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Conceptual Metaphor and its Role in the Composition, Performance, and Consumption of Music

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**CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR
AND ITS ROLE IN THE COMPOSITION,
PERFORMANCE, AND CONSUMPTION OF MUSIC**

LOREN NATARIO

[Slide 1]

Two years ago, I enrolled in an honors seminar titled “Memes, Metaphor, and Myth”. If I’m being completely honest, the reason I took the class was because it had the word “memes” in the title and I have a juvenile sense of humor. The class was more interesting and engaging than I initially thought it would be, and ideas that were presented to us have stayed with me even as I have continued to work in my field. The most significant impact on me was the class’ introduction into the world of conceptual metaphor, primarily as described by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their book, *Metaphors we live by* (among other works). We had multiple options for our culminating papers in the class; I chose to write about the use of conceptual metaphor within my field of study: music composition.

Conceptual metaphor is used extensively in discourse regarding music and is indicative of a lot of the patterns of reasoning we use when discussing music. These underlying patterns about how we conceptualize acts of listening to, performing, analyzing or writing music give us subconscious expectations and influence our opinions on what the function of music is, how it should sound, etc. Many of the musical aesthetic changes in and around the 20th-century were the direct result of composers (experimentally or otherwise) challenging or disregarding these patterns of reasoning, or finding creative ways to subvert the expectations the patterns of reasoning give rise to.

A quick disclaimer: I am going to make some sweeping claims about how conceptual metaphor is indicative of traditional modes of thought regarding music. However, I am largely only observing conceptual metaphor in English and applying this reasoning almost exclusively to Western music. I do, however, feel that there is evidence to support that other languages have similar methods for conceptualizing the abstract experience of “music”—more on that later.

[Slide 2]

In order to discuss Lakoff’s *Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*, we must first discuss how his definition of the term “metaphor” is distinct from how the word has traditionally been defined. “Metaphor” is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them”. In other words, a

metaphor is one specific novel instance of figurative speech. This definition creates a dichotomy between the domains of “literal” and “figurative” language. Poetic metaphorical comparisons are reserved for artistic expression and are removed from conventional, everyday speech. The implication is that conventional language is “literal” and all concepts can be conceptualized without metaphor. Lakoff argues that this is demonstrably false, and that even the most common abstract concepts (such as time, state, change, etc.) are widely understood via the use of metaphor.

[Slide 3]

Lakoff defines “metaphor” as a systematic cross-domain mapping system in which a conceptual experience (such as “life”), is mapped onto a concrete experience (such as “a journey”). Lakoff states:

“In short, the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another” (Lakoff, p. 1). In this system, the source domain is mapped onto the target domain. Lakoff uses mnemonic devices of the form “TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN” or “TARGET DOMAIN AS SOURCE DOMAIN” in order to facilitate referencing such mappings. A set of ontological correspondences between the source domain and target domain are present and characterize the mapping itself.

The distinction between figurative and literal language is abolished by this mode of thought, or at the very least much less apparent: some abstract experiences are capable of being understood in a literal sense exclusively through the use of conceptual metaphor.

[Slide 4]

To illustrate the previously mentioned ontological correspondences, we’ll stick with one specific mapping Lakoff uses to illustrate his points in his article *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*. Consider the phrase “Our relationship has hit a dead end”. The source domain of the statement is journeys, and the target domain is (romantic) relationships. Under this mapping, these correspondences are evident: 1) the individuals in the relationship correspond to travelers [because they are on a journey], 2) the relationship itself corresponds to a vehicle [because it is the mode of transportation on the journey], 3) the life goals of the individuals correspond to the mutual destination of

the journey, and 4) relationship difficulties correspond to obstacles preventing the individuals from reaching their destination. These correspondences allow us to reason about the state of this relationship based on our knowledge of travel.

[Slide 5]

The statement “our relationship has hit a dead end” evokes specific lines of reasoning based on what we know about both journeys and what we know about relationships. From the source domain (journeys) we can infer that Two TRAVELERS are in a VEHICLE with a COMMON DESTINATION. The VEHICLE* has encountered an IMPEDIMENT, rendering it useless. If it is not fixed, the DESTINATION will not be reached. Applying this reasoning to the target domain (relationships), we deduce that Two INDIVIDUALS are in a RELATIONSHIP and have COMMON LIFE GOALS. They have encountered DIFFICULTIES, rendering the RELATIONSHIP a hindrance for them to achieve their LIFE GOALS.

(*side note: Lakoff notes that metaphor tends to be at the highest possible [superordinate] categorical level: in such instances where metaphors that use cars as the source domain make sense, similar metaphors that use boats or planes or trains are also applicable. To conceptualize relationship difficulties, one might also say “we’ve gone off the rails/tracks”, or “we need to bail out”. This is why the mapping RELATIONSHIP AS A VEHICLE is used rather than specific ones like RELATIONSHIP AS A CAR.)

[Slide 6]

We can further deduce that there are a limited number of courses of action for solving the problem. In the source domain, 1) the travelers could work to overcome the obstacle their vehicle has encountered, 2) remain in the vehicle and give up on trying to reach the destination, or 3) abandon the vehicle. Applying this pattern of reasoning to the target domain, we infer that the parallel courses of action for solving the relationship problem would be to 1) work through the difficulties the relationship has encountered, 2) continue the relationship and give up on achieving their life goals, or 3) end the relationship.

[Slide 7]

Now that we’ve established what conceptual metaphor is, I’d like to address some more specific examples as we work towards discussing the influence of conceptual metaphor in the field of music. There are a wealth of metaphorical mappings used to conceptualize

common abstract concepts, such as “time”, “state”, “change”, “action”, “causation”, “purpose”, and “means” using concrete domains such as space, motion, and force. Lakoff describes an overarching metaphor to encompass all of these mappings which he refers to as the Event Structure Metaphor. Included in the Event Structure metaphor are the following metaphors:

- STATES ARE LOCATIONS (regions of space with imposed boundaries)
 - “*entering a state of euphoria*”
- CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS (into or out of bounded regions)
 - “*emerging from a state of hibernation*”
 - “*I’m going crazy*”
- CAUSES ARE FORCES
 - “*pushed over the edge*”
- ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENTS
 - “*we’re skipping right along*”
 - “*things are going swimmingly*”
 - “*we’re powering through*”
- PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS
 - “*we have a ways to go*”
 - “*we’re nearly there*”
- MEANS ARE PATHS
 - “*however you want to go about it is fine*”
 - “*try a different way*”
- DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION
 - “*stuck between a rock and a hard place*”
 - “*I’m swamped*”
- EXPECTED PROGRESS IS A TRAVEL ITINERARY
 - “*I’m ahead on my homework*”
 - “*I’ve fallen a little behind*”
- EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE LARGE, MOVING OBJECTS
 - “*go with the flow*”
- LONG-TERM, PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS
 - Evident when progress is expressed as forward motion:

- *“let’s keep moving forward”*
- And when progress is expressed as distance covered:
 - *“we’ve come a long way”*
- And when the opposite of progress is expressed as backward motion:
 - *“you’re backtracking”*
 - *“back to the drawing board/square one”* (implies returning to somewhere one has already been)

[Slide 8]

Each of these metaphors has source inferences and a concomitant target domain entailments. For example, for the metaphor MEANS ARE PATHS (to destinations), a source inference is that there are alternative paths to reach a destination and the corresponding target entailment is that there are different means to achieve the same goal. Thus the entailed metaphor is DIFFERENT MEANS OF ACHIEVING A GOAL ARE ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO A DESTINATION.

[Slide 9]

The Event Structure metaphor is abundant in music discourse because important/significant musical events are conceptualized the same way as any event. Musical passages unified by one or more prevalent, lasting, distinct characterizations (volume, tempo, key signature, character, etc.) are often conceptualized as states. Therefore, the STATES ARE LOCATIONS metaphor is applicable:

- *“in the key of C”*
- *“we’re entering a new section”*
- *“stay in tempo”*

CHANGE IS MOTION

- *“we’re moving on to a new section”*
- We refer to a linear arrangement of chords as a *“chord progression”*

CAUSES ARE FORCES

- *“This chord gravitates towards the tonic”*

Significant musical changes or conclusive statements are conceptualized as purposes, and the PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS metaphor is employed:

- “*this the chord’s resolution*”
- “*we’ve arrived at a new tonal center*”
- “*we’re nearing the end of the piece*”

[Slide 10]

MEANS ARE PATHS

- “*this is the way the chord resolves*”
- “*what is another way this piece could end?*”

EXPECTED PROGRESS IS A TRAVEL ITINERARY

- “*this dominant pedal tone postpones the arrival of the tonic*”

[Slide 11]

The fact that musical events are conceptualized in similar ways as external events is indicative of some expectations that we have about musical conventions. For example, if passages of music unified by overarching characteristics are conceptualized using the STATES ARE LOCATIONS (i. e., bounded regions of space) metaphor, it follows that these “states” of music conceptually exist within boundaries.

Additionally, since compositional techniques are conceptualized using the MEANS ARE PATHS (to destinations) metaphor, one can conclude that these compositional techniques are utilized with specific purposes/goals in mind. If conclusive statements in music (such as chord resolutions) are conceived of as destinations, this is indicative that we think of them as goals: there must be musical arrivals or the music has no purpose.

Extrapolating further from these implications, and keeping in mind the DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION metaphor, it becomes clear that these conceptualizations impose an obligation on musical phrases to eventually resolve. Consequently, those musical devices (dissonance, tension, etc.) which conventionally postpone or delay the arrival of certain other musical devices (tonal center, consonance, cadence, etc.) are not

conceptually “allowed” to exist in their own right; they must fulfill their purpose—that is, leading to some sort of a resolution or release of tension.

Finally, an inability to achieve a goal amounts to failure, or at the very least, a sense of lack of fulfillment. Thus, any music which fails to reach these arrival points effectively is valued lower than music that does.

[Slide 12]

Clearly, English conceptual metaphor did not exist until a great deal of time after ancient Greek philosophers. However, I believe that a lot of English conceptualization mappings we have for aspects of Western music originated with conventions of Western music as described by the earliest sources. In his *Republic*, Plato advocated banning some of the modes in order to promote a stronger nation: Lydian because it expresses sorrow, and Ionian because it is too relaxed and promotes indolence. He chose to only keep Dorian and Phrygian modes. Dorian because it is a “[harmony] which can render the note or accent which a brave man utters in warlike action and in stern resolve;” Phrygian because “when in this manner he has attained his end, I would have the music show him not carried away by his success, but acting moderately and wisely in all circumstances, and acquiescing in the event” (Plato, Book III, 389-403).

In Aristotle’s *Politics*, there is a section in which he discusses the different effects harmonic modes have on the listener: “one harmony makes us feel quite differently from another: the mixo-Lydian harmony winds us up to a high-strung mood of lamentation, the more relaxed ones let us down to an easier state of mind, while the Doric harmony stands midway between these two extremes, and the Phrygian produces strong excitation of feeling” (Aristotle, Book V, p. 364).

In Eduard Hanslick’s *The Beautiful in Music*, written in 1854, Hanslick cites writings of many musicians in order to illustrate how notions of what music can or should be are deeply ingrained. One quote he includes is by Ferdinand Hand: “Music represents emotions. Each feeling and each state of mind has its own inherent sound and rhythm, and these have their objective counterpart in music” (Hand, §. 24).

[Slide 13]

The War of the Romantics took place in the mid-19th century between two opposing “camps” of musical aesthetic ideology. The Wagnerian camp advocated program music—music that was a direct response to a third-party narrative, work of art, etc. and was intended to complement these works or otherwise elicit emotional responses or impressions of events. Hanslick even quotes some writing of Wagner in the works he cites: “the organ of the emotions is sound, its intentionally aesthetic language is music” (Wagner, p. 99).

The opposing party (led by Brahms) advocated the notion of absolute music—music that is intended to be appreciated as an experience in and of itself, rather than as a representation or illustration of some external experience. Both parties believed the other’s work was detrimental to music as an art form.

Hanslick’s own opinion was somewhere in between the two ideologies: he noted that, traditionally, “on the one hand it is said that the *aim* and *object* of music is to excite emotions—*i.e.*, pleasurable emotions; on the other hand, the emotions are said to be the *subject-matter* which musical works are intended to illustrate” (Hanslick, p. 18). He refutes these claims by asserting that 1) beautiful objects exist independently of the responses they may or may not elicit in observers, and 2) the close association between music and emotion does not necessarily mean that principles of musical aesthetics are dependent on this relationship. He goes on to say that music can replicate or be representational of qualifying adjectives (such as gentle, impetuous, etc.) but not substantive feelings (like “love” or “anger”) themselves (p. 35). In Hanslick’s view, music cannot embody conceptual experiences like emotions because conceptual experiences are incapable of being reduced to material forms. Hanslick even went as far as to acknowledge that music was largely conceptualized in terms of epithets (very similar to how we have defined traditional metaphor in that they are purely figurative): “To define the musical complexion of a given theme, we often speak in terms used to describe *emotions*, such as ‘proud, gloomy, tender, ardent, longing.’ But we may with equal justice select them from a different order of phenomena and call a piece of music ‘sweet, fresh, cloudy, cold,’ ...epithets...may be used so long as we remain fully conscious of their figurative sense” (Hanslick, p. 74-75).

While Hanslick did challenge a lot of contemporary musical conventions of his time, he still subscribed to the idea that certain chords, themes, and rhythms “invariably produce this specific impression and none other” (p. 76).

Arnold Schoenberg, in his 1926 article *Opinion or Insight*, sought to challenge even notions such as these. Schoenberg asks “when is tonal vs. atonal (consonant vs. dissonant) music warranted, justified, or permissible?” Schoenberg asserted that musical consonance/tonality was a means “to make what happens easily comprehensible” (Schoenberg, *Style and Music*, 259) by means of closer/more apparent relationships to the tonal center. Schoenberg first introduces the concept of the “emancipation of the dissonance”, in this article. This declaration places the same value on dissonant music as that placed on consonant music. Rather than dissonance and consonance functioning as tension and release, dissonance was justified and could function as either. Schoenberg goes on to clarify that “consonance and dissonance differ not as opposites do, but only in point of *degree*; that consonances are the sounds closer to the fundamental, dissonances those farther away, that their comprehensibility is graduated accordingly, since the nearer ones are easier to comprehend than those farther off,” (Schoenberg, 262). Schoenberg’s philosophy provided an alternative to tonality by making it clear that there is no obligation to “resolve” dissonant harmonies to consonant ones; rather than “failing” to resolve, dissonant passages could “choose” not to resolve to consonance. Schoenberg did not abolish the tension/release convention of music; he questioned why the musical elements “consonance” and “dissonance” have to exist within their own bounded regions and remain confined to specific functions.

Luigi Russolo was an Italian Futurist painter and composer who pioneered the use of noise (sounds without definite pitch) within structured music. Some consider his work to be the “emancipation of timbre” analogous to Schoenberg’s “emancipation of dissonance” (Venn, p. 11). Russolo claimed in his book *The Art of Noises* that “the most complicated orchestras can be reduced to four or five classes of instruments different in timbres of sound: bowed instruments, metal winds, wood winds, and percussion. Thus modern music flounders within this tiny circle, vainly striving to create new varieties of timbre. *We must break out of this limited circle of sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds*” (Russolo, p. 25). In order to accomplish this, Russolo built and wrote for noise instruments he called *Itonarumori*. In order to preserve the dynamic continuity of

pitch of his instruments, Russolo avoided describing changes from pitch to pitch as “steps” as was typical.

Yet another way composers have branched out from conventional 12 tone music is with alternative tunings. Western music’s 12 equally-tempered tones is actually sort of a compromise. Perfect intervals are based on simple ratios: perfect fifths are 3:2, for example, and octaves are 2:1. But these ratios don’t line up perfectly. Twelve 3:2 ratios stacked on top of each other is actually slightly sharper than seven 2:1 ratios, even though they should be the same note. The difference (about 1.0136) is called the Pythagorean comma. Our 12-tone scale sacrifices the perfect ratios of fifths in order to make the octaves line up properly tuning them down 1/12 of the Pythagorean comma.

Some alternative tunings try to preserve these perfect ratios, like just intonation. Some expand and “fill in” the notes in between 12-tone equal temperament, like 24-tone equal temperament. 24-tone equal temperament is also called the “quarter tone scale” because it features all the notes halfway between the semitones of the 12-tone scale. A multitude of other equal temperaments (19, 27, 29, 31, 34, 41, 53, etc.) have been written for as well.

[Slide 14]

Lakoff points out that times are conceptualized in terms of space, usually as things in motion, and an observer’s orientation within that space. Under this mapping, the correspondences between source domain and target domain are 1) the passage of time is motion, 2) future times are located in front of the observer; the past is located behind them, and 3) one thing (either the time object or the observer, is in motion) while the other is stationary and serves as a referential point. The source inference is that motion is continuous and one-dimensional; the resultant target domain entailment is that time is continuous and one-dimensional. Time metaphor has two distinct mappings: those in which time passes and the observer is stationary (TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT, and those in which the observer moves through a time landscape (TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE).

TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT accounts for expressions such as “*the time for action has arrived*”, “*the time has long gone since...*” and has its own specific entailments,

namely that 1) the time actively passing the observer is the present time, and 2) if the time is passing by a stationary observer, it does so at a specific velocity.

The TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE explains other expressions, like “*I’ll be there soon*”, “*we’re coming up on Christmas*”, etc. Given that time is conceptualized here in terms of landscapes or landmarks, it follows that time has a finite range and can be measured.

[Slide 15]

Because music as an art form takes place over time, the majority of conceptual metaphor used to conceptualize time is also applicable to music. For example, we tend to think of the passage through a work of music as being analogous to the passage of time. Short units of musical works are referred to as “*passages*”. Individual units of longer musical works are referred to as “*movements*”.

Some examples of conceptualization of musical events as time landmarks include using bar or measure numbers as time landmarks, as in “*we’re coming up on bar 40*” or larger landmarks like “*we’re approaching the end of the piece*”. Additionally, when discussing overall musical structure, we often assign rehearsal markings (usually letter names) to distinct sections, allowing musicians to conceptualize the relationship between sections as linear motion (i. e., “point A to point B”). The conceptualization of music as analogous to the passage of time (given our linear conception of time) implies that works of music must also be linear.

[Slide 16]

Karlheinz Stockhausen was the first to introduce the concept of “moment-forming” music with his piece *Kontakte* in 1958-1960. In addition to being another way in which composers have challenged program/“narrative” music in favor of absolute music, Stockhausen’s moment-forming music challenges the conceptualization of music as linear, instead declaring that it is possible for music to have temporal multiplicity. Stockhausen stated that pieces of moment-forming music “neither aim at the climax, nor at prepared (and consequently expected) multiple climaxes, and the usual introductory, rising, transitional and fading-away stages are not delineated in a development curve encompassing the entire duration of the work. On the contrary, these forms

are immediately intense and seek to maintain the level of continued ‘main points’, which are constantly equally present, right up until they stop. In these forms a minimum or a maximum may be expected in every moment, and no developmental direction can be predicted with certainty from the present one; *they have always already commenced, and could continue forever...* They are forms in which an instant does not have to be just a bit of a temporal line, nor a moment just a particle of a measured duration, but rather in which concentration on the Now—on every Now—makes vertical slices, as it were, that cut through a horizontal temporal conception to a timelessness I call eternity” (Stockhausen, p. 198-99).

In an article published in 1996, Jonathan D. Kramer applies postmodern reasoning about musical temporal structures in pieces from the past (he is not claiming that the works are postmodernist; he just analyzes certain elements through a postmodernist lens, drawing from his 1988 book *The Time of Music*). Kramer includes another quote from Stockhausen to support the idea that even older pieces can feature musical temporal manipulation: “When some processes in a piece move toward one (or more) goal(s) yet the goal(s) is/(are) placed elsewhere than at the ends of the processes, the temporal continuum is multiple” (Stockhausen, at composition seminar). Kramer presents a dichotomy between musical piece time and gestural time, explaining that while piece time is diachronic and evolves on a note-by-note basis, gestural time is synchronic: a musical arrival point such as a cadence offers a sense of finality regardless of where it occurs in the temporal continuum (Kramer, p. 26). This postmodern ideology demonstrates that the conceptualization of music as a progression that is analogous to the passage of time fails to consistently explain musical passages in terms of (one-dimensional) linear motion.

[Slide 17]

Transitioning back to large overarching conceptual metaphor as outlined by Lakoff and Johnson, I’d like to discuss one more that I feel is especially prevalent in the field of music. Some conceptual experiences are metaphorically attributed agency. The example used in *Metaphors we live by* is the experience of the rising of prices, understood as the entity referred to as “inflation”. When referring to inflation, one might say things like “*inflation is making us desperate*”. Lakoff states that in such cases, “viewing inflation as an entity allows us to refer to it, quantify it, identify a particular aspect of it, see it as a

cause, act with respect to it, and perhaps even believe that we understand it” (Lakoff and Johnsen, p. 26).

In other cases, experiences which are conceptualized as entities are further specified as human. Instead of “*inflation is making us desperate*”, one could say “*inflation has us pinned up against the wall*”. This facilitates the conceptualization of “inflation” as having a malicious personality and playing the role of adversary that can attack, hurt, or steal from us (Lakoff and Johnsen, p. 34). This conceptualization influences how we think about it and how we might react to it.

[Slide 18]

A large amount of individual musical facets are given agency for the sake of conceptualization. In some cases, the overall character of the piece is conceptualized via the entity metaphor; in other cases, small, discrete components are conceptualized as entities. Entire pieces (or smaller sections) may be characterized as “gentle”, “boisterous”, “snake-like”, or “robotic”. Additionally, when discussing theory, one often hears that certain individual notes “want” to resolve in certain ways.

Even the specifications and markings common throughout most scores feature language that conceptualizes music as an entity or personage. These markings are traditionally in Italian, which I believe supports my conviction that conceptual metaphor mappings in English are indicative of a more widespread system of conceptualization.

Hanslick also mentions similar characterizations in *The Beautiful in Music* when he discusses the use of epithets. After stating that their use is justified so long as we remain conscious of their figurative sense, he goes as far as saying they may even be unavoidable (Hanslick, p. 75). Such characterizations are prevalent even in the notation of music, and even when composers try to divorce their work as much as possible from human characterizations (for the sake of producing an abstract sound experience), it is virtually inevitable that the performers of said music or listeners will describe it using such characterizations.

[Slide 19]

This may come across as shameless self-promotion, but I think a really important component of this presentation is my senior recital. It's a short concert that is the culmination of the work I've done during my time as a student composer at Western. I feel it's an important counterpart to this presentation because it's exemplary of how I've tried to incorporate what I've learned and what I've been discussing throughout this presentation into the music I've written.

What I have on the board behind me is a program (patcher) I made to work in conjunction with live audio feed from a programmable music box. In order for this to work in its live processing capacity, I need my bulky home computer and surround-sound capable speakers, so today I've simply brought a playback demo instead.

The way it works is that this program picks up audio from the music box, which I have programmed to play specific notes by punching holes in feed paper. The program analyzes incoming pitches and converts them into MIDI data, which are simply integers. Based on which integer the program receives, it performs different audio processing functions. The program can record and playback audio clips at varying speeds (including backwards), transpose and output live audio into different intervals for unique doubling, convert incoming audio into granular synthesis, and output all of these different processes to different areas of surround-sound space. I also tried using pitch transposition functions in extreme ranges in order to produce noise elements rather than distinctive pitches.

I didn't have a specific narrative in mind while I was writing this music, but I did consider the narratives that are closely associated with music boxes. Usually, this is either childlike innocence, or some horrific perversion of childlike innocence. I tried to subvert expectations by not conspicuously incorporating either narrative.

[Play *Sockbox* recording]

[Slide 20]

Thank you for your time! Before we move on to questions, I would like to thank Dr. Bruce Hamilton and Dr. Lesley Sommer for pointing me in the right direction multiple

times throughout this project, and I would also like to thank Professor TJ Olney for introducing me to these concepts and the profound influence they have had on my work.

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Conceptual Metaphor and its Role in the Composition, Performance, and Consumption of Music

LOREN NATARIO

1

Metaphor Traditionally

“All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players”

Defined as specific novel instances of poetic/figurative language

- Mutually exclusive with day-to-day language

Distinct from literal language

2

Conceptual Metaphor

A cross-domain mapping system

conceptual is mapped onto a concrete

Source domain → target domain

- via “TARGET DOMAIN IS/AS SOURCE DOMAIN”

Abolishes the dichotomy between literal and figurative language

Example: “LOVE IS A JOURNEY”

“Our relationship has hit a dead end.”

- Source domain: A JOURNEY; target domain: RELATIONSHIPS
- Set of ontological correspondences
- Purpose is to allow us to reason about love based on our knowledge of travel
 - Not poetic/figurative language; occurs in everyday speech

“LOVE IS A JOURNEY” (cont.)

KNOWLEDGE OF JOURNEYS:

- Two TRAVELERS are in a VEHICLE with a COMMON DESTINATION. The VEHICLE* has encountered an IMPEDIMENT, rendering it useless. If it is not fixed the DESTINATION will not be reached.

KNOWLEDGE OF RELATIONSHIPS:

- Two INDIVIDUALS are in a RELATIONSHIP and have COMMON LIFE GOALS. They have encountered DIFFICULTIES, rendering the RELATIONSHIP a hindrance for them to achieve their LIFE GOALS.

5

“LOVE IS A JOURNEY” (cont.)

SOLUTIONS TO A DEAD END IN A JOURNEY:

Overcome whatever obstacle the vehicle has encountered

Remain in the non-functional vehicle and give up on reaching their destination

Abandon the vehicle

SOLUTIONS TO A DEAD END IN A RELATIONSHIP:

Work through whatever difficulty the relationship has encountered

Remain in the relationship even though it prevents them from achieving their life goals

Abandon the relationship

6

Event Structure Metaphor

- STATES ARE LOCATIONS (bounded regions of space)
- CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS/CHANGE IS MOTION
- CAUSES ARE FORCES
- ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENTS (along a path)
- PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS
- MEANS ARE PATHS (to destinations)
- DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION
- EXPECTED PROGRESS IS A TRAVEL ITINERARY
- EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE LARGE, MOVING OBJECTS
- LONG TERM, PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS (MOTION TOWARDS A DESTINATION)

7

Entailed Metaphors

“ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENTS”

- MANNER OF ACTION IS MANNER OF MOTION
 - FORCES AFFECTING ACTION ARE FORCES AFFECTING MOTION
 - AIDS TO ACTION ARE AIDS TO MOTION
 - *“it’s smooth sailing from here on out”*
 - CAUTIOUS ACTION IS CAUTIOUS MOTION
 - *“treading on thin ice”*
 - SPEED OF ACTION IS SPEED OF MOVEMENT
 - *“going by leaps and bounds”*
- Etc.

8

Event Structure Metaphor in Music Discourse

STATES ARE LOCATIONS (bounded regions)

- *“in the key of C”; “you’re out of tune”; “where is your entrance?”*

CHANGE IS MOTION

- *“we’re moving on to a new section”*
- *“chord progression”*

CAUSES ARE FORCES

- *“this chord gravitates toward the tonic”*

PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS

- *“this is the chord’s resolution”*
- *“we’ve arrived at a new tonal center”*

Event Structure Metaphor in Music Discourse (cont.)

MEANS ARE PATHS

- *“this is the way the chord resolves”*
- *“what is another way this piece could end?”*

EXPECTED PROGRESS IS A TRAVEL ITINERARY

- *“this dominant pedal tone postpones the arrival of the tonic”*

Implications of the use of the Event Structure Metaphor in Music Discourse

Certain musical elements conceptually exist within bounded regions

Compositional techniques are means to ends

Musical phrases are obligated to “resolve”

- Dissonance/atonality amounts to tension; consonance/tonality amounts to release

Musical value/worth determined by ability to achieve goals

Evidence of these Implications in Music Discourse

Plato's *Republic*

Aristotle's *Politics*

Hanslick's cited works in *The Beautiful in Music*

Challenging Expectations of Musical Events

War of the Romantics (program vs. absolute)

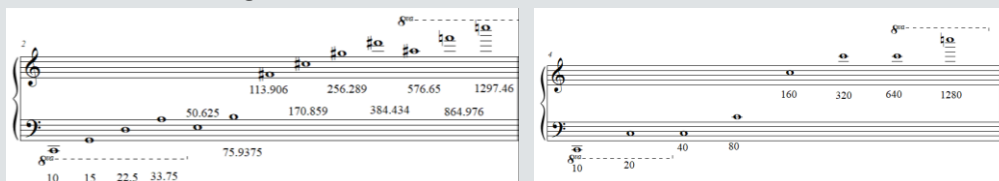
Hanslick's own opinion

Arnold Schoenberg

- Emancipation of Dissonance

Luigi Russolo; Noise music

Non-standard tuning



13

Time Metaphor

Time conceptualized in terms of space and orientation

TIME PASSING IS MOTION

- TIME PASSING IS MOTION OF AN OBJECT
- TIME PASSING IS MOTION OVER A LANDSCAPE

14

Time Metaphor in Music Discourse and its Implications

“Passage”

“Movement”

“Point A to Point B”

“coming up on bar 40”

“We’re approaching the end of the piece”

Challenging Musical Linearity

Karlheinz Stockhausen

- *“Moment-forming”*

Jonathan D. Kramer

- *The Time of Music*
- *Postmodern Concepts of Musical Time*

The Entity Metaphor and Personification

Some conceptual experiences are metaphorically attributed agency

Ex: the experience of prices rising, viewed as an entity “inflation”:

- “Facilitates referring to it, quantifying it, identify specific aspects of it, reason about how to respond to it; personifying can put it in more specific roles such as “adversary”/“opponent”

17

Music as Entity; Music as a Person

MUSIC AS ENTITY:

Entity metaphor

- *“seems to grow into the next section”*
- *“the leading tone wants to resolve upwards”*
- *“it lurches forward”*
- *“snake-like”*
- *“robotic”*

Italian musical terminology

- *Espressivo* – “expressive”
- *Scherzando* – “playful”

MUSIC AS A PERSON:

MUSICAL HARMONY IS INTERPERSONAL HARMONY

- *“these voices are having a dispute”*
- *“question/answer”* or *“call/response”* passages

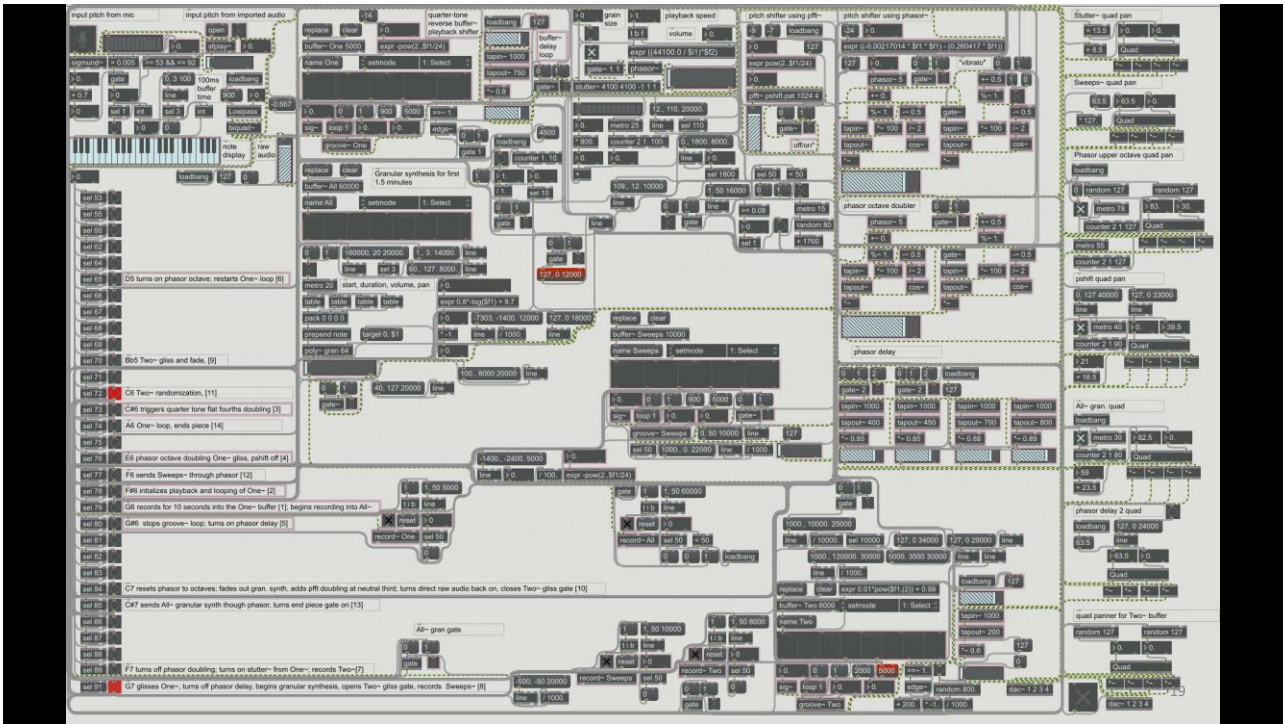
Other personifying expressions

- *“longing”*
- *“hinting at what comes next”*
- *“demonstrative”*

Italian musical terminology

- *Agitato* – “agitated”
- *Dolce* – “sweetly”
- *Furioso* – “furiously”

18



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