

SOME THOUGHTS ON MUSIC AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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Overture

The aim of this essay is to begin to explore, with the help of a psychoanalytic perspective, some of the ways one can understand how music affects us and what it is about music that has this capacity.

That music has a profound effect on us is not in doubt. It affects us at various levels, emotionally, intellectually, and bodily to give us considerable pleasure. We are not just aroused by the effect of music but music can convey to us complex meanings and, in my view, focused and powerful emotional states. It seems to involve simultaneously the deepest and earliest layers of the self as well as the most sophisticated (Sterba 1965). It can create a sense of wholeness or can confuse or even fragment us by its power; it can rouse us into battle or provide laments for the fallen dead; it can excite us with rhythms and harmonies, or soothe our troubled souls with elegies, bring us into intimate connection with others or allow us to retreat into a private world of the imagination. Music can have the extraordinary power to be able to evoke, through atmosphere, particular times, places, and people.

Music can thus have powerful links with human agency, and of all the arts it has the most immediate emotional impact on an audience, with an ability to release us from social restraints (Kramer 2011: 14), so that its source has not without reason been linked to ‘deep unconscious urges.’ (Cooke 1959: 16). Empirical studies of the effect of music (De Nora 2000) show that it has a wide variety of actions in a wide variety of contexts, but a constant theme seems to be that it has considerable transformative power for the human subject.

The response of the listener to music is a complex process, involving emotional and cognitive aspects. Music will tend to evoke some feelings in the listener of a general kind, often pleasurable, sometimes linked to memories, or even past memories of previous performances.

The intensity of the listening experience may vary according to where the music is heard; listening to a live performance for example is usually more evocative than listening to a recording.

The *place* where the music is heard may also have particular relevance. For example, John Eliot Gardiner (2013) describes how the sense of place was important while he and the Monteverdi Orchestra were recording all of Bach's cantatas, in a kind of musical pilgrimage. The original context in Bach's time was for performance in church during the cycle of the seasons and religious festivals. By taking them out of that context into the concert hall, something essential disappeared. The concert hall allows for focused listening, but all the many connections to the Lutheran year and hence their essential meaning are diminished. Hence Eliot Gardiner arranged for performances in a variety of churches, mainly in Germany in order to approximate the original context of the music. Musical meaning may, then, be linked to time and place or context; it requires a particular home.

Musical listening involves recognition of a complex pattern conveyed by the music, particularly if the listener is schooled in at least some musical analysis, or surprise at a new pattern that emerges from the music, or the music may convey a sense of a *journey*, with the music taking the listener along. This parallels in some way the human subject's *psychic* journey and may bring us into the psychoanalyst's territory. The journey may be a long one, as with Wagner, and may involve a trip into the darker recesses of the soul, as with Mahler, or brief but encompassing whole areas of human feeling as in a Schubert song, frantic as in a Rossini overture, erotically stirring and exciting as in a pop music concert and uplifting of the human spirit as when listening to a Bach Passion or Monteverdi's Vespers. A piece of music, 'no matter how short or long it is, can immediately give you the feeling of having lived through a whole life, even if it is a small Chopin waltz, which lasts only, with the "Minute Waltz," about a minute and a half or so' (Barenboim and Said 2002: 125).

There is also something deeply puzzling about how music can have such effects, the nature of musical meaning and how we can make sense of musical experience. As many thinkers have emphasised, music does not have a clear object (aside from the listener) nor an obvious narrative structure; it is not representational in the usual way at least. Clear thoughts are not represented, except of course when words are present as in songs and in opera, though the relationship between the words and the music varies considerably. At times the music and the

words go hand in hand as for example in Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), where each passing emotion of the protagonist has an appropriate musical accompaniment or commentary or addition to clarify his mood (Bostridge 2015).

With opera, the music can act as an accompaniment, commentary, or chorus, or to sustain emotion. At other times music and words seem to go their separate ways, with different logic. For example, the end of Wagner's Ring cycle is one of the most powerful and satisfying experiences in opera. Yet its meaning is also enigmatic. After all the complex and murky plot shifts of *Götterdämmerung*, the ring is finally returned to the Rhine maidens, Brunhilde rides into the fire and Valhalla collapses with the end of the gods. But quite how we get there is not that easy to comprehend and there are many inconsistencies in the plot. (Tanner 1996). The characters are also rather thinly drawn. 'Instead of characters in any true sense of the word, these "personages" are like arenas for the uncontrolled display of emotions that burst in upon their souls from outside, unalleviated by human characteristics' (Dahlhaus 1971: 134). While the mythical scenes seem peripheral to the dramatic structure if considered solely in respect of their contribution to the stage action, 'musically they are central: they create the framework for the complex of motivic associations that spreads over the whole drama' (Dahlhaus 1971: 135).

Despite the inconsistencies of the plotting, the music, with its powerful and lyrical 'redemption' theme, gives a wonderful sense of a good ending, in which the contradictions seem to have been resolved. Indeed, I think that one can say that in a piece of music like an opera, the music must have primacy for the piece to work satisfactorily. With the ending of *Götterdämmerung*, then, something powerful is represented through the music; it may not be clearly conscious, it may involve contradictions and inconsistencies, but the point is that the lyrical outpouring motive would seem to represent and make tangible powerful *unconscious* urges, in Cooke's phrase, yearnings and desires seeking fulfilment which have motivated the various characters and their emotional outbursts.

One can see already how understanding musical meaning is a complex affair, emerging from interactions at a number of levels. The latter include the composer's intentions and instructions for performance and how they are interpreted by the performers; the space of listening, the concert hall, opera house, church, private space or arena; the relationship fostered by an artist or conductor with their audience, with their style of playing or shaping the musical texture, ability to communicate the music and personal qualities; the style of the

music, its formal aspects, its dynamics and particular quality of movement, and the historical context of the performance. The absence of conscious thought presentation in music has led some thinkers to deny that music can represent emotions of any consequence, a debate I will not get into in great detail at this point, except to comment that this implies a narrow view of human emotion, where intellect and thought are separate, whereas most modern research on emotion, as well as psychoanalytic experience, reveals the intimate link between them, except in pathological states such as autism. Indeed, emotions, using a musical metaphor, seem to help us ‘tune into’ the world around us. They are often bound up with strategies for living and relationships with others; they have intentionality and vary from short to long lasting in duration, and very often involve some kind of judgement, however unconscious. (Solomon 2007). Emotions are thus complex, involving context, meaning and development, which would seem to make music an ideal medium for emotional communication. As Cooke (1959: 199) put it, ‘Music is the carrier of the emotion.’ Or as Lawrence Kramer (2007: 29) put it, music does not signify or merely arouse emotion, instead, it, ‘renders emotion tangible, giving a sensuous, reproducible form to something otherwise transient and interior.’

Thus, from this point of view, the notion of ‘pure music’ untainted by human emotion is unsustainable, using an inaccurate model of an emotion. The complex pattern of a musical work, its context, its weaving in and out of consonance and dissonance, its different rhythms, subjects and development, all involve complex judgements; without the emotional element integral to the musical judgements, the music would have no life or ‘soul’.

Alternatively one could see that emotions arise along the circuit leading from the composer to the audience; emotions are not ‘in’ the score, or ‘in’ one element of the chain, but arise as a result of the composer, who often provides marks on the score suggestive of various emotional elements at least in Romantic music, finding a musical means for the performers to communicate with the audience. But it is finally in the actual *performance* that the emotions are communicated to the audience. One should also add that the satisfaction in appreciating the form of the music, its complex patterns, the realisation of the forms, the to and fro of musical movement, entrances, exits, contrasts, tonal relations in all their dynamic subtlety with heightened tensions and resolutions, actually produce emotions. The experience of listening to music includes wonder and awe, sheer enjoyment, the physical ‘tingling’ effect which very probably has directly observable neurological causes, but also the intellectual satisfaction of appreciating *form*, which has its own powerful emotional effect on the listener

directly linked to eliciting order out of chaos, integration rather than disintegration (cf. Segal 1952: 203).

Not only does music have the ability to reach right into the unconscious, but I would also suggest that music resonates at the unconscious level with what I have elsewhere (Kennedy 2014) called a ‘psychic home’, the basis of our sense of identity and linked to notions of the human soul. The psychic home provides an organising psychic structure for the sense of emerging identity. A psychic home is built up from a number of different elements, as with the physical home, which forms its substrate. There are intra-psychic elements but also inter-subjective elements, involving the social world. The sense of home as the ground of our being, the place we need in order to feel secure, is fundamental. This may help to account for the powerful emotional effect of movements to and from a tonal centre, when we hear movements away from and back to a *home* key, in a kind of musical ‘journey’. That journey may have enormous power, as Bostridge (2015: 21) points out in Schubert’s *Winterreise*, there is a combination of the ‘homely and the insistently mysterious,’ perhaps linked to the narrative of an alienated wanderer seeking some kind of home, until he faces the image of death at the end of the cycle.

It may account for the uncanny experience of listening to music such as the prelude to Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, where the chromatic tonality remains ambiguous. A diminished 7th chord hovers over the music capable of several different resolutions; we do not know whether or not it will reach home base, creating an intense emotional experience, which no doubt is intended to set the scene for the opera’s trajectory of unfulfilled human desire and its deathly transformations.

Daniel Barenboim (2002: 46-7) describes the ‘psychology of tonality,’ which parallels the inner life. This is ‘creating a sense of home, going to an unknown territory, then returning. This is a process of courage and inevitability. There is the affirmation of the key – you want to call it the affirmation of self, the comfort of the known territory – in order to be able to go somewhere totally unknown and have the courage to get lost and, then, find again this famous dominant, in an unexpected way, that leads us back home.’

The role of the psychic home in responding to music may also help to understand the unease, and interest, that we may hear when listening to atonal and serial music, where the sense of home is either absent, disguised, or fragmented.

Mahler was already beginning to stretch tonality almost beyond what it could bear (Adorno 1971: 20). Debussy inaugurated the new aesthetic of discontinuity, fragmenting the melodic flow of the music with abrupt changes and frequent interruptions, though still just about within a tonal structure. Thus, by using the whole tone scale in *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), there are no tonics or dominant. The work hovers around the key of E major without ever really getting there, until the very end. Thus the work does just about reach 'home.' Then Schoenberg introduced into the melodic flow a different kind of organisation, where it was fragmented and cut up even more and perhaps closer to the language of the unconscious, thus redrawing the boundaries of the musical journey and also extending the range of human emotions capable of being represented. He talked about 'liberating dissonance'. One can certainly hear music that seems to take us nearer to extreme or 'dissonant' mental states, almost borderline or hysterical at times. For example, in his atonal Expressionist piece *Erwartung* (Expectation), a woman anxiously searches for her lover. She eventually finds his dead body in a forest, talks to the body as if it's alive, accusing the lover of betrayal, wonders how she is to live her life now and wanders off alone into the night. The music has a hysterical quality. Indeed, Theodore Adorno (1958: 39) commented on the similarities of this music to a psychoanalytic case study.

Stravinsky had a different solution to the tonal crisis, using free dissonance, with piles of triads used on top of one another as in the *Rite of Spring*, or using polytonality, with the use of more than one key at the same time, as well using new rhythms and melodic fragments.

One could say then that the new music gave expression to the times, where the old uncertainties were challenged, where conscious reason and traditional rationality (represented in music by traditional tonality) were overthrown by Freud's explorations of the unconscious, while new and at times extreme emotional states were capable of being represented musically as a new conception of human subjectivity was taking place. Though serialism dominated much of the post Second World War music scene, in the late 20th and 21st century we have of course seen a return of tonality in many new guises; it has been given a new home. Not that it ever disappeared; there always have been major composers, such as Britten, Copland,

Shostakovich and others, who never abandoned a close relationship with tonality, rather similar to the way that many artists continued to carry on painting figuratively rather than participate in what was the avant-garde abstract mainstream.

In addition, in the 1960's Minimalists such as Steve Reich, reconfigured the nature of musical time and experience, introducing new repetitive yet melodic themes and conceptualising music as a 'gradual process.' Music seemed then close to ritual and to impersonal unconscious forces.

'While performing and listening to gradual musical processes, one can participate in a particular liberating and impersonal kind of ritual. Focused in on the musical process makes possible the shift of attention away from *he* and *she* and *you* and *me* outward toward *it*' (Reich 2002: 36).

Understanding music and how it affects us is of course not like understanding a language, though the structure of music has some parallels with language, a vast topic that I shall not cover in detail on this occasion. Anyone can appreciate a piece of music, as Charles Rosen (2010: ix) put it quite simply: '...understanding music does not come from memorising an esoteric code. Many aspects of music..benefit from a long study, but grasping its emotional or dramatic meaning is either immediate or requires only becoming familiar with it.' That is, we all have a musical capacity, a mixture of innate and acquired elements. However, he goes on to say that specialised study can allow us to understand why we take pleasure in hearing what we appreciate and on the way that music acts upon us to give us enjoyment.

I would suggest that psychoanalysis, which is after all a complex listening discipline, can add something to our understanding of the musical experience at various levels, such as its origins in evolution, its place in the early mother-child relationship and the deep relation between emotion and music, as well as making observations about the complex 'listening circuit' leading from the composer and their score to the performer and their audience. Musical studies in turn can enrich and clarify aspects of the analyst's listening function. Analytical and musical listening share similar states of mind, experiences, and cognitive processes, in particular in the use of non-verbal communication of emotional states and unconscious meanings.

The musical experience

The basic units of the musical experience are not so easy to grasp. On the one hand, we hear sounds, but, as Roger Scruton (1997: 19) points out, music makes use of particular kinds of sound, these sounds are organised by a human subject as a form of communication into an event. He called this an ‘acousmatic event,’ the term being derived from the description in ancient Greek of the Pythagoreans who were *akousmatikoi*, willing to hear. The acousmatic event is to be distinguished from a physical event; it is heard apart from the everyday physical world. In this ‘other world’, sounds are transformed into tones (or pitches); a tone is a sound which exists within a musical ‘field of force’ (Scruton 1997: 17).

The composer Thomas Adès captures something about this quality of music in his descriptions of composing. What animates music, he says, is stability and instability. Music is an endless search for stability, trying to fix something that in life would be appreciable only for a moment. ‘I can hear a single note and feel all the directions it wants to move in...essentially the note is alive and therefore unstable...I don’t believe at all in the official distinctions between tonal and atonal music. I think the only way to understand these things is that they are the result of magnetic forces within the notes, which create a magnetic tension, an attraction or repulsion. The two notes in an interval, or any number of chords, have a magnetic relationship of attraction or repulsion which creates movement in one direction or another’ (Adès and Service 2012: 2-3).

Of course one cannot omit the physical reality of sound. For example, different musical intervals have different patterns of overtones. A minor third has a remote overtone, which contributes to its particular quality of disturbance compared to a major third. However a major third or major key in one context can feel triumphant but in another disturbing, as at the end of Sibelius’s *Seventh Symphony*. Simon Rattle describes it as ‘almost like a scream...It’s the most depressed C major in all of musical literature. There’s no other piece that ends in C major where you feel it’s the end of the world...it doesn’t sound like a victory, but as something you reach on the edge of death’ (Service 2012: 188).

How music affects us physically is gradually being understood from recent work in neuroscience and cognitive psychology. Recent neuroscience evidence (Patel 2008) suggests that the neural pathways in the brain responsible for music are complex, involve many different

areas with some overlap with those involved in language and also emotion, but also maintain some degree of separateness, that music and language are ‘cognitive cousins’.

But it is also important to distinguish the study of music as an elaborate *art form*, involving the distillation and communication of complex intellectual and emotional states and narratives, which reach the highest levels of human communication, from the study of the place of music or musical elements in everyday life, such as in the mother-baby music-like exchanges, or its place in understanding emotional states or the study of how language itself incorporates musical elements such as rhythm, pulse, and prosody. Much of the scientific research in the musical field focuses on what is more easily observable and measurable, such as the nature of relatively brief responses to musical stimuli, short term emotional reactions such as so-called ‘chills’ or ‘thrills,’ that is the sensation of hair standing up on the back of one’s neck (Huron, 2006), or the fascinating and subtle way that mothers and babies become attuned, or fail to attune, to one another, where there is a ‘music of relationship’ or ‘communicative musicality,’ (Gratier and Trevarthen 2007).

There is also increasing understanding about how music may have emerged from early cognitive and perceptual capacities in early hominins, around 80,000 years ago, or possibly even earlier. There is certainly concrete evidence of musical instruments from around 40,000 years ago. It seems that music and language may have evolved in parallel, or used some common pathways while retaining some differences in their use of these pathways (Tomlinson 2015).

But music as an art form can be lost in the various elaborate discussions on whether or not music conveys specific emotions and the origin of the emotions. Music is perhaps more like poetry in that it carries information about emotions in a concentrated form. Thus a listener can recognise sadness or joy in some music but is not necessarily made sad or joyful, though may be so briefly. If one thinks of a piece of theatre such as Shakespeare’s *Othello*, or Verdi’s opera *Otello*, the latter’s suicide and the events leading up to it move us, but we are not usually made to feel suicidal. Instead we have an *aesthetic* experience, a special form of emotional experience.

The sense of touching ‘another world’ seems to convey something vital about music, given that we are always going to fall short in language when trying to grasp the nature of the musical

experience, especially when making sense of music without words, or so-called ‘pure instrumental music’. As Gustav Mahler put it, ‘We find ourselves faced with the important question how, and indeed *why* music should be interpreted with words at all...As long as my experience can be summed up in words, I write no music about it; my need to express myself musically – symphonically – begins at the point where the *dark* feelings hold sway, at the door which leads into the “other world” – the world in which things are no longer separated by time and space’ (Letter to Marshalk, quoted in Cooke 1980: 54).

This other world could be death, or could be the unconscious, the world of dreams. As Martha Nussbaum (2001) discusses, the expressive content of music has often been described as having a dreamlike quality, our reactions before it like the experiences we have in dreams, lacking the daily-life narrative coherence of our everyday emotions. Mahler describes, ‘this strange reality of visions, which instantly dissolve into the mist like the things that happen in dreams’ (Mahler 1979: 346, Letter to Bruno Walter). And music has an affinity with the ‘amorphous, archaic, and extremely powerful emotional materials of childhood. And it gives them a sharpening, an expressive precision, what Mahler calls a *crystallisation*, that they did not have when covered over by thoughts, in their still archaic form. One enters the “dark world” in which language and daily structures of time and causality no longer reign supreme; and one finds the music giving form to the dim shapes of that darkness’ (Nussbaum 2001: 269).

Mahler indeed had a rare capacity to evoke childhood reality in musical form, such as with some songs from *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth’s Magic Horn), the *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children) and in the last movement of the Fourth Symphony, where, using one of the *Wunderhorn* poems, a child (Soprano) sings of a blissful life in heaven. And famously Mahler met Freud for a consultation in 1910 in a summer in Holland (after cancelling three previous appointments), due to marriage problems, which seemed linked to childhood memories of his parents’ difficult marriage. Though one must be very cautious about trying to make connections between a composer’s life and their music, we have here information from an actual clinical encounter, not wild speculation, which gives insight into aspects of Mahler’s musical expression. As Ernest Jones describes in the Freud biography (1955: 88-9).

His father, apparently a brutal person, treated his wife very badly, and when Mahler was a young boy there was a specially painful scene between them. It became quite

unbearable to the boy, who rushed away from the house. At that moment, however, a hurdy-gurdy in the street was grinding out the popular Viennese air 'Ach, du Lieber Augustin'. In Mahler's opinion the conjunction of high tragedy and light amusement was from then on inextricably fixed in his mind, and the one mood inevitably brought the other with it.

Jones 1955: 88-9.

Donald Mitchell (1975: 74) writes how frequently Mahler's music re-enacted this traumatic childhood experience, 'how the vivid contrast between high tragedy and low farce, sublimated, disguised and transfigured though it often was, emerged as a leading principle of his music, a principle almost always ironic in intent and execution.' That is the trauma assumes complex shapes, and becomes an essential element of Mahler's use of musical tension and contrast in his works. In his *First Symphony* this is clear in the way that the slow movement, a sombre funeral march, is based on the round 'Frère Jacques', as well as being interrupted by outbreaks of obvious parody, with music that is close to sounding like a hurdy-gurdy. As his music matured, these contrasts became more subtle and more integrated into the general structure of the music.

Lawrence Kramer (Kramer 2011: 64) also links the musical experience to feelings of strangeness and the uncanny, and hence close to unconscious experiences. Kramer describes how music reaches directly and deeply into the unconscious, hence its elusiveness to being tied down by language. In order to make sense of music, we have to rely on metaphor, allusion, indirect descriptions, or else a too hermetic musical analysis in the hope that this will tie down its meaning. But that meaning cannot often be tied down by its very nature. This implies that cognitive and neuroscience explanations that fail to take account of unconscious experience can give us only limited understanding of musical experience, though findings from these disciplines are still important in providing insights into the complex processes of musical perception. And these disciplines also contribute to understanding the nature of *early* musical experience, its relation with time and the shaping of early affects, which provides the basis for understanding fully formed musical experience.

Early musical experience - communicative musicality and vitality affects

Because music occurs in time, it can under certain circumstances provide a powerful sense of *continuity*. Already with the early mother-baby relationship one can see how the maternal voice

echoes and re-echoes to the baby's sounds, in a kind of musical manner, imitating and repeating what comes from the baby and providing, as Daniel Anzieu (1995: 174) describes as a sort of sound mirror, not a static mirror but a dynamic and responsive mirror providing a sense of continuity over time. In distorted mother-baby relationships, for example with a depressed or borderline mother, there may be a lack of responsiveness, and the maternal echo can become more like the plaintive echo in the myth of narcissus, and time can become deadly, what Green has called 'dead time' (Green 2003: 115.). Anzieu also describes how the sound mirror can become pathogenic when the mother's response is dissonant, contradicting what the baby feels or expects; or can be too abrupt, causing confusion and psychic damage to the baby's protective defences; or impersonal, when the mirror of sounds fails to provide emotional information for the baby. Otherwise, the mother's vocal responses normally provide a positive experience for the baby, enveloping or wrapping the baby in a comforting and enlivening sound world.

Marie-Cecile Berthau (2007) has described from a psycholinguistic perspective how mutual imitation of child and caretaker in early communication and speech acquisition form an incessant movement from one to the other, intermingling the voices of both, and becoming the basis of internalisation. In her reading of Mikhail Bakhtin, she describes how the 'voice has the function of a carrier as it carries the speaking subject out of himself, decentering and orienting him towards the other(s), supporting and leading the contact' (Berthau 2007: 154). Gratier and Trevarthen (2007: 170) respond to her essay by proposing that 'voice cannot be separated from the stream of moving in time, from the "musicality" of it; the rhythms and cadences of its expression and in memory of being in company.' Based on years of Trevarthen's mother-infant research, they describe how the 'behaviour of infants in their delicately negotiated engagements with sympathetic partners and playmates demonstrates that there is an *innate intersubjectivity* that enables synchrony of intentional rhythms, expressive gestural forms and qualities of voice with others from birth' (ibid 170).

Indeed, there is good evidence that human infants are well equipped to learn the musical regularities of their environment. Thus at least by six months babies have the probably unique human ability to recognise relative pitch perception, the ability to recognise that a melody is the same when the pitches are transposed up or down. By one year, the child can show sensitivity to musical keys (Trainor and Hannon 2013). While the ability to move in synchrony to a musical beat requires complex motor skills and does not appear until about five years,

babies do move rhythmically much more to music than to speech (Zentner and Eerola 2010), and not surprisingly singing is more effective than speech in calming infants.

Stephen Malloch (1999) used computer-aided musical acoustic techniques to study vocal exchanges between infants and adults to clarify how the pulse and expressive and emotional qualities of voices are engaged in improvised musicality, or what he called ‘Communicative Musicality.’

Trevarthen and Gratier propose that the expressive rhythm of human voices, or the communicative musicality of the mother-baby interchange has a vital role in promoting the well-being and comfort of the baby. Using Winnicott’s notion of physical and mental holding, they propose (Trevarthen and Gratier 2007: 174) that, ‘the vocal rhythms of interpersonal engagement constitute a Holding environment for the infant that is in continuity and coherent with the physical holding involved in the caregiver’s mothering techniques.’

Studies of interactions between infants and problematic mothers confirm the crucial role of voice. Thus mothers with postnatal depression speak to their babies with monotonous, low-pitched voices and have difficulty engaging in lively protoconversations or ‘motherese.’ Depressed mother’s speech is less musically expressive and less focused on the infant (Murray et al. 1993). Borderline mothers tend to be unpredictably intrusive or withdrawn and express more negative affect; their vocal performance is also inconsistent and dissonant, reflecting their shifting mood states, and that is confusing for the baby. Thus overall, one can say that communicative musicality is a vital element of bonding and attuned attachment between mother and infant. Without musicality the internalisation from the interaction between voices is distorted and emotions are disturbed.

Gratier and Trevarthen (2007: 176) in addition make the point that a mother’s voice is also the voice of her community; it carries the imprint of others’ styles of speech. In that sense the baby is early on exposed to the convention all styles of their community, with all its particular speech rhythms and style, forming the basis for belonging; or what one could call a ‘speech home,’ one of the dynamic elements of the psychic home.

Daniel Stern (1985: 54ff) had described the important role of ‘vitality affects’ in the mother baby relationship. This was a way of trying to describe the dynamic quality of the emotions

between mother and child, and how a mother may be ‘tuned’ into the baby’s state of mind or on the contrary have difficulties in so doing. Affect attunement is an important quality in good enough mother child relationships, and something that needs to be looked at when considering the nature of attachments. He cited the work of Suzanne Langer (1967) who had already paid attention to the many ‘forms of feeling’ inextricably involved with all the vital life processes. She had also used the notion of forms of feeling to capture the many feelings evoked by music. For her music does not so much evoke particular feelings but their ‘form’, their essential shape over time.

In his later work, Stern (2010) extended the notion of vitality affect and, rather in the manner of Langer, described the role of ‘dynamic forms of vitality,’ a mental creation shaping human experience, including the musical experience. Vitality forms can be described in terms of movement, time, force, space and direction, all together giving the experience of vitality (Stern 2010: 4). Dynamic forms of vitality give life and shape to the narratives we create about our lives. We tend to think of the mother-baby interaction in terms of objects and space; the advantage of this way of thinking is that one is dealing with the ‘real time’ phenomena of process, dynamics and flow. With regard to music, Stern proposes a parallel between the shape of the vitality form, its pattern of ups and downs, shades of intensity and patterns of flow, with the musical phrase and its dynamics. Hence, one can see the natural links between at least early emotions and music.

Stern also touches upon how such understanding can shape even more sophisticated musical products as Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* (Stern 2010: 83). For example, the famous opening four pitches establish an initial level of arousal and a specific vitality form. Then they form the basis for many variations in intensity, speed, timbre, colour and stress, shaping the pattern of arousal up and down. ‘Beethoven’s subject matter is nothing less than the vitality dynamics of music and life’ (ibid 84). While one may be sceptical about how far one can apply the notion of vitality forms to a sophisticated piece of symphonic writing, it does seem to add something in how we can appreciate how emotions can be communicated by music, and it does add a dynamic and temporal account of music, which more purely structural analyses can leave out (Kerman 1985: 84).

Emotional connectedness and attunement to one another are essential elements in musical performance, perhaps owing something to these early musical foundations of

intersubjectivity. A combination of cooperation and individual expression takes place, with the musicians mutually adjusting their actions and sounds, particularly in small ensembles, where close mutual and intersubjective and empathic listening is essential. It is most clearly visible in the improvisations of jazz musicians, who reflect through a ‘feel’ for the music. But it is also clearly *visible* in any small ensemble; one can observe the human context, the intense communication between the players, which allows for an intense musical experience. I think the visual experience for the audience is part of the pleasure of experiencing the music. How a pianist for example comes on stage, engages the audience with their eyes, hands and gestures is all part of the aesthetic experience.

A key notion in this context is that of the synchronisation of the body with the environment or ‘*entrainment*’, that is, the ‘alignment or integration of bodily features with some recurrent features in the environment’ (De Nora 2000: 78-9). Musical entrainment involves perceiving the regularity of beat and can be seen for example when dancing to music or marching in time to music. It seems hard-wired into the brain, since it is a skill that children can be seen to acquire naturally. There is even evidence that participating in musical activity such as synchronised singing and drumming can promote cooperation in four year olds (Kirschner and Tomasello 2010).

With musicians there is obviously a complex form of entrainment, where they ‘regulate the temporal alignment of their musical behaviours by engaging in continual processes of mutual adjustment of the timing of actions and sounds,’ (Cross 2009: 189). Ensemble performance involves acting in synchrony and requires ‘constant temporal negotiations...that are at once cognitive and embodied’ (Cook 2013: 411). This involves conscious and unconscious communications between the players, communication at both the bodily and emotional level, with the reading of gesture and eyes as well as the building up of trust and mutual understanding. Emotional focus, where the performers are enabled to be absorbed and focused *within* the music somehow seems to be a vital part of giving a good performance (Bostridge 2011: 111) and requires this sort of close common understanding and communication.

Perhaps we can understand some aspects of the psychoanalytic relationship in these terms, where there may be different degrees of entrainment between analyst and patient, depending upon the nature of what gets repeated in the transference.

With orchestral playing, the complex role of the conductor adds further to the need for musical entrainment. Gone are the days of the conductor as dictator, instilling fear and using and abusing power, or even those who wish to impose their will by empathy with the mind of the players. Instead, conducting is really about facilitation and mutual music making as well as collaborative leadership (Service 2012).

Daniel Barenboim (2008: 20) describes how in musical performance, ‘two voices are in dialogue simultaneously, each one expressing itself to the fullest, whilst at the same time listening to the other.’ This kind of communication, obviously close to the kind of intersubjective communication I have already referred to, is not only about music but is a life-long process. For Barenboim this capacity of music for engaged conversation, its dialogic quality, can help in mutual understanding between people who might otherwise be deaf to what they have in common. His West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, formed from Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs is a concrete manifestation of this hopeful principle. One can see here the power of music’s ability to bring people together in a mutually satisfying endeavour, breaking down barriers to understanding and facilitating and heightening mutual communication.

The processes of emotional and musical entrainment, with music’s power to synchronise emotions and actions, seem to have their origins not only in early communicative musicality but go back some way in evolution.

I have already referred to Ian Cross’s account of music as capable of communicating ambiguity and of being a form of communication more adept than language at conveying shared and cooperative interactions. From this follows his argument that the faculty for music is as a result likely to have had strong evolutionary advantages for humans in their interactions.

Musical listening

In this final section, I will touch on some of the themes already covered, but in the context of the *listening subject*, and this does add further issues particularly concerning the emotional impact of music on the listener. The issues raised here will have some relationship to psychoanalytic listening as after all psychoanalysis is a listening discipline; its bedrock is listening to the patient. While of course there are significant differences between listening to

a musical performance and listening to a patient in a consulting room, there is also some common ground.

In psychoanalytical listening, one is listening simultaneously to the 'surface' and the 'depth' of the patient's communications, to both the conscious and underlying unconscious stream of thoughts and feelings. There are some loose parallels with this kind of listening and musical analysis, particularly the kind that looks beneath the surface of the musical 'foreground' to the underlying deep structures of the 'background' (Cook 1990). However, such analysis is a highly sophisticated and intellectual exercise.

Analytic listening, in contrast, however intellectual taxing at times, also entails a responsive, receptive or affective kind of listening, more like trying to make sense of the shape of the communications or their vitality affects. This has also been described as a kind of musical 'reverie' (Lombardi 2008), which can arise in the analyst particularly during intense emotional exchanges. Theodor Reik (1953), who saw music as intimately linked to emotions and psychic reality, had already pointed out, with many clinical examples, how musical associations arising in the analyst's mind can be of great help in the understanding of the patient's communications. 'The tunes occurring to the analyst during sessions with patients are preconscious messages of thoughts that are not only meaningful, but also important for the understanding of the emotional situation of the patient...The tunes stand in the service of the agents responsible for the communication between the unconscious of two persons' (Reik 1953: 19-20).

Lombardi suggests that musical associations have a particular capacity of bridging the gap between the concrete and the abstract, between body and mind, the non-symbolic and the symbolic, the internal and the external. As with Reik, he shows how the use of the analyst's counter-transferential musical reverie can be used for clinical purposes. One could say that every patient has their own music, but that every analyst and patient encounter creates a music of its own. The analyst is thus engaged with listening to both the patient and to themselves and to their own responses to what the patient brings. Thus, as Michael Parsons (2014: 113ff) has shown, analysis involves listening in two dimensions at once – externally to their patients and internally to what is stirred up by listening to their patients. That internal listening involves a certain kind of receptivity to the unconscious, which seems to have parallels with listening to music. It is, as Parsons also points out (ibid 158), that kind of receptiveness, which comes

in when listening to poetry. With the latter, one may be making out the meaning of their words, but allowing the words to have an emotional impact is also an important part of the experience and one, which may be difficult to tie down. Parsons describes how being receptive to the ‘internal’ music aroused in a listening analyst helps the analyst understand the external music that is the patient (ibid 51).

During a session, the analyst may become immersed in the flow of the patient’s material. As Martin Nass (1971: 309) describes, ‘As in listening to music, one may follow the melody line, the obbligato, the counterpoint. The analyst is free to move from one line to the other, to hear them all simultaneously.’ The quality of communication between analyst and patient is similar to that of musicians in small ensembles; as I described above, there is then a close mutual adjustment and readjustment of interactions. Nass also points out how new analytic themes in the analysis may arise and develop, repeat and transform in ways similar to how they do so in a musical composition.

But if the analyst listens out for patterns, they may often be strange patterns. Some are coherent patterns, but more often than not we listen for breaks in the continuity, where the pattern is dissonant. That is where the conflicts may reside as it were. In trying to explore this listening process in more detail, it may help to consider the complexities of musical listening where of course dissonance and consonance are in constant interaction. Listening to music, being affected by the music one hears, involves a number of different elements; there is a network of human subjects engaged in complex acts of communication and interpretation.

First there is the general aesthetic stance of being open to an aesthetic experience, common to other arts. This includes the sense of eager expectation and arousal. For some, such as Peter Kivy (1990), that is one of the main sources of affect in at least instrumental music, along with at most ‘simple’ emotions such as happiness or sadness. He does make some concessions to music with words, though even there he seems reluctant to go too far. However, to counteract this view, imagine hearing the Vespers of Monteverdi in a beautiful church as sung by The Sixteen under Harry Christophers. One feels heightened emotion and tension, the enjoyment of the sounds, harmonies and tonal relationships, with their consonances, dissonances, expectations and surprises, all the excitement of the musical shifts and modulations. In a sacred or special place with a great conductor there is an added element, a new depth of experience, with feelings of reverence, awe, spirituality and heightened understanding of some

essential aspects of human life. For those with religious belief there is the added effect of the meaning of the words. As in any dramatic performance there is a concentrated vision of human life through the artistic medium, affecting us at a number of levels, consciously and unconsciously, penetrating one's soul.

However, just focusing on the element of arousal, it seems clear that music induces a general state of arousal, heightened awareness and expectations. In an analytic session, the particular quality of arousal may well have intimate connections with the patient's earliest object relations, how for example the early vitality affects between mother and baby were managed.

There are some similarities between Stern's and Leonard Meyer's model of how music can convey emotion through arousal mechanisms. Meyer proposed that there is a close relationship between conscious and unconscious expectations aroused by music but not then fulfilled, and that these moments and how they are shaped by the music can elicit subtle emotional responses. Focusing on what he thought of as what was 'most vital and essential in emotional experience: the feeling-tone accompanying emotional experience that is the affect. Emotion or affect is aroused when a tendency to respond is arrested or inhibited' (Meyer 1956: 12-14). The greater the build-up of expectation, or suspense and tension, the greater the emotional release upon resolution.

Meyer applies his arousal hypotheses to the musical field, for example showing how moments of expectation, suspense, and eruption of something unexpected in music evoke emotional responses similar to those aroused in other life situations, so that listening is moulded by the listener's expectations.

Even with the limitations of Meyer's theory of expectation, it has proven fruitful to modern research into music, emotion, and the brain. There is considerable current interest in the cognitive mechanisms of expectation and prediction and their accompanying brain processes, a vast field that I can only mention in passing. I think one should add here in contrast that emotions can be aroused by expectations that are raised and then thwarted but also by those which are *fulfilled*. For example, when one hears the opening of Bach's *St John Passion*, as John Eliot Gardiner (2013: 343-4) describes, there is conveyed a complex mix of light and dark emotions, the lifting up of Christ on the cross and his abasement, being brought low for the sake of humankind. In order to convey these emotions directly, there is the relentless pulsation

of the bass line, the persistent sighing figures in the violas and the swirling motion in the violins suggestive of turmoil and even the surging of the crowd, and then over this ferment there is the lyrical dialogue of oboes and flutes which however produce anguished dissonances, suggested of the harrowing of Christ's flesh. Then with the entry of the chorus, there is a powerful portrayal of Christ in his majesty, looking down as it were on the 'maelstrom of distressed unregenerate humanity below' (Gardiner 2013: 344).

It would be difficult to explain such rich music in terms of inhibited expectations, when one is plunged straight into the musical drama. One could add here that as important as arousal mechanisms may be in sparking off emotion, one can see how interest is maintained by the ability of the music to *sustain* emotion. For example, listening to the opening of Bach's *St John's Passion* or the 'Kyrie' of his *B Minor Mass*, there is an *ongoing* sense of awe and pleasure, contemplation and sheer excitement, lasting minutes. One may speculate that music's capacity to sustain ongoing communal excitement had a strong evolutionary power to sustain communities.

Music of course does not need the human voice to create this effect; it only needs the dynamic play of the various instrumental voices working together at multiple levels to create ongoing musical interest, from a string quartet to a symphony orchestra. There is a kind of parallel between language and music here. Elsewhere I have pointed out that the conscious thread of thought has many streams (Kennedy 2007: 74) or voices or drafts. Through dialogue the themes of these voices may become more or less coherent, and in an analytic session, one may be able to tease out the different voices and their origins. Music by its very nature of being able to manage the expression of multiple voices simultaneously has even more capacity than language to convey complexity.

Jenefer Robinson (2005: 293) argues that music like emotion is a *process*, and so it is particular well suited to express not only particular emotional states but also different kinds of emotion, conflicts between emotions, ambiguous emotions and the way that one emotion may transform into another emotion. If emotions are processes and our emotional life occurs in streams, then she argues that it is reasonable to think that music, which is itself a process or series of processes occurring in streams, is particularly well-suited to mirror emotions, for example through complex movements of harmony, rhythm and melody (ibid 311). When we have an emotion she describes a process where there is an immediate affective 'appraisal',

which can be fast and automatic, be experienced at a body level, and for which one can find clear physiological evidence. This is followed by a slower cognitive evaluation, which may be or become quite sophisticated. The emotion involves the whole process, and thus emotions are comprised of affective and cognitive elements, not one or the other, or one element at the expense of the other. Thus, when we listen to music, we have the immediate affective responses and also the cognitive appraisal where we can reflect upon the responses; we can come to grasp the structure of the music as well as what it expresses (ibid 348). We feel the music but we also judge it in some way. This is a kind of active listening, allowing the music to interpenetrate one's being while also reflecting on what we experience. As Aaron Copland (1958: 14) wrote, 'In a sense, the ideal listener is both inside and outside the music at the same time, judging it and enjoying it, wishing it would go one way and watching it go another... A subjective and objective attitude is implied in both creating and listening to music.' This is very near to analytic listening, where we allow the experience of being with the patient to have an impact on us at various levels.

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