

Action, Criticism & Theory for Music Education

The refereed scholarly journal of the



Volume 3, No. 1
May 2004

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Electronic Article

Does Everyone Have a Musical Identity? Reflections on Musical Identities

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ISSN 1545-4517

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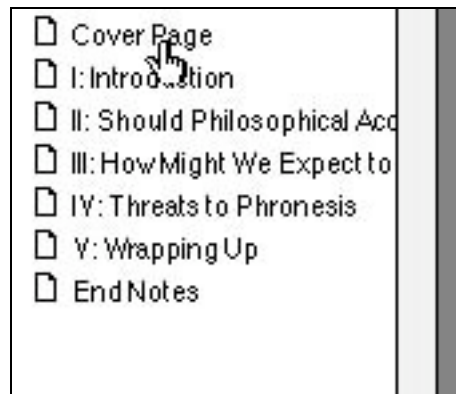



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Does Everyone Have a Musical Identity? Reflections on *Musical Identities*

Theodore Gracyk, Minnesota State University, Moorhead

"What really matters is what you like, not what you *are* like."
—Rob Fleming, narrator of Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity*

I



Raymond MacDonald, David Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell commissioned ten original essays for *Musical Identities* and contributed a splendid introductory essay of their own.¹ Because the project arose from a series of research seminars funded by The British Psychological Society, a dual shared perspective unifies the eleven pieces. They are essays in the psychology of music (something not apparent from either the title or the book jacket), and they presuppose (or at least do not challenge) a social constructionist view of identity. The editors divide the essays into two groups: those on developing musical identities (“identities in music” involving recognizable social and cultural roles, such as that of a pianist, conductor, or composer), and those on developing identities through music (“music in identities” where music plays a role in creating a non-musical identity, as when music contributes to the articulation of gender and ethnicity). I will have relatively less to say about the essays on identities in music and somewhat more to say about those on music in identities. Because I am not a psychologist, nor in any other way a researcher in the social sciences, my reflections on the book are going to be rather more speculative than the essays in *Musical Identities*.

The four chapters on identities in music illuminate the processes involved in becoming a musician. But that in itself raises an issue that troubles me. Identities in music are routinely conceived in terms of a dichotomy between musicians and non-

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musicians, a dichotomy explicitly formalized in Alexandra Lamont's "Musical Identities and the School Environment." Ostensibly a study on "how children's perceived musical identities develop over time and under different conditions" (41), Lamont's questions presuppose a very specific concept of "musical experience."² The presupposition is masked by Lamont's justification of her approach:

[S]ince children were engaged in an amount of musical activity at school as part of the Curriculum, the traditional labels of 'novices' and 'experts' were clearly inappropriate, since even the 'novices' had a certain musical experience. So I asked the children a series of short questions about their musical backgrounds (47).

Lamont asked the children whether they had music lessons outside of music class in school, and whether they had any ability to play a musical instrument. Based on their replies, Lamont put the label 'non-musician' into the mouths of those who answered both questions negatively: "Almost half the children (48%) *described themselves* as 'non-musicians,' saying that they did not have lessons and did not play a musical instrument" (47, emphasis added).

Does the evidence show that the children described themselves as non-musicians, or is Lamont imposing a standard cultural identity that the children have not themselves internalized? Do we escape inappropriate stereotypes by replacing the distinction between novice and expert with one between musician and non-musician? (Would we conduct a study in which we ask children if they own dogs or cats, and then conclude straightaway that those without dogs and cats have no pets?) My questions may seem to raise a difference without a useful distinction until we consider other research that does not confine musicianship to playing instruments. None of the authors in *Musical Identities* cite Patricia Shehan Campbell's monograph, *Songs in Their Heads*, an ethnographic study that documents and explores the rich and varied modes of

musicianship in children's lives.³ Drawing on Christopher Small's catholic notion of "musicking" (a verb coined by Small to cover *any* activity relating to music),⁴ Campbell

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found that children engage in a wide variety of musical play and that singing is central to the self-identities of many children. (Many of these children fall into the same age ranges as those in Lamont's study.) Spontaneous rhythmic musicking was constantly evident in children's lives when Campbell started to look for it.

In equating musicians with those who take lessons or play instruments, Lamont treats most childhood musical activity as beside the point. From a social constructionist perspective, her study does not document so much as it creates or at least reinforces a new identity for musically active children, the identity of non-musician. (From a social constructionist perspective, how could it be otherwise? Every study will impose identities.)

Related cultural prejudices are a submerged leitmotif running through the other essays. Only occasionally do we find some acknowledgment that a "non-musician" has a musical identity, or that a listener's musical taste is an important component of her personal and social identity. The collection's introductory essay admits the possibility of an expanded notion of musical identity when the editors assure us that "listeners are not passive consumers, but active partners in a cultural process who use music to fulfill different functions according to different social contexts and locations" (13). Yet in most of the essays, the importance of listening to music is either ignored or dismissed.⁵

Musical identity is repeatedly identified with study of a musical instrument.⁶ As a result, the four essays on identities in music deny the possibility of musical identities for the great majority of people.

This lopsided emphasis on playing musical instruments is all the more puzzling given Colwyn Trevarthen's piece on the origins of musical identity in infancy. Synthesizing five decades of research while emphasizing recent studies, Trevarthen reminds us that "the spirit of musicality" is an innate drive, as fundamental as speech but prior to it in each infant's life. This musicality first emerges in vocal games. Trevarthen is almost apologetic when he notes that the pride taken in "advanced musicianship" is "not

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so far removed” from the pride a six-month-old takes in sharing a musical game (35). But he also warns that talent can be smothered through conformity to social expectations about cultivated musical skill. Trevarthen resists drawing a speculative conclusion, so let me advance it for him. It is that emphasis on serious music and trained musicianship, whether in music education or in most of the studies in *Musical Identities*, privileges the musical activities of a small (and shrinking) elite, frustrating the very search for community that underlies the human drive to make music.

Two of the essays do address identities of “non-musicians” in relation to music, arguing that musical taste plays a role in the construction of both gender identity and youth identity. In each case they show how music, in early life a vehicle of social bonding, creates that bond by excluding others from the group. Notice that both essays are in the second half of *Musical Identities*, in the section on “music in identities,” and so explore music preference as a vehicle for establishing or developing another aspect of identity (e.g., being female or belonging to an in-group). The music is discussed in order to determine whether music plays a role in another, presumably more significant mode of identity. When it is noted that males tend to be collectors of music (i.e., of recorded music) in a way that females are not, it is assumed that modes of collecting reflect and reinforce gender. There is no thought about the possibility that being a collector is itself a significant musical identity, that is, an identity in music.

I do not want to move on to larger issues without mentioning the two interesting essays that end the book, one concerning music making by individuals with special needs and one on music therapy. Both essays concentrate on the positive effects that music making can have on individuals struggling with the fact that others regard them as abnormal. Both essays recall Trevarthen’s theme of music as proto-conversation, as innately suited to creating and healing social bonds (25). But they again undercut the editorial claim that listeners are not passive consumers, for again music is restricted to musicianship. In “Disability and Identity in Music Therapy,” Wendy L. Magee articulates the assumptions made in music therapy. Listening to music is a recreational activity,

involving “opportunities for distraction with an emphasis on pleasure and enjoyment” (182). This recreational use of music is “superficial” and must not be confused with the “difficult” work of music-centered therapy. However well entrenched it is among music therapists, this position deserves to be reconsidered in the face of evidence that the “superficial” presence of background music can have its own therapeutic value for persons with physical disabilities.⁷

In granting musicianship a special role in everyone’s life, those two essays are more reassuring than are the other essays on developing identities through music. The three essays on gender, youth, and national identity leave me with a lingering sense of unease, ushering in the second issue that troubles me. They leave me worried that, having shown that music plays an important role in “obtaining security in one’s own identity whilst simultaneously achieving knowledge and understanding of others” (G. Folkestad, 160), they say nothing at all about *musical* identities. That is, they tell us nothing at all about why *music* is so useful for finding, developing, and communicating aspects of social and personal identity. But isn’t this the issue that draws readers to a collection such as this?

II

Among all of the activities humans possess as means by which to create such a powerful sense of identity and community, music may be among the most personal and the most meaningful.

—G. H. Hebert and P. S. Campbell⁸

Given the two issues that I have raised, I feel some responsibility to suggest why human identity is so readily and intimately connected to questions of musical identity.

But there are two distinct topics here, and we cannot move forward until it is clear which of the two I will address. First, we can ask how different individuals acquire the specific social and personal identities that they possess, and how it is that music of one

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sort links to one sort of identity and how music of another sort links to a different identity (e.g., why is composing a male activity and why are most violin students women?). Second, we can ask a more fundamental question, which is why music (of *any* sort) seems more pertinent to identity than does one's food preferences or one's taste in fashion or most hobbies. Connections between identity and food or fashion are susceptible to precisely the same sort and level of scrutiny given to music in *Musical Identities*. Furthermore, non-musical professions can be examined in precisely the same manner as that given to musical identities in the essays on "identities in music" (e.g., we may ask why some individuals become engineers while others become social workers). But almost anyone interested in a book like *Musical Identities* is likely to suspect that these questions are more pertinent with music than with those other areas, because music is somehow more central to identity than whether one likes extra pickles on a hamburger or even whether one hopes to become a doctor or a kindergarten teacher. So I am interested in the second of the two topics.

Even within a social constructionist paradigm, in which each individual's musical identities are seen to depend on the contingent vicissitudes of life, musical identity might prove to be a deep element of identity, so that the music one liked at seventeen is more noteworthy than how one wore one's hair. Without romanticizing innate musical sensibilities, we should start with Trevarthen's point that musicality is an innate human drive. We might then wonder whether music has renewed significance during adolescence, a question acknowledged but peripheral to Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves in their essay on music and youth identity.⁹ In fact, that essay is less about music than an attempt to demonstrate that "musical behavior is guided . . . by group identity needs," which in turn shows that adolescents do not differ as a group relative to social psychology assumptions that explain inter-group behavior in general (145). In other words, there is nothing special about the relationship between music and identity.



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Adolescents use music as they use sports and entertainment, dress codes, and eating rituals.

Against this backdrop, I would like to pursue the insight that there is a special relationship between music and identity. Furthermore, adolescence and young adulthood may be a distinctive stage of life, uniquely configured so that an individual's relationship to music plays a profound role in the formation of the very idea of self-identity. (I do not think that it is altogether an accident that the only research in *Musical Identities* that concerns adults is that involving adults with special needs or those receiving music therapy. The relationship between music and identity in a "typical" adult's life is never examined.) But if a sense of self-identity is an acquired concept that develops during adolescence, music is exceptionally suited to serve as a tangible model for making sense of both self and self-identity.

It might seem that the centrality of music to adolescence is readily explained by citing the connection between music and expression of emotion. We can simply cite the increasing emotional sensitivity of the adolescent. Such ideas pop up throughout *Musical Identities*, yet there seems relatively little research substantiating the supposed connection. For instance, Magee reads it into the statements of Jessie, a woman dealing with Multiple Sclerosis who receives music therapy. Although Magee says that Jessie responds to the music therapy because it is "an emotional medium" (194), I find nothing in the transcripts to suggest that Jessie thinks that playing music is rewarding for that reason. I do not doubt that music is often rewarding for giving us "a psychological sense of another" (194). But television, books, and films are probably more powerful than music in presenting and dealing with concrete human problems and their attendant emotions, so music's expressive power is not itself the reason why *music* seems so powerful in adolescence. I will suggest a more fundamental attraction of music by drawing on an influential argument about personal identity in David Hume's philosophy.

III

If I speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Hume was one of the key Enlightenment figures to call for a Newtonian science of human nature. That is, Hume thought that we should apply the experimental method to human cognition, emotion, and behavior, limiting discussion to hypotheses capable of yielding experiential consequences capable of empirical testing. He was also one of the first thinkers to argue that personal identity is not a matter of discovering the self through careful introspection: the idea of an “invariable and uninterrupted” self is an invented “fiction.”¹⁰ The fiction of a stable and unchanging self is a heuristically useful construct of memory and imagination, but there is never any experiential confirmation that such a self exists.

Here is Hume’s famous summary of the thesis that one’s self identity is not a matter of locating an observable, stable self:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. . . . If any one, upon serious and unprejudic'd reflection thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continu'd, which he calls himself; tho' I am certain there is no such principle in me.¹¹

Seeking a stable self, each individual finds only “a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.”¹² But this leaves Hume facing the obvious question of why each individual *seeks* a self, for he admits that there is a natural “propensity” to

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attribute stable personal identity to the flux of perception and emotion. For an answer, Hume turns to the workings of memory and imagination.¹³



The key to Hume's positive proposal is that we develop two distinct concepts of object identity. The first, virtually unknown in experience beyond our short-term perception, is of a thing "invariable and uninterrupted" over some period of time. An example might be a book sitting on my desk. Without moving it or myself, I observe its unchanging shape and color for five seconds. In the absence of change, I observe the same book at the end of the process as at the start. The second notion of identity is "of several different objects existing in succession, and connected together by a close relation," as when I take a moving train to be a single object although I do not actually observe the physical connections between the visibly distinct cars of the train. Postulating a physical link between the engine and each successive car, I do not hesitate to treat the train as one object. But when memory links the successive parts of this second type of object together, we ignore the fact that we have actually experienced a succession of objects. In many cases, "we are apt to imagine something unknown and mysterious, connecting the parts, beside their relation." Imagination replaces the object's "interruption or variation" with the less complex fiction of an unchanging object. That is, we postulate some "mysterious," empirically inaccessible unity to the parts, and jump to the unverifiable conclusion that some invariant element underlies the weaker, contingent relationship that we actually observe.

Socially constructed categories play an additional role in the process of assigning identity as we learn that different types of objects are allowed to display different ranges of variation and diversity. If we see a very small dog and then a very much larger dog in the same place twenty-four hours later, we immediately conclude that it is a different dog. Dogs are not the sort of things that change that much, that quickly. In contrast, "the nature of a river consists in the motion and change of parts," and we count it as the same river although all of its parts constantly change over the same twenty-four hours of time.

Following a heavy rain, I regard the local river as the same river even though I see that it has more than doubled in size. We learn that it is the “nature” of other things to obtain identity in other ways: if a brick church is destroyed and then replaced with a stone church, built in a different style, we treat them as the same church through “their relation to the inhabitants of the parish.” Yet the two physical buildings have no direct connection to one another.

So how do I connect this discussion of Hume to adolescence and musical identities? Musical works demand surprisingly complex decisions about identity. In developing the capacity to perceive a musical work in a specific sound event, listeners must learn to distinguish between what is unique to the sounds, considered as the material instantiation of the work, and the work itself. This point is often made by observing that there is a difference between the tokens (specific aural events) and the type (the musical composition).¹⁴ In some ways, music is like Hume’s example of the river. In other ways, music is more like the church. Like a river, it is the nature of a musical work to consist of a succession of perceptually successive and differing items. Like the church, we learn to count two perceptually and temporally distinct appearances as manifestations of the same object.

Yet most children understand the basic principles of musical work identity at a very early age, generally beginning around the age of eighteen months. For purposes of illustration, I will cite my own experiences as a parent. One day I dropped a CD into the stereo system and pushed “play.” Fifteen or twenty seconds later, my five-year-old looked up from his coloring book and said, “Hey, this is *Fantasia*.”¹⁵ It was Beethoven’s sixth symphony and my son remembered the music from having seen the film twice, some months earlier. He had not yet received any formal musical training, yet he understood that this music (in an “authentic” performance instead of Leopold Stokowski’s adaptation) was the same music that he’d heard twice before. The same year, he surprised me when he demonstrated further awareness of Beethoven, in this case the

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opening phrase of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Having heard it a few times on the stereo in standard orchestral dress (conducted by John Eliot Gardiner), my son spontaneously taught himself how to play the opening four notes on the piano. He thus demonstrated that he already understood that the timbre of the strings and clarinet are not essential to the musical work, nor is the orchestral "fortissimo" that his index finger could not reproduce. As Hume proposes, the involuntary operations of memory and imagination led my son to postulations of identity in the face of perceptually and temporally distinct sets of perceptions. Nobody tried to get him to adopt these assumptions about musical identity. He imposed them on his experiences, suggesting that infants and children possess "innate psychological foundations of both musical behavior and musical awareness" (20). As a "willing and active candidate[s]" in the socialization process, my son's musical behavior confirms Trevarthen's insistence that such behavior is a by-product of an "innate drive" (26). This interpretation of childhood behavior is also Hume's model, for Hume also distinguishes between innate drives and the subsequent habits formed on the basis of "observation and experience."¹⁶ Equipped with same innate "instincts" and cognitive faculties and exposed to similar circumstances, each individual can spontaneously generate similar "habits" of response (including similar abstract thoughts about self and world). We thus explain how individuals agree on topics such as personal identity without postulating either innate ideas or Skinnerian behaviorism.¹⁷

Let's now leap from childhood recognition of musical work identity as a manifestation of innate drives to the identity issues that typically arise in human adolescence. Besides the more obvious physical changes associated with puberty and sexual maturation, adolescence is a time of intense cognitive maturation, including transition to genuine hypothetical, deductive, and abstract thinking.¹⁸ Thinking that was previously tied to concrete cases gives way to analysis of concrete circumstances in light of abstract concepts and ideals. Expanding self-awareness is facilitated as adolescents learn to view themselves from multiple viewpoints, including that of their increasingly

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important peers. This period of life is particularly interesting to social constructionists, for this period is dominated by exploration of “multiple selves,” that is, of the possibility that different and even antithetical principles may guide behavior at different times. Many adolescents struggle with the loss of any clear “core” self as personal identity becomes increasingly independent of identification with basic, rigid categories (e.g., “I’m a girl” or “I’m seven years old”). Adolescents differ widely in how many options they are willing to explore in attempting to construct a coherent identity.

While biological dispositions account for the strong interest in music displayed by infants and young children, why is an interest in music (particularly the “leisure” activity of *listening* to music) so common in the lives of adolescents, who no longer rely on it for communication? It may appear (as it does for Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves) that musical taste and musical behavior are simply two more avenues to explore as adolescents sort through their “multiple selves,” no different from nor more important than any other. But we should not forget that the adolescent search for identity is driven by enhanced cognitive abilities. Achieving a coherent self-understanding is a challenge *because* that self-understanding is no longer tied to concrete thinking. Abstract thinking equips the adolescent to question the meaning of life and the status of the self.¹⁹

(Following Hume’s model of analogical reasoning, we might note that dogs and horses also experience adolescence, but they do not appear to undergo any parallel period of identity crisis.) It is only upon developing abstract cognition that adolescents become aware of the diversity of their own choices and of the diversity of points of view that will evaluate and respond to those choices. The challenge of constructing a self-identity is driven by a Humean realization that there is nothing concrete (“there is no impression constant and invariable”) to anchor the integration of self-identity. At this stage of life, even the physical body is in flux.

Music’s power, particularly in adolescence, may stem from the manner in which it serves as an external model for the very process of identity formation. The process by

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which individuals stabilize a self-identity is remarkably like that for recognizing musical identity (that is, the identity of the self-same piece of music in temporally separated and sonically distinct performances). As I've noted, most pre-adolescent children know how to identify musical works despite the fact that they are dealing with objects which count as "same" despite multiple and very different concrete instantiations. Furthermore, because music is a temporal art, with works unfolding in time, this ability to recognize musical works involves the ability to project sequences of sounds in advance of actually hearing them. While this is not the place to defend it, I subscribe to a very traditional doctrine about music and music listening. We do not have to endorse Eduard Hanslick's extreme formalism and his arguments against emotional expression in music to appreciate his point that music must appeal to the imagination before it can appeal to the emotions.²⁰ The "auditory imagination" is the process of finding "mysterious bonds and affinities among tones," so that within its "continuous self-formation" we perceive "the organic, rational coherence of a group of tones."²¹ This sense of coherence (or, in problematic cases, incoherence) arises only through the coordination of memory and imagination. This coordination both constructs and evaluates a single object in the succession of perceptually successive and differing sensations. Hanslick emphasizes the complexity of the achievement of enjoying music as a "mental" project: "its achievements are not static; they do not come into being all at once but spin themselves out sequentially before the hearer." Of course, many people never learn to integrate all the components of complex music, so "indolent" listeners focus on vocal melodies at the expense of harmonic complexity.²²

Putting aside the dated aspects of Hanslick's polemic, the second part of the following description of listening to music is strikingly like Hume's description of his attempts to sense himself through introspection:

The most significant factor in the mental process which accompanies the comprehending of a musical work and makes it enjoyable will most frequently be

overlooked. It is the mental satisfaction which the listener find in continuously following and anticipating the composer's designs, here to be confirmed in his expectations, there to be agreeably led astray. It goes without saying that this mental streaming this way and that, this continual give and take, occurs unconsciously and at the speed of lightning. . . . Without mental activity, there can be no aesthetical pleasure whatever.²³


Equipped with an innate disposition to recognize musical objects long in advance of facing the challenge of constructing a self-identity, adolescents may respond strongly to music because listening to music provides an opportunity to practice the mental task of integrating successive experiences into a coherent object. The important point is Hanslick's observation that we recognize a musical work only when we actively construct the appropriate object in the "auditory" imagination. The process may seem passive (one merely listens and hears, just as one simply looks at physical objects and sees them). But it is not. However "recreational" it may appear, listening to music always involves a complex synthesis and analysis of competing clusters of unfolding sensations.²⁴

So an adolescent investment in music as a leisure activity may make several subtle contributions to the process of "discovering" one's identity. First, in the same way that a successful musical performance enhances an individual's sense of self (as autonomous yet capable), the simpler activity of listening can provide the reassuring pleasure of finding a stable and coherent object within a "lively arabesque."²⁵ So listening involves an easily repeatable but generally successful exercise of the mental processes that are needed to construct a sense of self. Even the repetitive behavior of listening to the same song again and again may have far more to do with securing a needed a sense of stability (through satisfied anticipation) than with the specific emotional content of the piece of music.


Second, music is a powerful memory stimulus.²⁶ Tia DeNora explores the implication that music's temporal quality gives it a unique capacity to integrate or


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“interlace” diverse experiences that happen to coincide with hearing the music. Rehearing the music (whether a song or a musical group or even a style of music) at a later date encourages us to vividly recall the associated events. Through their association with music, memories of otherwise mundane events, times, and places seem unusually integrated and meaningful. So to the extent that a sense of self-identity literally begins with one’s memories, music’s power to enhance and integrate selected extra-musical memories contributes to the construction of self in unpredictable but powerful ways. Music serves as an unconscious principle of selection in the ongoing project of

 assembling an identity from the total sum of one’s past.²⁷

Third, musical works may themselves serve as paradigm cases of the elusive sort

 of thing that we seek in trying to establish personal identity.²⁸ Musical works offer a

 model of the intangible object that we seek when we seek ourselves.²⁹ Consider the major parallels. In order to grasp what is taking place in unfamiliar music, listeners must locate a distinctive *kind* of object. To use Hume’s description, the listener must hypothesize “a close relation” that unites sounds delivered to the listener as “several different objects existing in succession.” But an additional level of complexity faces the listener who takes pleasure in hearing the same music in different interpretations (e.g., the fan who wants to hear and compare all available recordings and even mixes of the same piece by a favorite artist). The listener must grasp the same musical work within different successions of different objects, remembering earlier cases while comparing them (in the auditory imagination) with present cases. Each of these cases has its own unique character, yet these multiple instantiations are recognizable as performances of a single musical work. The musical work is an abstract object that is realized differently in many specific objects, each of which is apprehended as an individual object only because the listener has assembled that object in the act of listening. Similarly, the adolescent struggles to find a stable self that unites the multiple selves that emerge in diverse settings and contexts. In each case what is sought is relational, not concrete, and with

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<http://mas.siue.edu/ACT/v3/Gracyk04.pdf>

both the musical work and the self, the object sought is a relational connection uniting a set of objects found through relational connections.

Whether a listener enjoys the same recording again and again or recognizes a piece in a fresh interpretation, what feels like a process of discovery is really a process of imaginative construction informed by memory. Of the two cases, constructing self-identity is less like rehearsing a favorite record than it is like listening to many different interpretations of the same piece. Here, the musical object must be granted stability despite awareness that it can show many different faces to the world. But this stability is always postulated more than it is experienced. Yet what is more mundane than enjoying a piece of music? Music offers a daily reminder that an object as ontologically mysterious and complex as a piece of music is, after all, a perfectly familiar sort of thing.

In conclusion, the instinct guiding musical behavior in infancy may be equally valuable in adolescence. But where an infant receives the benefits of the instinct by engaging in music making with others, the self-aware adolescent may receive benefits from the seemingly “passive” activity of recreational listening. The mere act of listening to music can be a model for finding extra-musical identity.

Notes

¹ Raymond MacDonald, David Hargreaves, and Dorothy Miell, eds., *Musical Identities* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Page references to this book will be placed in the body of the essay.

² Several researchers propose that musical ability is more fundamentally located in the skill of “audiation” or in a musical aptitude to find structure and meaning in music. See Edwin E. Gordon, *Primary Measures of Music Audiation* (Chicago: GIA, 1979) and K. Karma, “Components of Auditive Structuring: Towards a Theory of Musical Aptitude,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 89 (1985), pp. 18-31, respectively.

³ Patricia Shehan Campbell, *Songs in Their Heads: Music and its Meaning in Children's Lives* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴ Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration of Afro-American Music*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), and *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1998). *Music of the Common Tongue* was originally published in 1987.

⁵ Explicit discussion of listening is limited to two essays. In the first, Nicola Dibben discusses gender identity. In the second, Mark Tarrant, Adrian C. North and David Hargreaves discuss youth identity. I'll say more about these in a moment.

⁶ Besides Colwyn Trevarthen, Jane W. Davidson is the only scholar in *Musical Identities* to explicitly allow that vocal performance counts as musical performance. Borthwick and Davidson have a passing reference to "listen[ing] to opera" as an example of a musical identity, but they never discuss its deviation from their standard case of studying an instrument. (Sophia J. Borthwick and Jane W. Davidson, "Developing a Child's Identity as a Musician: A Family 'Script' Perspective," *Musical Identities*, p. 63.) Furthermore, their study does not treat vocal training as contributing to a musical identity.

⁷ Always alert to the centrality of music to life, Oliver Sacks notes that hearing or even imagining music can "unfreeze" a musically sensitive Parkinsonian patient, and he invites us to generalize from the way "that patients' own kinetic melodies *can* be given back to them, albeit briefly, by the appropriate flow of *music*." Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, First Harper Perennial ed. (New York: Harper Perennial: 1990), p. 348. However, Sacks warns that it must be music that the individual patient enjoys (p. 62 n) and it must have a rhythmic impetus "'embedded' in melody" (p. 61 n). For music in case histories, see pp. 60, 117, 125.

⁸ Quoted in Göran Folkestad, "National Identity and Music," *Musical Identities*, p. 152.

⁹ The arguments that follow are not intended to challenge the idea that music plays multiple roles in lives of adolescents, evidence for which is cited by Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (p. 135).

¹⁰ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part IV, Section VI. For a sympathetic account of Hume's discussion of personal identity, see James Giles, "The No-Self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 43:2 (April 1993), pp. 175-200. In explicating Hume, I generally frame his position contemporary terminology (e.g., saying 'concept' where Hume would say 'idea').

¹¹ Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part IV, Section VI. For those unfamiliar with Hume's argument, here is more of the context in which he denies any perception of self:

There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. . . . Unluckily all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of self, after the manner it is here explain'd. For from what impression cou'd this idea be deriv'd? This question 'tis impossible to answer without a manifest contradiction and absurdity; and yet 'tis a question, which must necessarily be answer'd, if we wou'd have the idea of self pass for clear and intelligible. It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are suppos'd to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, thro' the whole course of our lives; since self is suppos'd to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot, therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is deriv'd; and consequently there is no such idea.

¹² Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part IV, Section VI.

¹³ This recourse to mental faculties is one of several ways in which Hume is thought to refute his own position (e.g., Aaron Preston, "David Hume's Treatment of Mind," *The Paideia Project*, <http://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Mind/MindPres.htm> [2003, Jan. 5]). However, Giles plausibly argues that no self-refutation occurs. His arguments are bolstered by reflection on Hume's larger, "Newtonian" project. Like the stable self, memory and imagination are postulated as explanatory hypotheses. None of these are known through privileged direct experience, yet all remain useful "fictions" (i.e., constructed ideas) reified by the grammar of natural language. Interpreted in this way, Hume is not guilty of an objectionable confusion between a constructionist view of objects and of concepts (e.g., the tendency to overlook the difference between saying that the idea of "ocean" is a social construction and saying the same about the body of water that is the Pacific Ocean). (For more on this topic, see Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000].) Hume is arguing for a constructionist view of the *idea* of self-identity, and tries to explain both how and why we construct and apply this idea to the things that we do.

¹⁴ For an extended discussion of issues surrounding musical works and their identity, see Stephen Davies, *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), chapters one through four, and Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter four.

¹⁵ For those unfamiliar with it, *Fantasia* is a Walt Disney animated film originally released in 1940. In a forerunner to music videos, visual interpretations accompany orchestral works (edited and conducted by Leopold Stokowski). For example, Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* serves as background music for a battle between two ferocious dinosaurs. An abbreviated adaptation of Beethoven's Sixth Symphony (the Pastoral) receives a kitsch interpretation involving satyrs, nymphs, and other creatures from Greek mythology.

¹⁶ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IX ("Of the Reason of Animals"). Hume's own argument emphasizes the instinctive ability to make inferences based on past experiences. See also Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part III, Section XVI IX ("Of the Reason of Animals") for an earlier, shorter version of this argument.

¹⁷ For an overview of recent research findings, see W. Jay Dowling, "The Development of Music Perception and Cognition," *The Psychology of Music*, ed. Diana Deutsch, Second edition (San Diego and London: Academic Press, 1999), pp. 603-25.

¹⁸ Employing the terminology of Jean Piaget, this period of cognitive development is often referred to as formal operational thought. My summary draws from Laurence D. Steinberg, *Adolescence*, 6th ed. (Blacklick : McGraw-Hill Companies, 2001), David R. Schaffer, *Developmental Psychology: Childhood and Adolescence*, 6th ed. (Belmont : Wadsworth Publishing, 2002), and Kathleen S. Berger, *The Developing Person: Through the Life Span*, 5th ed. (New York : Worth Publishers, 2000).

¹⁹ Carol I. Diener and Carol S. Dweck, "An Analysis of Learned Helplessness: II. The Processing of Success," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39 (1980): 940-52.

²⁰ Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, trans. Geoffrey Payzant (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1986), pp. 5, 45.

²¹ Hanslick, pp. 30, 31, 29, 31, respectively.

²² Hanslick, p. 64.

²³ Hanslick, p. 64. Hanslick here foreshadows the influential views of Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

²⁴ Hanslick allows that “pathological” or merely physiological responses do not involve the auditory imagination. He designates this response as “hearing” and “undergoing” instead of listening. As one test of the difference he points to an individual’s ability to remember a “specific image of just this particular piece of music,” where “this particular piece” is a formal arrangement of tones and not a concrete object of any kind. Hanslick, p. 66.

²⁵ Hanslick, p. 29.

²⁶ Unfortunately, only one of the essays in *Musical Identities* mentions this issue, Dibben’s essay on gender identity (p. 125).

²⁷ The preceding remarks are an attempt to amplify DeNora’s comments on music’s “emblematic capacity” in relation to memory. See Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 63- 68. For further commentary and elaboration on DeNora’s book see the essay reviews in *Action, Criticism, and Theory (ACT) for Music Education* (1:2). <http://mas.siue.edu/ACT/index.html>.

²⁸ I am not suggesting that listeners consciously think of music as satisfying this symbolic function. It is no surprise that most adolescents explain music’s value by citing its relevance to their emotional needs (Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves, *Musical Identities*, p. 135). There is no reason to assume that adolescents have genuine insight into the functions performed by music (hence the argument by Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves that it performs an important function in securing group identity by conveying meta-information about listeners).

²⁹ DeNora similarly discusses music’s role as “a mirror for self-perception” (DeNora, p. 70), but she is interested in how “a particular musical mirror” is used for “the articulation of self-identity – for its spinning out for a tale for self and other” (p. 69). In contrast, I am proposing that music also functions as a “mirror” of a more abstract sort of object.

Biographical Information

Theodore Gracyk has a Ph.D. in Philosophy, University of California, Davis (1984). Much of his published work explores issues concerning the aesthetics of popular music. Some of this work appears in two books, 1996's *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Duke University Press) and 2001's *I Wanna Be Me: Rock Music and the Politics of Identity* (Temple University Press). The latter was named co-winner (with Gary Giddins) of the 2002 U.S. Branch book award of the *International Association for the Study of Popular Music*. Gracyk teaches at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

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Thomas A. Regelski, Editor.