
Book Review

Theodore Gracyk and Andrew Kania, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music*. Routledge, 680 pp., \$186, hardcover.

Reviewed by Marlies De Munck

The first reference work ever to be devoted exclusively to the philosophy of music, *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music* immediately appeals as a beautifully edited collection of fifty-six compact essays.¹ The book is divided into six parts, each varying in length and consisting of chapters of about ten or eleven pages. All entries are written in clear, accessible prose and their quality ranges from good to excellent—a fact not unrelated to the high number of outstanding scholars who contributed. Comprehensive bibliographical details and good suggestions for further reading conveniently follow each entry and an extensive index is provided at the end of the book. The entries are interrelated by useful cross-references that allow for a pleasant browsing experience. The companion is primarily designed to serve as a work of reference, but the entries can also be used and read as brief introductions to an array of topics, arguments, and central figures in the philosophy of music.

The volume starts with an elaborate part of eighteen chapters on general issues as divergent as the definition of music, the ontology of the musical work, notation and authentic performance, matters of style and value, understanding and evaluation, and many more. The second part focuses on the traditionally central issue of music's relation to the emotions and discusses the main theories based on relations of expression, arousal, and resemblance. It is followed by a relatively short part dealing with music aesthetics in Asia and Europe, Antiquity, early Modernity, and a general characterization of continental and analytic philosophy of music. The fourth part brings together nine essays on a selection of long-established philosophers from Plato to Adorno, including the “non-philosophers” Hanslick, Gurney, and Wagner. Part five deals with the “impure” genres of pop, rock, jazz, song, opera, film music, dance, and visual music. The sixth part is devoted to musicology, music theory, composition, analysis, and ethno-musicology, as well as to further removed disciplines that have recently become important to the academic study of music, including politics, sociology, gender, phenomenology, cognitive science, psychology, and music education.

The volume's comprehensiveness testifies to the relevance and the liveliness of the debates. Still, a certain degree of arbitrariness seems to be unavoidable when putting together a companion that balances between a nuanced introduction and an all-encompassing encyclopedia. Why, for instance, do the emotions deserve an entire part while the other topics only get one chapter each? Likewise, the uniform length of each chapter does not always correspond to the intellectual or historical import of its topic. The issue of style, for example,

¹ The author also has a version of a review of this book in progress that will be published in *The Leuven Philosophy Journal*. This English version is published with their permission.

does not have the same relative weight as the whole of the early modern period in France, Britain and Germany or, for that matter, as Adorno's complete oeuvre. Less important, yet remarkable, is that a few of today's most renowned philosophers of music, including Lydia Goehr, Jerrold Levinson, and Peter Kivy, did not author a chapter of their own, though they are all prominently present by reference. On the positive side, a number of young researchers have been given the opportunity to contribute, which in itself is a promising sign regarding the future of the field. First and foremost it is the wide range of topics and disciplines that makes this companion a must-have for those who want to teach or be taught on the by now quite extensive and ever proliferating domain of music aesthetics, if only to get an impression of the multifarious questions that music can raise.

From the perspective of the academic professional a few minor remarks still ought to be made. Even though the general level of the essays is more than sound, no great philosophical risks have been taken with respect to content. Some entries, like the chapter on oriental music aesthetics or the one on Antiquity and the Middle Ages, are informative yet not quite philosophical nor very critical of their topics. Most authors, however, survey existing philosophical theories and go on to defend their own stance within the debate. Still, little new ideas or groundbreaking arguments are brought in and it is a pity that the editors have not seized on the opportunity to include more original philosophical material. On the other hand, the different kinds and styles of music in part five reflect recent tendencies to also consider everyday experiences of music and thus to investigate beyond the limits of the traditionally cherished genre of western absolute music. The broad range of non-philosophical disciplines in part six also compensates for the absence of new philosophical material. Thus, the editors express their hope that combining the "usual topics" with new, non-philosophical approaches, will inspire new ways of thinking about music (Preface xxiv).

The interdisciplinary character of the volume does nowhere imply that the analytical approach is exchanged for continental or non-Western modes of philosophizing. Whenever other approaches are dealt with, they are translated into the subject of an entry. In a sense, the very concept of an encyclopedia requires analytical classification and a separation of topics from their broader context. Still, one should keep in mind that the presence of context or other styles of philosophizing yield different questions, not to mention different answers. This basic fact risks being overlooked precisely because of the companion's explicit aim at comprehensiveness.

A last critical remark concerns the second part on emotion, which contains considerable overlapping since all chapters refer to the same standardized positions. Brought together, it becomes apparent how these major theories all come to a fairly similar conclusion. Most are based, explicitly or implicitly, on a supposed isomorphism between music and the emotions, usually completed by a combination of convention and imagination. Examples are Peter Kivy's "contour-convention" view and Stephen Davies' resemblance theory, referred to by Jenefer Robinson as the "doggy theories" because of their famed examples of the seemingly sad face of a dog (201-2). Other accounts in the same vein are Anthony Newcomb's "metaphorical resonance," "hearing *as*" hypotheses like Kendal Walton's "projectivism," Malcolm Budd's "imaginative identification," Jerrold Levinson's "persona theory," and other variants of animation theories. In spite of the many technical details and ingenious nuances, all these theories eventually state that the emotions, whether felt, expressed, or recognized, are not *in* the music but are perceived *as if* they were. This, unfortunately, was precisely the problematic point to begin with. The discussion seems to have reached a natural end, making one wonder whether this is because the answers are satisfactory or because philosophy cannot take the problem any further. One could also argue that the impasse is due to the fact that, from the very start, the argument has been constructed as an unsolvable paradox. By separating the music from its sociocultural context and considering only one explanatory principle at a time, the problem has been formulated such that music's emotional or expressive import has become principally unaccountable. In the present volume a critical meta-standpoint with regard to the nature and presuppositions of the existing analytical

theories is nowhere offered, nor seriously considered. It is to be expected that the increasing influence of other disciplines might indeed cause a serious reorganization of the field.

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