

(... *editorial*)

After all, everything is hard enough without having to deal with something that is not tangible and clear. The higher orders of abstraction are just a nuisance, to some people, although to others, of course, they are quite interesting. I would say that on the whole, people who didn't like this kind of idea, or who refused to think about it, were in the majority.

— Donald Barthelme, "The Temptation of St. Anthony."

The matter has been hashed over a wearying number of times, a kind of musicologists' *In nomine*. But let's begin from a less rarefied angle.

Music is different, we insist, from the other arts. More than one undergraduate music major disputing with "non-musical" friends has stoutly maintained this without knowing how to support the argument. Never mind the subtle constructs and definitions designed to demonstrate that music *is* different and to show *how* this is so; never mind the equally elegant arguments designed to prove the very opposite, or even better, the speciousness of these distinctions. Such things are food for graduate students, and we typically offer our younger pupils only a few epistemological scraps on the way to the business of cultural, historical, and analytical facts about music. But the (not so hypothetical) undergraduate, innocent of explicit philosophizing, insists upon music's difference because that's what *feels* correct.

The problem is one of words. Take any of the "highly colored moments" within a given work. "You just can't describe it, it's like... [insert here some expressive but elusive physical gesture, whose irreproducible subtleties seem to hold its entire sig-

nificance].” More than likely some words will be stammered out immediately after to supplement the gesture and its music. The desire to speak (of) music manifests despite every denial of that speech’s adequacy. And music remains different, nevertheless, for it all too obviously slips out from under our words and the words of others, leaving us unfulfilled. The desire to speak directly and lawlessly, to own the music we love by means of our tongues, regardless of what that might entail, remains, perhaps, as our basic motive for engagement despite all we do as scholars to direct its flow into more ruly channels.

Desire unfocused versus desire trained: the contrast between graduate and undergraduate is only a specific instance of the contrast between professional and amateur (in its older sense). All too often, it seems the status of professional only comes at the cost of forswearing love’s expression. Maybe we do not truly love that which we can claim to control completely. As Barthes once observed, there are nowadays many listeners and many virtuosi, but few practitioners (and to play imperfectly is to know for certain how music can flee the grasp of its lovers). The vocabularies we have developed for musical scholarship can be marvels of clarity and precision, but perhaps because of our faithfulness to the ideal of transparent verbal expression music escapes all the more quickly.

What if the desire to speak slip from its normal courses into muddier mazes? What if we attempt to follow our impulses along instead of pulling them back into the well-mannered routes of established scholarly practice? With any luck, we find ways of thinking, speaking, and writing that possess strangeness and charm, as our various linguistic senses of self go sliding along after the music we hold to constitute us so deeply. Music’s differences begin to appear to us as a model for our own differences, from ourselves as well as from others.

Just such a taste for following music’s differences and refusing to normalize it, for allowing and even encouraging the text to exemplify what it analyzes, seems to the editors of *repercussions* to be a persistent feature of our first two issues. We hope

that our undergraduate passions, however pruned and covered, may be allowed to surface when we tell of music; we want to be professional amateurs. Our unruly musicologies proclaim themselves in exploded formats, impolite speech, over- and understatements of value, rhetorical luxuriance, and any number of departures from the standard styles. Speech about music aspires to the condition of the fractal. All this hubbub makes for interesting scholarship, we think: "Without Contraries," Blake says, "there is no progression." Not *progress*, since the past is not for us something to be surpassed and forgotten, but *progression*, and aesthetically significant arrangement of difference in thought, speech, and writing.

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