Listening as the Work of Co-Composing: A Note on the Actuality of Adorno's Musical Thought[1]

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Abstract: For the work of listening can be understood as a collaboration with the musical work itself, and in this sense for Adorno listening, as will be discussed below, is an activity of co-composing or reconstituting the music. Certainly Adorno's dialectical philosophical approach is at great variance with the 'empirical musicology'[2] through which contemporary music studies explores these topics, but its contemporary relevance is all the greater in that it puts Adorno's contributions in the larger context of critical social theory and its commitment to sustaining the human capacity for a vision of emancipation. It is not my intention here to enter into a detailed consideration of the relationship between Adorno's perspective and the work of contemporary musicologists and music theorists. Rather, my aim is to elaborate Adorno's conception of the work of listening in some detail, in the context of his thinking about what he calls ›the new music‹ and its place in the history of Western art music.
Keywords: Adorno, new music, structural listening.

"[The new] music can be considered the bearer of a moral and spiritual obligation"[3], writes Theodor Adorno in his *Guidelines for Listening to New Music*. This is the case, he says, in a socio-historical context in which the deterioration of listening to fragmented and sensory-focused activity "is promoted both by prevailing music institutions and businesses as well as by the social regression of listening. This", he continues, "is why it is exceedingly urgent to fully and consciously resist it in the apperception of [the new] music."[4] The effort to listen properly to music, in other words, is a work of resistance, a moral and spiritual obligation for the listener as well. Here we see how intimately Adorno's thinking about music is tied to his social criticism. In his essay *Adorno's Praxis of Individuation Through Music Listening*, Jeremy Shapiro elaborated

1 An earlier version of this paper was given at the IRCAM conference "Tracking the Creative Process in Music", Paris, October

2 See Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook (eds.): *Empirical Musicology: Aims, methods, prospects*, Oxford, 2004.

3 "[…] die neue Musik [darf] als Trägerin einer geistig-moralischen Verpflichtung gelten" (Theodor W. Adorno: "Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik" ["Guidelines for Listening to New Music"], in: Theodor W. Adorno: Der getreue Korrepetitor. Lehrschriften zur musikalischen Praxis, Frankfurt am Main 1963 (pp. 39-98), p. 96, translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro; translation revised by Shierry Nicholsen. When Adorno speaks of new music here he is referring specifically to the music of the Second Viennese School and its descendants rather than to all new or modern music.

4 "Gerade weil diese Tendenz zum atomistischen und kulinarischen Hören, eine in Wahrheit vorkünstlerische, krud stoffliche Neigung zum Abtasten und Abschmecken isolierter Reizmomente, ebenso vom herrschenden Musikbetrieb wie von der gesellschaftlichen Rückbildung des Hörens gefördert wird, ist es überaus dringlich, in der Apperzeption neuer Musik dieser Neigung aus vollem Bewußtsein zu widerstehen" (ibid., p. 96).

the notion that Adorno's thought about music represents a strand of critical social theory.[5] For Adorno, he claims, "adequate" or "genuine" listening was a way of building subjecthood, a model for a way to be, a form of experience that moved toward escaping from the always-the-same. Here I will expand on one aspect of Shapiro's thesis, namely the question what the work of Adorno's "genuine" or "adequate" listening actually consists of.

As Shapiro points out, Adorno's interest in listening converges with one of the directions taken by contemporary music studies, namely an interest in the nature of the activity of listening.[6] At the same time, it converges with another of the foci of contemporary music studies, namely the exploration of collaborative music-making.[7] For the work of listening can be understood as a collaboration with the musical work itself, and in this sense for Adorno listening, as will be discussed below, is an activity of co-composing or reconstituting the music. Certainly Adorno's dialectical philosophical approach is at great variance with the 'empirical musicology' [8] through which contemporary music studies explores these topics, but its contemporary relevance is all the greater in that it puts Adorno's contributions in the larger context of critical social theory and its commitment to sustaining the human capacity for a vision of emancipation. It is not my intention here to enter into a detailed consideration of the relationship between Adorno's perspective and the work of contemporary musicologists and music theorists. Rather, my aim is to elaborate Adorno's conception of the work of listening in some detail, in the context of his thinking about what he calls 'the new music' and its place in the history of Western art music.

The Progressive in Music and the Dialectic of Objectivity and Subjectivity in Composition

Adorno's notion of the work of listening is very closely linked with his conception of what is progressive in music. For if music has a moral and spiritual obligation, essentially one of resistance to social regression, it is not necessarily any music that carries that obligation, just as it is not necessarily any listening that collaborates in that resistance. When Adorno refers to "great" music as well as to "advanced" music, he is not subscribing to a "museal" conception of a canon

5 See Jeremy J. Shapiro: "Adorno's Praxis of Individuation Through Music Listening", in: *Zeitschrift für kritische Theorie*, no. 32/33, 2011, pp. 36-64. See also Martin Niederauer: "Gehörte Dialektik. Über den Zusammenhang von Musik, Rezeption und Gesellschaft bei Adorno", in: Marc Grimm and Martin Niederauer (eds.): *Ästhetische Aufklärung – Kunst und Kritik in der Theorie Theodor W. Adornos*, Weinheim, Basel, 2016, pp. 180-197.

6 See Eric F. Clarke: *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*, New York 2005; Tia DeNora: *Music in Everyday Life*, Cambridge, 2000; Ruth Herbert: *Everyday Music Listening: Absorption, Dissociation and Trancing*, Farnham, Surrey, 2011.

7 See Nicholas Cook: *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance*, Oxford, 2014.

8 See Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook (eds.): *Empirical Musicology: Aims, methods, prospects*, Oxford, 2004.

of established works. Rather, his reference reflects his conception of the nature of music history (more accurately, the history of Western art music.) On the one hand, as he says in a talk on the relation between the new music and what he calls "traditional" music (often referred to as "classical", a term Adorno hated)[9], this historical development is not something natural or "organic"[10] and does not proceed in some imagined linear fashion. If the new music is experimental rather than something that appears to have come about organically from the old, this is because works of art are made by human beings: "The consciousness and spontaneity of human beings have been incorporated into them", he writes, "and continuity is repeatedly broken by their intervention."[11] Whether an experiment is useful or not, however, has to do with whether it addresses an objective musical issue or is on the contrary simply an arbitrary act of the composer's will.

In other words, Adorno thinks of the nature of musical advances in terms of a dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity. The composers active in any specific period, with its specific socio-historical context, face objective challenges, but these challenges take the form of technical musical problems, and the advances made by earlier composers in earlier periods form part of the context of these issues. That is to say, the objective state of social reality, in which human beings and the larger social whole are not reconciled but rather in conflict, is not reflected directly within music but rather gives rise to specific musical problems. This is the objective aspect of the potential for musical progress. Attempted resolutions of these immanent musical problems can only be made by individual human beings. But a response that advances music is not a matter of a composer's subjective intentions so much as a question of whether the composer is capable of a subjective response to those objective issues. Such a subjective response will necessarily be an individual one, but not an arbitrary one.

Adorno's comments on Schoenberg in his essay *On the Social Situation of Music* provide a concrete example of how he understands this dialectic:

> Schoenberg's really central achievement is that he […] never behaved "expressionistically", superimposing subjective intentions upon heterogeneous material in an authoritarian and inconsiderate manner. Instead, every gesture with which he intervenes in the material configuration is at the same time an answer to questions directed to him by

9 See Theodor W. Adorno: "Das Erbe und die neue Musik" ["The New Music and the Legacy of the Traditional"], in: Theodor W. Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 18, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schultz, Frankfurt am Main 1984, pp. 684-694 (translation by Shierry Nicholsen and Jeremy J. Shapiro).

10 "gleichsam organisch" " (ibid., p. 684.).

11 "Kunstwerke, die musikalischen nicht weniger als die anderen, sind ein von Menschen Gemachtes; Bewußtsein und Spontaneität von Menschen gehen in sie ein, und stets wieder wird durch deren Eingriff die Kontinuität durchbrochen" (ibid., p. 684).

> the material in the form of its own immanent problems. Every subjective-expressive achievement of Schoenberg is simultaneously the resolution of objective-material contradictions which continued to exist in the Wagnerian technique of chromatic sequence and in the diatonic technique of variation employed by Brahms as well.[12]

It is important to understand that the progressive aspects of a composer's work are not separable from the work's meaningfulness, the degree of which (and thus the degree of the work's greatness) is related, in Adorno's words, "to its richness of elements that are differentiated, mediated with one another, joined together to make meaning."[13]

At the same time, it is also important to remember that while music as an art form has some autonomy from and a critical stance toward the socio-historical context, these specifically musical problems cannot be given a definitive or fully adequate solution when there is no such reconciliation possible in social reality. For this reason even the most advanced music is nevertheless condemned to fail. But great music, shall we say, fails meaningfully.

Immanence and Historicity: The Location of the Musical ›New‹

I have been speaking here of composers, but to speak as Adorno does of problems being immanent in the music itself is to broach another question, namely, where is "the music itself"? Many of Adorno's texts read as though his interest were centered on the musical work, that is, on individual musical compositions or on a composer's body of work (when Adorno uses a composer's name he is generally referring to that composer's work). But as those involved in contemporary music studies are well aware, "the music itself" can be created – in the sense of actualized – by many activities other than the composing process; in performance, for instance.[14] Adorno himself worked for decades on a theory of musical reproducibility[15], that is, interpretation,

12 Theodor W. Adorno [1932]: »On the Social Situation of Music«, in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, translated by Susan H. Gillespie, Berkeley 2002 (pp. 391-436), p. 399; "Es ist nun die eigentlich zentrale und in der üblichen Betrachtungsweise niemals recht gewürdigte Leistung Schönbergs, daß er […] die expressive Kritik des vorgegebenen Materials und seiner Formen niemals 'expressionistisch', durch selbstherrliches und rücksichtsloses Einlegen subjektiver Intentionen ins heterogene Material vollzog, sondern daß jede Geste, mit der er ins materiale Gefüge eingreift, zugleich die präzise Antwort ist auf Fragen, welche das Material in Gestalt der materialeigenen Probleme an ihn richtet. Jede subjektiv-expressionistische Errungenschaft Schönbergs ist zugleich eine Auflösung objektiv-materialer Widersprüche, wie sie sowohl in der chromatischen Sequenztechnik Wagners wie in der diatonischen Variationstechnik Brahmsens fortbestanden." (Theodor W. Adorno: "Zur gesellschaftlichen Lage der Musik", in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 18, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schultz, Frankfurt am Main, 1984 [pp. 729-777], pp. 737 f.).

13 "Im allgemeinen steigt der Rang einer Komposition mit ihrem Reichtum an voneinander unterschiedenen, miteinander vermittelten und zum Sinn sich zusammenfügenden Elementen." (Adorno, "Das Erbe und die neue Musik", p. 689).

14 See Nicholas Cook: *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2000 as well as Cook, *Beyond the Score*.

15 See Theodor W. Adorno: *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*, London 2007.

and would no doubt have agreed with Schoenberg's comment on Mahler's conducting that in some ways reproduction is production by another pathway.[16] In his notes on reproducibility Adorno also speaks of the silent reading of musical texts as a form of interpretation, and when I speak of listening as "co-composing" I am suggesting that for Adorno listening as well is a form of music-making, of actualizing "the music itself". While music can be actualized in these activities, it is clear on the other hand, as contemporary music theorists have also emphasized, that a musical text in the sense of the notes or score is not the music itself. A good portion of Adorno's manuscript on reproducibility is devoted to discussion of this point. One might say that fundamentally a musical work exists in virtual form and can be actualized in a variety of modes, one of which is a text and none of which coincides definitively with the music in itself. An analogue that might help to make this point would be the absence in Elgar's *Enigma Variations* of the theme that is being varied – giving rise to many divergent suggestions about what the theme "really" is.[17]

This point bears on the question of the way the music is instantiated in various activities. But ›the music itself‹, even in the virtual form of the musical idea of a piece, is also located in time, and not only in the time at which it was composed. For works of art, according to Adorno, have an after-life in which certain of their qualities, including their original shock value, are lost, while other aspects of them reveal themselves as they are heard and performed.[18] This has to do with ways in which they may be affected by socio-cultural dynamics in the course of history[19] but also, as we shall see, with the role of listening in helping the works to endure.

Listening

Adorno holds up as desirable something he variously calls authentic, genuine or adequate listening. All of these terms, including the potentially misleading term "adequate" need to be taken in the sense of "up to the challenge" of doing the work needed to grasp the music. (The word "expert", which Adorno uses in his book on the sociology of music to denote a type of listener, is misleading in suggesting that Adorno is concerned with musical training or technical knowledge

16 Cf. "Der Produktive erzeugt in seinem Innern ein genaues Bild von dem,was er wiedergeben wird.. .. In wenigem nur unterscheidet sich solches Reproduzieren vom Produziern; fast ist nur der Weg ein anderer" Arnold Schoenberg: "Prager Rede", in: Arnold Schoenberg et al.: *Über Gustav Mahler*, Tübingen 1966 (p. 44).

17 See Shapiro, Adorno's Praxis of Individuation Through Music Listening.

18 See Adorno, "Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik", p. 98.

19 See, for instance, Nicholas Cook on Beethoven's 9th Symphony, referencing Adorno (Nicholas Cook: *Beethoven: Symphony no. 9*, Cambridge, 1993).

rather than a highly developed capacity to do the work of listening.[20]) Such listening is a complex and dialectical activity, as we see in the variety of terms with which Adorno describes it. He refers, for instance, to the living experience of the music, to surrendering oneself to the music without reserve, immersing oneself in the music, following along, and most tellingly for my current purposes, co-accomplishing (*mitvollziehen)*, co-constituting *(mitkonstitutieren*), or co-composing (*mitkomponieren*) the music.[21] These terms designate not different kinds of listening but different aspects of the genuine listening activity, which involves activity and receptivity, spontaneity and reflection, emotion and intellect, subjectivity and objectivity, and attention to the part and whole. In contrast to the kinds of regressed or inadequate listening that Adorno characterizes among other things as "culinary", that is, confined to the merely sensuously pleasing sound, or "atomistic", that is, focused on the part without regard to its context, [22] adequate listening involves a complex kind of work that, as I indicated above, can be considered a conjunct form of music-making, and Shapiro, as we have seen, argues that this kind of work is a practice of building subjecthood through attending to the non-identical. Music that is not susceptible to being listened to in this way relieves the listener of doing such work. As Adorno puts it, in such cases "the composition hears for the listener".[23] And of course listeners may be eager for such relief. But the listener who does no work gains nothing.

The New Music and the Problem of Listening

Adorno's conception of the complex nature of the work of listening needs to be understood in the context of his thinking about the revolution wrought by the new music of the Second Viennese School. For Adorno, the difficulties this music encountered, and continues to encounter, in its reception both illuminate the question of what music requires from the listener and make it acute. The difficulties arise because that music attempts to grapple with the fact that the tonal system with which Western art music operated for hundreds of years has become outworn and is no longer viable. This means that musical coherence and meaning has to be created and communicated without the aid of the conventions of tonality. To be more specific, the demise of

20 See Shapiro, Adorno's Praxis of Individuation Through Music Listening.
21 See, for instance, Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, pp. 39, 52 and 72.
22 For "culinary" see for instance, Adorno, Anweisungen, p. 41. For "atomistic", see for instance,Theodor W. Adorno [1965]: "Schöne Stellen" ["Beautiful Passages"], in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 18, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Klaus Schultz, Frankfurt am Main 1984 (pp. 695-718), p. 695.
23 Theodor W. Adorno [1941]: "On Popular Music", in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Essays on Music,* ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, Berkeley, 2002 (pp. 437-469), p. 442.

the system of tonality means renouncing such aids to intelligibility as the distinction between major and minor, the distinction between dissonance and consonance, and the use of cadences to outline form, as well as the familiar structures offered by the sonata form so closely associated with the system of tonality. Accordingly, the conventionally generated expectations which guided listeners in their hearing cease to be functional. As Adorno puts it, the listener can no longer swim along in the channels of tonality. Indeed, in a sense each composition now creates its own formal structure, something that has never been heard before – as epitomized for Adorno in the vocal phrase "ich fühle luft von anderem planeten"[24] from Schoenberg's second string quartet. Thus the listener must face the question, how does one listen to the genuinely new, that which has never been heard before? What kind of listening work is called for?

The Subcutaneous

Lest the question of how to listen to the genuinely new seem unanswerable, let us note that of course Adorno is well aware that there is no such thing as something absolutely new, something for which there is no precedent of any kind. In fact, in dialectical terms the new in the new music is the determinate negation of the old, hence tied to it in specific ways. Nor does Adorno mean to imply that there was no developmental process leading to the point at which the system of tonality itself was outmoded. As Adorno argues in *Das Erbe und die neue Musik*, there is a continuity as well as a break between the new music and the great (progressive or advanced) music of the past. It lies in the presence in each of those works of what Adorno, following Schoenberg, calls the "subcutaneous", [25]the individual formal structures beneath the conventional surface. In the music of the past, the subcutaneous was interwoven with that surface. With the new music, however, what Adorno calls the tonal shell or husk[26], that is, the surface schemata of tonality, has been burned away and one now hears directly what previously lay beneath the surface. The progressive character of the music is carried in the subcutaneous layer rather than via the schemata of tonality, and this is as true for traditional as for the new music.

24 Quoted in Adorno, Schöne Stellen, p. 718.

25 For the notion of the subcutaneous, see Adorno, Das Erbe und die neue Musik, p.688: "Schoenberg hat in seinem letzten Buch einmal im Zusammenhang mit metrischen Problemen vom "Subkutanen", von einer unter der Haut des Regulären sch abspielenden Irregularität gesprochen. Ich glaube, dieser Begriff der subkutanen Gestaltung gilt für jegliche Musik von wahrhaftem Rang in all ihren Aspekten."

26 Adorno uses this metaphor in connection with the notion of the subcutaneous. See Adorno, Das Erbe und die neue Musik, p. 688.

The Work of Listening to the New

While the habits of tonal listening are of no use when it comes not only to the new music but also to the subcutaneous progressive aspects of traditional music, Adorno refers at various points to other activities and modes of mental and emotional functioning that are components of the work of genuine listening. The first and most crucial is an active suspension or renunciation of the expectations ingrained through experience with tonal music; those expectations will not be fulfilled and will simply distract attention from what is actually going on in the music. What is needed instead is alert attention to each musical event as it occurs[27].

A second is a set of cognitive categories that offer templates to be used in listening, which is among other things a cognitive activity. If the categories narrowly specified by the tonal system and the sonata form never were and now are clearly not adequate to grasp the immanent dynamics of the most advanced music, the listener nevertheless needs categories for characterizing aspects of musical form, categories that allow one to come closer to grasping the unique forms created by the new music as well as the subcutaneous in traditional music. Such categories would need to have a moment of universality but also allow one to grasp specificity. Adorno offers as examples of such categories continuation, dissolution, succession, development recurrence, and contrast. He refers to this idea as his "material theory of form in music". [28]

A third activity entering into the work of genuine listening is what Adorno calls "exact imagination,"[29] a term which refers to a quasi-emotional registering of the specific character of the music, expressible in figurative language rather than discursive logic. Exact imagination is important in registering the nature of the musical detail in itself as opposed to merely in its function with regard to the whole. Coordinated with exact imagination is what Adorno calls the "speculative ear,"[30] by which he means the quasi-philosophical dimension of reflection and

27 See Adorno, Anweisungen, pp.43-45.

28 See Theodor W. Adorno [1969]: "On the Problem of Musical Analysis", in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, Berkeley 2002 (pp. 162-180), p. 177. Max Paddison has elaborated this notion in his Adorno's *Aesthetics of Music* (1993).

29 See for instance Adorno, Schöne Stellen p. 699: "...so müsste plausiblerweise der Weg zum Verständnis des Ganzen ebenso vom Einzelnen hinauf führen können wie vom Ganzen hinab. Aus diesen Weg sieht musikalische Erfahrung um so mehr sich verwiesen, als übergreifende Formen, denen das Gehör blindlings sich anvertauen könnte, nicht mehr existieren. Das Mittel zu solcher Erfahrung ist exakte Phan6tasie. Sie schliesst den Reichtum des Einzelen, bei dem sie verweilt, auf... " for additional discussion of the notion, see my *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics*, Cambridge 1997, and Shapiro, Adorno's Praxis of Individuation Through Music Listening.

30 See Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 41, with reference to the listener's active relationship to the music: "[Es ist] eine schweigende, imaginative, schliesslich hörende Aktivität, Leistung dessen, was Kierkegaard das spekulative Ohr nannte."

analysis in music and music listening. The listener's speculative ear operates with a sensitivity to aspects of the composition at hand developed both through repeated listening and in the course of analysis of the composition.

Thus the work of listening as Adorno conceives it transcends the polarity of intellect and emotion. Feeling and thought are mediated and sublimated to become the activities of exact imagination and the speculative ear rather than the experience of specific ideas or emotions. Attending alertly, listening with exact imagination and a speculative ear, and using the kind of universal categories of process Adorno suggests: One begins to grasp what Adorno means by a living experience of music.

The Work of Listening as Co-Composing

The components I have just discussed work together in the complex and dialectical activity that I refer to as 'listening as co-composing'. While Adorno, as noted above, uses the term 'co-composing', along with other essentially equivalent terms like 'co-constituting' and 'co-accomplishing', he does not focus directly on the idea. Rather, its centrality is implied through his frequent use of terms with the prefix co- *(mit-*), i.e., 'with', to refer to listening as a constructive activity on the part of the subject, combining activity and receptivity in the ways discussed above.

The term co-composing emphasizes the analogy between listening and other forms of *making* music. But who or what is the listener 'with'? On the one hand, the listener is with the music as it unfolds. Listening as co-composing does not mean creating something from nothing but rather recreating or reconstructing the music in the course of hearing it. It is an activity of ongoing synthesis, where what is constructed is shaped both by each tone or musical event as it occurs and by what one has already heard. At the same time, of course, the term co-composing suggests an analogy with the work of the composer (and by the same token that of the interpreter as well, as Schoenberg noted of Mahler in the comments cited above). Like the genuine listener, the composer is engaged in a dialectic of receptive attention to what is newly perceived, and the construction and reconstruction of coherence as the work on the composition proceeds. For the composer who is to be open to the new must also give up expectations engendered by tonal experience and expect the unexpected, the idea which comes unbidden to the mind in the form of an *Einfall* or inspiration; at the same time, he must integrate the new idea with what has come before.

Reflection and Analysis

The role of reflection and analysis in listening as co-composing requires some elaboration. Adorno's notion of the speculative ear, referred to above, designates his position on the longstanding debate about whether 'understanding' music has any connection with 'enjoying' it[31].

Crucial to Adorno's understanding of the new music and what it requires of the listener is that this music itself is reflective. What he means by this is related to what I said above about the relation between the new music and traditional music. Namely, as determinate negation of tonal music, the new music is bound up with it as a reflection. If we think of the course of music history as an implicit process of self-reflection,[32] then this reflective dimension is foregrounded in the new music. If in the present day music is used to reinforce false consciousness, as Shapiro suggests, then the new music, with its grounding in reflection, is a progressive force working against that false consciousness.

This self-reflective process is not only written into the musical text, so to speak; it is also required of the listener, in the form of analysis. Adorno insists that the new music simply cannot be understood without analysis. This statement can be easily misunderstood as meaning that Adorno believes that one must reflect on the music while listening to it, trying to discern its meaning. This is not the case. Adorno puts it this way: "Listening does not mean analyzing, and analysis split off from listening is alien to music. But inversely without the work and effort of analysis one cannot hear properly."[33] Thus listening and analyzing are distinct but interdependent ways of relating to the music. Analysis is meant to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the coherence in the music than the listener can ever hope to be fully conscious of while listening.

With the new music of the Second Viennese School the need for analysis becomes strikingly clear. That music makes use of discontinuities and gaps and may easily seem chaotic. Analysis is needed to locate continuities and similarities across the discontinuities and divergences that are so striking. Without analysis even a 'correct' or 'accurate' (to the score) performance of a post-tonal composition can easily be perceived by performers and listeners alike as the musical

31 See Jerrold Levinson: *Music in the Moment*, Ithaca, NY 1997.

32 In *On the Problem of Musical Analysis*, for instance, Adorno notes that Brahms' compositions are the product of his analysis of music of the past, especially Beethoven's (see Adorno, On the Problem of Musical Analysis, p. 163).

33 "[…] hören heißt nicht analysieren, die vom Hören abgespaltene Analyse wäre musikfremd; aber ohne die Arbeit und Anstrengung der Analyse wird umgekehrt nicht richtig gehört." (Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 72.)

equivalent of meaningless gibberish.[34] Here again Adorno emphasizes that analysis, while crucial, is not intended to replace spontaneity in listening. "Reflection", his comment quoted earlier continues, "which identifies the functional connection of the individual detail, may perhaps help spontaneously reunite while listening what appears ripped apart, namely elements that in themselves are in stark contrast and separated from one another by rests or pauses."[35]

It is perhaps superfluous to note here that analysis does not mean mere factual information, nor does it mean rigid following of any of the established methods of music analysis (such as Schenkerian analysis.). Rather, in Adorno's words, to analyze means "to investigate the inner relationships of the work and to investigate what is essentially contained within the composition".[36]

Analysis, in other words, must be immanent analysis. But there is a dialectic implied here as well. For if on the one hand, the new music in creating its own unique forms requires analysis that attempts to find the unique idea and mode of proceeding of each work (and Adorno notes in one of his last texts, *On the Problem of Musical Analysis* (1969), that he realized this only in the course of revising his Berg book), on the other hand, analysis will necessarily always have a reductive moment that puts it behind the living experience of the music. The problem of the relation between analysis and the musical work is thus a version of a problem central to Adorno's thought, namely that of the relation between identity and non-identity. For Adorno, this problem includes the effort to move toward grasping the nonidentical while remaining inescapably enmeshed in the identical, both in terms of cognition and in terms of the socio-historical context.
Adorno's insistence that the new music requires repeated listenings is related to his insistence that it requires analysis. Recursive listening is part of the process by which the listener reconstitutes or recomposes the music. Consider how shocking the discontinuities in the new music are at first hearing. Not only does analysis itself, when it is working to formulate, as it were, the specific idea of a work, require time and recursive examinations of the work, it takes time for the listener to absorb the results of analysis and coordinate them with what he hears in the face of the shocks the music initially gives rise to. In somewhat the same way, repeated listenings are needed not so that attention can be dulled by familiarity but rather in the service of more and more detailed perception of coherence and intelligibility amid what can seem fragmented or chaotic. In this vein,

34 See Adorno's comments on Webern's *Bagatelles* (Adorno, *On the Problem of Musical Analysis*, p. 168).
35 "Die Reflexion, die den funktionellen Zusammenhang am Einzelnen benennt, hilft dennoch vielleicht, daß man das scheinbar Zerrissene, nämlich in sich schroff Kontrastierende und durch Pausen voneinander Getrennte, beim Mithören wieder spontan vereint. " (Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 72.)
36 Adorno, On the Problem of Musical Analysis, p. 163.

Adorno no doubt appreciated Schoenberg's comment that Mahler's numerous rehearsals as a conductor came about because with each rehearsal he heard more and more to be attended to.[37]

Some Specific Aspects of the Work of Listening to the New Music

In the 1950s and 60s, during the time he was associated with the Darmstadt summer courses, where he was in dialogue with some of the avant-garde composers of the time[38], Adorno gave a number of talks designed to facilitate the genuine or adequate listening he was concerned with. Some have already been referred to here. One in particular, the *Guidelines for Listening to New Music,* goes into detail regarding the way a number of aspects of the new music diverge from the conventions of previous music, and the work the listener must do to grasp them.

That talk is aimed at the listener with a genuine desire to understand the new music, who must, however difficult it may seem, work to listen to each aspect of the new music with the combination of openness and constructive effort discussed above.

Melody in the new music, for instance, will usually not conform to conventional ideas of the singable line but rather employ unexpectedly large intervals with pauses between the notes. The listener is required to trace the arc of these intervals, as it were, in order to grasp the melody. Or in the case of the multi-tone chords used in the new music, each note must be heard in itself so that the chord as a whole is not simply perceived as a chaotic jumble. At the same time each note in the chord must be heard as a voice leading in a certain direction. In both these cases it is clear that without such efforts the listener will simply not hear the music. At the same time, however, Adorno notes that the capacity to do this kind of listening work is an ideal to be progressed toward rather than something reserved for the expert.

The Issue of Repetition

As I noted above, Adorno comments that in some sense with the new music each composition creates its own form. What must the listener do to grasp the unique form of a particular piece? This question too concerns the relationship of identity and non-identity. In traditional music, repetition of the identical (in whatever sense) was crucial to establishing the

37 See Schoenberg, Prager Rede, p. 44.

38 See Gianmario Borio: "Dire cela, sans savoir quoi: The Question of Meaning in Adorno and in the Musical Avant-Garde", in: Berthold Hoeckner (ed.): *Apparitions: New Perspectives on Adorno and Twentieth-Century Music*, New York, 2006, pp. 41-68.

form of the work. Repetition was used, for instance, to create easily recognizable reprises or recapitulations, clearly distinguished from development sections. Once the architectonics of the sonata form have been abandoned, however, one cannot expect the kind of obvious compartmentalization of development and reprise that aided understanding in traditional music. In contrast to traditional music with its reliance on repetition, Schoenberg characterized the new music as 'musical prose'; it does not use obvious repetitions or analogies as formal markers signaling the endings of sections and is thus more like prose than like poetry with its use of rhyme.[39] At the same time, however, as Adorno points out, relations of similarity, that is to say, of identity and non-identity, remain crucial for any understanding.

In this sense the dialectic of identity and non-identity is at the core of the issue of form in the new music. The central technique used in the new music is what Adorno calls "radical variation,"[40] which relies on the perception of relations of similarity, in which the new or non-identical nevertheless refers to the old or identical, to create coherence. To grasp these references the listener needs to be able to sense the old in the new and the new in the old. What this means is that while the listener needs to attend to each note, he also needs to hear, in Adorno's phrase, 'multi-dimensionally,'[41] thus backwards and forwards in time, with a memory of what has gone before that can be heard in relation to the present, so that the details both anticipate and look back, thus helping to reconstitute the coherence of the whole. Adorno refers to this multi-dimensional listening as a component of 'structural listening'[42], one of the central concepts in his work on music. It is important to stress that while this work of listening backwards and forwards in time means awareness at some level of these relations of similarity, it does not mean moving to a reflective, analytic stance while listening, or a conscious effort to remember. Rather, it is an unconscious coherence-making, aided by the work of analysis that sharpens awareness of similarities. This is simply the other face of listening with utter attention to each note.

Structural Listening and Multi-Dimensional Listening

Adorno's term 'structural listening' has been criticized on a number of grounds, both by

39 Adorno discusses the notion of musical prose in Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 50.

40 Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 51: "Technisch-musikalisch gesagt: ihr zentrales Kunstmittel ist das der radikalen Variation....." For discussion of the idea , see Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, pp. 51-2.

41 See Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 52: "[die] Mehrdimensionalität des musikalischen Verlaufs, [die] Mitkonstitution des Gegenwärtigen durchs Vergangene".

42 See Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 95: "Das Hören, das dem integralen Kompositionsideal gerecht würde, liesse am ehesten als strukturelles sich bezeichnen. Der Rat, mehrschichtig zu hören, … hat bereits ein wesentliches Moment dieses Hörideals benannt."

music theorists and by critical theorists, as not according with the actual practice of listeners, or even, as Shapiro suggests, with Adorno's own praxis of listening. While Jerrold Levinson, for instance, does not refer directly to Adorno, his book *Music in the Moment*, which argues that awareness of the architectonics of a work is not necessary in order to understand the work, [43]can be read as an implicit critique of Adorno's structural listening as it is commonly understood. In fact, however, as we have seen, Adorno would agree that the listener's sense of the work's form is not a matter of conscious reflection while listening.

Adorno tends to present structural listening as a matter of perceiving the dialectical relationship between the part and the whole, with the music unfolding from the part to the whole, which, however, has determined the part. While this dialectic of the whole and the part is certainly important to Adorno's understanding and the nature both of listening and of musical form, I believe that the term multi-dimensional may help to illuminate a dimension of listening easily ignored when one focuses on the dialectic of whole and part. As we saw earlier, Adorno's conception of what makes a particular composition meaningful emphasizes integration or coherence. What the listener needs to hear to grasp meaning at this level is more like network of similarities of different kinds of things than what might be suggested by the terms part and whole. For the part that is related to the whole is not only a phrase or a single musical event, as the word ›part‹ may suggest; it can also be a dimension of the music, such as timbre or texture. As the new music moves in the direction of integral serialism, this network of similarities takes the form of attempts to relate all the dimensions of the music to one another.[44] The listener must then be acutely sensitive to the mutual influences of a number of things that otherwise might be perceived as separate and unrelated. Hence, I suggest, it would be well to complement the term structural listening with the term multi-dimensional.

Adorno himself offers a counter-perspective to the notion of structural listening as hearing a synthesis of the whole and the part. He couches it in terms of the relationship between the mediated and the immediate. Adorno introduced his 1965 radio talk *Schöne Stellen* (*Beautiful Passages*) with a theoretical discussion published separately under the title *A Little Heresy*[45]. In that text, wanting to counteract a tendency at the time (the 1960s), to overemphasize the whole as opposed to the detail, Adorno reiterates that while musical understanding "is tantamount to the

43 See Levinson, Music in the Moment. This is the fundamental argument of the book.
44 See Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, pp. 94-5.
45 Theodor W. Adorno: "Little Heresy", in: Theodor W. Adorno: *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie, Berkeley 2002, pp. 318-326; Theodor W. Adorno: "Kleine Häresie", in: Theodor W. Adorno: Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 17, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Frankfurt am Main 1982, pp. 297-302.

ability to perceive musical contexts, ideally developed and articulated music, as a meaningful whole"[46], a complete synthesis or reconciliation of the whole and the part (analogous to the individual and society), is neither possible nor desirable. The *Little Heresy* is an elaboration of the value of the details in music, both in their relation to the whole and in their own right. While hearing the moment in relation to what has come before and what comes after, "the moment of pure present time", Adorno asserts, "always retains a certain immediacy, without which the relation to the whole, to that which is mediated, would no more be produced than vice-versa".[47]

Another way of saying this is that although listener's synthesizing activity, the activity through which the link between part and whole is established, is crucial, the dialectic of whole and part involves more than synthesis.[48] In Adorno's words, "[t]he right way to hear music includes a spontaneous awareness of the non-identity of the whole and the parts as well as of the synthesis that unites the two." The musical detail thus "acquires its own rights, which go beyond the whole."[49] Accordingly, listening requires lingering over the details rather than hastening past them to the whole. As noted above, the activity of exact imagination is crucial here to the full experiencing of detail. In *Schöne Stellen* Adorno then offers numerous examples, from Bach through Schoenberg, of the 'beautiful passage', i.e. the detail with its own inner substance.

An Example

As an example of Adorno's understanding of the new music's transformation of musical form and the tasks it sets for the listener, I turn to the question of endings in the new music. What constitutes an adequate ending in a work of musical prose that knows no perfect authentic cadences (the signal of an ending in a traditional work)? How indeed does one know that the end of a work has come? This question offers the reader an opportunity to go through the process Adorno has outlined for listening to the new music. To exemplify a non-schematic answer to this question of ending, Adorno chooses Schoenberg's op. 23 no. 2, a piano piece about one minute

46 Adorno, Little Heresy, p. 318; "Musikverständnis […] kommt der Fähigkeit gleich, musikalische Zusammenhänge, im idealen Fall ausgesponnene und artikulierte Musik als sinnvolles Ganzes wahrzunehmen. " (Adorno, Kleine Häresie, p. 297.)

47 Adorno, Little Heresy, p. 319. "Dabei behält der Augenblick der reinen Gegenwart, das Jetzt und Hier immer eine gewisse Unmittelbarkeit, ohne welche die Beziehung zum Ganzen, Vermittelten so wenig sich herstellte wie umgekehrt" (Adorno, Kleine Häresie, p. 297).

48 See Niederauer, Gehörte Dialektik, for a discussion of this point.

49 Adorno, Little Heresy, pp. 321 f.; "Zum richtigen Hören von Musik gehört das spontane Bewußtsein der Nichtidentität von Ganzem und Teilen ebenso hinzu wie die Synthesis, die beides vereint. […] Weil beides jedoch nicht ineinander aufgeht, gewinnt darüber das Einzelne auch ein über das Ganze hinausschießendes, eigenes Recht. " (Adorno, Kleine Häresie, p. 300 f.).

long (and widely available in recordings over the Internet, including a performance by Eduard Steuermann, Adorno's colleague and sometime piano teacher). The reader who listens to a performance of this piece will have a chance to observe the extent to which his/her own habits of listening anticipate moves characteristic of tonality, expectations which are then thwarted. Adorno, as I have noted, stresses the need both for repeated listenings and for listenings informed by analysis. In this case, Adorno's comments on this piece and its ending can stand in for a sample of analysis. He presents the piece as an example of musical prose. "In vain would one seek in the course of the piece a return of the striking beginning, even in some varied form", he writes. "The piece can only be properly perceived in the light of a completely different idea of form: a striking outburst, set in opposition to episodes that stop as though out of breath, gradually softens and finally dissolves in quietness." This dissolution in quietness, he continues, "is a phenomenon of resolution, just as the resolution of dissonance or the resolution of formal tension through a recapitulation once were. But now it is brought about through the completely free, autonomous course taken by the piece in itself."[50] The listener who takes this opportunity to listen to the piece multiple times, before and after reading Adorno's comments, will be able to observe the process of listening as co-composing and reconstituting in action.

In this paper I have tried to make clear the active role of listening in the constitution of the musical work. If music is the bearer of a moral-spiritual responsibility, as Adorno says, then the activity of listening as co-composing has an important role in carrying out this obligation. For, as Adorno says, artworks have an afterlife; but in order for that life to continue, the work of genuine or adequate listening too must continue. "In order for works to last, they need the understanding of those who listen to them. It is for the sake of their enduring", he writes, "not as a means of the mere dissemination of information",[51] that he attempts to help readers with the work of listening.

50 "Vergebens die Suche nach einer sei's auch variierten Wiederkehr des heftigen Anfangs im Verlauf. Das Stück ist nur von seiner ganz veränderten Formidee hier richtig wahrzunehmen: ein heftiger Ausbruch, in seinem Gegensatz zu innehaltenden Episoden, mildert sich allmählich und löst sich schließlich in Ruhe – ein Lösungsphänomen, wie einmal die Auflösung der Dissonanz oder die der Formspannung durch die Reprise eines war, jetzt aber durch den ganz freien, autonomen Verlauf des Stücks in sich selbst herbeigeführt. " (Adorno, Anweisungen zum Hören neuer Musik, p. 50).

51 "Damit die Werke dauern, bedürfen sie des Verständnisses derer, die sie hören. Um dieser Dauer willen, nicht als Mittel bloßer informatorischer Verbreitung sind Höranweisungen zu verantworten. " (ibid., p. 98).