



University
of Glasgow

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Do musical works contain an implied listener? Towards a theory of musical listening.

John Butt

When I first agreed to develop a paper along these lines for a recent conference I was already aware that it brought with it the substantial dangers of merely producing a string of clichés or truisms about music and listening. With hindsight, these dangers have hardly receded and I appreciate even more acutely why the entire field of music listenership has so often proved slippery. However, my title contains a degree of obvious cultural charge that might help me relate listenership to broader issues and debates: already the term ‘musical works’ brings in a concept that can hardly any longer be discussed as a neutral, transhistorical, category, and the words ‘contain’ and ‘implied’ already evoke the concept of a definite ‘container’ and perhaps also a degree of intentionality, somehow inferred as part of the work.¹

Examining the notion of an implied listener in relation to other categories of musical discourse brings with it the further danger that the discussion will merely duplicate existing debates under another guise. If, for instance, I were to suggest that the listener is crucial in rendering certain pieces of music a unity, through a process of necessary

¹ The recent literature on the ‘work concept’, and the degree to which it is an historically-conditioned category, is extensive. Seminal contributions include, Carl Dahlhaus, *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (1977), trans. J.B. Robinson, as *Foundations of Music History* (Cambridge, 1983); Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: an Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford, 1992); “On the Problems of Dating” or “Looking Backward and Forward with Strohm”, in Michael Talbot (ed.), *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool, 2000), 231-46; Heinz von Loesch, *Der Werkbegriff in der protestantischen Musiktheorie des 16. Und 17. Jahrhunderts: Ein Mißverständnis* (Hildesheim, 2001); Harold S. Powers, ‘A Canonical Musuem of Imaginary Music’, *Current Musicology*, 60-61 (1996), 5-25; Reinhard Strohm, ‘Looking Bach at Ourselves: the Problem with the Musical Work-Concept’, in Talbot, *The Musical Work*, 128-52; Walter Wiora, *Das musikalische Kunstwerk* (Tutzing, 1983).

concretization (as Gadamer might have said),² I am not necessarily saying anything substantially different from the analyst or performer, who might equally assert that his or her insights reveal the work to be a unity. Or, if I merely say that the piece confirms, confounds or otherwise modifies the listener's expectations, is this really substantially different from the traditional sort of observation that the piece is predictable, unpredictable or pleasingly complex in its manipulation of norms? My task then will be to try and assess the degree to which the issue of the listener brings in dimensions that are substantially new or that – perhaps more realistically - at least modify those with which we are already familiar.

To start with the most obvious level of truism: we can surely assume that virtually all music in the human world presupposes that someone will hear it – otherwise there would be no reason, unless very obscure, to create it. An argument may be made that certain repertoires were designed less for immediate listening than others, or that some forms of sacred music – Renaissance polyphony perhaps – might have been partially designed for a divine listenership, or at least do not demand that a listener, in the sense of an audience, always be present. But, even if this were so, such repertoires at least require a performer, and performance itself is impossible without a degree of ingrained listening practice. One strategy in the philosophy of visual art, developed in particular by Richard Wollheim, is to infer a universal human habit of 'seeing-in' – in other words, the ability to discern representation even in seemingly random, natural arrangements of marks, while, crucially, not losing the sense of the physical presence of the marks (otherwise we would

² See Hans-Georg Gadamer *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960), trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, as *Truth and Method* (London and New York, 1989), esp. 328.

be talking about delusion rather than an essential artistic impulse).³ Obviously, there can be no seamless parallel with music here – we are unlikely to discern the representation of some sort of object in a sound from nature, at least beyond the realm of onomatopoeia; this issue is difficult enough even with cases of actual, humanly created music. But we certainly can and do discern patterns, rhythms, gestures and even emotions in non-musical sounds and can, in an infinite number of cultural ways, transform these into music of some kind. I would call this facility ‘hearing-in’ rather than ‘listening-in’ since this suggests that it can happen subconsciously, without effort or attention. Moreover, once music has been created we habitually experience another level of ‘hearing-in’, discerning moods, emotions or personal facets that may parallel the sort of ‘hearing-in’ that the music’s creators might have experienced and thus engaged as part of their creative activity. But there is never, of course, any certainty that the listener’s ‘hearing-in’ will directly match that of the creators (a closer match is much more likely in the field of representational visual art). It is the fact that we hear things in sounds at all that is significant.

I am not sure that the development of a theory of ‘hearing-in’ so far tells us anything we didn’t know already, but it does serve to remind us that music is crucially dependent on a creative element in the capacity to hear. There is nothing we experience in musical listening to parallel the way we can encounter basic truth claims in language, which we can normally test in some way, independently of the precise time in which we hear them.

Rather, we constantly have to assimilate whatever we hear into particular shapes,

³ See Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton, 1987), esp. 46-59. Wollheim introduced this concept in the second edition of *Art and its Objects* (New York, 1980), in which he developed ‘seeing-in’ as a departure from his original adoption of Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘seeing-as’.

patterns, resonances and emotions, and we surely do this prior to any specific intentions on the part of composers or performers. Indeed, if we fail to do this, there is no chance of any intended form of cohesion (or the coherence accorded to ‘the work itself’ by analysts of a modernist bent) being intuited whatever. If this creative listening capacity is thus prior to any musical act, there would clearly be a constant circulation between the roles of composing, performing and listening, and each activity – to the degree that it is separated - could be illuminated by renewed consideration of the others.⁴ A sense of this circulation might also be a useful starting-point in comparing the musical practices of different cultures or ages: some might afford differing emphases to the compositional, performative or listening elements, perhaps even attempting to efface some of them. Even the apparent absence of listening considerations in, say, a piece of highly structured modernist composition tells us a tremendous amount about the listening practices of its context. The notion of ‘hearing-in’ also works for the consideration of the reception of pieces of music or performances; different listeners will obviously hear different things in such pieces or events, regardless of the specific intentions of the original creators. A consideration of the capacity for hearing-in within any particular environment may help us to appreciate any elements of the hearing imagination that are not immediately part of our own experience.

Surviving repertoires might give us some sense of what it was like to be sensorily aware at the time of their creation, an idea of the ‘carnal formulae’ by which people of the past, or in different parallel cultures, heard their way through life. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for

⁴ Something along these lines was explored by the American composer, Roger Sessions, in *The Musical Experience of Composer, Performer, Listener* (Princeton, 1950).

instance, stresses how much humans communicate through gestures that are quite different from cognitive operations, and perhaps this sense of gesture could be applied to music: 'The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his.'⁵ This might suggest then that we could come to imagine quite clearly how the gestural implications of music were heard in the past, by taking account of their bodily effect on us, and regardless of how little we might be able to relate them to specific concepts. Of course, the nature of historical difference will mean that we are never likely to intuit exactly the bodily gesture that inhabited the music in the past (or, more crucially, even if we were to hit on exactly the 'right' gesture, there would be no way of distinguishing this from a 'wrong' one today). What is surely of primary importance is that the music related to *some* sort of gesture; historical research might then predispose us to intuiting some gestures more than others, but this is secondary to the sense of a human habitation within the music. Merleau-Ponty lays great stress on how physical artefacts are moulded by human action and consequently spread an atmosphere of humanity at various levels of determination. Music is, of course, seldom determinate, even for its first listeners and creators, but there is surely a way in which even the least determinate of music can still summon up for us a sense of human presence. The remote cultural world may well be ambiguous, but it is somehow 'already present',⁶ particularly if we imagine ourselves to be hearing something for which another's hearing played so vital a part in its creation.

⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), trans. Colin Smith, as *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York, 1958/2002), 215.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 405.

Can the concept of an 'implied listener' be developed beyond this basic sense that some form of hearing must always already have taken place, as a component of virtually any piece of music we consider in terms of human creativity? I would propose dividing the listening aspect of music into three interlocking categories: first, the general hearer-oriented nature of virtually all music, which I have so far considered. This involves a form of *hearing*, one which would thus not necessarily call for the intentionality or involvement suggested by *listening*. Nevertheless, a more engaged level of hearing is certainly not to be excluded, such as when music is used as an aspect of meditation or is part of a formal ritual. In these cases, a more concentrated *listening* would be counter to the broader purposes at hand. This sort of musical hearing is that which is most likely to be common to a broad range of cultures and historical periods and my remaining categories of listening are built upon this as something that is always already in operation. My second category concerns the many types of music that are specifically listener-oriented – e.g. those which purposely play on listeners' expectations and which are clearly designed with an audience in mind. This is clearly a category that is familiar from the way we might already analyse music in terms of its play on our expectations. The third type of listening might be more restricted historically (and culturally) and somehow relate to the type of listener who creates a specific sense of self over the duration of the listening experience. This would thus be something grounded in the time of the experience but which somehow overcomes its sole dependence on the linear sequence of events. These three modes thus imply a continuum from 'mere' hearing (contingent on the basic human capacity for 'hearing-in') towards listening as an activity

of consciously mapping the music in time and, finally, one in which the ‘implied listener’ might be more specifically determined. Clearly, the third category is crucially dependent on the second (as well as the first), so I now need to examine the second category in more detail.

Historically, this second type of listening (which I’ll provisionally label ‘roller-coaster’ listening) would relate to cultures in which larger, often paying, audiences became the norm; it is thus most likely when music has become a commodity, where listeners expect to get something out of it. We can assume that playing to the audience’s expectations was a crucial element in the invention and development of opera, for instance. Much of the effect of opera is to seize the audience, take them forward in the development of action and character in such a way that the music serves the immediate dramatic purpose, as means to end. If you listen to the music and become engrossed in the stage action, you are swept along in the course of events – there is no essential separation between ‘the music’ on the one hand, and the listener, on the other. Likewise, if you decide to embark on a roller-coaster ride, the experience is one where your body and consciousness become part of the ride; it takes some degree of perversity to analyse how the ride is structured, or how it might be self referential. To the extent that you become ‘one’ with music (where, you might be soothed by its flow or surprised by its shocks and dramatic effects), the listening experience is continuously attentive. Much popular music surely works along the same basis – the listener is invited to enter into a particular state, or identify directly with the performance or performer, and submit to this state for at least the duration of the song.

So is there any stronger sense of implied listener beyond the sense of being invited to map one's consciousness, and perhaps bodily movements, along whatever lines the music might lead us in time? I would suggest that there might be a third, more specialised, type of listening presupposed by certain pieces of notated or performed music. This might be defined along the lines of an 'internal' or 'implicit listener', someone latent in the way the music seems to have been put together. This category might be much more narrowly bounded historically than the other two (although, I would stress, it is crucially dependent on both), and it is certainly much more elusive, contentious, and harder to define. While this category is clearly tied closely to repertoires that place engaged listening at a premium, it suggests something rather more than merely the sense that the music might play directly to our expectations, with the transformations of state that these may bring. This takes us remarkably close to recent discussions of the role of narrative in music: namely, that if music is directly modelled on a plot and the events implied by a text it is essentially reinforcing a narrative that is already there, as if a sort of mime or the gold plating on a statue. Music possesses an independent narrative function only when it does something exceptional, something that somehow runs counter to the demands of the existing narrative. To quote Carolyn Abbate, it flees 'from the continuum that embeds it'.⁷ Perhaps the notion of an implied, internal, listener is equally exceptional, something working in relief or contradiction to the way the type of music concerned habitually draws the listener along.

⁷ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices – Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1991), 29.

Does the development of the operatic aria perhaps mark the beginning of this third concept of the implied listener, given that its musical structuring of time and emotion normally runs at a different tempo from the more realistic time of the dramatic narrative? Such detachment clearly allows the richest of musical experience and psychological insight, as if the dramatic narrative is frozen for a while, so that the situation can be explored in more detail. The aria thus offers the listener a type of experience that goes beyond merely mapping the flow of the drama or its emotional progress. Nevertheless, I would argue that this represents a significant development within the field of listener-oriented music (my second, 'roller-coaster' category) rather than necessarily bringing us directly to the concept of the implied listener. The aria presents a particular emotion and character within a musical form, a construction that could perhaps profitably be compared with the development of perspective, over a century earlier, in the visual arts. The gestures, lines of text and musical signatures are heard in relation to a recognisable musical form (such as a simple strophic construction or the *da capo* principle), which acts as a predictable frame in musical time. This allows for an ordered presentation of contrasts and subsidiary elements, the balance of which is revealed by their place in the overall scheme. What the listener gets, then, is a span of musical time in which the fleetingness of the narrative moment is suspended, and by which the overall drama acquires an increased depth of field. Such musical drama thus begins to imply a viewpoint outside itself, although - without more research into the audiences throughout the history of the work's reception - we will not necessarily gain much detailed knowledge of the type of person occupying this viewpoint. This music thus implies a *position* of listening without necessarily providing us with the elusive 'implied listener'

(it is, rather, the seat on that roller-coaster, inextricably connected to the machinery of the presentation, something pre-given rather than something the passenger is necessarily encouraged to create or develop).

In Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, the first major opera, the recitative style dominates as a form of speech in which every emotion and verbal nuance is amplified by the music; the set musical pieces, whether songs or choruses, generally correspond directly to the actual singing or playing of the characters and are thus directly part of the represented drama. In Monteverdi's later operas the arias come closer to the more 'standard' model I have outlined above, originating in the world of the action but distending an emotion or feeling from that world towards ours. However, *Orfeo* does take us directly into the crucial debate about the effect of music on its audience, since this originated during an era when doubts were cast on music's direct connection with the passions of the soul.⁸ The prologue of *Orfeo* introduces the figure of *La Musica*, conjured up by Striggio and Monteverdi, to take us into a world in which there seem - at least initially - to be no doubts about the magical powers of music. *La Musica*'s speech is interspersed with a ritornello that we naturally hear as an example of the music about which he is talking ('I am Music, and with sweet melodies, Make peaceful every restless heart...I sing to this, my golden lyre, alluring mortal ears so well, That my melodious harmonies Whet their desire for heaven's harps').⁹

⁸ Daniel E.L. Chua, 'Vincenzo Galilei, Modernity and the Division of Nature', in *Music Theory and Natural Order from the Renaissance to the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Suzannah Clark and Alexander Rehding (Cambridge, 2001), 17-29. Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow – An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2007), 19-42.

⁹ 'Io la musica son ch' ai dolci accenti so far tranquillo ogni turbato core...Io su cetera d'or cantando soglio mortal orecchio lusingar ta l' hora e in questa guisa a l' armonia sonora de la lira del ciel piu l' alme invoglio'. Translation from the King's Music edition, ed. Clifford Bartlett (Huntingdon, 1984/1990).

One fascinating musical moment comes when this ritornello from La Musica's prologue provides the close to the tragic second act, after Euridice's death. Having heard this ritornello no less than six times in the context of Music's prologue, this immediately takes the listener back to the opening of the opera and we begin to wonder whether it signifies anything in its new place. Does it tell us something about the power of music that is yet to enable Orfeo to reclaim happiness? Does Orfeo's ultimate failure suggest that music is somehow of a higher order than the fallible human who masters it, something perhaps akin to religion?¹⁰ This moment of music's detachment from its generally direct and mimetic role within the drama might point both to the archaic, traditional, power of music, but also to a more modern role as something that signifies through its very detachment from the immediate action. On the other hand, the same ritornello sounds one last time, at the opening of Act V, after Orfeo has lost his lover for the second time. Now we might begin wonder whether the ritornello ever had any significance at all: perhaps it is a mere framing device, resetting the musical scenery (after all, a note in the 1607 libretto suggests the return to the opening scenery at this point).¹¹

But, as Act V proceeds, we may begin to think again. At precisely the point where Monteverdi departs from the original libretto and interpolates the new ending, which involves the arrival of Apollo, he inserts yet another ritornello, one that we have heard

¹⁰ A similar point is implied by Berger, *Bach's Cycle*, 40-2, when he suggests that the conclusion in Monteverdi's revised version of the original text represents a triumph of the *prima* over the *seconda prattica*, a confidence in harmony as something that transcends the passions.

¹¹ See King's Music edition, 123.

before. This was in Act III, where it is heard at the introduction to Orfeo's famous set piece 'Possente spirito'. As we know, Charon does not succumb to the musical charms of this song, but when shortly afterwards this same ritornello is repeated, Charon promptly falls asleep. Thus it seems that the one piece of music that had any sort of effect in the story - albeit soporific - was also suitable for conjuring up Apollo in the modified, triumphal ending.

I have been keen to stress that neither of these ritornello returns has a definitive meaning, rather that they make us wonder whether they mean anything at all, whether they provide some sort of commentary on the nature of music or whether they merely help the opera hang together. But if they merely help the opera hang together, why does it need to hang together in a musical way (rather than, say, merely reflecting whatever strengths or weaknesses the spoken drama might have on its own terms)? The point I am trying to develop is that the type of listening experience implied here goes beyond following the events and being tied to the flow of the music. It engages the memory of the listener in a way that makes one try and make connections and think about the issues raised by the opera. Crucially, it does not represent a sort of cipher that is meant to be cracked, since that would be something different from the immediate experience of listening. It is the very lack of ultimate certainty that makes this case so fascinating, since it conjures up the idea of a listener present over a prolonged span, and one who might indeed continue to think after the performance has finished. This, then, may come close to my suggestion of the stronger sense of implied listener, one who is latent in the way the music is written and performed.

My next examples come directly out of the work I am currently undertaking on Bach's Passions. What makes these so relevant for the current discussion is the fact that they were designed as part of a broader cultural event in which the listener is directly implicated as a participant in worship. Most aspects of Lutheran worship were designed to dispose the listener not only to a direct experience of the biblical events, stories or doctrines appropriate for the day, but also to make connections and take to heart specific lessons learned from Christ's sacrifice. In short, it is hard to avoid the fact that this music had a certain didactic function, one in which the listener was expected to make specific syntheses out of different aspects of the experience. Lutheran salvation required the specific cultivation of faith on the part of the individual – a ceaseless change of heart, to be renewed on a daily basis; no mechanism of sacraments or even a relentless array of good works could be a substitute for this. What is interesting is the fact that Bach seems to exploit the listener's memory in exactly the same way as Monteverdi did in *Orfeo*. Most famously, there are the repetitions of the music first heard with the crowd's call for 'Jesus of Nazareth' in the opening scene of the John Passion.

Some scholars see later repetitions of this, such as for the words 'We have no king but Caesar', as revealing a hidden meaning, i.e. that Jesus is the true king of the Jews.¹² I am profoundly sceptical of the notion of Bach's music providing such precise theological meanings – not least, because if it were proved to have done so, the music would somehow have become redundant once the code was cracked. What seems more

¹² See Eric Chafe, *Tonal Allegory in the Vocal Music of J.S. Bach* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 287-300.

significant is the way Bach seems to exercise the listener's consciousness through the manipulation of recurrences.

The later uses of the 'Jesum von Nazareth' music interact with other choruses whose musical content is itself repeated, as if the recognition of a recent recurrence brings with it a memory of something further back. The chorus 'Wir dürfen niemand töten' is itself an immediate reworking of the first chorus of Part 2 ('Wäre dieser nicht ein Übeltäter'), but ends with the harmonic sequence from 'Jesum von Nazareth'. Thus there are two levels of recollection working simultaneously, that of the chorus just past, which is then coupled to that of the very first pair of choruses. As if to balance this sense of pairing, the very next *turba* is 'Nicht diesen, sondern Barrabam', which is another complete reworking of the 'Jesum von Nazareth' music. Husserl might have described this sort of overlapping of retentions, running off into one another, as a 'comet's tail' effect in his phenomenology of time consciousness.¹³ The listener might thus develop a doubled sense of temporal grounding in the world of the Passion narrative; a conscious memory of a recent piece of music (as a 'constituted temporal object')¹⁴ is combined with the recall of a piece that one probably did not realise lay dormant within a sequence of retentions. This renders the latter repetitions doubly uncanny, something that could also be related to the loosening of strictly linear temporal boundaries, which is characteristic of John's Gospel itself (8:58 'before Abraham was, I am').

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins, 1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht, 1991)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 345-6.

Considerations of the meaning of time are also a feature of the Matthew Passion. The text of the first chorus, with its allusions both to the Song of Songs and to the end times when Christ will reign as both bridegroom and lamb on the right hand of the Father, opens up a strong sense of temporal expectation. The connection with Revelation is itself anticipated in the Gospel text, with Jesus's first statement in Part 2 (the most substantial of his three utterances in this latter part), when he prophesies to the high priests that from now on they will see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power, coming in the clouds of heaven. Jesus sings the word 'Wolken' to a figure that begins with a four-note pattern (b. 12), which in fact was first introduced in the string parts two bars previously. It would be perverse to dispute that this figure is a form of word-painting for 'clouds', particularly since it has – effectively - been surrounding the singer for several bars already. Yet the uninformed listener does not realise this meaning until Jesus's line explicitly links it with the word 'Wolken'. Here, then, is an example of the music being ahead of what it signifies, something which is perhaps of a piece with the forward-leaning nature of this Passion as a whole.

Hearing this section with a little fore-knowledge or with a particularly acute awareness of where the biblical words lead, this could also be considered an example of the protention of the momentary consciousness. Rather than playing on the notion of retention as in most of my previous example (Augustine's present of past things), this is a present of future things, a sense of what is just to come in the next immediate moment. In other words, this presupposes a listener who is developing a sense of personal consciousness in time, extending the pinpoint of the present in both directions. Such a feature of the music

could be very simply assimilated into a theological expectation of what will happen in the much more distant future, but for the purposes of this study it is the idea that the music seems tailored to a sense of the listener's presence that is most significant.

Some of the arias in both passions take this idea of cultivating, or at least implying, an active listener even further. The majority of Bach's arias present the vocal line as vitally dependent on the 'stuff' of the piece as presented in the instrumental material: some adhere closely to this, others deviate in a variety of ways. However, there are some instances in which the deviation is more absolute, where the ritornello material seems purposely to be ignored in the vocal lines. This seems to be the case with the longest and perhaps the most challenging aria to perform in the John Passion, 'Erwäge, wie sein blutgefärbter Rücken', where the ritornello is so blatantly shaped by the string figuration (composed originally for violas d'amore) that the tenor can, at most, only allude to the figuration of the opening two beats (b. 5). If this setting of the word 'Erwäge' was indeed Bach's first compositional thought (as one would expect for a composer of vocal music), he clearly very soon developed it well beyond any vocal considerations.

But, perhaps, Bach did this purposely to set the tenor slightly away from the essential substance of the piece. After all, the text is imploring us to consider how Jesus's bloodstained back is in all aspects like the sky, on which a beautiful rainbow of God's grace remains once the deluge of our sin has abated. Thus, the tenor's imploring 'Erwäge' (b. 5) encourages us to 'consider' the four-bar ritornello that we have just heard, but without initially telling us what to consider; not until b. 8 do we get the

reference to the sky, and not until the B section do we learn of the deluge ('Wasserwogen', b. 22) or the rainbow ('Regenbogen', b. 25).

Thus there is perhaps some sense in having the tenor stand a little apart from this emerging picture, we retrospectively focus on the rounded ritornello that continues to lie harmonically behind the voice, but from which he seems to step out towards us. And we add associations to it as his commentary proceeds (sky, deluge, rainbow). This is surely no straightforward symbolism, but, rather, a sophisticated exercise in a pre-modern revelation of resemblance: Jesus's body is like the sky with a rainbow, even if this would initially seem absurd; Bach's four-bar ritornello invention is increasingly revealed to embody precisely the same images even if we would never have considered this at the outset. It is relatively easy to associate the music with the natural elements, but we are encouraged also to sense this as becoming a spiritualized form of Jesus's body, something akin the 'real presence' of the Lutheran Eucharist.

As I have stressed already, these examples are not to be taken as evidence that the music is some sort of code, but that they seem designed to engage the listener in concretizing a sense, one that is played out in time and thus through an expansion in moment-to-moment consciousness. There is also the sense here of the singer as an intermediary between the instrumental music and the listener, thus going beyond the sense of perspective that I have already suggested is implied by aria forms in general. This is a

sort of perspective where the viewing- (or rather listening-) points, both inside and outside the music, are occupied by human subjects. We might also gain the sense that the notion of the listener assimilated to the flow of the music is rendered more complex: the listener can certainly occupy the 'world' implied by the instrumental ritornello, or the one implied by the singer observing and pointing towards the first, or even one of her own brought into being by following the interactions between the first two.

Much of my discussion has been edging towards the notion that the stronger sense of the 'implied listener' is characteristic of a particular period in musical history – the time when the development of individual subjectivity was at a premium and when music came to be seen as a crucial element in the cultivation of this essentially artificial construct.

The music plays on our memory and sense of consciousness, developing our awareness as conscious beings anxious to develop a personal identity defined by its consistency and integrity, enduring beyond whatever is thrown up by the moment. There is a degree of necessarily artificiality in this: one uses a cultural tool to enhance one's sense of personhood and unique existence, something crucial in the construction of western modernity, but this is by no means the norm for humanity in general.

One might predict that this sense of implied listener became particularly important within the later 18th century and early 19th century German concept of music as part of *Bildung*. This sort of developmental aesthetic education was thus primed to translate the religious

motivations of Bach's Passion music into this imperative towards personal subjective development. The types of temporal and layered listening experiences that I have outlined in Monteverdi and Bach are surely amply evident at certain places in music from the classical era. Such examples are equally likely to be sporadic and exceptional rather than something that can be discerned as a norm of musical procedure. Precisely those examples that have recently been cited to demonstrate music's sporadic narrative function also work from the point of view of implied listenership. Beethoven's representation of memory, most obviously the return of the introductory Adagio 'La malinconia' just before the conclusion of the String Quartet in Bb, Op 18, no. 6, has been discussed by Charles Rosen, Lawrence Kramer and Karol Berger.¹⁵ The latter suggests that Beethoven is the first person to discover the 'past tense' in music, by which it represents a mind abandoning present concerns for something returning from the past. My examples surely imply that the roots of this go rather further back, until at least the beginning of the seventeenth century, although it is clearly much more overt in the period of Beethoven.

Considering this sort of issue from the standpoint of the listener forces us to think more about the specific type of human implied by this sort of music: is it one who is recognisable to us, one that we would wish to be, or even one that we cannot help being?

¹⁵ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge Mass., 1995), 166; Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles), 190-203; Karol Berger, *A Theory of Art* (Oxford and New York, 2000), 179.

Like all good stories, this one of the implied or internal listener eventually begins to disintegrate, or at least is rendered more problematic, the longer it lasts. For instance, towards the end of the nineteenth century, while incipient musical modernism might continue play upon listeners' expectations as much as any other music, and indeed set up levels of conscious recollection, more often than not much of the ultimate effect is towards the alienation rather than cultivation of the listener. Just as I have tended to focus on those cases where the sense of an implied listener was in the ascendant, those where it is on the decline (or at least becoming problematic are perhaps the most telling). In other words, some pieces seem to preserve the notion of exercising the listener's self-awareness while ultimately leaving the listener disoriented.

While analysts tend to look for coherence and unity in Bruckner's symphonies, this approach tends to ignore some of the sense of shock the listener surely experiences, at least in certain instances. The opening of the Fifth Symphony begins unusually, for Bruckner, with the slow introduction that had been one major strategy for the classical symphonist. Traditionally, the slow introduction might introduce us to a world of seriousness or profundity that the main 'stuff' of the first movement dispels or redefines. What we have, in effect, is the sense of the main discourse of the music as lying within a frame, which the listener enters from outside, in the introduction.¹⁶ The listener might use the memory of one initial world ('outside the frame') to inform the experience of the

¹⁶ See Berger, *A Theory of Art*, 181-2, for the suggestion that, like paintings, music can have an internal frame, thus separating its discourse into one outside and one inside the frame.

'plot' of the symphonic process within it. The opening of the fifth symphony is unusual though, because the introduction sounds so much like historical quotation (had Bruckner played Bach's chorale prelude on 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland', perhaps?). It is not a typical element of his symphonic world, perhaps a frame borrowed from elsewhere; and it seems to run out of steam before long, by no means setting up anything that is to follow.

Next follows a sequence of fanfares in a seemingly unrelated tonality (beginning in Gb to the initial Bb), almost Stravinskian in their starkness and unorthodox voice leading. If we've been prepared to accept one section of this music as lying outside the frame, what are we to do with this second one? And then there follows the third unrelated element, an expectant pedal on A and thus nowhere near the opening tonality, but now in a much more familiar symphonic style that eventually leads us into the 'first subject' proper. But this itself begins as if as a parenthesis, initially in Gb, and thus again largely outside the primary tonality. In other words, one is entirely disorientated as to the point at which we join the symphonic world; and when the first subject actually appears we might even be wondering whether we missed its start. There is a feeling that it has somehow been going on already without our having caught its beginning, since it is already modulating quite widely, as if developing a theme that has already been announced with some degree of stability. All of this is, I think, something more than the case of a piece of music constantly thwarting our expectations, since we are never quite sure where the 'normal'

music really lies, against which our expectations are to be dashed. It is almost as if the 'implied listener' is defined in a negative sense. Of course, the traditional analyst might still claim that all these ambiguities are eventually sorted out in the work's massive progress and that all the elements conspire towards a grand synthesis at the end. But, at least from a listening perspective, this is as much wishful thinking as musical reality; it is perfectly open for the listener to claim that he hears the work satisfactorily resolved, but this is really an act of faith, the belief that one's earlier disorientation was merely a temporary aberration.

To draw all this together, I have proposed that there are three levels in which we can consider the listening element of music as a composed and performed artefact. First, there is the notion that all music is the product of a fundamental human capacity to hear, both unconsciously and consciously, harnessed in countless ways by diverse cultures. The listening experiences informing and inflecting the music as it was created could provide a focus for analysis and criticism contrasting with those methods traditionally employed. Secondly, there is the type of music, covering very broad historical and cultural boundaries, that presupposes an attentive listening or even participating audience, and that is tailored to the active experience of listening to music; this is the simplest and most familiar category. Finally, there is the stronger sense of the 'implied listener' which I suggest is much more elusive, with specific historical and cultural boundaries within western modernity, and which is discernible more in the exceptions than in the 'normal'

progress of the music. While this sense of the implied listener – someone developing the sense of a secure and unitary self over time - is perfectly understandable today (assuming I have understood it correctly) and might well still be employed in a broad range of new music in our own age, I would suggest that it now reflects only one way of being human among an alarming array of choices. Discerning or realising an implied listener should certainly not become the norm for all ‘good’ listening or the ideal by which all music should be measured. Indeed, it is surely time to acknowledge that the type of music we tend to associate with the canon of Western classical music is an historical construct through and through, and relates to a specific range of subjectivities that are equally contingent. On the other hand, historical constructs should not be abandoned simply because they are historical rather than universal, but their survival and regeneration requires constant thought and effort.