Music suffers in discussion more than most arts. The difficulties of grasping the workings of an art whose materials of sound are intangible, elusive, and ephemeral are increased by the usual practice of employing physical and other alien metaphors to convey the activities of musical creation and appreciation. It is common to hear even musicians speak of constructing a composition, as if music were an object to be structured by joining together tones, chords, or melodic elements and arranging them in acceptable order by conformity to established metrical and formal patterns. The very word for the creation of music, compose, incorporates the same mythical assumption of the musical work as a thing, a piece that is put together out of pre-existing materials. The creative process, difficult to understand in any art, is even more recondite in the musical one.

It is tempting to parody this constructivist prejudice with a trope which condemns that opinion by affirming its negation, and so speak of musical creation as "de-composition." This image recalls the dark wit of that arch iconoclast, Baudelaire, whose prognosis for love likened the future of his beloved to a dog's decaying carcass. While the discussion of musical creation that follows may seem quite as shocking to the traditional lore of aesthetics as the poet's song...
does to that of love, let me carry the comparison no further and offer, not a romantic apostasy of love but, following the biological metaphor, a romantic affirmation of art. In any event, my interest here is not in organic degeneration but in artistic generation, and we shall suggest that in the case of music and, mutatis mutandis, the other arts, some common ways of regarding the creative process are as misleading as they are misapprehended. More positively, an alternative will emerge that may grasp more successfully something of the nature of musical creation and, through extension, the performance and appreciation of music, by considering it as a process of aesthetic engagement of an exemplary directness and intimacy.

The manner in which music is made often baffles the nonmusician, probably because the materials of music and the ways they are shaped seem markedly different from those found in other arts. Moreover, they appear to have little direct connection with those activities and experiences that lie outside that art and with which we are far more familiar and easy. And so the challenge of arranging tonal materials seems incomprehensibly strange. Perhaps that is why in the Western classical tradition music is so often called the most abstract of the arts, for it rarely draws directly from the sounds of the world outside the concert hall, nor does it usually assume the fragmentary or unbounded forms in which they appear. Even when music is combined with theater as in opera, with poetry as in song, with rhetoric as in melodeclamation, or with environment as in musique concrète, it does not seem to possess in any direct fashion the referential character that language appears to have in literature. Nor does it carry the images and forms of the world that painting and sculpture have until recent times, exhibited directly and with which, even in their most abstract instances, they still remain connected. Music does not fashion
itself out of the social condition of human action and reflection in the manner of narrative literature, nor can it grasp the steadying hand of structure and function that are an inherent part of architecture to which Goethe and Schopenhauer once compared it.²

It is true that theorists have sometimes claimed that music reflects or embodies the qualities and dynamic forms of emotional states. The respectable history of this notion can be traced back to classical philosophy. It reappeared in certain theories during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, emerged as a position in its own right in the Affektenlehre of the eighteenth-century Germans, continues in Langer's theory of the arts as symbolic of feeling in the twentieth, and remains popular still as one of the questionable truisms of aesthetics. Yet this is a connection that requires a developed theory for it to be taken seriously, and such proposals have by no means been universally convincing. Apart from the commonplace association of music with feelings, a connection that results in rather little intelligibility by balancing the intangibility of the one against the indeterminateness of the other, music remains perhaps the most arcane of the major arts, an intriguing yet incomprehensible wonder of creation. Indeed, there is surely the prospect of rest and redirection to be found in Schönberg's remark that "from the point of view of pure aesthetics, music does not express the extra-musical."³

This, then, is the peculiar travail and glory of the composer. By inventing and ordering sounds that have no direct tie to the world outside music and that serve no primary purpose, he becomes a Promethean challenger of the divine monopoly on original creation. Apparently beginning with no more than a self-contained history of practices and techniques, the composer brings something into being where nothing was before.
Yet at the same time that music is abstract and intangible, it is also concrete, employing the most direct qualities of audible experience. What these qualities are has often been specified by such terms as tone, pitch, timbre, duration, intensity, volume, rhythm, meter, tempo, and the like. Joined together in a musical work, these immediately perceptible qualities make music instantly accessible. There need be no intermediary for perceptual experiences that we can apprehend in their striking directness and whose force requires no explanation, even though it often tempts one.

In arranging these aural qualities lie the confusions and challenges of musical composition, and much has been proposed and denied about this process. Some have tried to characterize the outcome of such an ordering in the most general terms. Hanslick's account is the classic statement of the formalist position—*tonend bewegte Formen*, which may be translated variously as "sound and motion," "forms moving in terms of a tonal system," and "tonally moving forms," but which can be read, closest to the last of these and least assumptively as "forms of moving tones." This is a position that has clear echoes in Stravinsky's observation that "the phenomenon of music is the phenomenon of speculation aimed at the elements of sound and time" and in Langer's claim that the essence of music is "the creation of virtual time, and its complete determination by the movement of audible forms." Yet these highly generalized characterizations, while commendable for being more literal than most, seem to help us rather little in accounting for the ways in which music is shaped from these basic materials into individual works.
Specific systems of rules are sometimes adduced here, the most famous of which is surely Schönberg's serial technique. Yet except in its most attenuated and cabalistic post-Webernian manifestations, a tone row specifies an order of pitches roughly comparable to a mode or a scale, except that the sequence in using the pitches is obligatory once the row has been decided on, and none of the twelve pitches can be repeated. This leaves an enormous range of possibilities to the composer's individual discretion, resulting in music as varied stylistically as Schönberg's *Violin Concerto*, Berg's *Lulu*, and Webern's *Symphony* op. 21, to cite some of the most famous instances. More determinate rules have often been adduced for the writing of music, from Fux's codification of contrapuntal practice and Rameau's ordering of the tertiary harmonic idiom, both early in the eighteenth century, to Goetschius's neat classification of homophonic and contrapuntal musical forms at the turn of the twentieth and to periodic attempts to specify rules for writing four-part harmony. Yet except for serial composition, such systems of rules have most typically followed practice, not prescribed it, and have led to enshrining uninteresting conventions once the practices they specify are no longer fresh and unpredictable. The composer who does not recompose the works of others is likely to be guided, knowingly or not, by the remark of the colleague who advised, "The modern composer should know no rules of composition aside from some vague generalities." This is not a romantic disclaimer of order or another expression of contemporary iconoclasm, for it was written by Benedetto Marcello, an early eighteenth-century composer whose work reflected the conventions of the Baroque as much as any other musician of the period. Apart from the technical skill and the auditory awareness that may be acquired by mastering an already petrified technique, rules have little to offer, either
as a method for or an explanation of musical creation.

There is another even more common account, whose simplicity and obviousness are compelling to the amateur and musician alike. This is to regard musical composition as a process of shaping tonal materials by the demands of some musical form. Not only does a preponderance of the musical literature—classical, folk, or popular—follow an easily identifiable formal structure, but those forms also supply the names for much of that literature. Songs, ballads, fugues, canons, sonatas, symphonies, rondos, and variations offer both titles and explanations of music simultaneously. It is clear and easy to consider a musical form much in the manner of a mold that gives shape to its contents. Musical sounds are arranged within the restrictions imposed by a form, and that shape guides the composer in elaborating and ordering the materials. Such forms are a rough analogue of the Kantian categories of the understanding and appear to function as a priori determinants of tonal matter which, without such ordering, would be both shapeless and incomprehensible. Even if one wisely acknowledges the arguments for literature and painting that advise against thinking we can separate form and matter, the distinction seems convenient and compelling in the case of music, and it appears to offer a plausible account of the compositional process. Indeed as we noted at the outset, the very word compose means, by etymology and usage, "to place together," and suggests a constructivist activity. Thus usage, convention, and intuition concur here.

As an account of how composers actually write their music, the process of shaping musical materials according to the patterns and strictures of a previously determined form is no
doubt true in many cases. Production by formula has, to be sure, a long and tiresome history for
the listener as well as for any artist of limited originality. Even though we are ready to admire
Bach for those marvelous dissonances that stand as exceptions to the conventions of
voice-leading which were codified only after his time, and we extol Beethoven and Mahler for
their daring in bursting the confines of the classical symphony, it is still true that there is a vast
musical literature that seems more or less to conform to those established patterns.

Still, there are problems. For example, musical forms are not neutral structures that can
be filled by any auditory material at hand. You cannot have a Dutch colonial skyscraper, Philip
Johnson and postmodernism notwithstanding, just as you cannot have a monumental classical
symphony. When Mozart approached this in the finale of the _Jupiter_ Symphony, for instance, he
had to break the bonds of the sonata-allegro form and adapt it to his own purposes, just as
Beethoven did for the same reasons in the first movement of the _Eroica_. There cannot be a
monochromatic still life or an epic sonnet for the same reason that the subject of a Bach fugue
cannot easily serve as the theme of a symphony or a three-part song. That is because musical
materials place demands on the composer; they require certain forms of elaboration and oppose
others. And when a composer is more swayed by the force of convention than by the force of the
musical ideas, the result shows the strain, as when Schubert bent his extraordinary genius for
lyric melody into awkward and ungainly dimensions under the expansive developmental
requirements of the symphony. To be able to function in a different, uncongenial form, the
character of musical ideas must be modified, as when the theme in a sonata-allegro movement is
used as the subject of a fugato. But the converse is equally true, for at their most successful the
ideas change the form as well. At the very least, then, there is a correlation between musical materials and forms: The materials suggest what form is most suitable, and the form influences the kind of material appropriate to it. But this is an uneasy balance, probably because the terms of the equation are the wrong ones and, indeed, because there is no equation in the first place.

For there is more to be answered here than this convenient falsehood can manage. The forms we have been talking about do not appear ready-made; they have their histories. Different shapes and materials appear in musical practice, and an altered sensibility develops. Over the course of the history of the art there have been fluctuations in melodic style, different orderings of line and texture, altered and expanded harmonic structures, and fresh sounds and effects made possible by the technical capabilities of newly invented instruments, like the piano in the eighteenth century and the synthesizer in the twentieth, as well as major changes in the social conditions of musical experience, such as the public concert. These novel developments force an extension of the prevailing forms, such as the expansion of the Baroque binary form into the sonata-allegro form, the evolution of the classical symphony into the romantic one, and the replacement of individual pitches and chords as the units of musical order by patterns, textures, and agglomerations of sound. Isn't it more plausible to suppose, then, that the kinds of thematic, textural, and harmonic materials of a period influence and indeed shape the prevailing forms of that age? At the very least, composers of talent instill freshness and life into the conventions they inherit, as Bach, Brahms, and Stravinsky did. Often they develop and extend those conventions, as occurred with Haydn and Mozart, stretch them into unrecognizability, as happened with Bruckner, Mahler, and Wagner, and seize on new vehicles to carry their
distinctive ideas forward, as did Chopin, Liszt, and Satie. Such composers can hardly be said to "follow the form" when their musical materials just would not abide by the strictures of those forms. To take form as "superinduced," Elliott Carter claims, "is either the death or the imprisonment of the thing." 8

However we structure the problem of the relation between musical form and materials and attempt to resolve it by attenuating the distinction and urging the reciprocity of its terms, the issue will not settle comfortably. For the phenomena of music, complex and recalcitrant, are not packaged that way, as far as perception is concerned. The distinction between form and materials in music comes after the fact, not before it. It supplies an ordering by which we mistakenly hope to understand those phenomena better. Yet it is hard to avoid the thought that this may be yet another case of the common philosophical phenomenon of concepts and distinctions that generate more difficulties than they dispel. When it is the composer who leans on the form-materials distinction and guides the musical ideas by the demands of a form, there emerges all the tediousness of derivative art, of pat formulas with predictable products. While new tonal materials and technologies are a major cause of changing musical sensibilities, which then press in fresh directions for their embodiment, they offer but the most obvious case of what all art compels. In music, as in the other arts, the work is not a construction from elements but a growth toward an integral unity. Musical perception confirms this fulfillment of auditory sensibility.

How better to develop a theory of musical composition than from the standpoint of perceptual experience? If we are sensitive to musical sounds as they are directly heard, we may
discover that they possess a dynamic, generative character. A tone, for example, will not stand alone: Its very duration extends the tone and projects a tension that propels it forward. Accretions and groupings develop, and each of these contains its own aural impulses which compel it to move ahead. From the Baroque passacaglia and the opening motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony to the five-note figure that begins Bartók's Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste, the history of music is replete with works that develop out of the germinal forces inherent in their initial motivic ideas.

Yet there are many other ways in which musical forces move. Patterns of tones, of rhythm, or of harmony, for example, may set up a momentum that must be continued and carried to fulfillment. Many of the Preludes from Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier are uniform figurations, derived from harmonic progressions bound in sequential relation on the circle of fifths, which constitute nearly the entire piece. Recent minimal music carries out the same impulse to fulfill the dynamic pressures established by a harmonic and rhythmic pattern. Zuckerkandl's discussion of the dynamic properties of tones in the diatonic system does much to illuminate how connections among pitches are not fortuitous but are generated out of tensions inherent in their relationships. Thus melodies have a kind of logic in their fulfillment, although words like logic or necessity have connotations too rational to convey the dynamic qualities of sound that the composer shapes intuitively. A piece like Ravel's Bolero is a complex instance of these processes, combining a persistent rhythmic pattern with two similar melodies that are repeated endlessly, and all cast under the dynamic framework of a single great crescendo to fashion a work of obsessive force.
Repetition, in fact, may be the single most significant factor in the development of musical materials. It is important, however, not to construe repetition in a mechanical sense, for music is not built up out of identical repeated units, like a building constructed out of brick or blocks of stone or modules of pre-cast concrete, or like an internal combustion engine which fires its cylinders ceaselessly in an unvarying order. Repeated melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic patterns breed their sequels, so to speak, because the ways in which continuity develops are not only cumulative but generative.

The chaconne and the passacaglia are instructive examples of how this may occur. Used mainly in the Baroque period but still found today in popular as well as classical idioms, these are two related modes of composition that shape a piece out of a single repeated unit. Although there is some disagreement about the exact distinction between them historically, there is reason to associate the chaconne with a repeated harmonic sequence and the passacaglia with an ostinato or repeated ground—a line that appears mainly but not always in the bass. Out of a germinal unit that is usually made up of a set of four or eight bars in slow triple meter, a series of continuous variations unfolds, carried along by their own momentum to sometimes dramatic conclusions, as in the thirty-one repetitions of the opening eight bars of the final chaconne in Bach's Partita No. 2 for unaccompanied violin and the thirty-four variations of the first eight measures that constitute the passacaglia finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. A different use of a repeated musical unit forms the basis of Schönberg's serial technique, whose structural unit, the tone row, usually made up of the twelve semi-tones within an octave, is arranged by the composer in a different and
distinctive order of pitches and intervals for each individual musical work. The row is repeated always in the same order but under the varying rhythm, range, harmonic, and melodic appearances that constitute the distinctive character of that particular work.

Repetition assumes many different forms in music. At times it may center on a single note: Of the first thirteen melodic notes of Chopin's Etude op. 25, no. 1, eleven of them are the same E flat. Or it may be of a simple interval, as in the prevalence of the minor second in Beethoven's Quartets op. 95 and op. 132 and the fifths and fourths at the opening of his Ninth Symphony. Fugal subjects are characteristically repeated in their entirety, and any transformations are made carefully so as not to affect the subject's integrity and recognizability. Again, signs in the musical score indicating the literal repetition of each section of a binary composition were universal during the Baroque, and they continued as common practice in the exposition sections of sonata-allegro movements of sonatas and symphonies well into the nineteenth century. If these are understood as recommendations for experience and not merely as a notational convention, and if they are performed accordingly, these repetitions are no mere blind duplications but new and different experiences in their own right. Repetition then becomes regeneration rather than reiteration. One is reminded of William James's comment that no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before. . . . Does not the same piano-key, struck with the same force, make us hear in the same way? . . . It seems a piece of metaphysical sophistry to suggest that we do not; and yet a close attention to the matter shows that there is no proof that the same bodily sensation is ever got by us twice. ¹¹
Since the forces and tensions inherent in musical sound occur in elusive ways, one can think of the composer as an artist who possesses a special sensitivity to their dynamic pressures. All musical materials have distinctive traits and thus generate their own individual manner of development. And because these sounds and their germinal shapes are always different, there are no formulas for realizing their possibilities in ways that carry richness and wonder, especially under repeated listening. Every original work, then, is newly made, not by constructing or building up a structure but by a process of germination and growth. In musical creation the composer engages with the tonal materials, participating in their dynamic forces and moving them to completion through the reciprocal interplay of composerly intuition and auditory perception.

Musical creation is therefore an activity of tonal engagement, a fusion of composer and sound in a dynamic process of elaboration and fulfillment. One thinks here of such striking examples as the tone poems of Liszt, whose motives emerge and expand, the music dramas of Wagner, with their ceaseless interweaving of leitmotifs, and even a work like Sibelius's Fourth Symphony, whose themes appear as the culmination of the movements rather than at the outset. But what is most pronounced in these cases is but a manifestation of the pervasive and central trait of musical creation. Musical generation means, then, that making music is not an act of combination but a process of producing sound sequences and structures by drawing out the expansive possibilities of the musical materials. Writing music is therefore an activity of extension rather than of retention or construction.
Just as musical materials should be thought of as germinal and not substantive, so our understanding of form in music must be transfigured along similar lines. When musical form is considered perceptually, it undergoes a metamorphosis from a structure within which figures or themes are placed and developed to become the processive shape of auditory experience. A musical form is not a container within which sounds are situated or a framework inside which they are arrayed. Form in music, and indeed in the other arts as well, is rather the order of experience, "form as proceeding," Carter calls it, which in music becomes the perceived succession of sounds as they are grouped, identified, and shaped sequentially. The overall dynamic continuity of Erwartung, for example, gives Schönberg's work its musical motion, a "sense of propelling interconnection." Thus musical form is at most a guide to the sequence of musical materials as they are heard; it is least of all an abstraction from that sequence.

Cadences offer a clear illustration of how a formal feature can function directly in auditory perception. Signifying formal divisions in a musical work, cadences are the notes or chords that conclude a musical phrase, a section of a piece, or an entire work, and they impose some kind of closure, momentary or complete. Some cadential patterns have been studied and classified according to their place in the modal or diatonic system in which they appear. Thus it is common to think of cadences as formulas to be brought out and employed at the appropriate divisions in a work to help define its structure. While this way of describing them reflects familiar and convenient usage, it says nothing about how cadences actually function, about the quality of completion, indecision, elusiveness, or evasion of the endings they articulate. More
than with most words that designate formal features, the terminology used in classifying the harmonic formulas of cadences that were prevalent during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries does, in fact, offer some descriptive suggestion of their auditory function, as in the case of perfect or full, imperfect, deceptive, and half-cadences. Other terms, such as authentic and plagal cadences, do not. Yet what really counts in a description of how cadences function are not the chord progressions or structures that distinguish one kind of cadence from another for taxonomic purposes, but how these are actually heard, the quality and strength of closure they convey. A composer's choice of a cadential pattern is guided, then, by the feel and force of the movement that is being shaped and by the perception of the demands of the musical materials. How much is the movement of the music to be slowed down or arrested? What sense of completion or incompleteness does the music require at that moment? What sort of cadential arrangement will hold just the right degree of closure for that point in a work? When is it right that a piece end, and what will give that ending the proper weight to balance what preceded it? These are the kinds of considerations that function here in forming a musical experience. Rather than choosing a cadence from a stock of formulas, the composer is sensitive to the demands of the music and is guided by its needs.

What is true of cadences applies equally to a common internal structural feature of tonal music--modulation or the transition from one tonal center to another. Modulation is typically analyzed according to harmonic formulas that clearly establish a new key, and yet nowhere is a composer's skill more apparent than in the ability to accomplish these transitions. When produced by formula, we get the clumsy announcement that such a change is now taking place, as
in the embarrassingly awkward modulatory interludes that Schubert often resorts to. It is as if he were saying, in effect, "Wait a moment while I modulate. Then the music can continue on its melodic course." In contrast, the skillful modulations that occur in Mozart, Chopin, or Brahms seem the natural outgrowth of the musical movement as it seeks fresh tonal surroundings and eventually returns to its original place. Instead of a formula used mechanically to fulfill a requirement of the musical structure, modulation here becomes the aural discovery of new regions of tonality.

The larger divisions of musical form can be understood in much the same way as cadences and modulations. The standard forms of the classical and romantic periods may be treated either as structures or as experiential patterns. The ternary, or three-part song form, for example, embodies the basic idea of contrast in which a middle section offers a change in character from the similar sections that flank it. This is usually represented structurally as an A-B-A form, but it is heard as the experience of difference and familiarity. The same opposing accounts can be given the sonata-allegro form, a different, more complex and elaborate three-part order and the typical identifying structure of the first movement of the sonata, symphony, and concerto during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet in a similar fashion, the thematic contrast that is presented in the exposition, the working out of those ideas that takes place in the development, and the return of the original ideas that signifies the recapitulation can be understood either as a complex framework for the ordering of thematic materials or it can be heard as a pattern of their unfolding. What occurs as a characteristic way of hearing the natural elaboration of musical materials may be misconstrued in retrospect as a structure for the
presentation of auditory information.

Other standard forms of the period lend themselves to the same contrasting interpretations: the rondo, with its constant alternation of new thematic ideas with the original one; the variation, with its succession of modified restatements of the initial theme; the scherzo, with its transfiguration into ephemerality of the decorous character and ceremonial order of the minuet. These, too, may stand either as formal structures or as successions of qualitative experience. Perhaps the fugue, a Baroque form that continues to attract composers, illustrates best the insufficiency of a formula. Even though fugues commonly begin with an expository introduction of the fugal subject in the various voices in an established order of pitch relationships, there is a good deal of flexibility in what follows, and the composer's sensitivity to the musical implications of the subject is mainly what determines the remainder of the piece. There are techniques and devices that lie at one's disposal, to be sure, but here, as in other musical forms, the sounds guide the choices, not the choices the sounds.

What lies at the heart of a phenomenological interpretation of musical form, however, is the operation of memory. For while sounds occupy a transitory and elusive moment, music is far more than the relentless passage of auditory instants. There is a relatedness and cohesion to musical sounds. Indeed, this entire discussion rests on the recognition of this but, more important, so does the very possibility of music itself, certainly in the Western classical tradition and probably beyond it as well. It is the capacity for aural memory that permits musical continuity and shape to appear and that allows the very possibility of repetition. Moreover, we
can grasp the experience of form only by means of memory, whether form be analyzed as an abstract structure or construed as an integral experience. Memory is the experiential dimension of musical form.

The subject of memory is a major topic in philosophy and can hardly be developed here. What we should observe, however, is that the function of memory in musical experience is rather unlike its use in other places. Music does not require factual recollection or what has been called "durable memory." Memory here is rather a consciousness of the immediate auditory past, a consciousness that extends, moreover, as a projection from that reservoir into the future. Music functions within a mnemonic aura, so to speak, of past and prescience. Its sounds resonate for a while in imaginative perception and carry at the same time an anticipation of sounds to come. There is, then, in this art as in others a phosphorescence of perception whose glow extends to enclose the musical work and become the shape of its experience.

This experiential rendering of musical form is a transformation that reflects the compositional process, not its methods. What is significant here are not the techniques of individual composers but rather the aesthetic significance of the process through which music comes into being. It is immaterial here whether a composer works laboriously at the development of his ideas, as Beethoven did, or whether the music issues easily, often fully formed, as the uniquely gifted Mozart wrote. Nor does it matter whether a composer uses the piano or another instrument for assistance or writes at a desk and relies solely on auditory imagination. These are biographical differences in techniques and working habits. But what is
common to all composers, whatever their individual methods may be, is the process of fashioning an experience of the movement of sound in time and in space.

Now it is this very process of shaping tonal experience that exemplifies the composer's engagement with musical materials. These materials, ephemeral though they be and wholly dependent on perception, possess an exquisite dependency on the composer's imagination. In no other art is that relationship quite so intimate as in the art of music. For here the means and materials are external to the sense to a degree more distant and foreign than in most other arts. The connection of painting with vision, of dance with the body, of literature with the word—all these media are consanguine with the perceptual qualities of their art. In music, however, they are not. As with film, the technology of the art is foreign to its material. The production of sound, with the possible exception of singing, uses means that are distant from the perception they stimulate—the complex mechanism of the piano, the chips and circuits of the synthesizer, the violin which produces sound, as people have often remarked, by scraping horsehair across catgut. While the body is surely involved, ultimately identifying with the other means of tonal production, it is as the facilitator and not as the material of sound. In the composer's absorption in sound, however, lies the direct assimilation of creation and object. Here is full participation in the aesthetic object, a process originated by the composer and emulated by the listener. Musical generation requires the complete engagement of the composer in the auditory realm.

Musical improvisation offers an interesting test of this idea. At first glance it might seem as if improvisation were a spontaneous welling forth of music governed only by the impulse of
the performer at the passing instant, as seems to be the case in the often subtle perambulations of jazz and the sometimes Dionysian frenzy of rock improvisation. However, some small knowledge of improvisational practice reveals the contrary: Most improvisation takes place within sharply defined boundaries of phrase and harmony, so that little is left to the performer's discretion but melodic turns and harmonic voicing, as in Baroque and Rococo ornamentation, the realization of a figured bass, the cadenza in a classical concerto, or jamming a chorus in a jazz performance.

Stanley Cavell offers an idea that appears to reconcile both alternatives when he notes that, especially up to the time of Beethoven, much music sounds as if it were being improvised, yet this takes place in a context in which the conventions of music are understood so well that we always know where we are and where we are going. Thus the sense of spontaneity combines with the security of a familiar order. With the disappearance of conventions we have lost such meanings in arbitrariness or have resorted to the nihilism of total organization. Francis Sparshott, however, refers to improvisation in pursuing the difference between a score and a performance by contrasting it with composition. A score is associated with a completed composition, while a performance conveys the quality of improvisation. Both writers nonetheless identify improvisation with a sense of spontaneity and growth, with the quality of freshness that comes with direct creation.

While improvisation may have different degrees of freedom in different contexts of musical practice, it captures something of the dynamic character of the perception of music that
we have been attempting to locate. In itself, actual improvisation is hardly the pure case of free creation in music. On one side, it is confined too much by conventions and formulas; on the other, improvisation is often too rapid to realize the nuances and to choose most truly from among the different dynamic forces that are present at any point in the unfolding of a work. Its freshness lies in the constant possibility of a chance arrival at an unpremeditated chordal structure or turn of phrase, where at times the hand leads the ear, not the ear the hand.\textsuperscript{16} Improvisation, then, reflects the generative characteristics of musical material and offers a first approximation of where it might go. But there is something more. Improvisation conveys the impression of a freely unfolding progression of musical ideas, an impression that touches the life that lies at the heart of musical experience. Yet this is the face of freshness more than the fact of it, for while the sounds may actually not be newly contrived, they have the sense of spontaneity, of spontaneous generation, as it were. In this respect improvisation embodies the creative quality central to the experience of music, a quality that is the measure of every performance.\textsuperscript{17}

Improvisation, in fact, combines both musical creation and performance in the same act. It is a dramatic instance of that generative process through which music originates out of an absorption in the musical materials, participating in their perceptual qualities and discovering their dynamic impulses. For the composer and the performer engage in the same reciprocal exchange with these materials, the composer in originating the score, the performer in revitalizing it. The score, of course, is never complete nor can it indicate every performance detail. The performer must therefore engage with the sounds and make them personal, so that performance at its best pursues the same process of fulfilling the dynamic forces of the music as
Yet it is not only the composer and the performer who engage with the musical materials to realize their creative forces. As the trait central to the experience of music, the generative sense of musical development is found no less fully in the act of appreciation. All listening that is active and engaged shares this quality of live performance. An auditory event can no more be separated from the listener, whether as creator, performer, or audience, than dance can be regarded apart from the dancer. In musical experience there is no independent object—scores, records, and tapes being in themselves quite inconsequential things, devices to guide performance or to reproduce it. As Strawson points out, no distinction holds between the hearer and other things in pure auditory experience. Moreover, even the illusion of separation is difficult to maintain, for there is no object visibly embodying the musical phenomenon, as the dancer does the dance or the book the novel. The sounds emanating from musical instruments are as intangible as those entering the ear. Spatial qualities are perceptually available in music, certainly, and a phenomenology of musical experience will surely discriminate distance, direction, and density. Yet these still are relative to the auditor and require the listener for them to occur at all, since they are perceptual, not physical features. Claudel's vivid description expresses the participation of the listener with a poet's eloquence: "We absorb him into the concert. He is no longer anything but expectation and attention."^19

Certain musical occasions render this experience with extraordinary effect, such as hearing Gregorian chant sung in a Gothic or Norman cathedral. The long reverberation time,
generally over six seconds, enables the sounds to persist, to rebound off the stone walls and lose their place of origin as they surround the listener in almost palpable fashion to produce an experience of immersion. 20 It is no surprise that Bachelard uses the auditory metaphor of reverberation to convey the meaning of sounds as the coalescence of time and space. Nor is it now strange to think of song as a unifier of singer and listener, for "the song sings itself in us; we are the song while the song lasts, identified at once with the singer and with the community." 21 Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, too, had good reason to believe that one can lose oneself in music.

Performance is not alone in emulating the participatory absorption of creation; appreciative listening is equally reconstitutive. Igor Stravinsky, never to be accused of pandering to romantic yearnings, acknowledges the participation of the listener in the creative process of musical generation, holding that

the listener reacts and becomes a partner in the game initiated by the creator. . . .

This exceptional participation gives the partner such lively pleasure that it unites him in a certain measure with the mind that conceived and realized the work to which he is listening, giving him the illusion of identifying himself with the creator. That is the meaning of Raphael's famous adage: "to understand is to equal." 22

In appreciative engagement, no less than in creative activity, music is brought into being for, as William James observed, every perceptual experience is, as such, original.
Participation in the dynamic character of musical experience is, then, equally the core of the creative act and the central trait of the regenerative acts of appreciation and performance. The same musical process is at work, whether original or reproduced, whether devised for the first time or renewed. The differences are more differences of agency than of perception, of history than of event. The engaged listener follows the direction that the composer originally shaped. We become a "composerly listener," to adapt Barthes's famous phrase,\textsuperscript{23} regenerating the music by responding to the same internal forces that guided the composer originally and so pursuing the same process along the same path. "You are the music while the music lasts," wrote T. S. Eliot in \textit{Four Quartets}, and when this happens there is no qualitative difference between the composer and the listener, only a chronological one.

In tracing out the notion of the generative character of musical creation, then, we are led to a metamorphosis of the conventional understanding of the features of music. Repetition now becomes regeneration, not duplication. Cadences are seen as pauses with different qualitative characteristics in the dynamic course of musical movement. Modulation is not a formula imposed to meet certain formal stipulations but is recast into the unstable movement of transition toward a fresh tonal region. Form and matter are transmuted into the shaping of tonal experiences out of the dynamic forces implicit in musical ideas. Memory becomes an aura of awareness persisting around the moving course of sounds, while improvisation evokes the unfolding life of musical ideas, the ideal of all performance and the vital force in musical creation. And the generative process that originated a musical work is emulated and paralleled by the perceptual experience of the performer and listener alike.
No art incorporates aesthetic engagement more thoroughly and more unassailably than music. It is, indeed, the art of engagement *primus inter pares*, and musical generation stands at the center of aesthetic participation. Shared by composer, performer, and audience, it is sound, in all its timbral, textural, dynamic, tonal, durational, and emphatic transformations that is the focal point of attentive listening. As a key to understanding how music is made, the concept of musical generation at the same time unlocks certain puzzles about its performance and appreciation. This becomes further evidence for the fecundity of the idea, for art has no separate parts, and recognizing the continuity among the different aspects of music assists in their mutual clarification. The original creation of musical objects and their re-creation in performance and in appreciation join together, then, as experiences of participation in generating and fulfilling musical ideas.

This discussion of musical creation began with a biological metaphor, one that rejected Baudelaire's love lyric of decay in favor of an image of growth. Mikel Dufrenne's equally Gallic sensibility also leads him to follow the same metaphor in an affirmative direction:
Creation requires everything to stay in suspense, as if in gestation. In this sense the work also is open, as a wound that has not healed. . . . The rigor of perfection can become *rigor mortis*--to achieve it the work risks being killed. And is it not to elude such solemn petrification that the work calls for a participation which, in accompanying it, keeps the work alive? . . . The work of art does not conclude the matter of creation, as those philosophers who preach the death of man would describe it, but rather invites every individual to become a creator.  

While "generation" is an apt image for all the arts, it especially suits music. More than in the other arts, the sensory directness of musical experience requires no mediation of knowledge or recognition. And the immediacy of the musical event, an event in which the conscious body joins, reflects the directness of growth in which internal forces press forward to realize the potentialities that are inherent in the tonal materials. Growth can be guided, to be sure, but it is most successful when it develops, in art as in biology, by fulfilling the possibilities that lie in the materials themselves and not by imposing external demands. Musical generation expresses this intent, and the positive side of musical de-composition lies in freeing music from misleading models. While we need logic and rhetoric both, in philosophy as in art a true metaphor may be more eloquent than a valid argument.

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7. Sam Morgenstern, ed., *Composers on Music* (New York: Pantheon, 1956), p. 48. Marcello was specifically denying the composer's need to master mathematical relations in order to write music.


   "...The constant and overall phenomenon of music is one in which every 'moment' is in the process of coming from some previous moment and leading to some future moment--only thus contributing to what is happening in the present...." (pp.99-100).

13. Bachelard uses the auditory metaphor, 'reverberation,' to convey the meaning of sound as the unity of time and space, for in the term 'reverberation' both space and time are present and indistinguishable. This may be taken as an empirical argument, so to speak, for the inseparability of musical form from its dynamic materials. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Orion, 1964), p.xii.


16. David Sudnow develops this at length in connection with jazz improvisation in *Ways of the Hand* (Cambridge: Harvard University
17. Elliott Carter grasps this point precisely: "From a purely musical point of view, I've always had the impression of improvisation of the most rewarding kind when good performers take the trouble to play music that is carefully written out as if they were thinking it up themselves while they played it—that is, when with much thought and practice they come to feel the carefully written-out piece as part of themselves and of their own experience, which they are communicating to others directly from themselves in the moment of the performance, in an alive way." Allen Edwards, Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds, p.78.


22. Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, p.81. Stravinsky was not the only composer to acknowledge a partnership with the listener. Hindemith did so as well, although without Stravinsky's verbal gifts: "While listening to the musical structure, as it unfolds before his ears, [the listener] is mentally constructing parallel to it and simultaneously with it a mirrored image." Paul Hindemith, *A Composer's World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), p.16.

23. Used by David Schiff in a lecture on Carter's music at Vassar College, 2 April 1989.