

Music and the Temporal Image: Change in Permanence
James R. Johnson, April 8, 2004

*“What then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is.
If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know.”*
St. Augustine

*“Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.”*
Percy Bysshe Shelley

Introduction

There is a danger inherent in philosophy which is done *in vacuo* for there is little against which the conceptual structures may be “checked.” Many attempts to make psychology, sociology, or the special field of education, scientific have yielded no more than a translation into the language of some “ism” - empiricism, pragmatism, behaviorism, operationalism. The process of establishing a philosophical grounding for a field such as music is more involved than the establishment of a connection to another area of intellectual endeavor. There is a need to establish new conceptual structures relevant to that field and not translate the concerns of one field to that of music. Conceptual structures, by their very nature, have implications and this is where attention must be centered. The realm of “conceptual implications” is virtually infinite and the impact of philosophy may follow these same dimensions.

A philosophical idea is like a stone dropped into water: its influence goes out in rings, over the whole domain if it is strong, or else until it becomes negligible. The center from which it spreads is the special problem, or complex of problems, which its proponent tried to clarify and had to recast, or even replace by altogether new questions.

Conceptual implications are as intertwined with each other as an organism is with the organs and organic systems which comprise it. The very fact that humans have a mental life makes all components of that life interdependent. Philosophy, by studying those conceptions, is involved with any and all aspects of that mental life. As a direct result of the interdependent nature of conceptual implication, philosophy has no elementary problems; any conceptual structure can eventually be found to imply all others. Above all else, it will be held during this discussion that philosophy is the pursuit of meaning.

Musical and the Moral Image

Accepting the wide reach of philosophical endeavor does not offer obvious insight into why one should consider the field of music when contemplating a moral imagination. Hopefully, a philosophical examination of music and its essence will reveal a structure so ingrained in human perception and conception as to warrant the journey.

Humans are sentient beings; we are conscious. Our experiences weave themselves as a fabric of sentience, sometimes in obvious patterns of impact and action and other times in dreams of which we are only vaguely aware. That fabric is the dialectic of permanence and change and their intimate unity. What we call motion in music is not necessarily change of place, but is change made perceivable, imaginable, in any way whatever; change within permanence. This is what it is to be an organism, and also points to the organic character of music.

Of crucial importance to the following considerations is the recognition of time, in all its many and varied definitions, as primal to human existence. It is the one gift of God's creation not negotiable; we can't bargain for more, nor do we know the duration of the gift we have all been given. Our conception(s) of temporality may be more closely tied to basic questions of morality than is generally conceded.

As organisms we interact in exogenic (experience felt as external impact or objectivity) and autogenic (that which is sensed as internal thought or subjectivity) with the exigencies of the world. Sights, sounds, food, water, air, words, are all assimilated by the human organism and it grows, stabilizes, declines and eventually dies. We do all this in a temporal frame whose boundaries are essentially unknown to us. How does one conceive time in a basically unknowable realm?

The purpose here is to apply the conceptual structures of organicism to the field of music: organic form; the act form of incipience, acceleration, consummation and cadence; autogenic and exogenic modes; image and model; talent and genius; principles of art and principles of construction; elements and materials; form and content; analysis and synthesis; abstraction; and dialectic. Preceding those considerations, however, will be discussions, within strictly musical parameters, of two important conceptual constructs: 1. a definition of music's symbolism, and 2. music as a discursively functioning system.

Music as Change in Permanence

"The life of feeling" is a phrase long used by scholars familiar with the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, mainly because she used the concept so frequently herself. For years she held that the essential quality of this life of feeling was one of tension and release, conflict and resolution. The ebb and flow of this life of feeling she found to be correspondent with the forms of music. Is the concept of "tension and release" the primary quality of the life of feeling? Do the conceptual constructions of organistic philosophy have an impact upon this life of feeling? The former question may be answered in the negative and the latter in the affirmative.

When the conceptual implications of "the life of feeling" are examined in greater detail there emerges a new essence; a viable alternative to the tension and release argument of music: change. More specifically, change in permanence. The interrelated nature and function of musical forms and that their character is essentially organistic. Such organic forms are not static, as life itself is not, for permanence of form is death to an organism; their permanence is a pattern of changes.

The tonal forms in motion which characterize music make change perceivable and are, therefore, symbolic elements. They do not express feeling or consciousness but one of the most profound aspects of the latter: change in permanence. Musical forms are not expressive of the tension and

release quality of some emotional and sexual states, but express the abstracted essence of dynamic form: the balance of becoming and passing. Music's function within the process of symbolization is that of making change perceivable.

Time, Space, and Motion

Simply stating the above is not sufficient, however. How do "change" and "permanence" function within music? What is motion in music and how do virtual time and space fit in? The answers to these questions in the field of music may revolve around the very essence of the space and time.

The motion perceived in music is not a change of place as is the motion of a truck. That change of place is generally given to the sense of sight although it is also possible to sense change of place through the faculty of hearing. To accomplish either requires the added factor of perspective in its temporal conception or relativity. Through hearing, change of place may seem like a passing from left to right or front to back or their converse and combinations. This motion is not what is heard in music although the relative perspective does have a vital role.

Some temporal constructs are very spatial. In early Semitic languages, for example, the Hebraic conceptions of past and future are purely spatial. The past (Hebrew *qedem*) is what lies ahead and is known, whereas the future (Hebrew *'āhōôr* or *'ahōărôn*) is behind and unknown. This is obviously an intriguing viewpoint for music, because all temporally dependent elements in music such as modulation (change of key area) or the process of theme and variation are all dependent upon the listener holding in their thought that which immediately precedes these techniques.

Even the well known time dilation portion of Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity has some interesting possibilities with regard to music and, obviously, with relation to perspective (in music, that of the listener, again). One observer in inertial motion (non-accelerating is the term used, I believe) and another observer in motion relative to the other will have disparate views of a particular, simultaneous event. Perspective, either temporal or musical, is found in the stasis of any one particular moment. When applied to music and modulation, for example, a change of key may seem out of place or abrupt (or even nonexistent) unless the listener has heard enough of the composition to have a key area established prior to the modulation. A frame of axis, in other words, has not been established.

Temporality is further stretched with the clock paradox. Atomic (cesium) clocks have been carried on airplanes and compared to the same clocks in stationary position on earth. When they are compared, the earth bound clock will have aged less. The strict units by which we normally think of time have very little connection to experiential or relative temporality. They are good at dividing our day into segments that can become a point of reference when needed and probably not much more.

The perception of time is commonly divided into two basic categories: sequence and duration. Again, these are seemingly obvious in their connection to music. However, in temporal philosophy, sequence carries with it the consideration of any one event following another, whereas in music a sequence has a strict definition involving key areas and/or motives structures relating to the events.

Duration, in philosophy, often concerns itself with the time between events and/or the length of the event itself. The corresponding music abstractions are those, respectively, of meter and rhythm. But is the perception of time always spatial? Is the perception of time and the perception of change (whether relative to space or motion) inextricably related? Must one have change of place in order to perceive motion? Does all motion involve time and space?

Time and space are inextricably bound, and within those bonds may also be found motion and change. There can be no time without motion, no motion without time; no motion without space, no space without motion; no time without change, no change without time; no change without space, no space without change; no time without space, no space without time; and no motion without change, no change without motion. And yet this discussion need not progress, or digress, to a consideration of the physics of all events in the universe as patterns of energy even though the analogies are intriguing. (Also intriguing, though not to be considered here, is the view of God the unchanging. Save for Malachi 3:6 [where the discussion is probably more centered on God's covenant as unchanging] the idea of God as unchangeable is difficult to locate verbatim in scripture. Is God without or beyond time, space, motion and change? If one functions, do they not all follow? Ah, ye of little faith!)

Time, Space, and Motion in Music

Time and space in music are just as intertwined with motion and change as are the abstractions of physics. They are relative. But illusion itself need not be the unreal, deceptively false perception which is its common definition. It may be that illusion is really a missing or ambiguous dimension or element; that which gives us image as opposed to model.

The time, space, motion, and change of music are all given to the sense of hearing and as a result whatever perception of them is in evidence must be directly related to their apprehension through hearing. There seem to be two primary ways of achieving the relative perspective necessary to perceive these four interrelated concepts in music: succession and progression.

The first, succession, is the most elemental sense of time. It involves nothing more than knowing that one event is followed by another and that the mind cannot be aware of more than one event at any given instance. The primary musical techniques used to achieve succession are frequently cited as the essential characteristics of form: repetition, variation, and contrast. For example, it is common to teach young children the rudiments of "form" in music. The teacher requests that a student compose a piece for rhythm instruments in ternary form and the student responds with eight thumpings of the drum, followed by four cymbal crashes, and a repetition of the eight drum beats. The temporal orientation is one of succession and cannot account for other more involved perceptions of time, motion, and space in music.

To achieve spatial orientation in music probably requires perspective within a system, a position from which other functions become relative. Were there to be no perspective, but rather constant and total change, the only perception would be that of chaos; the type frequently sought in aleatoric or chance music. The sense of some permanence is a requisite of relative motion in music and thus of the secondary illusion of space. One reason that music composed within the system of diatonic

harmony has often been considered the highest achievement of the musical art is that it can provide some sense of relation. Within such a system it is possible to find an orientation or perspective from which change and motion become relative and the illusion of space realized. This perspective is found in the second aspect of temporality in music: progression.

Succession and progression both have an intimate relation with the spatio-temporal aspects of music but there may also be another contributing factor whose genesis is found in the definition of illusion as a missing or ambiguous dimension or element. Music is given to the sense of imagination formulated through hearing and therefore removes from the perception of motion any function of sight. Could the various dimensions of geometric space also play a role in the temporal and spatial orientation of change and motion in music?

One way of considering the question involves an assignment of certain theoretical abstractions common in musical analysis to factors in that geometrical space. Length may be associated with duration and rhythm. It is a linear abstraction though not necessarily functioning as periodicity as a dialectic of phase preparation; the consummation of one phase being the inception of another or group of others. The next geometric parameter of height also involves linear duration and succession as rhythm does but would add the factor of frequency fluctuation in a vertically conceived manner: melody. The third dimension of depth would be the function of harmony which has only to add more melodies to the height dimension. As an abstractive function, harmony cannot be distinguished from melody save as a factor of number: even, for example, two musical elements such as a rest and a note “sounding” simultaneously. Harmony is an extension of melody and rhythm functioning in geometric layers or levels. These layers or levels are most commonly referred to as “voices” and may form another possible “aural” perception of space within the temporal realm of music.

Another spatial orientation in music occurs through timbre and texture. Orchestrations, instrumentations or voicings are frequently referred to with words such as “full” or “thin” or “massive” or “delicate”; all terms generally associated with spatial orientations. The “highness” of the flute sound and the “lowness” of the double-bass may contribute to such a perception but there is nothing intrinsically “high” or “low” in such perception that is not conceived as such prior to its distinction. The “massive” sound found in a performance of Verdi’s Requiem is readily distinguishable from the “delicate” space delineated by Haydn’s Kaiser String Quartet. Again, this is just one additional aspect of space which may contribute to the whole realm of the spatio-temporal in music.

Space in music may be secondary in illusion to the primary one of time but being primary does not designate “first” but “always.” The point that needs to be emphasized, however, is the interrelated nature of musical functions. Space, motion, and change are as one with time. The distinction for music’s ambiguous or missing dimensional illusion is that these aspects are all conceived and thus perceived as auditory abstractions. Music is time, space, motion, and change given to hearing. The perception and conception of musical forms in motion is that of change in permanence; the balance of becoming and passing.

Music as a Discursive Form

Music has meaning and that meaning is built in the same discursive manner as other linguistic structures, namely languages. Our basic thoughts and conceptions are discursive and the conception of time – change in permanence – is seemingly dependent upon music as a discursive system.

How is music a discursively functioning form? The conclusion often formulated was that since language was discursive and music could not be translated into language, music could not be discursive in function. If music is examined carefully and not required to function within another symbol system namely language it is indeed possessed of all the characteristic functions ascribed to discursivity. In other words the analysis must remain within the parameters of music and “translations” such as Albert Schweitzer’s emotional vocabulary of Johann Sebastian Bach must eventually be discounted. (It should be noted in defense of Schweitzer’s work that the interaction of music and text is a very viable level of analytical abstraction once the concept of assimilation is placed within a discursively functioning symbol system.)

To explain more fully the ramifications of music as a discursively functioning system each factor in that function needs to be examined. There are seven such commonly held functions: vocabulary, syntax, connotation, denotation, translation, symbol, and linear temporality.

Vocabulary

The vocabulary of a system requires there to be elements which may enter into relations. Those relations are the forms or structures of the system and its contents are given with it; content being that which is given with a particular logical form. Therefore, just as forms may change so may contents. The change itself is dependent, respectively, upon the abstraction and interpretation being made at any one time.

As an example consider two notes one whole step apart sounded simultaneously with the following simultaneity being a repetition of the higher sounding note and the lower note a half step down from its previous position. In two species counterpoint, this is an example of the form of resolution: a movement from dissonance to consonance. The form and its contents all find their function and meaning within the system of music. It is possible to take much diatonically conceived music and give its forms and contents an extra - musical “emotional meaning.” In this example the emotion would probably be one of the “expectation” of the resolution or the exhilaration resulting from the anticipation. It is not necessary to deny any such function under the present definitional parameters since the formal relation abstracted involves contents which are simply the result of that unique abstraction.

The formal relations of music are able to withstand innumerable interpretations of its abstractive forms. It almost seems to invite them. Finding “feeling” or “emotion” to be a content of music is not inconceivable. To say that feeling and emotion may not be possible contents for music would be to deny any kind of external verification of what is being said here. To say that feeling or emotion is the only content to be found in music’s forms, however, is conceptually crippling. It restricts music to that which is conceived wholly within the diatonic system and precludes not only that which followed but that which preceded functional harmony.

Any philosophical conception needs to be fecund enough to include those aspects which are raised as exceptions. Contrary to what nominalism holds, it is not the words which are too broad in meaning but the conceptions which are too narrow. There are numerous elements in music which may enter into relations thus forming its vocabulary. The danger is that those forms may become so desperately restricted in conceptual explication as to preclude many elements which function purely within the system of music itself.

Syntax

Syntax is the form, structure, or shape of a discursive function. It is, therefore, intimately tied to the previous discussion of vocabulary. That music has form is almost impossible to deny, in fact music is often referred to as pure form.

One of the pervasive problems of form in music centers on the use of the term itself. It is often thought that all musicians must know what they mean by the term form since they use it so frequently. Form has been variously defined by theoreticians as structure, logical design, shape, temporal shape, mutable, immutable, an element of style, the architechtonic organization and projection of the tonic triad, the transient application of an unchangeable idea, or even the idea of form itself (Palto must be amused). How is it possible for there to be so many opinions, so vehemently held, as to the real definition of form in music?

Almost all the paradoxes of form in music may be rectified by discovering which level of abstraction the author is discussing and which body of the musical literature he delimits. For example, Heinrich Schenker and Leonard Meyer are closely tied to the "traditional music" of diatonically conceived composition. Their definitions of form are to be understood from the perspective of the logical language which is their method of analysis and presentation. There can be no perfect induction or complete enumeration; there can be no determination of "the" form of any event. All analysis, and resultant synthesis, is dependent upon the logical language or forms which are used to accomplish that analysis. Any resultant presentation or synthesis of such analysis is in that same logical language. The structure in which a question is posed inevitably predisposes the form of the answer.

Form is a relation of elements; nothing more and nothing less. Music is possessed of innumerable levels of abstractive elements which may be interpreted through just as many levels of form. What is required is that the perspective from which those forms and elements are analyzed needs to be known by those doing the analysis and those to whom it is being presented.

Connotation

Fixed connotation is the quality of definitional substitution; one structure may be substituted for another. It is one of the vital aspects of discursivity which some have said music lacks. They find that a musical figure has no fixed meaning "within the linguistic sphere." Herein lays the fallacy of such an argument: music cannot be required to function outside of itself. But how does music function within its own system in a connotative manner?

Probably the best example can be found within the procedures of diatonic harmony. This type of harmony has the special property with which it is frequently labeled: function. Structures within diatonic harmony serve a specific function but those functions may also be shared or in the definitional parameter presented above, substituted. The pre-dominant function may be held by the subdominant or the supertonic triads; the pre-tonic by the dominant or “leading tone” triad, etc. Another example may be found in the procedures of orchestration. This aspect of the art of music is actually predicated upon the very connotative quality denied to music. This predication involves the fact that a musical idea may hold its equivalence between two disparate instrumentations, i.e., a melody played by a trumpet and later by a violin remains “that melody.” The connotative substitution is through the abstracted element of timbre. A musical idea has connotative function even in the parameter of ideational presentation; something which even linguistic forms do not have.

These are only two examples of connotative function in music. The next two aspects - denotation and translation - also have a crucial bearing upon the substitutive function.

Denotation

The concept of denotation involves the quality of general reference. Denotation and connotation provide the content of any discursive system and music is no exception.

Music has often been seen as not referring to anything specific, or as being too specific for words. Such a conclusion once again requires music to function outside of its own domain. If music is to have the quality of general reference it must be found within its own parameters.

Denotation involves the logical arguments of class as one and class as a complex. In the former case music’s reference is to what many philosophers call the integrity or uniqueness of each individual composition. This is a class as one. But such individuation is dialectically bound to its involvement: the class as a complex. Any composition is involved with, and thus possesses general reference to, many other compositions. It is involved with other compositions of the same genre by its own composer and to those of the same genre by other composers. It is also involved with compositions of different genre by its own composer and other composers. The list could continue but the point is the denotative quality of music is one of the functions of those branches of musical endeavor called theory and history. What makes this composition unique in a composer’s output and how does it compare to others of its genre? The second movement of Haydn’s Symphony 94 in G major refers to itself but also to all movements using the techniques of theme and variation. In other words, genre and style in music are dependent upon the denotative quality of musical forms.

Translation

The perfect translation is probably sought by as many as seek the perfect induction or the complete analysis; all doomed to failure. To translate is to manipulate form and content. A translation of a phrase from one language to another often involves more than a straight substitution of one word for another. For example, when translating German to English the problem of word order is one very obvious challenge.

Some have said translation is impossible for music because it had no fixed connotation or general denotation. The attempts to translate music into a language of the emotions had never completely succeeded and it never could. There is no argument here. To say music cannot be translated into a language of feeling or emotion is quite easy to accept but to use that same premise to deny music the quality of translatability is once again definition by default.

Music can be translated within its system function and many musical techniques are based upon that premise. They will be addressed presently but first there is a question which arises out of requiring music to function within its own system. Is German, for example, required to function outside its own system when it must present its meanings in another language? In a sense that is true and this requirement accounts for the fact that there can probably never be a perfect translation but in another sense a negative response must be given the question.

The symbolic function of all human languages is essentially the same. Perception, tied in dialectic with conception, is predominantly linguistic. Most thought is carried on in a language although definitely not all thought. It is very possible to manipulate, generalize, rearrange, and order musical ideas without attempting a conception of them in words. Languages are members of the set of discursively functioning elements involved in symbolization and their set is defined by that function. There are many linguistic elements and languages that carry a significant portion of conception. It was a normal assumption for Langer to find languages to be the only members of the discursive set and look for another explanation of music. The resultant presentational symbol system is unnecessary once the discursive properties of music are recognized. Therefore, as close as they may be in discursive functioning, music is not language and language is not music. How can it be required of music to function in its own sphere and also in that of language? Quite simply, it cannot.

What musical functions display the discursive quality of translation? There are two basic methods which roughly correspond to the division of abstractive form and interpretive content. The first method involves primarily musical content and is commonly known as transposition. This technique changes the content while maintaining the formal relations, for example, transposing a melody from C major to F major. The character of transposition is one which is virtually unique to the musical art.

The second method involves a manipulation of form and to some extent content although the formal aspect is of primary import in this case. Arrangement, improvisation and transcription of musical ideas belong to this function. There is a change of form, of the way the elements are related. The change may involve a different harmonization of the melody or even changing the melody itself but probably not to the degree that it is unrecognizable. It may only mean changing the instrumentation and thus would involve the relation of one timbre to another. In an isorhythmic motet or a cantus firmus mass movement the translation of the original material is so manipulated so as to be almost unrecognizable. This translation often permitted the juxtaposition of some seemingly irreligious elements with those of a more sacred nature. The point is that the translation or manipulation of musical ideas has a long history and is one of the essential qualities of the art itself.

One more aspect of translation needs to be mentioned. To really confront the issue of translation the way it is in linguistics would require, for example, the arrangement of a Western musical idea within the musical forms and techniques of another culture. Perhaps the reason this is so seldom done is that it is very quickly evident that a perfect translation is no more possible in music than it is in linguistics. Cultural background and experience may be too divergent to achieve a satisfactory result. Yet people of widely disparate cultural heritages have come to assimilate the music of other cultures as the history of Black music in America is a testament.

Symbol

As soon as the concept symbol comes to the fore an army of verbal guns is aimed at the proponent and the challenge is laid down to identify the direct object of this symbol. Extrication from such a position is no easy matter. In the musical art there are at least two avenues of rescue: structure and correspondence.

The first relies purely upon the expressed intention and purpose of philosophy: the pursuit of meaning. It is the role of philosophy to establish the possibility of meaning and not its psychological conditions. Music fulfills the logical conditions for functioning within symbolization by virtue of its possession of form. It is capable of being an element in the process of symbolization. Obviously not everyone conceives everything musically and everyone certainly does not find the same correspondent forms in all types of music. Classical music is not played over the sound system at many dance clubs and fusion rock is not heard often on the stage of the Grand Ol' Opry. How many times has a national anthem served a symbolic function in ceremony? Is the symbolic function identical for everyone?

Whether there is an inherent human relation to all musical forms cannot be stated with any confidence. It is probably not too cavalier to claim, however, that virtually all people find some musical forms to relate to and in so doing find some intervalent structures of correspondence. Many of these relations may be known below the psychical limen of sentience but the mere fact that music is as prevalent in most human societies is evidence enough for the possibility of its function within the process of symbolization. Music has structures capable of functioning symbolically and the intervalent correspondence is heard at many levels.

Linear Temporality

This temporal property of music is related to the spatio-temporal discussions presented at the beginning of this paper, but there are some further clarifications that can be made. Some claim music's forms are not successively built up but presented *in toto*. However, it is quickly realized that every shift of tonality gives a new sense to previous passages. This is, for example, the defining quality of the musical techniques of modulation, augmentation, diminution, inversion, retrograde, thematic development, and so on. Musical meanings are successively built from the beginning of the composition's performance to its conclusion. The entire concept of modulation in diatonic harmony returns the discussion of perspective and orientation within a musical form; the sense of change in permanence and the balance of becoming and passing.

The recognition of the unchanging, or the key modulated from, is a discrete abstraction and each is progressively built up in the architectonic structure of a composition. The dialectic is continuous and there is an ongoing sense of becoming and passing. Progression, harmonic function, modulation, melody, and numerous other factors in music are dependent upon this quality of discrete linear temporality.

Once music is allowed to stand on its own as a system it becomes evident that it is discursive in function. The qualities of vocabulary, syntax, connotation, denotation, translation, symbol, and linear temporality all function in its forms. The forms of music carry with them all the potential to function as a primary vehicle for the conception of temporality; of change in permanence.

However, as those forms are structured with a linear temporality the question arises: is the Western concept of past, present and future the most relevant to that understanding? Is there a more fruitful dialectic to be discovered in the “change in permanence” found in organic function?

Music as Image and Model

The primary distinction presented by organistic philosophy is that of change. An organistic form, like an organism, is not static but a form whose permanence is a pattern of changes. This process of change is a dialectic existing at various levels of function in the form. The elements in an organistic form are not independent parts but interrelated, interdependent centers of activity. Since music is an occurrent art, its centers of activity are abstracted elements which also have form and content relative to their abstraction and interpretation. The dialectical process not only exists between those various elemental factors but also between the occurrent composition and any percipient.

There is another dialectical process which is relevant to the purposes and that involves the autogenic and exogenic modes of organistic function. The autogenic mode is characterized by those events and activities which are felt as action; internal to an organism and an organistic form. Such action is often termed subjective. The exogenic mode, on the other hand, involves those events and activities which are felt as impact and carry the perception of objectivity. It must be emphasized that these are not independent functions any more than the elements of an organistic form are independent of each other. They are interdependent and interrelated. The autogenic and exogenic modes are involved in a constant dialectical process, sustaining the patterns of change in permanence which constitute any organism and organistic form.

The events, activities, and actions mentioned above are also conceived through their organistic function. The main conceptual structure in this instance is that of the act form. This form has four basic internal processes: incipience, acceleration, consummation, and cadence. Incipience begins with an impulse or nascent act and involves the potentiality intrinsic to that impulse or nascent act. The impulse is then accelerated either with or without further articulation. That articulative process may have qualities of entrainment or inhibition and within it stages of individuation and involvement. Should the impulse be accelerated and actualized above the psychical limen of sentience, it is said to have been consummated. The consummation of an impulse leads to a cadence of that nascent act and is the rhythmic preparation of other acts. The matrix which is the pattern of changes is itself changed through this constant dialectic.

One more clarification needs to be made prior to embarking upon this examination and that is the recognition of music as an organistic form whose characteristics, qualities, and functions are those of an organism. The interdependent relations exhibited by its elemental forms create the pattern of changes in permanence and demonstrate the balance of becoming and passing recognized in organisms themselves.

The musical “participants” - for lack of a better term - are the composer, performer, listener, academician, and conductor. The rationale for the choral music delimitation is centered upon the need to bring the subject of text and music into the discussion. Rather than being a limitation in parameter, however, the area of choral music has a tendency to expand the consideration.

A composer is involved with both the principles of art and the principles of construction. The principles of art are the creation of an “apparition”; an event which is illusory by its missing or ambiguous dimension. Its form is an organistic pattern of changes in permanence given only to the senses of hearing and imagination. The principles of construction are those basic devices by means of which the musical ideas are manipulated. Over the course of musical history, these principles of construction have resulted in the establishment of the great traditions of music.

The principles of art have their inception in a musical image; image in the sense of how the composition appears. It is through the principles of construction that the musical image may take on the character of the model; showing how something works. These are the primary functions of any composer and the realization of the image and the model is tied, respectively, to the dialectic of the autogenic and exogenic modes.

How is it possible to call a musical composition a model rather than an image? The resolution of this paradox goes to the consummated relation of the musical symbol; the consummate relation of a composition and a pattern of changes in permanence. These patterns of changes in permanence which music presents may be analyzed as patterns. If they can be analyzed, they cannot be images.

The line between an image and a model is rarely drawn distinctly, and the question persists of when, or if, an image can become a model. What is the difference between how something appears and how it works? The major criterion is based upon abstraction. A model is built up from abstractions through which an event is constructed and is dependent upon the perspective of those abstractions. Such is the case with the principles of construction in music. The original musical idea is an image - a nascent, potential act - which is then manipulated through constructive devices, resulting in a model. A musical form is essentially a model of change in permanence; of the balance of becoming and passing.

The initial musical idea that a composer creates is the incipience of the act itself. That idea contains potentialities which have intrinsic forms themselves. It is this phase of the act which is basically autogenic; felt subjectively as action.

The invention of a musical idea is the function of genius. It involves the creation of a new conception, a unique impulse to action. The motivational matrix from which the impulse emerged

may have been changed by a particular poem or program that was read or by a specific commission. More often than not, however, the impulse emerges from below the psychological limen of sentience and appears in the musical imagination of the composer. That is why the stage of incipient musical impulse is autogenic; felt as internally motivated action.

Once the musical impulse is presented aurally, however, it is no longer in the autogenic mode but rather takes on the quality of impact; the objectivity of the exogenic. The musically nascent act is now dependent upon the talent of the composer to bring the new conception of genius to fruition. For some composers this is an easier task than for others. Mozart and Beethoven provide well known cases which exhibit one range of talent in working with the results of their own genius. Mozart supposedly notated compositions with little correction or conceptual incubation; even the staggering amount of music composed by someone living such a short life is probably evidence enough of such ability. Beethoven is known to have made numerous sketches of themes and parts of works before giving them final form. This process is not a judgment of the worth of their respective compositions only a recognition of the fact that there are varying degrees of conceptual genius and actualizing talent.

Within the exogenic mode of composition are found the final three stages of the act form: acceleration, consummation, and cadence. Each of these has a special function but they are also not independent of each other.

An impulse in the acceleration stage may or may not be further articulated. Should the musical impulse entrain other musically nascent forms it will highly individuate itself. The subacts of other motives and/or harmonic inceptions may become involved with the initial impulse and form an even more potent impulse.

The musical impulse itself may be so strong as to assimilate most other factors to its potentialities. This assimilation will probably occur to varying degrees and not always in totality. There are many times when the text is in a close dialogue with the music as is evidenced in many of the art songs of Franz Schubert. On the other hand, the assimilation of text within the musical forms of Johann Sebastian Bach is quite complete. The Doctrine of Affections held that a single movement should have a single affection or mood. The example presented in chapter five was from the Mass in B Minor where the text variances of the Credo require new settings when going from the crucifixion to the resurrection. Within each movement, however, the text may be frequently repeated and the single mood developed along strictly musical lines. Assimilation functions at the compositional level in addition to the perceptual one, but is a process which demonstrates numerous levels of occurrence.

On the other hand, a musical impulse upon reaching the level of articulation may not entrain other musical impulses but be inhibited. It may actually be inhibited by the composer denying to it any further articulation; perhaps deeming it unworthy of additional manipulation or simply not being possessed of sufficient musical potentialities to warrant its exploitation. The impulse may also be entrained by other more potent impulses and come to some degree of actualization by that means. Whether it is entrained or inhibited, the impulse has an impact upon the musical matrix that forms the motivational substrate of that composer. The impulses and entrained subacts of the compositional process eventually become the “involvements” or superacts from which other

compositions are progressively “individuated.” At any particular moment in time the complete works of a composer form such a matrix of involvement.

The realizations of the potentialities of a musical impulse have even farther to go. Once accelerated, the impulse must be actualized or consummated; it must achieve an occurrent form to be called music. This consummation involves such functions as voicing, orchestration and the temporal functions of formal and harmonic succession and progression by means of repetition, variation, and contrast. The manipulation and actualization of the musical impulse also utilize many of the discursive functions discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Such principles of construction as inversion, retrogression, augmentation, diminution, fragmentation, combination, transposition, and transformation may all be used to consummate a musically nascent act.

The consummation of musical impulses obviously results in a change in the motivational matrix from which additional musical impulses will emerge. The emergence may result from action below the psychical limen of sentience and appear purely autogenic in incipience. However, an impulse may also emerge from the matrix with a quality of exogenic objectivity as when a composer is motivated to manipulate and transform the musical ideas of another composer. Sometimes there is a deliberate refusal to recognize the process of acceleration and consummation of the musical impulse. This is the case with contemporary music of the aleatoric type. It almost completely denies the exogenic mode to the composer.

The pattern of changes in permanence that is the organistic matrix of a composer’s musical imagination is built by the dialectic of the autogenic and exogenic. The process is continuous and the origin of any impulse from within the dialectic is difficult to ascertain. It is absolutely vital to recognize that the dialectic functions at all times.

The Temporal Image

No amount of philosophical speculation or theoretical posturing can ever take the place of music as an occurrent art. Music is a living, dynamic form and it requires human beings to create and actualize it. Its structures can be so pure as to allow innumerable interpretations of its abstractive relations and so immediate as to entrain the unspent impulses of performer, conductor, and listener to a point unequalled in experience.

The forms of music are often powerful enough to assimilate whole realms of art to them and, just as often, flexible enough to allow the self-expression of an impassioned performer to be born on the words of a song. The patterns of change in permanence may be so strong at times as to cause one to avoid that particular composition; it is not right for the moment. At other times and with another piece the performer and listener will find music to be one of the most potent memories held of a situation. The musical catharsis can be shattering.

We may end where we began: humans are sentient beings; we are conscious. Our experiences weave themselves as a fabric of sentience, sometimes in obvious patterns of impact and action and other times in dreams of which we are only vaguely aware. That fabric is the dialectic of permanence and change and their intimate unity. What we call motion in music is not necessarily

change of place, but is change made perceivable, imaginable, in any way whatever; change within permanence. This is what it is to be an organism, and musical.

The tonal forms of music make change perceivable and by doing so are capable of being symbolic elements. Music does not express feeling or the entirety of human consciousness but expresses one of its most profound aspects: “change in permanence.” It does not express, nor is it expressive of, the tension-resolution and conflict-solution parameters of pragmatic philosophy but rather expresses the essential organicism of dynamic time: “the balance of becoming and passing.” This is one of the most profoundly human of moral conceptions and its acceptance may be preliminary even to that of “How then, shall we live [that time]?”