Ruth Halle Rowen, *Musical hearing in history*

I read the articles of Miss Carpenter and Mr. Crocker with great interest, especially as they raise the question of musical hearing. Miss Carpenter, in dealing with the "aspects of the heard thing", speaks of "the increasing hierarchization of the musical space"; Mr. Crocker, also on the subject of hearing, proposes that we "educate our ears" to "develop a sense or senses of form" covering the span of Western music. Both Miss Carpenter's hypothesis and Mr. Crocker's suggestion require a historical orientation of musical hearing. We might therefore combine and paraphrase their thoughts as follows: In order to determine with validity the historical changes in the hierarchization of musical space, we must try to hear the music of each period as it was heard by its contemporaries.

How do we train our modern ears to hear in terms of the music of another period? While familiarity with the music is essential, commentaries on style, method, and performance written at the time may help considerably in our pursuit. Fortunately there were champions of the ear in every era. Let us compare statements on musical hearing by Heinrich Schenker of Vienna and Aristoxenus of Tarentum—figures at opposite ends of the historical span. Schenker's exclamation, "Oh how easy it is to fabricate theory and music history, when one hears badly!" (*Harmonielehre*, 1906, p. 162) does not conjure in our minds the remedy of a hearing-aid or an oscilloscope for measuring frequency. Although the chapter from which this sentence stems is called "The construction of intervals", the emphasis is on perceptual rather than acoustic measurement. Some twenty-two centuries earlier, Aristoxenus remarked that melody appeals to "the two faculties of hearing and intellect. By the former we judge the magnitudes of the intervals, by the latter we contemplate the functions of the notes" (*The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, ed. & trans. Henry S. Macran [Oxford, 1902], p. 189). Sometime between Aristoxenus and Schenker, the distinction between hearing and intellect was dissolved, and a single, complex notion of hearing emerged.

While many theorists of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance became so speculative about proportions of pitch and rhythm that they seemed to forget music theory should also relate to what is heard, Marchettus of Padua succeeded in keeping an equilibrium between the mathematical and the aural. Chromatic alteration had been advocated both "causa necessitatis" and "causa pulchritudinis". Marchettus furthered its tasteful use by declaring that the pitches are raised or lowered "to obtain more beautiful harmonies" (*Gerbert Scriptores* 3:135). He espoused the term "musica colorata" rather than "musica falsa", contending that chromatic alteration is good, not bad, as suggested by "false". Marchettus' inclination toward intelligent hearing is apparent.

The application of the word "color" to tone links the aural sense to the visual. Miss Carpenter discusses the relationship of hearing to color in the area of synaesthesia, which has sensorial connotations much more technical

than those we might possibly apply to the mention made of musical color in the Middle Ages. The various uses of "color" in relation to music of the Middle Ages and Renaissance indicate the recognition of the role of musical hearing.

Alongside of *musica colorata*, "color" appeared in the Middle Ages in the relation of talea and color. As exemplified in the isorhythmic motet, "color" sometimes referred to the repetition of a series of tones without regard to their original rhythmic values, while "talea" indicated the repetition of rhythm. Johannes de Muris in the *Libellus cantus mensurabilis* mentions that some of his contemporaries make this distinction: "For they say color when the same tones [voces] are repeated; but talea when similar note-shapes [figurae] are repeated" (*Coussemaker Scriptores* 3:58). The difference between color and talea, however, was by no means clear cut. Prosdocimus de Beldemandis pointed out that there were three possibilities: (1) no difference between talea and color, (2) the difference described above by Johannes de Muris, (3) color as the repetition of both tones and note-shapes, with talea as the repetition of note-shapes alone (*ibid.* 3:225–27).

The application of "color" to music went beyond mere repetition; it also involved embellishment of the melodic line. Johannes de Garlandia, speaking of the copula (a passage of rapid notes), discussed the selection of a place where this "color" was to be introduced in the cantilena (*ibid.* 1:117).

The embellishing type of coloration was pursued in the 15th century by Conrad Paumann, the organist, in his *Fundamentum organisandi* (Facsimile ed. by Konrad Ameln [Berlin, 1925]). Paumann offered the following ways to color the descent of a fifth:

Ex. 1 Conrad Paumann, *Fundamentum organisandi*, *Fundamentum breve ad ascensum et descensum* [Plates 65–66]

gfedc

agfed

Examples like the above, written to show the technique of organ composition, provide proof absolute that in the 15th century a melodic motion was heard on different levels. Paumann heard through these melodic lines to the scale motion 5–4–3–2–1. Today we must incline our ears to listen in the same way.

To rediscover the way music was heard in the 15th century, we may compare organ settings of musicians such as Paumann with their vocal counterparts in such contemporary song books as the *Locheimer Liederbuch* (*ibid.*). Following is an excerpt from the melody "Des Klaffers Neiden" which appears in both sources:

Ex. 2 *Locheimer Liederbuch,* Des Klaffers Neiden [Plate 14]
(transposed up a fourth for comparison)

Des Klaf - fers Nei - den tut mich mei - den freun. im Her - - zen,

Fundamentum organisandi [Plate 74] (original pitch)

The interval of a fifth (at *), a bare leap in the vocal melody, is characteristically colored in the organ version. In contrast, the next interval of a fifth (at **) is colored on both versions! Their juxtaposition reveals that a scalewise descent (g f e d c) could be heard through different colorations.

In ensuing eras, coloration appeared in many guises depending on the musical styles prevalent at the time. The article "Coloratura" in Johann Gottfried Walther's *Musicalisches Lexicon* (1732) enumerates the following fast ornaments (Figuren): Circoli mezzi, Tremoli, Trilli, Diminutione, Variationi, because they are colorful (weil sie sein bunt und farbicht aussehen). In a separate article, Walther said that "Variazione" means the changing and decoration of a vocal or instrumental melody by introducing smaller notes so that one still notices (mercket) and understands (verstehet) the original melody. Although Walther did not actually mention the word "hearing", he was cognizant of intellectual hearing. His dictionary articles provide further evidence of the value of investigating variation procedures for acquaintance with the hearing processes of bygone centuries.

The investigation of coloration alone cannot fulfill our desires in our quest for historical ears. Mr. Crocker proposes another area of inquiry when he leads us to wonder whether there is any eternal rule for "distinguishing a piece from a nonpiece". To tackle this problem we must consider what the listener hears. The "listener" may be the composer re-evaluating his work as he views it at a distance, the theorist trying to determine the method behind the composition, the performer digesting the work during the act of recreation, or the bystander examining it from a professional or nonprofessional standpoint. In Haydn and Mozart's time the audience had a great influence on "distinguishing a piece from a nonpiece". Now we look askance at the concert-goer who has the temerity to applaud between movements, thus breaking the continuity. In the 18th century, matters were different. Mozart himself tells us the reason why he felt compelled to write a substitute movement for his Symphony in D Major (KV 297).

> The audience forgot to clap their hands as loudly and to shout as much as they did at the end of the first and last movements. For indeed the Andante is a great favourite with myself and with all connoisseurs, lovers of music and the majority of those who have heard it. It is just the reverse of what Le Gros says—for it is quite simple and short. But in order to satisfy him (and, as he maintains, some others) I have composed a fresh Andante—each is good in its own way—for each has a different character. But the last pleases me even more (*The letters of Mozart and his family*, ed. and trans. Emily Anderson [London, 1938], Vol. 2: 837).

Which symphony is a "piece", the one with the original middle movement, or the one with the substitute movement? Apparently, posterity is not able to make up its mind, as both Andantes are currently in print. Perhaps we may better decide if we try to listen with 18th-century ears to the first movement with its "premier coup d'archet" beloved by the Parisians, and to the last movement which begins "with two violins only, piano for the first eight bars —followed instantly by a forte." Concerning the latter, Mozart informs us, "The audience, as I expected, said 'hush' at the soft beginning, and when they heard the forte, began at once to clap their hands" (*ibid.* 826). Perhaps even after we listen to these outer movements we will remain as undecided about the second as Mozart evidently was.

Moving forward to the Romantic era, we still find the ears of the audience influencing the composer. Berlioz was quite used to the selection of one or more movements from *Romeo and Juliet* for performance, depending on the taste of the royal listener under whose patronage the program was being prepared. Berlioz, the conductor, even dared to include only the Scherzo and Finale from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony on his program for the Festival of 1022 performers. He obviously sacrificed his ears to showmanship, admitting that at the rehearsal the cellos and double-basses sounded like "the grunting of about fifty ferocious pigs" (*Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, ed. Ernest Newman [New York, 1966], p. 354). In his essay on this symphony Berlioz describes the structure of the passage connecting the last two movements in vivid aural terms. "The ear hesitates, uncertain as to the way in which this harmonic mystery is about to issue" (*A critical study of Beethoven's nine symphonies*, trans. Edwin Evans [London, 1958], p. 66). However, nowhere in the essay is there any attempt to discuss the structure of the symphony as a whole.

The taste for divertissement is evidenced in the Romantic suite, often a series of movements which satisfied either composer or audience, or both. Mr. Crocker reminds us of the eclectic nature of the 17th-century keyboard suite. In the 19th century, compilation of a suite from the movements of a ballet is a reminiscent procedure. The variable length of the Classical serenade, dependent on the circumstance of performance, may also come into this category.

In another channel lies the desire for greater unity between movements,

culminating in the Romantic era with compositions consisting of only one movement. Great admiration for the unity in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony was one of the factors which caused E. T. A. Hoffmann to link his analysis of this symphony with his premise that music is the most romantic of all the arts. Hoffmann started his discussion of the symphony as follows:

> The first Allegro, $\frac{2}{4}$ meter C-minor, begins with the main theme consisting of only two measures, which in the continuation is variously shaped, appearing again and again. In the second measure a fermata; then a repetition of the theme a tone lower, and again a fermata; both times only string instruments and clarinets. The key is not yet determined; the listener imagines E♭ major. The second violin again begins the main theme, in the second measure the key of C-minor is now determined by the violoncellos and bassoons sounding the keynote *C*, while violas and first violins enter in imitation, culminating in a passage containing the two-measure main theme which is repeated three times (for the last time with the whole orchestra joining in) and proceding to a fermata on the dominant, causing a foreboding of the unknown, the mysterious, in the mind of the listener (*Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12:634 [July 4, 1810]).

It is significant that Hoffmann concluded his lengthy sentence, with its measure-by-measure analysis, by indicating the effect of the passage on the listener. He continued to enumerate the details of each movement and then summarized on a different level.

> Beethoven has retained the usual succession of movements in the symphony; they seem to be fantastically linked to each other, and the whole envelops one like an ingenious rhapsody; but the feeling of each thoughtful listener is certainly of a *single* lasting sensation of inexplicable, passionate longing, deep and sincere, understood and retained until the final chord. . . . Beside the internal disposition of the instrumentation, etc., it is most of all the inner relationship of the individual themes to each other which engenders the unity that establishes a *single* mood in the mind of the listener. In Haydn's and Mozart's music this unity reigns over all. It is clearer to the musician when he discovers it in two different movements with the same fundamental bass, or when the joining of two movements is obvious; but a deeper relationship, which have nothing to do with that type, often speaks only from soul to soul, and it is this relationship which reigns between the movements of both allegros and the minuet, and which gloriously proclaims the circumspect genius of the master (*ibid.* 658 [July 11, 1810]).

Schenker agreed with Hoffmann's demand for a "very deep penetration into the internal structure of Beethoven's instrumental music", but differed with the "realization of the demand" (*Beethoven V. Sinfonie* [Vienna, 1925], p. 72). In his book on Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, Schenker referred to Hoffmann's article, saying, "Hoffmann's ear did not reach higher musical connections, since his presentation is merely an empty word-duplication of

the tonal occurrence and not yet a real clarification of its meaning" (*ibid.*, p. 20).

Schenker's impatience with Hoffmann is understandable, especially when we take into account their divergent backgrounds. Schenker approached Beethoven's Symphony with the ear of an early 20th-century theorist; Hoffmann, with the ear of an early 19th-century critic-composer. Our historical investigation of hearing on various hierarchical levels must include all available evidence, whether or not it conforms to current standards. The task will be complicated indeed. We will have to take into account and assess opinions of composers, theorists, performers, critics, informed or uninformed amateur listeners, from their respective points of view. In applying their comments to the music, we will have to establish the hierarchical levels, which in turn vary for different periods. Whether or not our results will affirm "the increasing hierarchization of the musical space" remains to be seen. The attempted investigation must be fruitful, nevertheless, because we will be "educating our ears" in the process.

Edward T. Cone, *What is a composition?*

Not all arguments can be settled by agreement on the definitions of the terms involved, but the issues at stake can always be clarified thereby. Not all questions of definition can be settled by appeal to the dictionary, but, unless one is determined to play Humpty-Dumpty, that is the place to begin. When the concept under discussion is one that may well be affected by relevant historical considerations, as is certainly the case with "piece of music", one might well start by consulting the *Oxford English dictionary*.

The entry under "piece" in the *OED* is, as one might imagine, lengthy. The references that concern us are to be found under two subheads: the first refers to the use of the word "in general sense; or followed by *of*" and the second to "absolute uses . . . without *of*". In other words, we are asked to distinguish between "piece of music" and (musical) "piece". The former is listed under meanings relating to "a portion or quantity of any substance or kind of matter forming a single (usually small) body or mass". It is considered as "forming one body of finite dimensions" and as constituting "a separate part of the whole existing stock of the substance". In this sense, which is the earlier of the two to enter common use, we find, for example, the locution "piece of song" (*Twelfth Night*, II, iv, 2), which, although obsolete today, shows clearly the way in which the term is conceived and how it differs from the more modern "absolute" usage. In the latter sense "piece" refers to "a production, specimen of handicraft, work or art", and is equated with "piece of work"; specifically, "a musical composition, usually short, either independent or forming an individual part of a larger work".

What interests me about the foregoing distinction is the fact that, while the