

*C: Robert L. Hall article: Music as  
the form of World*

analogy. For our understanding of music has, I think, long been impeded by the tendency to assimilate it to the other more familiar and readily verbalized arts, just as our understanding of art in general has been sorely handicapped by our propensity to explain it in the light of concepts and objects of a wholly different and foreign sort. I have elsewhere<sup>2</sup> used the concept of "surrogate theories of art" to denote attempts of this sort, and the notion applies equally to the substitution of the conceptual object for the perceptual one, and the visual experience for the musical one. Once a path is charted around these pitfalls, we must devise concepts and categories that are taken from musical experience. Only in the light of these can we hope to acquire a clearer understanding of the musical object. It would be presumptuous to do more than suggest a direction here, but perhaps that will be sufficient to provide a positive close to this discussion of two thoughtful and provocative papers.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Edward Bullough, "'Psychical distance' as a factor in art and an aesthetic principle," *British Journal of Psychology*, 5:87-98 (1912). This well-known paper has been reprinted in a number of anthologies in aesthetics, including Melvin Rader, ed., *A modern book of esthetics*, 3rd ed., (New York, 1960), pp. 394-411; Morris Weitz, ed., *Problems in aesthetics* (New York, 1959), pp. 646-656; and Eliseo Vivas and Murray Krieger, eds., *The problems of aesthetics* (New York, 1953), pp. 396-405.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Berleant, "Surrogate theories of art," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, forthcoming.

#### Saul Novack, *Some thoughts on the nature of the musical composition* (Further considerations of Professor Crocker's Reflections)

The questions that Professor Crocker has engaged are of overwhelming import. Within an obviously enjoyed bit of speculation, he has shown his wisdom by allowing them to remain unanswered. At this moment, limited by a response which is even briefer than Professor Crocker's exposition, I cannot offer anything beyond a few suggestions as to possible directions further inquiries might take, well aware of the lack of sufficient amplification and support of some of my observations.

The word "piece" is a curious one, and its implicit meanings were perhaps not originally intended. Distinction should be made between "piece" and "composition." The former implies any musical time-space which is either inorganic, or organic but subservient to a higher musical unit. The term composition (*componere*: to collect together a whole from several parts) involves much more than a collection of the several parts. If we limit the

term to its application to purely musical conditions, we must expect its organic nature to result from musical integration. The questions we must ask are: what is musical integration? What are its criteria? Are they not derived from the "system" within which the music operates? We encounter, however, different systems, and we cannot apply, for example, the same principles to the monophonic art of Gregorian Chant as one does to triadic tonality, or non-triadic tonality, or, to select another example, twelve-tone serial music.

Within the corpus of music based on triadic tonality which, in its evolution and development, extends from the 13th through the 19th century, our particularized concepts of integration or "order" have been derived from and loosely codified in somewhat sterile classifications of so-called musical forms. Form, in its most general sense, evolves from the myriad and subtle fashions in which tonal structure and thematic design are fused. The latter is dependent upon the former for its articulation into an organic unity. When this happy marriage occurs, a composition comes into being. A composition is a vision of the whole, and both of these principles, structure and design, individually and jointly, become subservient to the realization of this vision. Design without structure is meaningless prattle. Structure without design produces an empty shell.

But what constitutes structure, and what is thematic design? The answers to each require major exposition. This is dangerous territory, and one in which great abuses in critical writing exist. Thematic design, glorified by the "music appreciation" cult, has always been the center of attention. Its aspects of repetition and contrast lend themselves easily to descriptive procedure, providing the reader with at least an extensive, if not always clear, representation of its constituted nature. The character of musical structure, however, has been far more elusive. If, for the most part, our consideration of structure is grammatical rather than syntactical, how can we begin to comprehend organic character? Thus, "conventional" analysis of 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century music emphasizes chord nomenclature and key changes considered *seriatim*. In the music of the Renaissance, emphasis is given to the enumeration and description of cadences, which become the key to the understanding of modality and tonality (with unfortunate confusions), as well as other phenomena. Prior to the Renaissance we still are, for the most part, in virgin territory. The historian happily fixes upon other devices such as isorhythm or textual-musical forms as a safe means of accounting for over-all unities. The primary concern for design only tells us nothing about the relationship of tones to one another and their role in the logical ordering of tones.

A definition of structure is impossible without considerable elaboration. Only a basic concept is posed at this point. The structure of a composition involves the interrelationship of tones whereby organic unity is achieved. Each tone has not only immediate contextual significance but also functions within all other contexts further removed, ultimately relating to the entire composition. It is obvious that the relationships that create unity in a twelve-tone serial composition are different from one in triadic tonality. Reference,



therefore, is made to the term "system," for each system implies the conditions for structure. Each one of us must discover for himself the means whereby the *tonal relationships* convincingly explain the organic nature of the musical work. But he cannot rely upon the techniques that merely describe the facade. Modulations, cadences, "aesthetic" key relationships, and juicy, imaginative chord descriptions all make nice reading, especially if the literary style is attractive. They unfortunately do not reveal the organic conditions of the work of art. The ultimate validity of one's basic assumptions and the operative realization of these assumptions finally must rest not only on its logic but also on the degree that others find it more convincing than any other analysis. Finally, the principles must be realized and tested through the *aural* experience. If the analyst who seeks to discover the "truth" cannot discern the musical structure of a work, either he is momentarily limited or the composition is a "non-composition." Some contemporary "creators" have given us some choice examples of the latter within recent years.

The example of Professor Crocker's question-raising tropes poses problems in form and unity to be solved only in terms of principles peculiar to the monophonic chant phenomenon without possible comparisons or confusions with musical events in polyphony, based as they are on different operative principles. He finds that the tropes "actually show a relatively clear, closed musical form when considered by themselves, apart from their Introit." Mr. Crocker is an authority in this area, and I am willing to accept his statement; yet in my own examination I cannot find their musical structure. Textual, liturgical structure is clear, and I can sense a general, over-all design and organization in the Introit (e.g., *Resurrexi*, LU p.778) in which repetitions of sections set off in alternation with a contrasting Antiphon articulate a spatial ordering suggesting more than just a "beginning, middle, and end." Is there a coincidence of liturgical order and musical order? I think that it is the former by purpose and the latter by accident, i.e., a by-product rather than a conceptual vision of the whole. Nevertheless, one may pose the possibility of simultaneously achieving musical and nonmusical unity, as, for example, in the setting of a poem in a through-composed Schubert song. I specify through-composed, for a strophic setting is completely different from a compositional point of view. To discern, therefore, the nature of musical structure, one must find the structural conditions that are unique or peculiar to a particular time style, conditions that are inherent in the system. Certainly, the high point of clarity is attained in the 18th and 19th centuries, and our approach to the problems of musical structure has been less difficult. No one has more convincingly demonstrated this than Heinrich Schenker.

The problem of "multi-pieces" or multi-movements becomes ever so much easier to understand once the criteria for the composition are established. If a movement is an organic unit through *both* structure and design, its identity as a composition thereby is ensured. Its relationship to other units therefore must be sought in other than compositional terms. In each type of multi-

compositional grouping a specific unifying principle (non-compositional) operates as the basis for the relationship. A few contrasting examples are given.

A Notre-Dame clausula may be a compositional unit (e.g., *HAM*: I, Ex. 28C, commencing on the syllable, Do [Domino], on the fifth line, to the end of the example), but it is also part of a larger *liturgical* unit which is not a compositional entity.

A polyphonic setting of the Mass (Ordinary) may have a number of compositional units. The Mass as a whole is a liturgical unit. The nature and number of compositional units vary according to the ordering of the compositional concepts within the spatial possibilities in the liturgical arrangement. Thus, for example, in the Desprez *Missa Pange Lingua* Kyrie-Christe-Kyrie are fused in structural and design unity to form a total composition. By way of contrast, in the Bach *Mass in B minor* the same liturgical divisions, Kyrie-Christe-Kyrie, are three separate compositions. In both cases the Mass is a liturgical unit rather than a musical unit, and the individual movements are subservient to the non-musical entity. It does not make sense to regard the Mass as either a musical form or composition.

The 17th-century suite, growing out of the paired dances of the Renaissance, is based on rhythmic contrast. This is emphasized particularly in the Proportion Suite in which the same thematic design is cast in different durational values. Dance contrast, perhaps in its origin a rhythmic-motoric phenomenon, became a specific aesthetic principle. Each dance in a suite is a separate composition. The collective principle is aesthetic rather than compositional. The unity of key throughout is not conditioned by structural factors but rather by the aesthetic factor of contrast, for thus does it focus attention on the differences in the rhythm and tempi of the successive dances.

Each movement of a symphony by Haydn or Mozart, for example, has its intrinsic structure and design and is complete unto itself. The events of structure and design and their formal fusions have no bearing on events in each of the other movements. The choice of key for the slow movement certainly is not dictated by structural considerations. What could possibly be the meaning of the oft-used term, "symphonic form"? The composer may very well choose his keys with care, and the reasons for choices are many. Whatever they are, however, they are almost never dictated by the principles of *compositional* unity.

A strophic song is a composition repeated as many times as is necessary to accommodate the text. The poem, therefore, governs the highest order of identity, i.e., the compositional repetitions are subservient not to a higher musical order but only to a poetic order.

We readily recognize the compositional autonomy of an aria. In an opera, for example, secco recitatives are pieces; arias, usually, compositions. The latter are sometimes subservient to a larger compositional unit, but the opera as a whole is, as Mr. Crocker implies, a dramatic continuum, and, I must add, not a compositional continuum.



More challenging is the concept of theme and variation. While each example must be judged in its own terms, essentially the procedure is governed by a succession of units, the theme and each variation constituting a separate compositional entity. While there are the obvious similarities within a set of variations, there are also differences, sometimes considerable, revealing different structural or design concepts. In such a case, however, we are directed to specific aspects of linkage among the set. We witness varying degrees of compositional redundancy or compositional parallelism. The variational principle remains as the super-imposed musical concept that serves as the hierarchic basis for the collection. Schematic ordering in Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, for example, is a vision of the whole which thereby intensifies through non-compositional means the interrelationships of the variations. Despite the remarkably fascinating totality, each variation is a separate and unique composition with a parallelistic structure and different design.

Mr. Crocker recognizes the problem of "linkage" in the "multi-piece," and notes that varied solutions are possible. The quoting of thematic material outside an individual movement is not sufficient to create a larger unity, for that by itself does not create a binding superstructure. In these terms neither Beethoven's 9th Symphony nor Dvorak's "New World" Symphony is a single, unified composition. Referential parallelisms (as in Beethoven's 5th) and thematic quotations establish hierarchical musical units, but they are not compositional. Likewise, compositions with open ends represent purposeful manipulation of design or structure, or both, to create the illusion of continuity even though complete musical order already has been achieved, the latter, perhaps, to satisfy the artistic conditions which impel the creative mind to drive toward formal control. If we were to juggle several symphonies by Haydn to project four movements in the order of C Major, F Major, G Major, and finally, C Major again, would we serve any purpose in describing the total "event" as a I-IV-V-I unity? From the viewpoint of tonal relationships the movements would be continuous rather than contiguous. Yet we still would be presented with four compositions. Continuity does not imply unity. In this light Wagner's *Der Ring* might be reconsidered. The basic assumption that we are presented in each of its large units with continuous flow of sound, hence formal continuity, is subject to question. Even the view that single acts are compositional units requires further thought. Structural analysis may reveal that there are complete entities within the act that serve as the true compositional unities. The open ends that produce a continuous flow, aided by the "symphonic" articulation of the leitmotif, create the illusion of the larger organic whole.

In the absence of a specific term to describe the phenomenon of the multi-compositional grouping, one might be led to characterize each according to the hierarchical principle or principles which govern it. But terminology does exist. A sonata is not a musical composition; it is a sonata—and so on. In each case the specific term spells out the exact nature of the non-compositional unity.

I am inclined to believe that in our literature there are lots of "pieces" which we call compositions, and lots of compositions which we do not recognize as such because they are seen as subordinate to a higher order which is non-compositional.

The investigation of musical structure remains the primary task of the musicologist as a preliminary step to the understanding of the composition. By way of comparison, the contemporary theorist, frequently a composer himself, has been compelled by historical necessity to formulate the theoretical conditions governing much of the music of his time. In doing so, he has been much more successful than the musicologist concerned with the historical past. "Form analysis" and "style analysis" in the traditional sense have failed to provide us with significant insight.

### Robert L. Hall, *Music as the form of World*

"If music," commands the Duke in subjunctive uncertainty, "be the food of love, play on." No lover would ever doubt that the music should continue; philosophers have never been quite sure. How can the mere patterning of outer sound create, of itself, inner emotion? or in any way express it? Or does music merely symbolize emotion in some nonverbal way, presenting us with an analytical understanding of it? Is music philosophy or is it feeling? From this central query our insight into the nature of music must stem.

The nature of music must follow from the nature of man. Of him we can say with certainty that he is conscious of a total World, earth and heaven, with which he must deal. The nature of that World, however, depends upon the fundamental way he happens to apprehend it. For a different person, for a different culture, for a different time of life, or even for a different mood, there may be a different way in which things are found to relate to each other and to the whole. A World, then, is the pattern of happenings within an over-arching form. It is an integrated way of experiencing the universe. The World pattern of a mere mood—say love or despair—is but a variation on the more basic World pattern of the individual, and this but a version of the underlying pattern of the culture, whose most fundamental form may persist, through various stages, over milleniums.

The essential point to be understood about a World form is that it is a way of experiencing, not a structure of thought. Only secondarily is it subject to conceptualization. True, we must conceptualize it in order to understand it—the philosophies of a period are different versions of this—but it need not be conceptualized in order to be lived. While a World form may feature, for example, salvation or the transitoriness of all things, and these may be conceptualized in the religion, science, or philosophy of the time, they are grounded in a way of experiencing which is prior to formulation.