The secret diaries of a music lover: associating emotions to music

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Introduction

When trying to describe the relation between music and passion so that an interest in the passion will ipso facto be an interest in the music, one should avoid what Malcolm Budd calls "the heresy of the separable experience": "the separation of [the experience] of what gives music its value (…) from [the experience of] the music itself." (Budd 1985, p. 123) Or as Richard Wollheim puts it, it is hard to accept an explanation of art that places its essence outside the object of art itself. A heretical description "represents a musical work as being related in a certain way to an experience which can be fully characterized without reference to the nature of the work itself." (Budd 1985, p. 123) Some emotional responses are more prone to this heresy than others. In order to avoid the heresy, one needs an explanation of the listening experience that keeps unified the expressive and non-expressive aspects of it so that they are the objects of one single act of attention.

Also, throughout the listening process, listeners are engaged in trying to make sense of the unfolding and progression of their musical experience. Those who can make sense of the progression of the experience correspond to what Leonard Meyer (1956) describes as the listener who is capable of understanding the style of the music. According to Meyer, hypothetical and evident meanings are formed by "purely musical events" and these don't include expressive musical events. Expressivist philosophers of music, of course, disagree and argue that one you cannot entirely grasp the 'purely musical' without grasping the expressive. The

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"purely musical" is often modified by the expressive, which is demonstrated by the performance of "excerpted chunks of music".[1]

Philosophers tend to believe that what causes our emotional reaction to music falls under one of at least five main categories. They shall be considered respectively.

The cognitive response

First we have what Aaron Ridley calls the *cognitive responses* to music, i.e., our immediate response to the character or to the formal characteristics of a given piece of music: Richard Strauss's music may be said to be uplifting and Schumann's songs depressive and a famous character in one of Woody Allen's movies once said that he couldn't be too much exposed to Wagner's ferocity without feeling the urge to conquer Poland. We may respond cognitively to a number of qualitative and quantitative aspects in the music - the sensuality of timbres and textures, its speed, duration, volume, etc. – and a number of technical qualities such as its tonal complexity, or the intricacy of its harmonic structure.

Cognitive responses escape the heresy of the separable experience: their objects are always aspects of the music itself.

The axiological response

Second, there are emotional responses involved in our critical appraisal of the work's composition or interpretation: we are overwhelmed by the harmonic complexity of a Bruckner movement, or become irritated with the *chitarrone* of an Italian opera. I propose that we name these as axiological responses.

The empathetic response

Third, music can elicit from us an *empathetic* response, i.e., we tend to perceive the piece as the *expression of* someone's emotional circumstances (Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* or Schubert's *Winterreise* are obvious examples) but not necessarily the author's (transmission theory). The character of our response may be *consonant* or *contrasting* and the same piece of music may elicit compassion, commiseration or irritation. In any case, one takes the piece to be closely related to a specific state of mind, which not only causes but formally determines the piece.

Contrasting empathetic responses have as their material object the person whose passion we take the music to express. Consonant empathetic responses diverge, however: they may have objects and thus may not be properly classified as "feelings". If we come to feel with the person whose emotion is thought to be expressed, our response may share the same object and our empathetic response

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[1] In this respect, Aaron Ridley proposes that we consider the experience of listening to Wagner's "Winterstürme" performed as a concert excerpt outside the context of *Die Walküre*'s first act. (Ridley 1995, 71)

becomes an emotion. But because we don't require that sharing of an object, consonant empathetic responses may be either emotions or feelings.

Also, authors such as Aaron Ridley suggest that when we consider an emotion (e.g., "depression") as being distinct from a co-nominal episode of emotion (*this* depression) one obtains a formal object, "by means of which the emotion type may be identified without reference to any particular episode of it." (Ridley 1995, p. 35) Thus we can describe someone's behavior without linking the expressive behavior to a particular episode: thus we refer a behavior which is "expressive of terror" to a mere formal object such as "reaction to something tremendously threatening". The reference is made only to the formal object of the passion of which a particular behavior is expressive.

Empathetic responses face serious problems in regard to the heresy of the separable experience, in particular the expression-as-transmission variety (Tolstoy's or Deryck Cooke's views, for instance). Deryck Cooke, for example, tried to develop a musical vocabulary such that a descending minor triad would always be expressive of "passive sorrow" (Cooke 1959). But it is doubtful that such invariance does exist. Also, transmission theories would always be heretic because they tend to foster an instrumentalist view and to perceive music as a means to an end. Of course, much depends on the way we characterize musical expressiveness and the degree to which our empathetic responses depend upon musical features expressive of passions. But since virtually all of these passions are characterizable without reference to the music expressive of them, then they are guilty of the heresy of paraphrase and should therefore be inadmissible.

On the other hand, there is the tricky question concerning the identification of the bearer of these passions. Two candidates are usually considered eligible to assume that position: the composer herself or some kind of putative agonic persona who may or may not be identified with the composer. Transmission theories of empathy defend the first candidate: the passions felt by the listener are indeed the emotions of a specific human being, namely, the music's composer. J.W.N Sullivan (1960), for instance, explains the emotion in music through the composer's mental state. Note that Sullivan carefully rejects the systematic identification of biographical traits in Beethoven's music (e.g: his cure in Baden-Baden as being reflected in the Molto Adaggio of his *String Quartet n. 15* "Heiliger Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart"): "the work of a great artist is not some kind of sumptuous diary." (Sullivan1960, viii) He defends instead that there is a "root-experience" by which a composer's attitude towards life, expressed in his music, is largely conditioned. But against this, it should be noted that there is always something intrinsically disappointing in trying to use life to understand music. As Aaron Ridley puts it, "the deductive traffic should always flow from the music to the life and not the other way around." (Ridley 1995, p. 190).

The other candidate is a kind of hypostasized persona. Authors such as Coleridge or Scruton argued in favour of the idea that an appropriate understanding of

dramatic representation, for instance, is strictly a matter of the will. Coleridge called it a "willing suspension of disbelief" and Scruton (1983) a "perceiving in disbelief". But the truth is that very often we can hardly help but be drawn into the representation, and particularly into the representation of the expression of states of mind (because of sympathetic response) and this is often explained by the fact that we tend to perceive the representation as the expression of a persona. Now, there are several kinds of personae we may postulate. First, we have what we could call the "style-c'est-l'homme" persona, following Buffon's famous adagio. Some pieces of music invite the construction of one type of persona than of other: as Charles Rosen puts it, in the transition from the Baroque to the Classical sonata style, "the mere rendering of sentiment was not dramatic enough (…) and it was replaced by dramatic action" (Rose 1971, p. 43). Second, we have "diegetic personae": in coming sympathetically to grasp the expressive character of a singer's melismatic gestures, we may come to respond empathetically to the persona whom the singer represents. But most importantly, we have the "expressive persona": empathetic responses require that we postulate a persona (an "anonymous agent", according to J. Levinson 1982) of which the music is a narrative or a drama. On the one hand, the admittance of this persona makes the empathy theory better suited to extend the range of musical expressiveness as to encompass the full range of human emotions. It also becomes very agile when it comes to explain why the listener may sometimes be deeply moved to an emotional response, since she is actually being confronted with a "person" undergoing an extreme emotional turmoil. However, this "hypothetical emotionalism", as Stephen Davies calls it, has also been confronted with some formidable contestation. In this context, it suffices to mention three of the main objections:

a)   How do listeners come to imagine the relevant persona that suffers that entire emotional loop? Take the example of Jerrold Levinson's explanation for the last movement of Brahms' First Symphony and, specifically, for the peaceful change announced by the horns). If the listener recognizes a sudden feeling of solving unnamed hardships, won't this be because she had already recognized expressions of overcoming in the music? In that case, as Scruton points out, hypothetical emotionalism is both circular and redundant. On the other hand, if the music provides no previous guide to what is to be imagined, how can we assess that our imaginings are being properly ascribed to music?

b)   Authors such as Stephen Davies or Peter Kivy (1989) have argued against the empirical claim that expressiveness is predicated to music on the basis of imagining a persona as subject to a narrative directed by the course of the music. It is simply an oversimplified and to some extent idiosyncratic re-description of musical listening. There are many different things going on in people's heads when they listen to music. Some of them may allow music to induce in them the imagining of the psychological experience of a persona, but it is doubtful whether everybody does this. Thus, since the postulation of a persona is not a -

so to speak - transcendental feature of musical listening, it would be better off by being included in the realm of the associations we allow ourselves to make while listening to music.

c)   It is often denied that music is capable of controlling the listener's experience in such a way as to unify their experiences in a general agreement regarding the proper expressiveness. To put it in other words, there are no constraints on the number of personas imagined living within a musical work. There are way too many possible narratives and it is doubtful they would all fall under a single archetypical story that would lead to general agreement.

The sympathetic response

Fourth, we are merely *sympathetically* moved by the way the music is *expressive*, which does not involve the belief that the piece constitutes a biographical trace of its author's intimate feelings. Weeping willows often induce melancholia but the sentient subject does not entertain the thought that the willow is experiencing some kind of self-commiseration. One recognizes in the object some features that are reminiscent of expressions of feeling ϕ, or, to paraphrase Peter Kivy's *physiognomic* approach, "what we see as, and say is, expressive of ϕ is parasitic on what we see as, and say is, expressing ϕ; and to see X as expressive of ϕ, or to say X is expressive of ϕ, is to see X as appropriate to expressing ϕ." (Kivy 1989, p. 50) It is often the case, of course, that when listening to music one relates to someone else – though not to her passions – as when we react with admiration towards the composer or the performer, to the way they elicit such powerful reactions from their audience. But that too should count as a form of sympathetic response.

Sympathetic responses of this kind are often related to what Aaron Ridley calls the musical melisma, i.e., the notion that there are striking resemblances between music and features of human beings (i.e., proper sentient beings) when involved in the expression of emotions. Even instrumental music comes charged with associations and can thus hook up with affective life-experiences as Peter Kivy points out when he compares the oboe aria of the First Brandenburg Concerto and the part where the Evangelist imitates the weeping of Peter - "und weinet bitterlich" - in *St Matthew Passion* (Kivy 1989, pp. 27-28). But what exactly are the human features of which we tend to recognize musical resemblances? There are several candidates.

i)

The phenomenological profile of inner experiences of emotion has been the favourite of authors such as Susanne Langer and Malcolm Budd. However, it is farfetched to think that emotions can be individuated in terms of their structural and phenomenological profiles: on the one hand, a single emotion can present different mixes of sensation and feeling on

different occasions and, on the other hand, contrasting emotions can share a similar outline.

ii)

The facial melisma. It is a fact that we are prone to recognize human faces bearing emotionally suggestive expressions in many nonhuman objects (cars, etc.); but it is doubtful whether we experience music as wearing a smiling or frowning face: temporal unfolding is a crucial aspect of our musical experience but the facial expression comes as an "atemporally structured gestalt" (Davies 2006, p. 181).

iii)

The vocal melisma. But to what features of the voice are we comparing musical expressiveness? If the similarity is supposed to lie in tone, timbre, accent or inflection, as suggested by Jacopo Peri or Thomas Reid. "the whoops, whines, bawls, wails, groans, cries, shrieks, moans and whimpers with which emotions are vocalized" (Davies 2006, p. 181) are quite unlike the sound of expressive music. A variant of the voice melisma consists in the idea that the distinctive prosodic contours of specific emotions can be recreated musically (Juslin 2001). This view derives from the fact that articulated voice and music are more alike in dynamic structure, articulation, pitch and intensity than in timbre and inflection. However, as also noted by Davies, "this process seems to depend more on conventional stipulations than upon iconic similarity." (Davies 2006, p. 181)

Against all this, an author such as Ridley would reply that all that is necessary for the theory to hold true is that the resemblance of music to voice that strikes the listener can *in principle* be explained by reference to the features that music and voice have in common. Therefore it is not necessary that the listener can (or does) do this when listening to the music. Furthermore, the perception of resemblance may sometimes happen at a level of which the listener is not conscious. "The reason why these melismatic connections can be made unconsciously has less to do with any merely conventional association than with the ubiquity and importance in our lives of the expressive human voice" (Ridley 1995, p. 80).

iv)

Of course, many musical works cannot be explained in terms of resemblance to the expressive human voice. Thus, melismatic theories need to look for other potentially expressive features of music. Musical motion is the strongest candidate either because of the spatial orientation of pitch or due to the belief that there is also a different kind of melisma – a "movement-based melisma" (Ridley 1995, p. 94) – connecting music and human behavior. "Musical movement" is a very dead metaphor. Since

many of the adjectives of musical movement apply also to the bodily movements of human beings, music may be related to a number of psychological states without introducing any further mechanism. Of course the number of these psychological states is small because most psychological states are not named after qualities of motion. Words such as "jerky", "smoothly", "agitatedly", "restlessly", "galumphingly" constitute adverbial expressions that apply to literal and musical movement *and* to psychological states: "a jaunty person". This leads us to what Stephen Davies calls the *appearance emotionalism*, i.e., the resemblance between music's temporally unfolding dynamic structure and configurations of human behavior associated with the expression of emotion. We experience movement in music in terms of high to low or fast to slow but also in the production and relaxation of tensions generated within the harmony, the phrasing, the timing, etc. This movement is like human behavior because it seems purposeful and goal-directed: there is closure and development not mere stopping and succession. Music is often expressive in recalling the carriage and posture of the human body as exemplified by Peter Kivy when he describes the aria "I know that my redeemer liveth", in Handel's *Messiah*, as "a speaker firm, confident, stepping forward, gesturing expressively, but with a certain circumspection, a reserve commensurate with the divine mystery of the text" (Kivy 1989, p. 54). The critics deny that the movement of music exactly resembles human behavior. Dereck Matravers (1998), for instance, argued consistently against this by noticing that musical movement resembles the movement of clouds as close as it resembles human expressive behavior. To this Davies has replied that the connection is given *in* the experience of similarity not in some absolute measure of verisimilitude. That is to say that we choose the similarities we wish to entertain because we do not find all resemblances salient or reversible. We are likely to be struck more by the way weeping willows resemble sad people than by the way they resemble frozen waterfalls. Our interests shape the world and so we experience many things as similar to human experience and behavior. So is the case with music: it is expressive because we experience it as possessing a dynamic character relating to humanly expressive behavior. But how does this work in the case of music that is abstract and insentient, not semantic or representational? How can this music express emotion? In these cases, appearance emotionalism holds that the expressiveness of a piece of music is an objective and literally possessed but response-dependent property of that piece. A response-dependent property produces a certain characteristic response in creatures of an appropriate kind under suitable conditions. "Green" for instance is only available to creatures that experience light-reflecting objects as colored and respond to color discriminations. Now, the fact that expressiveness in music is response-dependent does not mean that it is subjective in the sense of being personal, idiosyncratic or nonobjective. In fact, there is considerable agreement in the emotion-terms we use to

describe the music's expressive character. Scherzo.[2] Or rather: disagreement is never "too much": one may describe the *scherzo* in Beethoven's *7th Symphony* as "exhilarating", "jubilous", "hilarious", "triumphant" or "energetic" but never as "sad" or "melancholic". Davies claims that this is due to the fact that music can express a fairly limited number of emotional types but that it can express these objectively so that suitable skilled listeners agree highly in attributing them to music. What are these emotional types? Answer: "Only a limited range of emotional types can be individuated solely on the basis of observed bodily comportment (where the face cannot be seen and nothing is known about the context of action" (Davies 2006, p.183).

This kind of melismatic emotionalism constitutes a potent explanation of the way emotions tend to play a significant role in our aesthetic transaction with musical works. It holds several advantages *vis-à-vis* other theories. First of all, it does not lose the connection between music's expressive character and the human world of emotional expressions. Other concurrent theories characterize music's expressiveness as if it constituted a different dimension completely different from that of everyday human experience. Second, it explains how music can be objectively and literally expressive, which is preferable to theories (Goodman, 1968; Scruton, 1997) that try to analyze musical expressiveness as metaphoric but never end up by explaining what this means. For instance, in the case of Goodman's view that expression is a kind of metaphoric attribution and given that metaphor is a figure of speech, what is to be understood by the claim that music is "metaphorically sad"? Third, this kind of emotionalism is superior to all those theories that consider music's expressiveness as a cognitive process of abstract symbolization or indirect representation. The melisma does not expunge the vividness with which we experience expressiveness in music which, in this kind of explanation, is perceived as more similar to direct confrontation with, say, a sad-looking person than like reading or hearing a description of such a person.

But objections to "appearance emotionalism" have also been raised and some constitute formidable adversaries. For instance, a physical gesture can transmit with precision a very specific state of mind. But musical gestures can only transmit a *kind* of state of mind: music's melismatic repertoire must therefore be confined to a semblance of expression in a very formal sense. Therefore, melisma (vocal or gestural) is not really a question of expression. It becomes a question of semblance. A melisma itself isn't expressive – it only *resembles* something expressive. While it may cause our experience to be expressive, it cannot by itself explain what it is to experience music as expressive. If an emotion is expressed only if it is part of a sentient being's actual behaviour, then "melismatic or appearance emotionalism do not involve the proper expression of emotion" (Stecker 1999), because the appearance hovers independently of a specific feeling of which it would be a direct expression. There is a presentation of the appearance of an emotion but not a proper expression of emotion. And if this is

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[2] Cf. Kivy's criticism of Hanslick (1989, pp. 47-48).

true then appearance or melismatic emotionalism clearly becomes more a theory of representation in music than an actual theory of expression.

Stephen Davies has tried to deflect this objection by clarifying the relation between the music's expressiveness and the composer's or performer's intentions and emotions (Davies 2006, p. 184). It is granted that it is perfectly possible for the music to present an expressive character that was not intended by the composer and that the resulting composition cannot be perceived as a direct or primary expression of the composer's mental state. Nevertheless, Davies holds that "the music's expressive character is usually intended by its creator" and that composers intentionally appropriate the music's expressive potential in order to have it correspond to their emotions. It is as if the composer is showing how she feels not in the usual fashion but by pointing to the mask of tragedy. "In brief: while appearance emotionalism is not automatically associated with acts of expression, in the musical case this connection is quite frequent because musical works and performances are designed to have most of their salient properties, including their emotion-resembling ones" (Davies 2006, p. 185).

However, even if we acknowledge all that, another problem seems to persist. Since everything is similar to everything else to some degree then there is the issue of how similar must an appearance be to its human behavior counterpart in order for the appearance generated by the musical movement to constitute what Levinson (2006) calls "an emotion-characteristic-in-sound" of the proper emotion in question. The problem here is that while we can give content to the expression "sad human appearance" by translating it as "the appearance or kind of appearance sad humans typically display", we cannot do the same with the expression "sad musical appearance" because there is no archetypical profile for "sad musical appearance" as there is for "sad human face" (2006, p. 197). And if this is so, then it must be our disposition to hear the music as sad (for instance, by connecting it to an emotional persona) that makes us hear the "musical appearance of sadness" and not the other way around, as Davies suggests.

Another objection is often raised against the fact that theories of appearance emotionalism admit that, because of the rather rude melismatic connection between some music's expressive qualities and its human behavior analog, music can only express a highly restricted palette of emotions. Stephen Davies, for one, is comfortable with the idea that music can express only a fairly limited number of emotional types. Thus, by itself, this kind of theory disagrees that music could ever attain the degree of expressive precision that a composer such as Mendelssohn liked to praise: "a music piece that I love expresses thoughts to me that are not too imprecise to be framed by words but too precise."(Ridley 1995, p. 116) If appearance emotionalism is correct then all that music can do is resemble, in a somewhat disappointingly particular way, pieces of expressive behavior in isolation from the contexts that could make them more specific and nuanced: it is *this* passion rather than *that*.

To this, appearance emotionalists have replied, first, that although instrumental music may be limited with respect to the range of emotions it can present, that is surely not the case with music with words or with much programmatic music. And even in the case of pure instrumental music, there is the possibility of ordering successive emotional appearances in ways suggestive of subtler or more complex states. Also, one should always take into account the way a given interpretation may alter and vary a work's expressive palette. Thus there should be no inconsistency in maintaining both that the expressive scope of the musical works is limited and that there is huge diversity and plasticity in which this expressive schema can be elaborated. Second, they maintain that music has limited expressive powers and advance a kind of "statistical" argument. In order to carry on the idea that music is expressive then one should observe a wide coincidence in judgments of expressiveness by suitably qualified listeners (Davies 2006, p. 185). And this "coincidence" is only possible when we are discussing wide categories of emotions. *Ergo*, intrinsic musical expressiveness must be restricted to those unspecific emotional categories. More nuanced or idiosyncratic emotional responses to music – even those far that are far too specific for words, as Mendelsohn puts it – "are more revealing of the person who has them than of the music itself." (Davies 2006, p. 185) The appearance emotionalist would also add that differing musical works can be each expressive in its own manner; but this does not mean that each must possess a different emotion. To capture the difference between the "sadness" in, say, Mahler's *Ninth Symphony* and Schubert's *Sonata opus 959*, it is not necessary to qualify *what* is expressed but, instead, to describe *how* the musical means for bringing about this result diverge in their detail.

A third criticism argues that melismatic emotionalism cannot explain account the emotional responses music's expressiveness elicits from the listener. When listening to a musical work it is the case that either (a) the listener has no basis for an emotional response to the music's expressiveness or (b) the response is an inappropriate one. (a) is justified because while there are palpable reasons to respond to other person's emotions and feelings, mere *appearances* of emotion, the moment they are recognized as such, give us no basis for a proper emotional response. (b) is justified because if the listener does not believe that the piece of music has the "emotion-relevant qualities" that are required for a proper emotional response then, even if she does respond accordingly, the music cannot the object of their response. Thus, if sad music makes us sad, we are not sad *about* the music (Davies, 2006, p.185).

Peter Kivy has argued in favour of (a). Real emotion is not a proper response to the music's content. All the emotions that we really feel are those for which music is an appropriate object: delight in the music's beauty, admiration by the composer's expertise, disappointment by the performer's incompetence, etc. Stephen Davies, however, does not believe that listeners are never moved to respond to music's expressiveness with corresponding emotions. He holds that some emotional responses can be generated by a kind of contagion, even in the

absence of the cognitive content and behavioural elements that accompany them in the normal situation. Emotions lie on a continuum. At one end are emotions like envy or patriotism, in which the cognitive elements are necessary. But at the other end, are emotions in which the cognitive aspects are less important, emotions that we share with nonhuman animals. They have a "fast and frugal" (Davies 2005, p.185) nature: sadness, happiness, fear and anger, i.e., emotions that may occur independently of cognition. Since cognition in not a necessary element of proper emotional experience then we are authorized to speak of "mirroring responses" to music that deals with the "fast and frugal" termination of the emotional spectrum.[3]

The association of ideas: a defense

Finally, some portion of our emotional response to music is due to some kind of association of ideas, either because music imitates the sound of an object or because we tend to associate the music to some concept, such as *pasodobles* and Spain. Even Peter Kivy – a keen critic of this kind of approach - admits to have been imprisoned by a particular association of thoughts, always feeling a "bit off color" when he listens to Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* because the piece is tied to a rather unhappy time of his life.[4]

This idea could be traced back, at least, to Charles Avison and his 1752 *Essay on Musical Expression*. Avison's views are usually summarily reviewed and his theory of "association" is often dismissed as a mere curiosity in the history of musical theory.

As Avison puts it, associative responses may be emotions or feelings. Emotions when what we associate to the music is perceived as being the object of our response, or when the music is the object of our response in virtue of that association. Feelings when reflection upon whatever we associate the music with leads us to experience our world under certain descriptions. The response is never grounded in any fact about the music itself but is rather triggered by some contingent connection between the music and a different state of affairs (Ridley, 1995, p. 39). Since any mode of response whose object is characterizable without reference to the music is guilty of the "heresy of paraphrase", according to many critics associative responses shouldn't be acknowledged as proper responses to music's expressiveness.

Also, emotions are more than sensations because they have to involve, conceptually speaking, an intentional content, such as a set of thoughts, beliefs and desires about objects, persons or events. Based on Aristotle, Anthony Kenny suggested that when we experience emotion, we always experience emotion

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[3] In order to bypass this kind of objections, several theories have tried to go beyond the melisma itself. That was the case with arousal theories in particular (Jerrold Levinson and Colin Radford, for instance).
[4] Kivy 1989, p. 30. Amusingly, Kivy calls this the "our song" phenomenon.

about something (Kenny 1963, pp. 191-2). The threatening object present in the emotion of "fear" constitutes its *formal object*. The formal object of an emotion gives the description which something must satisfy in order to be taken as the material object of an episode of that emotion. To say that emotions must involve a thought and that all emotions must have an object is to say the same thing: and in each case it is the intentionality of emotion that is being underlined. Problems occur when the formal object of an emotion (of pity: "someone or something suffering") gives a description that a certain object cannot be thought to satisfy (e.g., the volume of a cadenza, because a cadenza cannot suffer).

There are several important arguments running against the plausibility of "association theories" as proper theories of musical expressiveness but they all tend to gravitate around the idea that the associations we construct when listening to music are idiosyncratic and that musical expressiveness holds an objective and public dimension that should be accounted for.

Consider first the charge of idiosyncrasy. Since many of the aforementioned theories are based upon the corporeal or gestural melisma, one should probably take a better look at dance and see if we can come up with a different sense of "expressiveness". Directors such as Robert Wilson and choreographers such as Trisha Brown, Alain Platel ou Pina Bausch, just to mention a few, have consistently shown us that there is a special kind of expressiveness that is obtained when we dance *against* the music. A slow musical movement may be accompanied by convulsive dancing (e.g., Pina Bausch's *Café Müller*) and vibrant and speedy rhythms can be resisted by extremely slow movements. In these cases, expressiveness does not derive from a melismatic source but rather from a contrastive option. Nevertheless these episodes are expressively rich. The nature of associated gestures produces a dense non-redundant and, eventually, highly idiosyncratic, approach to music. Couldn't this be also true of most of our musical listening?

Now let us consider the widespread notion that proper musical responses have to be objective and have a public dimension. Aestheticians and philosophers of art have probably been submitted for too long to what we could call the Kantian prejudice of a "sensus communis" and the idea that an *Übereinstimmung* in the free play of the faculties leads the way to an *Übereinstimmung* among spectators of art. But let us entertain for a while the idea that the need for intersubjective agreement and the assumption that through art one connects to our fellow beings and to a higher sense of sharing a common humanity are probably politically based mystifications. What if we assume the counter-hypothesis that aesthetic experience, especially in the cases where we try to derive some emotional dividends from the aesthetic transaction, is often a deeply idiosyncratic, private and non-communicable episode? Levinson's "personae in music", Davies' appearances of emotion, or Ridley's and Kivy's melismas, they all fail if forced to work as mutually exclusive explanations of what causes our emotional responses. But they are all admissible if taken as interchangeable items in the game of associations that characterizes musical listening.

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