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Philosophy and the Analysis of Music: Bridges to Musical Sound, Form, and Reference [Book review]

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much better by ourselves? The answer is that in doing so we discover more about music as a system of the human intellect. We do not necessarily learn anything about human creativity, though. Cope's work is very much concerned with the replication of facets of musical data-streams, and not with the replication of human thought processes. The problems with the computer-generated works are that they lack the components of intent and cumulative emotion that many "human-composed" works have, and though they are convincing on a local level they have little direction over larger spans of time. Cope cites these problems and concludes his work with a number of possible improvements to the system.

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Philosophy and the Analysis of Music: Bridges to Musical Sound, Form, and Reference. By Lawrence Ferrara. (Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance, 24.) New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. [392 p. ISBN 0-313-28345-1.]

In recent years there seems to have been a tendency (in theory at least) to view conventional academic disciplines with a certain hostility as intellectual chastisements that, rather than opening our minds to knowledge, merely hinder us. In the humanities especially, interdisciplinary studies have become a trend. Many scholars are tempted to abandon the cozy security of their methodology and embark on other, more adventurous hybrid enterprises. *Philosophy and the Analysis of Music*, one such enterprise, draws its premises from two apparently different fields, philosophy and musical analysis, in order to arrive at a better understanding of music.

In his introduction Lawrence Ferrara endorses a widely held belief, namely, that the musical work possesses at least two fundamental levels of meaning: the first, its structure and sound; and the second, its references to the other-than-purely-musical. He focuses on "engaging [the] problem of the alleged dislocation between intrinsic and referential levels of musical significance" (p. xiv). Ferrara's immediate

aim is to discover the meaning of a musical work at least in these two different levels: intrinsic (formal) and referential (emotional, representational, and the like).

In succeeding chapters, the author reviews the major twentieth-century approaches to the basic issues in Western aesthetics. He begins with an overview of theories on musical meaning and content—perhaps the most often discussed issue among Western music aestheticians. The ideas of Leonard B. Meyer, Susanne K. Langer, Nelson Goodman, Wilson Coker, Peter Kivy, and others come in for examination. All these writers have in common that they accept the referentiality of music, that is to say: music can represent or arouse extra-musical emotions and images.

Chapter 2 introduces the concerns of epistemology and examines the implicit role of method in conditioning the analytic perspective and the choice of analytic task. Ferrara notes the failure of many analysts to recognize the consequences of their choice of method, since "each method enables music analysts to accomplish the tasks that are established by the method" (p. 35). Drawing on Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (2nd rev. ed. [New York: Crossroads, 1989]), Ferrara concludes that "conventional systems of musical analysis are not objective, they are methodological subjectivism" (p. 46).

Chapters 3 and 4 further explore the German tradition, with a survey of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Martin Heidegger's hermeneutics and philosophy of art. Then follows an overview of Thomas Clifton's musical phenomenology. The author's own "eclectic method for musical analysis" is finally unveiled in chapter 7. This method is based on a ten-step process aimed at revealing the many layers of significance in a musical work. The ten steps incorporate both conventional formal analysis and philosophical perspectives previously introduced. The flavor of this mixture is suggested in the names for the ten steps: (1) historical background; (2) open listenings; (3) syntax; (4) the sound-in-time; (5) musical and textual representation; (6) virtual feeling; (7) ontohistorical world; (8) open listenings (again); (9) performance guide; and (10) metacritique.

Two specific analyses illustrate the proposed method. First Ferrara considers Béla

Bartók's *Improvisation*, no. 3, op. 20; then the third movement of David Zinn's *Spanish Sojourn* is examined. These sample analyses are, however, rather disappointing. It is not easy to avoid the suspicion that when all is said and done the "eclectic method" is commonsensical and that one does not need to study Husserl's phenomenology or Heidegger's hermeneutics in order to arrive at a rather conventional synthesis of analytic methods with a philosophic leavening.

Ferrara is engaging when he is summarizing and commenting on the works of Meyer, Clifton, Heidegger, and others. Here he offers the typical, philosophically *unbewandeter* student of music a readable text that will certainly suggest more sophisticated ways to think about music. Musicologists interested in philosophy and cultural studies will find this book informative and even challenging. One wonders on the other hand, if these readings, especially those of the major philosophical figures, would prove satisfactory for the academic philosophical community. Ferrara's interdisciplinary approach is brave and risky in view of the fact that scholars are jealous of their fields. In this regard Rose Rosengard Subotnik has described a disappointing attempt of her own to interpret Kant for musical ends. "It did not occur to me," she asserts, "that philosophers had a traditional manner of interpreting Kant that I would be expected to know and follow. At the time, I actually thought I was free to read Kant's third critique and think about it for myself as Beethoven had been" (*Developing Variations* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990]: 296).

Perhaps the biggest problem of this study, though, is that the whole argument is constructed on the dichotomy between sound-form and referent. This dichotomy itself is grounded in the concept of the autonomy of the musical work, which brings us at last to the untouchable "holy cow" of bourgeois aesthetics: the independence of the musical work from the social sphere. In consequence of this premise, Ferrara has neglected the social dimension of the musical entity. But one cannot claim to reveal the layers (not even the main ones) of meaning of a musical work without dealing with its social setting. The notion of "taste," for example, is fundamental to

understand the meaning of art. Taste is an indicator of social distinction. Art was, is, and will continue to be used to create social distinction through taste, and consequently, to shape the social configuration of a culture. To take a musical work out of its social environment is to miss one deep meaning of that work; indeed some would argue that taste is more telling about the work than either the structure or the reference. The social implications of music must go beyond outlining the composer's biography and the historico-cultural setting.

The value of this work for musicologists who wish to consider philosophical issues relevant to music analysis—but who may not aspire to becoming philosophers themselves—will not be compromised by a sprinkling of typographical errors (such as those on pp. 94, 97, 148) or occasional seemingly unmotivated uses of boldface. The use of sexist language (man, mankind, etc.) throughout is disappointing, however.

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There Is No Truer Truth: The Musical Aspect of Browning's Poetry. By Nachum Schoffman. (Contributions to the Study of World Literature, 40.) New York: Greenwood Press, 1991. [xv, 178 p. ISBN 0-313-27401-0. \$39.95.]

Nachum Schoffman enters the critical debate over John Browning's knowledge and use of music with a revisionary intent. He believes both literary critics and musicologists have served Browning poorly. The former have not known enough about music, while the latter have not "gone far enough or deep enough" (p. xiv). He argues that Browning "was more than merely a cultivated musical amateur. He had at least some of the skills of a professional musician" (p. 22). These skills, among English poets of the nineteenth century, were unique, and they allowed Browning to write music poetry based on the "objective reality of musical facts" (p. 2).

There Is No Truer Truth is an attempt at a "musicologist's view of the musical aspect of Browning's poetry" (p. xiii), and such a