well as to any music with which one mimetically engages: in plain terms, it feels good to answer the implicit question of what it's like to do and be x, and it feels good to join in with others. Music gives us the chance to do this overtly and/or covertly and in the various ways that we have previously considered. Differences between styles (practices), between individual works, and between passages within a given work are known to us not only through differences in sound (second-person) and habits of conceptualization (quasi-third-person) but also through the kinds of mimetic experiences that they offer to a given listener on a given occasion.[53]

The other two avenues are more familiar to music theorists, but for the most part only in their non-mimetic formulations: anticipation and expression. We have already considered how anticipation involves quasi-first-person anticipation of what one will vicariously *do* next. By engaging the muscles and/or their corresponding portions of the brain, anticipated events become both more personal and more urgent and thus more meaningful. Analogously, mimetic expression is the complement of, or supplement to, non-mimetic recognition of various kinds of expression—an understanding that comes from vicariously expressing oneself in a way that is congruent with the heard expression, including the feeling of what it is like to produce the features related to pitch, rhythm, timbre and strength (acoustic intensity) of a given sound. Of the various forms of mimetic expression, cross-modal and intra-modal mimetic subvocalization may be the most important generally, given the importance of vocal expression for humans, although for some individuals, and for some music, we can expect it to be another form.

The topic of musical expression includes the familiar problem of determining who the expressive agent might be—the performer, the composer, or no one. Mimetic engagement adds another nominee: listeners, as agents who vicariously express themselves. When we posit musical agents who perform actions, whether understood as particularly expressive or not, the affective dimension of such actions, comprehended mimetically, contributes to the experience. But when we assume that

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[53] Since mimetic comprehension is informed by genuine first-person experience, according to the experiences of a given listener, this can also import something of the affective dimension of actual performance.

these actions are comprehended solely through non-mimetic hearing and recognition, our explanations are by comparison relatively ischemic. When music is understood to signify action, our access to this significa-tion is through a tripartite subjectivity.[54]

I have found that the gist of these avenues of musical affect are not difficult even for first-year students to grasp and to apply in their own musical analyses. Initially, it boils down to acknowledging the role of mimetic engagement in the experience of listening generally; in antici-pating, desiring, and working to vicariously achieve certain states; and in experiencing music as expressive of various affective states. The sub-sequent stage involves understanding how post-tonal music offers dif-ferent kinds of affective experiences in shaping our experience via these three avenues. When it comes to analysis of how the music "works," the answers involve understanding how the structural details shape a listener's affective response via these avenues. For most of my students, attention to the role of the quasi-first-person component, in generating their personal affective response, results in a noticeably greater invest-ment in analysis assignments.

Inaudible Elements of Music

The main point of the "tense leading tones" example is to demon-strate how the customary use of "hear" can hide quasi-first-person en-gagement. Even when we broaden the meaning of "hearing" to include affect, such as the feeling of tonal tension, the predominant custom is to tacitly assume a bipartite subjectivity of second- and quasi-third-person engagement. This is the case, for example, when we explain tonal tension as resulting from expectation for what will happen in the exte-rior musical stimulus. The problem is not that this is wrong but that it is in fact accurate; there plainly is a non-mimetic component to tonal expectation. But there is also a mimetic component, and quasi-first-person engagement makes expectation, desire, frustration, and satisfac-tion richer and more visceral by connecting them with our first-hand experience of exerting to achieve goals—and it does this whether we are aware of it or not. This variable of awareness then results in roughly

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[54] In "The Subjectivities of 'Erbarme Dich'" and *The Sonic Self*, Naomi Cumming gives consideration to the role of vicarious performance in compre-hending musical signs and of the affective responses that co-occur. Her atten-tion to the quasi-first-person component is notable, if also less than the extent that I am advocating.

three kinds of tripartite subjectivities: one in which we are aware (at some level) of the tripartite-ness, and two in which we experience the effects of this tripartite-ness but nevertheless believe that "hearing" is bipartite (second- and quasi-third-person) or that it is unipartite (pure second-person).[55]

Tripartite, or triune, "bodily hearing" (to borrow Andrew Mead's term) bears not only upon the inaudibility of tonal tension but also upon other inaudible or semi-audible features such as pulse, meter, and motion generally. Similarly, it bears upon our comprehension of timbre and strength, whose meanings depend as much upon what it feels like to enact them as what they sound and feel like non-mimetically.

If we wish to expand the meaning of "hearing" from bipartite to tripartite, a fundamental challenge involves the apparent fact that our experiences via the external senses are intimately linked with subject-object differentiation in the construction of our own identities through-out our lives: *I* see, hear, touch, smell, and taste things in the world that are not-I. The idea that what is seen and heard (or looked at and listened to) is also comprehended via mimetic enactment, and thus by our becoming something of a hybrid of self and other, challenges the otherwise functional but blunt understanding of experience and of our relation with the world, including our understanding of our relation with music. The notion of a tripartite listening subjectivity embraces our experience of the otherness of music—as something we listen *to*—but it also embraces the joining-with of mimetic engagement and the result-ing loss of a plain subject-object differentiation. At another level it then embraces the paradox of experiencing these two subjectivities in a single listening experience.[56]

As I suggested previously, one thing that can increase awareness of quasi-first-person engagement with music is the occasional substitution of "feel" for "hear," which can benefit in two ways. First, as I will demon-strate in a moment, it can help dissolve the difference between subject and object, even apart from any consideration of mimetic engagement. Second, when affective responses to music are understood to result in part from mimetic engagement, then what a listener feels can be rec-ognized as resulting from a tripartite engagement. For example, con-sider the following proposition from Fred Lerdahl: "Fundamental to

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[55] Or come to believe, if and when we think about it.

[56] Compare Chapter 4 of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

the experience of tonal music is the hearing of patterns of tension and relaxation as the events in a piece unfold."[57] Now substitute "feeling" for "hearing" and feel how it shifts the balance of one's relationship with music: "Fundamental...is the *feeling* of patterns of tension and relaxation." And now substitute "mimetic participation": "Fundamental... is mimetic participation, which contributes to the feeling of patterns of tension and relaxation." In every case, the phrasing that we choose shapes the balance of one's tripartite subjectivity and offers this balance to one's readers and listeners.[58] Note also that "hearing" here is the least accurate, "feeling" begs an explanation, and "mimetic participation" helps explain how the feelings of tension and relaxation arise.

The notion of a continuously changing, tripartite listening subjectivity offers a different understanding of our relationship with music and, consequently, it opens a door to different understandings of how musical meaning is constructed. For example, consider again the question of what we are referring to whenever we speak of "the music" as performing various actions, exhibiting various features, or having certain properties. If what "the music" does includes what listeners vicariously do, then what "the music" *is* includes what we do and what we become in comprehending musical sounds both mimetically and non-mimetically. If that seems a little fanciful, it is nevertheless one of the implications of the mimetic hypothesis and of related historical and contemporary ideas. In the context of this essay, the most significant implication concerns the infusion of quasi-third-person conceptualization with quasi-first-person experience—or, how musical thoughts involve both mimetic and non-mimetic motor imagery. The many details of this infusion can be pursued to various extents according to purpose, including general music theory courses, seminars, and scholarship, with each case resulting in its own version of an alternative understanding of musical experience.

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[57] Fred Lerdahl, *Tonal Pitch Space* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 142.

[58] Although Lerdahl's proposition does not necessarily exclude mimetic enactment, at the time this component of experience presumably would not have been part of most readers' understanding of the meaning of "hearing." However, some notable remarks on empathetic listening in the conclusion of his and Ray Jackendoff's later essay, along with other writings cited above, suggest that the meaning of "hearing" is expanding: Ray Jackendoff and Fred Lerdahl, "The Capacity for Music: What is It and What's Special About It?" *Cognition* 100 (2006): 33–72.

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