

# The Philosophy of Creativity

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*New Essays*

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# Musical Style and the Philosophy of Mind

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The philosophy of mind has in important ways not done justice to the range of phenomena presented by music. This sin of omission is all the more striking in that contemporary philosophy of mind already contains resources that, when properly deployed, can be used to address the rich range of phenomena presented by music. Current aesthetics and philosophy of mind have certainly continued to address some traditional and important questions in the philosophy of music. They have offered more or less plausible answers to such longstanding questions as what is required for music to have some kind of meaning and emotional significance. It seems to me, however, that there are musical issues that are also distinctively philosophical in that they concern the very nature of certain phenomena, as opposed to the empirical psychological origins of those phenomena or their historical and social context. These issues have hardly been raised by philosophers.

The issues I have in mind also have a bearing on music criticism, music theory, the right way of conceiving of performance practice theories, and the right way to formulate issues in the history of music. Resolution of the issues will also provide a starting point for empirical theories of creativity in the specific domain of musical composition. A theory of why a composer is creative in a particular way cannot get off the ground without a proper characterization of the particular way in which her compositions are creative. We cannot give an explanation without a proper description of what is to be explained. If a work of art (or anything else) is creative by virtue of its possession of a particular property, a correct account of what is involved in having that property is a precondition for constructing a good theory of how its creator achieved a work with that property. In the theory of vision, it is widely accepted (and is a working constraint in much empirical research) that it makes no sense to address the question of how the content of a perception is computed without a specification of what it is that is computed (Marr 1980). An empirical theory that explains why a composer, scientist, poet, or mathematician is creative in just the ways he is will be a complex thing. We are certainly very far off from having any

such theory, in any rich or interesting area. But we know now that we should not be satisfied with a theory that fails to explain the distinctive aspects of the products of creative activity. If a set theorist (Cantor, for example) is creative in introducing a completely new method of proof, then a good, full explanation of his creative activity must explain why it is that method of proof he discovered. In that case, we have no difficulty in articulating the distinctive novelty in his products (such as diagonalization). But in the arts, matters are not so simple. We can often recognize that a poem, or novel, or composition is of some new kind that involves creative activity, without our being able to characterize in any explicit and articulated way necessary for a psychological theory precisely what that new kind is. We may and often do have a word for a new kind of art. But unless we can say more about what that kind is, we will not have a sufficiently structured characterization of it to be suitable as the explanatory goal of a computational, or any other, psychological theory. The goal of this essay is to supply a characterization in the particular case of a range of musical kinds, a characterization that, among other things, is sufficiently explicit and articulated to be a resource for a theory of creativity in musical composition.

As a piece of autobiography here, what brought home to me this issue and the unrealized opportunities it presents to the philosophy of mind was a task in my teaching. My main appointment is at Columbia University, which shares with the University of Chicago and with almost no other major Anglophone research university a strict core curriculum. "Music Humanities" is one of the courses in the core curriculum at Columbia. It is a course that presents some basic music theory together with a tour of Western music from the Middle Ages to the present. A few years ago, I agreed to teach it. I thought that it would occasionally include some interesting questions about the perception of music, even though some sessions would not have any philosophical dimension.

I could not have been more wrong—about the "occasionally" part. There was no session at all in which some essentially philosophical, constitutive issue did not leap from even the most straightforward presentation of the subject matter. I initially thought that a session on medieval church music would certainly be philosophy-free. Yet this is the period when notation emerged. Does acquiring a system of musical notation enhance or reduce the expressive power of a musical tradition? It is very obvious that the answer must be positive in some respects and negative in others, and that the task of saying which respects, and why, is as interesting and as intrinsically philosophical as the partly, but only partly, parallel task of explaining the relations between thought and language.

The kind of questions on which I think the philosophy of mind has hitherto failed in relation to music, and on which there are real opportunities for doing better, can be introduced by discussing in more detail one of the constitutive questions that arose from teaching such a course as Music Humanities. It quickly became apparent that the parts of philosophy on which one needs to draw concern not only perception, but also the emotions, the explanation of action, and the expression of mental states.

What makes a piece of music Romantic in style? (I use the capitalized "Romantic" when speaking of styles of music as something to be distinguished not only from the ordinary meaning of "romantic," but also as a term intended to be neutral on the historical or geographical origins the work, on which more later.) The Romantic style of a piece of music is a specifically perceptual phenomenon. Someone who is familiar with the concept of Romantic style in music can tell by listening to only a few bars whether a work is Romantic in style. A listener needs to hear no more than a second or two of example 4.1 to recognize it as Romantic in style.

So, whatever the correct answer is to the question of what makes a piece of music Romantic in style, it must draw on resources in the theory of perception.<sup>1</sup> But there are also two further challenges in giving a perceptual characterization of musical style.

The first is that of developing an account that draws on resources of sufficient generality that various parameters of the account can be altered to generate accounts of other perceptible musical styles, such as expressionism, impressionism, and neoclassicism (as in Stravinsky in the years 1920–45). These various styles are each immediately perceptually identifiable too. We ought to be able to say what perceptual features make the styles so recognizable.

The second challenge is more specific to Romantic style. Romanticism has a rich and very extensively discussed cultural relation to poetry, literature, other art forms, and to moral and political thought. Any account of Romantic style in music must adequately explain the connection between the apparently perceptual phenomenon and this broad current of thought and values. What can possibly be the connection between the rich brew of cultural ideas that involves the mix of the Schlegel brothers, Rousseau, Keats, Byron, and revolutions in Europe on the one hand, and a specifically perceptual auditory phenomenon on the other? We intuitively feel that there is a connection between the ideas and ideals and Romantic music as perceived, but what is it? I will try to do something to overcome the skepticism expressed by O. Baensch, who placed the Classic-Romantic polarity in the category of

basically nothing but vague collective terms for feelings we find qualitatively related, though we cannot further demonstrate this relationship by anything in the feelings themselves, and cannot reduce it to distinct characteristics.

(Baensch 1961, p. 33)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Meyer recognized the datum that suggests that Romantic style in music is a perceptual phenomenon: "we know that competent listeners can usually recognize that a work is Romantic after hearing only a few measures" (1989, p. 218). But I think Meyer's characterization of Romantic style does not capture the perceptual phenomenon in question: see below.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted also by Maynard Solomon (2003).

## Im wunderschönen Monat Mai

Robert Alexander Schumann (1810 - 1856)

The musical score for the opening of 'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai' is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment, with the tempo marking 'Andantino' and dynamic marking 'p'. The second system includes the lyrics: 'wun - der-schö-nen Mo-nat Mai, als al - le Kno - spen spran-gen, da'. The third system continues the lyrics: 'ist in mei - nem Her - zen, die Lie - be auf - ge - gan - gen.' The score concludes with a 'ritard.' marking.

Example 4.1 Opening of R. Schumann, 'Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,' from *Dichterliebe* Op. 48.

I will be searching for some distinct characteristics that respect both the perceptual character of a Romantic style in music and the links with the history of ideas and the development of romantic ideals.

The distinctive characteristic of the Romantic style in music is not intensity of expression alone. Great intensity is sometimes present on occasion in pre-classical

## Miserere my Maker

Thomas Campion

Soprano  
Mi-se-re-re my Ma-ker O have mer-cy on me wretch strange -

S. 5  
ly di-stre-ssed. Cast down with sin o-pre-ssed Mi -

S. 11  
ght-ily vexed to the soul's bi-tter an-guish e'en to the death I

S. 15  
lan-guish. Yet let it please Thee to hear my cease-less cry-ing. Mis-er -

S. 20  
er - e msi-er-er - e Mis-er-er-e I am dy - ing.

Example 4.2 Thomas Campion, 'Miserere my Maker.'

music. Consider Thomas Campion's song "Miserere my Maker," and particularly its last line, "Miserere, miserere, Miserere I am dying," in example 4.2.

Leonard Meyer writes at one point of "the shift from the eighteenth-century idea that music *represented emotions* (affects) to the nineteenth-century belief that music *expressed the feeling* of the composer" (1989, p. 221, Meyer's italics). Whatever shift there may be in ideas about music, when we are concerned with the characterization of the perceived music itself, as opposed to ideas about it, it seems an impossible position to hold that the last line in the Campion excerpt is merely representing emotions, and not expressing feelings. The same could be said about some high points of 18th-century music. Mozart's B minor *Fantasia* K.540 for piano also involves the expression of emotions, and not merely their representation.

In the case of literature, Walter Pater, writing in 1910, offered this characterization of Romanticism: "in the classical literature of Greece and Rome, as in the classics of the last century, the essentially classical element is that quality of order in beauty, which they possess, indeed, in a pre-eminent degree" (1910, pp. 245–246). He continued: "The desire of beauty being a fixed element in every artistic organization, it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty, that constitutes the romantic temper" (1910, p. 246). Later in the same essay, he adds the property of "strangeness" to that of curiosity in his attempt to define Romanticism. Certainly in the musical case, strangeness and curiosity are far from sufficient to make a work in Romantic style. Erik Satie's piano works are both strange and curious, but they are

not Romantic in style. I doubt that the characterization works for literature either (the characterization would also include literature of the absurd, for instance).

An alternative proposal is that what distinguishes Romantic style is that it involves the expression of a distinctively Romantic emotion or state of mind. The states of mind that have been suggested as belonging to this category include "terror, longing, ecstasy and awe."<sup>3</sup> There are certainly some distinctively Romantic attitudes and emotions. A deep kind of alienation is among them, the kind expressed in the last song "Der Leiermann" of Schubert's *Die Winterreise*. It is indeed not clear how a work in classical style could ever express that or do it so successfully. Nevertheless, some emotions expressed in Romantic music are identical to those expressed in classical style. They include romantic love, a sense of triumph, despair, and much more. I think the fundamental and fully general distinction between the Romantic and the classical must be a matter of how the emotion is expressed, rather than which emotion is expressed. It is the "how" that we need to investigate. Moreover, if there are some emotions more appropriately or satisfactorily expressed in Romantic style, there is presumably some property of that style that explains why that is so. We still have the task of identifying what that characteristic is.

There is some limited illumination to be gained from considering accounts of Romantic style in music that do not work, but I now turn from that to trying to build a positive treatment. The account I offer is built using three elements, each of which involves a particular distinction in the realm of the psychological, a distinction drawn and discussed in contemporary philosophy of mind and psychology.

The first element is drawn from the philosophy of action. Some actions are expressive actions. You may slump with your face resting on your hands and your elbows on your desk after hearing bad news. You may skip with delight at good news. In both cases, you may be careful not to damage nearby objects. In neither case is your action explained by means-end reasoning. There need not be anything you are aiming to achieve by these actions, but they are actions nonetheless; they are intentional, even though there may not have been any prior intention, conditional upon the quality of the news, to act one way or another. In both cases, the action is explained by the emotion that the action also expresses. Such actions were unsurprisingly neglected when belief-desire models of action explanation were dominant. In the past two decades, there has been more philosophical discussion of the characteristics of these expressive actions.<sup>4</sup>

The second element in the account brings the first element into the content of perception. Humans perceive some events as actions—as runnings, assertions, pushings, wavings, and so forth. An action may be perceived as aimed at attaining some goal—reaching for the elevator button, removing something from one's

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion in Solomon (2003, p. 38).

<sup>4</sup> See Hursthouse 1991 as a fine starting point for these discussions.

pocket, running for the bus. But some events are perceived specifically as expressive actions. I may perceive you as slumping from disappointment, raising your arms in joy, banging the table in anger, etc.

Musical performances are actions, and those who listen to performances perceive them as actions. Casey O'Callaghan (2009) has argued convincingly that sounds are events in which a moving object disturbs a surrounding medium and sets it moving. I further add that the sounds in musical performances are both heard as events in the objective world and experienced as actions of the musical performers. I will argue that these points have an aesthetic significance.

The third element concerns our human capacity to represent one thing metaphorically-as something else, an important phenomenon in cognition generally. This is not primarily or fundamentally a linguistic phenomenon. It occurs in imagination, thought, and perception. The linguistic phenomenon of metaphor exists only because there are mental states in which one thing is thought of, imagined as, or perceived as something else. In metaphorically representing one thing as something else, as when you think of a network of freeways as a nervous system, there is a relevant mapping from one domain (freeways and their properties and relations) to another (nerves and their properties and relations). The metaphorical mapping is not thought about in such mental states, and it need not be explicitly represented. The metaphor is rather exploited. The subcase in which one experiences one thing metaphorically-as something else is especially important in characterizing the content and nature of musical experience (Peacocke 2009).

When listening to Schubert's "Auf dem See" (example 4.3), one hears the syncopated notes metaphorically as the lapping of water on a boat. Much more remarkably, in bars seven and onward, one hears the lower notes of the piano as the mountains passing by as the boat travels along. These are examples in which certain types of events in the physical world are in the metaphorical content.

Metaphorical content can also concern mental states. One can experience the changing features of a piece of music metaphorically as the gradual change in affect involved in the transition from despair to serenity. One can experience some features of a piece of music metaphorically-as characteristics of a mood of determination without triumphalism (a state of mind that should not be classified as an emotion).

We need to take some care in formulating more precisely what it is that we are trying to characterize. Our target should not be taken as the experience of hearing something as Romantic in style, under one natural reading of that phrase. It seems clear that someone can hear and appreciate a piece of Romantic music without having the concept *Romantic*. I would say too that, even for a non-conceptual notion of the Romantic, a person can hear and appreciate a Romantic work without hearing it as falling under that notion. It is one thing for a piece of music to have Romantic characteristics that are appreciated in the hearing of the music. It is a further thing for those characteristics to be grouped under the general classification *Romantic*,

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Example 4.3 From F. Schubert, 'Auf dem See' D. 543.

whether conceptually or at some more primitive non-conceptual level. So what I propose to do is to give an account of what it is to hear a piece of music in a way that is Romantic. The way in which the piece is heard will have something in common with ways in which other works may also be heard, and which are Romantic ways. The task I am setting myself is that of saying what it is that these ways have in common, without thereby or necessarily putting any notion of what that common feature is into the content of the experience of the listener.

So much for identifying the target of this investigation. The central claim of this chapter is then that to hear a piece of music in a way that is Romantic is

- (a) to perceive the action of performing the music as an expressive action;
- (b) to perceive the action as expressive of some emotion or mental state E, where the music is heard metaphorically as E; and
- (c) to perceive it as an action in which the emotion or mental state E is controlling action in such a way that the classical musical forms or conventions are overstepped in one or more respects, and this overstepping expresses the strength of the emotion or mental state E.

"Perceiving as" is not to be understood factively here. The action of performing the music need not be expressive of some actual state of despair that the performer is suffering. I will call this positive account "the expressive-perceptual account," or "the perceptual account" for short.

Though I have not written out the condition formally to make it obvious, some of the same points apply *pari passu* to the reference to "classical musical forms or conventions" in clause (c) of this account as I made in formulating the target of this account. A listener does not have to have any notion or concept of the classical forms and conventions, let alone be able to say what they are, to meet this condition. The listener has only to possess a capacity to hear the music in a certain way, regardless of whether he classifies such music under the notion or concept "in classical style." What the listener who appreciates a piece of music in Romantic style does have to have is an ability to hear certain features of the music as standing in distinctive relations to certain different properties of music that is in fact in classical style. The relations need not be conceptualized as the relations they are, either.

The account is structured with complex embeddings in both the specification of the way the performance action is perceived and in the specification of the way the music produced in the action is perceived, in particular in respect of its perceived metaphorical content in the sense given above. So this characterization is doubly perceptual. The performance action must be perceived in a certain way. The music that is performed must be heard in a certain way. There must also be a certain relation between these two perceptions, the relation stated in clauses (a) through (c).

You may perceive the performance action as expressive of emotion as described in these conditions while also knowing that the performance action is entirely carefully calibrated by the performer and not in fact an expression of his actual emotion at all. The emotion may be one that he does not feel at all (though it may be important to the performer to imagine it from the inside). These points just reflect the general distinction between knowing something to be the case and how one perceives some state of affairs. Your completely confident knowledge that what you are seeing is a *trompe l'oeil* painted on a flat surface is entirely consistent with your vivid visual experience of it as a three-dimensional object. However much

you know about how the performer operates, if the performer is successful in affecting your perceptions, you will perceive his performance action as expressive of the emotion or mental state that is in the metaphorical content of the music. This independence of the perceptual state from knowledge is present in the theatre too. When we perceive a good actor in the theatre, we can perceive his actions as expressive of certain emotions and states of mind, even if we know the person who is acting does not really experience those emotions and states of mind.

On this account, your ability to hear the expressed state E in the metaphorical content of the music is essential to, and constitutively explanatory of, your perceiving the performance action as expressive of E. Gestures that would be expressive of an emotion in a nonmusical context, however exaggerated or obvious, will not by themselves suffice to place that emotion within the metaphorical content of the music. (It is the stuff of comedy to imagine cases in which someone tries to achieve that end by that means.) This is an important difference between perceiving a good actor on the stage and perceiving an expressive musical performance. The capacity to appreciate the actor's performance draws on the ability to perceive any human action successfully. It does not, except *per accidens*, draw on the ability to relate the content of some world of a specific metaphor to give the right kind of meaning to the actor's performance. But appreciation of an expressive musical performance does draw on the content of a world of metaphor. The performance action, to be perceived as musically expressive, must be perceived in a way determined by the metaphorical content of the music. To perceive the performance action as expressive of, say, resolute determination, resolute determination must be heard in the music. As we might say, the content that is heard in the music crosses a boundary to contribute to the perception of the performance action in the real world.

For the same reason, perceiving the action of performing the music as having a certain property is not the same as perceiving that property in the music. There is such a thing as hearing anger in the music itself. The "Rondo-Burlesque" of Mahler's Ninth Symphony is an example. But a person might perform a piece of music angrily, without there being any anger in the metaphorical content of the music. A pupil, irritated with his teacher, might perform a Haydn piano sonata angrily by emphasizing in an extreme way the features his teacher says were lacking in his previous performances. That would not result in there being any anger in the music as heard, in the way in which we hear anger in Mahler's "Rondo-Burlesque."

There is a wide range of classical forms and styles to which a Romantic composition may not conform. It may involve any of the following non-classical features: unusual inner accenting patterns and use of *rubato* (Chopin); chromaticism (Chopin); more distant key relationships than in highly classical music (Schubert); orchestral means not balanced in the way classical works are (doubled strings in unison, as in Tchaikovsky); unresolved chords and passages (as in the Schumann song previously discussed); the use of non-classical forms and structures within movements and across movements of a given work; and so forth. In short, it may involve

anything outside the target area of Berlioz's remarks when he said that "the deadliest enemies of genius are those lost souls who worship in the *temple of Routine*" and wrote of those who succumb to "the *lure of conventional sonorities*" (1969, pp. 218, 241). The conventions and styles that Romantic expression ignores are, more specifically, those found in Haydn and much of Mozart, in whom, as Hegel says in one of his more pleasing formulations, "the luminous sense of proportion never breaks down in extremes; everything finds its due place knit together in the whole" (1920). What is heard as Romantic music must in some respect or other *not* be heard as being there because of its "due place."

Earlier, I acknowledged that there are some distinctively Romantic attitudes and emotions. A distinctively Romantic attitude may be expressed in a work whose musical style is classical. One example is the mysterious poem by Salis-Seewis, "Ins stille Land, wer leitet uns hinüber?," as composed by Schubert in the first of his four settings of the poem (example 4.4).

The musical setting is classical in form and its key changes. The chromaticism it contains is no more than in many of Mozart's minor key works. The sense of Romantic mystery is already present before there is much chromaticism in the setting. So the distinction between Romantic attitudes and attitudes that are not distinctively Romantic cuts across the distinction between works that are in Romantic musical style and those that are not.<sup>5</sup>

On the account I have offered, the classification of music as Romantic makes sense only against a presupposed classical background. By Romantic musical style, we usually mean something that takes the first Viennese school as the classicism with respect to which Romanticism is defined. One could correspondingly define a style as standing in a Romantic-like relation to any given style, with a range of forms and conventions taken as the corresponding "classical" paradigm. This basis for a classical/Romantic distinction in style also permits some finer-grained distinctions with broad categories of style. Some of Mozart's contemporaries commented on (and sometimes complained about) his overstepping the boundaries of an earlier sub-variety of classical style. They commented on the way he used wind instruments in the accompaniment to operatic arias (Deutsch 1966, p. 328); his difficulty and ingenuity (Deutsch 1966, pp. 334–335, 383); and the "lack of that sense of unity, that clarity of presentation, which we rightly admire in Jos. Haydn's symphonies" (Deutsch 1966, pp. 472–473, a quotation from *Teutschlands Annalen des Jahres* for 1794). That is, these contemporaries heard Mozart's music in ways that are Romantic relative to Haydn's and other earlier styles, something that makes sense on the present account of Romantic style. What we call "the" classical style has many subdivisions and an interesting historical development, within which we should distinguish (at least) the Mannheim composers, the several periods of

<sup>5</sup> I thank Joseph Dubiel for questions that have altered my thinking on this.

25a. Lied  
Johann Gerdens von Salis-Seewis  
1842  
Breitkopf

25b. Lied  
Johann Gerdens von Salis-Seewis  
27. März 1846  
Breitkopf

1  
Ich will - in - le Land, wer - lei - tet uns hin - über -  
Ich will - in - le Land, wer - lei - tet uns hin - über -  
Ach Land! ach Land! ach Land! für - al - le Stur - me - be -

16  
Ich - will - mit - dem - he - lig - sten Ge - i - ste -  
Ich - will - mit - dem - he - lig - sten Ge - i - ste -  
Ich - will - mit - dem - he - lig - sten Ge - i - ste -

20  
Ich - will - in - le Land! Ich - will - in - le Land!  
Ich - will - in - le Land! Ich - will - in - le Land!  
Ich - will - in - le Land! Ich - will - in - le Land!

\* In der Originalfassung des Liedes im 'Vocalbuch' von Anton Diabelli  
Herausg. v. O. Schölkopf & Co. Leipzig

Example 4.4 From F. Schubert, 'Ins stille Land' D. 403, first setting.

work in Haydn's long life, and Mozart—as just the first step toward the distinctions we ought to make. Some of the transitions within the historical development of this classical style are movements toward the more Romantic, in the sense I have been trying to characterize. The chromaticism and the minor ninth leaps in the first movement of Mozart's great G minor String Quintet (K.516) are elements of Romantic style relative to what preceded Mozart in the classical tradition. What distinguishes the composers traditionally classified as Romantic in their style of music is a range of broadly classical musical features with respect to one or more of which they expressively overstep classical boundaries, in the way specified in clause (c) of the expressive-perceptual account.

As is implied by the examples we have already given, music can be very highly expressive without there being any form of classicism to which it stands in the same relation as I have identified the Romantic as standing to the classical music of Haydn and Mozart. We have the Champion example; the more expressive parts of Monteverdi operas also provide many such examples.

F. Blume writes of "the many intermediate positions in the continuing development of this antinomy" between the classical and the Romantic (1970). Hearing something as Romantic is not, however, fundamentally a matter of degree on the perceptual account. There may be more or fewer classical features that a Romantic work ignores, and that is indeed a matter of degree. It is also a matter of degree, for any one of those features, how much the work departs from the classical paradigm. But it is

not a matter of degree whether there is some classical feature such that the performance action is heard as an expressive action in which the agent's controlling emotion or state of mind produces an overstepping of that classical feature in the manner of clause (c) of the account. That is an all-or-nothing matter. The all-or-nothing conditions may of course be met in some parts of the piece and not in others.

This account of Romanticism helps to explain the extreme difficulty scholars have had in deciding whether to classify Beethoven, especially late Beethoven, as Romantic or as classical. Beethoven invented new forms beyond the classically recognized ones. The new forms are often specific to a single work. But he also conformed to these forms as the work progressed, and the hearer can perceive the particular work as conforming to these new forms. This is part of the significance of Maynard Solomon's point about Beethoven: "his will to form—his classicism, if you like—enabled him to set boundaries on the infinite, to portray disorder in the process of its metamorphosis into order" (2003, p. 40).

I want to claim more than just that Romantic music is to be characterized in terms of this expressive-perceptual account. It also seems to me that the expressive-perceptual account is explanatorily and teleologically fundamental. It is possible, and obviously of importance to music theory, to characterize the various compositional techniques involved in the change from classical to Romantic style. There has been much highly illuminating writing on precisely that in the past two decades. I would mention particularly Charles Rosen's chapter "Formal Interlude" in *The Romantic Generation* (1996) and the discussion of Schubert's key relationships by Richard Taruskin in his *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (2005). These compositional developments are characterizable in broadly syntactic terms, independent of their emotional and expressive significance. But the compositional developments are at the service of a goal that can be characterized fully only by saying that this music is meant to be heard in ways that are Romantic, as characterized in the expressive-perceptual account. From the point of view of the theory of creativity, the achievement of Romantic composers is not just a set of compositional techniques, but the appreciation that these techniques could result in works of a distinctive kind of expressive power so appropriate to the more general romantic movement in thought and culture. This is the property that constitutes the explanandum of an empirical theory of creativity in a composer in the Romantic style.

So how does this characterization of Romanticism in music meet the desideratum I mentioned at the outset, that it should dovetail with the ideas and ideals of the Romantic movement more generally, with ideals that can apply across the various art forms and even in the moral and political realm too? Here is a well-known passage from Wimsatt and Brooks attempting to formulate these general ideas and ideals:

Classic art was conceived by the German critics as "beauty"; romantic art as "energy." Classic was universal and ideal; romantic was individual and

"characteristic." Classic was plastic (like sculpture), finite, closed, pure in genre. Romantic was picturesque (like painting), infinite, open, mixed. (1962, p. 368)

Friedrich von Schlegel wrote:

Romantic poetry is constantly developing. That in fact is its true nature: it can forever only *become*, it can never achieve definitive form.... It alone is infinite. Its overriding principle is that the poet's fantasy is subject to no agreed principles.... (Letturay and Day 1981, pp. 246–247)

Many of these ideas find reflection in Romantic music that meets the expressive-perceptual criterion. Such music is heard as expressive action not wholly constrained by classical forms and conventions specified in advance. It is correspondingly open-ended. Perhaps one can even understand, if not endorse, the use of the term "infinite" on one reading—since the Romantic work is not always constrained by classical forms, there is no form to be completed. (Perhaps this is more like Aristotelian infinity, something to be explained in terms of possibility, rather than as an actual infinity.) Since Romantic music is heard as music expressive of emotion or attitudes that are so forceful that the music breaks classical boundaries, it is correspondingly authentic. It is a less constrained expression of the self. One can also connect the lack of constraint by form with the Romantics' emphasis on organicism, in which the music is supposed to grow out of some seed motif or idea. Similarly, the "axial" melodies favored by some composers in the Romantic style, such as the second theme in the first movement of Schubert's *String Quintet in C*, revolve and wander around a note to which they keep returning, without apparent formal constraint.

This characterization of what makes a piece of music Romantic in style differs at significant points from the description given by Richard Taruskin in the chapter "The Music Trance" in his book *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (2005). Taruskin discusses the effect of certain kinds of modulations on "the audience's experience of time" and writes that it "is comparable to the effect of an operatic scene in which static 'aria time' supervenes on the action time of recitative. To evoke such an introspective effect in instrumental music is precisely the act whereby instrumental music becomes romantic" (p. 69). A few sentences later, he writes, "Faust will lose his soul to the devil Mephistopheles, the latter warns, as soon as he calls out to the passing moment, 'Stop, stay awhile, thou art so fair!' [Weile doch, du bist so schön.] That moment, the moment in which *ethos* (responsible action) is sacrificed to *pathos* (passive experience, surrender to feeling), will be the moment of damnation. This is the moment romanticism celebrates" (pp. 69–71). Taruskin says of the representation of the child's apparent consciousness of the Elf King in Schubert's son *Erk König*, "The representation of 'inwardness' as it interacts with and



triumphs over the perception of external reality is the true romantic dimension here" (p. 152).

Taruskin's remarks do correspond to a streak in a certain sub-variety of romanticism. But it is natural to wonder how they can be of general applicability to a romanticism of which Friedrich von Schlegel said, "Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry" (an *Atheneum* fragment of 1798, quoted by Solomon 2003, p. 38); of the romantic tendencies of Beethoven who, as Maynard Solomon wrote, "was proud of his adherence to the central tenets of this so-called Josephinian Enlightenment... its idealization of reason, furtherance of reform, critique of superstition, and altruistic commitment to virtue" (2003, p. 28). Such a romantic figure as Byron was hardly free of strongly held political views, and he fought for some of them.

I think what is missing in Taruskin's description is that the trancelike states he talks about are often ones that involve "feelings," and more specifically emotions. Emotions have a normative content. They represent states of affairs as good or bad in quite specific respects. An emphasis on the emotion involved in a certain situation may be an emphasis on the value that is an essential component of that emotion. Sometimes the value may lie in the nature of some personal relationship itself, either lost as in Schubert's song setting of Claudius's poem "Am Grabe Anselmos" (D.504), or celebrated as current in the middle songs of Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben*. Similarly, in act III, scene 3 of *Die Walküre*, Brünnhilde is expressing a moral demand, that she not be humiliated, when she asks to be protected by fire surrounding the rock on which she is to be placed. There certainly is such a thing as wallowing in an emotion for its own sake, not an attractive thing. But a piece of music that is perceived in a Romantic way may equally succeed in highlighting and bringing home to the hearer aspects of the values involved in the emotions of which the performance action is heard metaphorically as an expression. Music that succeeds in doing this need not have any commitment to some kind of relativism or subjectivity about truth.<sup>6</sup>

Not just any departure from classical forms amounts to Romanticism. Romanticism involves the specific kind of departure in the expressive-perceptual account, having to do with the performance action being heard as expressive in

<sup>6</sup> Taruskin's fine book contains a few very puzzling pages (2005, pp. 61–63) at the start of the second chapter, where he seems to associate romanticism with some form of relativism about truth. "Truth is therefore relative, at least to a degree, to the individual vantage point and therefore to some degree subjective" he writes, in reporting Romantic thought (p. 62). He does not consider the possibility of combining the idea that the individual with a conscience can reason to a conclusion or a moral view or attitude with the proposition that truth in the relevant domain is not relative at all. Rejection of implausible institutional authorities, which is indeed a romantic idea, does not at all require relativism about truth.

relation to the metaphorical content of music, with departures from the classical forms being heard as a result of the power of emotion or mental state expressed.

I would sharply contrast the expressive-perceptual account of the Romantic style with the characterization it receives in Leonard Meyer's *Style and Music*. Since I am about to criticize his writing on one particular topic, I would like first to express my admiration for this book. Meyer majored in philosophy as an undergraduate, and the deeply philosophical, constitutive nature of the questions he asks about music shine through on almost every page of that book (as indeed they do in his other writings). Meyer does not, as far as I can tell, formulate any particular restrictions for the music to be Romantic in style. He does observe that many, if not all, of the conventions of classical style are broadly syntactic in character, rather than involving what he calls "secondary parameters," which he says, "establish continuums of relative, not stipulative, states of tense and repose—that is, louder/softer, faster/slower, thicker/thinner, higher/lower" (p. 209). Meyer notes that departures from classical paradigms involve a de-emphasis on syntactic relations. But Meyer's account does not involve the notions of expressive action, perception of action, and hearing something metaphorically as something else.

There are at least four broad kinds of musical style that we ought to try to characterize in perceptual terms, and that are departures from the classical, even if we restrict our attention to broadly tonal Western music in postclassical times. We should aim to say what is perceptually distinctive of each of the Romantic, expressionist, impressionist, and neoclassical styles. I suggest that each of these styles can and should be given a distinct characterization in the framework I have been using.

Let us take an impressionist example first (example 4.5).

In this music, we hear the wind pick up and flutter through sails or veils (Debussy does not tell us which). Now this is not an example of classical style, but it is certainly not music in the Romantic style either. Meyer says that three things distinguish Debussy's impressionistic music. He says that it emphasizes the "sensuous qualities of sound." The sensuous qualities of sound can be emphasized in music of many different styles and cannot be uniquely distinctive of impressionist music. The "sensuous qualities of sound" are emphasized in some of Berlioz's orchestral music and certainly in some of his songs, particularly some of those in *Les Nuits d'Été*. Of Debussy's "suggestive symbolism," he writes the following sentence:

Rather, it arises from the form and processes of the sound patterns and their juxtaposition as they interact with the cultural environment and psychological dispositions of listeners. (p. 270)

This sentence formulates a condition that is true of a huge range of interesting musical features and again can hardly uniquely fix what is distinctive of an impressionist work. I think these first two criteria do not contribute even partially to explaining what is distinctive of an impressionist work.

Example 4.5 From C. Debussy, 'Voiles,' from *Préludes*, Vol. 1.

I suggest that what is distinctive about an impressionist piece of music is that the performance action is not heard as the action expression of any emotion or mental state at all. The music itself is still heard metaphorically as, for instance, the flapping of sails (or veils) in the wind, or as the movement of the dancers at Delphi, or as the floodwaters gradually submerging a cathedral. The music can be heard in any of those ways without the action of performing the music being heard as an expression of an emotion or other mental state. In this respect, the music has a certain objectivity. If we use the apparatus of philosophy, we could say that in Romantic music, there is an intentional object, which we can call "the expressing subject," an object generated by the expressive content of the Romantic music. According to the account I outlined, in Romantic music what the expressing subject expresses is the emotional or mental state that is distinctively in the content of Romantic music. By contrast we can say using this apparatus, that what is distinctive of Debussy's impressionistic music is that it generates no expressing subject.

This criterion explains the third feature of Debussy's impressionist music, rightly noted by Meyer, that it does not contain the syntactically goal-directed movements of classical music—in returning to a tonic, or to a local tonal center, or to some syntactically determined rhythmic structure. In Debussy's impressionist music, one characteristic purpose is that the notes are placed as they are so that they can be heard metaphorically—as some objective event or state of affairs, rather than metaphorically as some mental state experienced from the inside. In Schubert's song "Auf dem See," it is indeed true that the metaphorical content of the music is of mountains passing by as a boat travels, but that content is embedded in a context in which the journey is also an emotional one and has an emotional coloring (liberation from an old love, as the poem later reveals). The metaphorical content of the music is not emotionally neutral as it is in *Voiles*.

Expressionist music departs from music in the classical style in a different way from Romantic music. The performance action in expressionist music is perceived as intentionally exaggerating or taking to extremes the violation of the classical constraints and forms. Sometimes this can be done in combination with the non-classical features of the music being perceived as expressive of emotions and the violation being there in part because the emotion is so strong. This aspect of the distinction between the Romantic and certain kinds of expressionism exploits a distinction that we apply to expressive actions entirely outside music. We draw a distinction between one person who slams his hand on a surface in anger without any thought of how hard he is slamming it, and another person who is also slamming his hand down as a genuine expression of anger but who intentionally slams it particularly hard.

In both expressionism and neoclassicism, there is an intention with respect to the classical constraints, but they are completely different intentions. In neoclassical music, the work is heard as intentionally conforming to some but not all of the classical constraints (not all, otherwise it would be classical). But in neoclassical music, the departures from the classical constraints are experienced as controlled departures. They are not experienced as departures purely because of the intensity of the expressed emotion. The departures may have a playful character, as in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*; they may be expressive of serious emotion (Jocasta's anxiety in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*); they may sometimes be extremely funny, as in the partially Mozartean parody in Anne's aria "I go, I go to him" in *The Rake's Progress* (example 4.6), which almost always seems to get a laugh from audiences.

In all these examples, the neoclassical music has a second-order character. Such music is, and is intended to be, heard as standing in certain relations to classical paradigms. The classical paradigms have become part of the heard content of the music, rather than first-order means.

There are various issues for which the distinctions I have been trying to articulate may prove helpful. The distinctions may help in articulating the character of the music of some specific composers more sharply. Despite where Mendelssohn falls

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Ich geh, ich geh zu ihm. Love can not be  
Die Lie be

sal - ter, Can - not de - sert;  
wankt nicht, kann nicht ver - gehn.

Example 4.6 From I. Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, opening of Anne's 'Cabaletta.'

in the chronology, I suspect many thinkers about music would have some hesitation in classifying him straightforwardly as a Romantic composer. This hesitation would be vindicated by the expressive-perceptual account. Very few, if any, passages of Mendelssohn's music are ones the performance of which is perceived as expressive action that breaks classical conventions because of the intensity of the emotions or states of which the music is heard metaphorically as an expression.

The character of some of the music of other composers can also receive a somewhat more precise description using the distinctions I have been marshaling. There is irony in some passages of Mahler. Such passages are not the extreme of expressionism, and they are certainly not the playful kind of neoclassicism in Stravinsky. I suggest that they should be described as passages in which the performance action is perceived as one that is expressed in partly classical ways because the composer has chosen to, rather than as an unquestioned default, and is making a point in having chosen to conform, a point sometimes shown up by other less classical features of the passage. Appreciation of irony in music involves the hearer perceiving the

performance action as one involving the expression of a second-order attitude to the conformity to the conventions.

Another domain in which these distinctions have some application is that of the description of performance practice. The performer may not be experiencing grief, or euphoria, or a change of mood, but it will be a weaker performer whose actions are not informed by his knowledge from the inside of what it is like to be in these states, and possibly from his imagining them from the inside in performing successfully. The ways that imagination of the mental state can affect performance and how the performance action is perceived, and the empirical conditions for the presence of more or less expressive power in the perceived action—all these are surely worthy questions of investigation. The proper framing of the questions requires the notions of the perception of expressive action and of the states E of which the music is heard metaphorically—as involving E.

If this discussion has been going in the right general direction, in the sense that it is at least drawing on the right kind of notions needed to characterize musical style, I would be inclined to draw three general lessons. The first lesson is always to address the constitutive issues from the start. We can no doubt find many features distinctive of each of the styles I have been characterizing in this framework. If, however, we want to say why those features are there, we need to allude to the fundamental features of the style—the ones that make the style what it is. Second, in music as elsewhere, we should always be alive to the possibility that adjacent fields—in this case, the philosophy of action and the perception of action—may be able to supply materials for the construction of constitutive theories of the very nature of the subject matter. Finally, we should always think very hard about what is in our actual heard phenomenology of musical experience. It may sometimes be (perhaps it is always) very hard to articulate precisely what it is that we experience. If what I have been saying is right, however, many crucial distinctions were already there, at some unarticulated level, in our very consciousness in listening to music.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This is a revised text of a public lecture given at the University of Chicago on March 7, 2011. The lecture provoked a rich interdisciplinary discussion from which I hope the revised version has benefited. I am grateful to members of three departments in the University of Chicago—the Committee on Social Thought, the Philosophy Department, and the Music Department—for their intellectual contributions to that occasion. I was particularly helped by the comments of Jason Bridges, Martha Feldman, David Finkelstein, Gabriel Richardson Lear, Jonathan Lear, Josef Stern, and Robert Pippin. At an earlier meeting at Columbia, I learned from the remarks of Lydia Goehr, Felix Koch, and the participants in Lydia Goehr's aesthetics discussion group. More recently, I received illuminating comments from the editors and from Joseph Dubiel and Ian Rumfitt. I am conscious of the many points at which my approach can be, and needs to be, extended. An extension to the perception of joint action, joint attitudes, and joint emotion is evidently possible and necessary to account for our perception of some performances by groups of musicians.

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## PART FOUR

## ETHICS AND VALUE THEORY