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THE HERITAGE OF *Donald H. Van Ess*
MUSICAL STYLE

Donald H. Van Ess

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BROCKPORT

THE HERITAGE OF
MUSICAL STYLE

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PREFACE

This book is intended for the introductory course in music—often called Introduction to Music or Introduction to Music Literature, and still widely known by its original name, Music Appreciation. Also, the book can be used in courses in the humanities.

The Heritage of Musical Style has evolved from the author's deep conviction that the great treasures of music, as of the other fine arts, are not confined to one or two epochs but are to be found in all periods of civilization. Moreover, the style of music—its form, underlying ideas, and its rhythmic, melodic and harmonic characteristics—is closely related to the prevailing culture of each epoch. Thus, the present text provides a broad perspective of man's achievements in music, and emphasizes how a knowledge of the cultural background of music can be an important factor in the enrichment of the musical experience of the listener. The keystone is the *conceptualization* of essential elements of music into basic styles or musical ideas—culled from each period and presented against the intellectual and artistic background of each cultural epoch. In this way, the reasons for the growth, practices, and styles of music come more clearly into focus.

Since the volume has been planned and organized to be used by the general reader, the student in the liberal arts curriculum, and possibly music students taking an introductory course for majors, several approaches are possible in using this text. The general reader will find the first chapter, "Meaning in Music," to be a helpful foundation for the chapters that follow. Depending on the amount of time and the background of the class, the student or his instructor may choose either to cover the first chapter in a thorough, systematic way or use it only as a reference in reading later chapters. The music major with a knowledge of the fundamentals may omit the chapter and commence with Chapter 2 (The Greco-Roman Era).

The book is organized historically but makes no attempt to cover every facet of music history, and detailed descriptions of techniques, composers and periods have been omitted whenever possible in favor of definitive summaries of these aspects. Ancient and medieval music, for example, is treated briefly but succinctly to enable the reader to move on to later periods relatively early in the course. Also, some of the later chapters reflect the author's desire to present familiar examples rather than the obscure and the unusual.

The humanities philosophy that serves as the foundation of this book, has a particular significance that needs to be underscored. Perhaps it is better to say the humanistic spirit itself needs to be *reaffirmed*, since there seems to be more than a casual relationship between the chaos of our time and the loss of human values as exemplified in some forms of art.

Study of the arts could provide the needed restoration of the humanistic spirit by bringing to the foreground the creative powers of man as represented in his painting, architecture, literature, and sculpture. Music especially occupies a key role in our renewal of the humanities. Artistic experiences, centered around noted works of music, not only bring enjoyment but also furnish a basis for forming tastes and standards. Hopefully, such experiences will help us separate greatness from mediocrity and see beyond changing fashions of taste.

In addition to the publishers and individuals who granted me permission to reproduce musical examples, photographs, and text, I wish to thank the following for generous assistance: Richard Wilbur, Wesleyan University, for the translation of *Correspondences* by Charles Baudelaire; Annie Knize, for the photograph of Anton Webern; Joseph Jenks, State University of New York, for translations of old English selections; Samuel Brick, University of Florida, for reading the manuscript in its early stages; Robert Gemmett, State University of New York, for the photograph of Beckford's Fonthill Abbey; and Halsey Stevens (University of Southern California) for critical reading of certain portions of the text.

Brockport, N.Y., 1978

DONALD H. VAN ESS

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1

MEANING IN MUSIC

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS: THE ELEMENTS OF MUSIC

Through the humanities . . . we may come to know the excitement of ideas, the power of imagination and the unsuspected energies of the creative spirit.

Report of the Commission on the Humanities

Undoubtedly the most important objective in listening to music, as with any experience in the arts, is simply personal enjoyment. However, what we are seeking through our study of the fine arts is a significant kind of musical enjoyment that will have real depth and substance and a lasting value in our lives. Our goal is true esthetic enjoyment, which results from an understanding of the composer's art and a feelingful response to the expressive elements of music such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and form. Esthetic enjoyment, then, may be defined as a pleasurable experience of relatively lasting importance involving intellectual perception and emotional response. It is, obviously, derived from meaningful listening experiences based on music of merit. Musical works of value, no matter what the period—the Renaissance, the classical, or the contemporary period—generally exhibit certain characteristics such as craftsmanship, logical order, intelligent use of available materials and human feeling. Moreover, these works provide meaningful musical experiences for the listener; they affect us inwardly, arrest our attention, move us emotionally, and compel us to hear them again and again. And lastly, they provide us with a more complete view of life, with its moments of joy, sorrow, deep religious thought, love, and death—in short, life's struggles and fulfillments.

To what source do we turn to find the music that will fulfill many or all of these requirements? To a particular period? To one composer? Through the study of the collective achievements of Western man in the fine arts we may find the rich sources of ideas and experiences that have continually inspired man since the Great Age of Greece. And through the study of these works we may discover values that are enduring and meaningful and that will in turn give our lives needed direction and purpose. Consequently, our musical listening and study will embrace a wide range of musical forms and styles and center upon representative works of the various historical periods. The ultimate aim of this endeavor is the development of musical taste, a taste that will be far-reaching in scope and that will recognize the commonality of the arts.

Perceptive Listening Enjoyment may be derived in a wide variety of ways as we listen to music. For example, a highly skilled performance of a technical passage may evoke a feeling of amazement and awe. Or, pleasant moments may arise while hearing a full, resonant harmony, a climactic ending of a symphony or may be derived from hearing a highly inventive drummer in a modern jazz ensemble. These are some of the broad aspects of musical enjoyment—they are comparable perhaps to selected highlights or passages in a novel or drama. Understandably, if we focus our attention only on these aspects we have missed the plot or the central ideas of the musical composition or novel.

This leads to several questions the interested listener will ask: What is it that I am supposed to be concentrating on in the composition? Is the composer merely filling space with colorful sounds or is there any unifying idea that I should hear which will help me to obtain a fuller enjoyment in listening? In short, the serious listener wants to know the *meaning* of the work, that is, what the composer has intended to be expressed or understood.

How is meaning embodied in tones? The answer is to be found in an examination of the art itself. First, music is primarily an art of tonal design or structure. Unlike painting, the design is not presented in complete form but rather as it is sounded. Music unfolds in time in much the same way as prose and poetry. Although the vehicle for communicating meaning is different (tones as opposed to words), music shares the same cognitive principles as verbal language. For example, in both music and literature, certain “key” ideas (themes in music and sentences in literature) hold our attention and lead us to anticipate further developments. Moreover, just as recognition, retention, and recall are required in tracing the unfolding plot of a novel, music likewise demands the same perceptive powers as a theme is restated or varied in the course of a musical composition. Meaning, then, in tonal art, is embodied in the composer’s ideas—the themes or significant series of tones upon which a composition is based. They are the uniting thoughts or ideas that give logic and coherence to the musical creation; they are the focal points of our attention, the plot, so to speak, that is woven into a tonal fabric.

As we hear a musical composition performed we also react emotionally. Certain feelings or moods are evoked as we hear a powerful climax sounded by the brass or percussion or a peaceful, pastoral section played by the flutes. Thus, music perception may be said to involve both a cognitive response (identification of themes and musical elements) and emotional response (reaction to tonal sensation). Since the latter is in the province of unmeasurable feelings, we must seek cognitive grounds for learning about music. The emotional aspect of perception is equally important; it will be enriched by a greater depth of understanding of tonal art and with increased experience in listening.

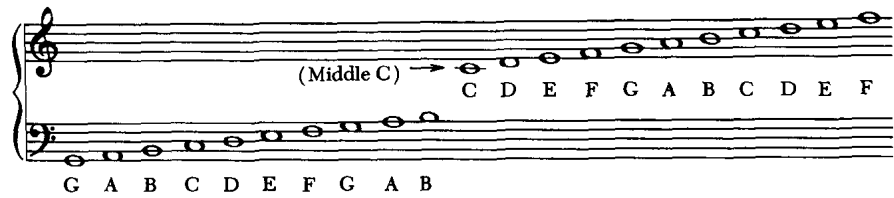
Music is made up of many component elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, and so on) that are a part of the total creative expression. The comprehension of these elements will require practice in listening. To illustrate, after several hearings of a certain work, the novice listener will begin to differentiate interesting features in addition to thematic material, such as tempo or speed of music, types of instruments and voices, and rhythmic patterns, to name a few. The principal objective—*perceptive listening*—is attained when the formal structure (the organization of the thematic ideas within a musical form) is understood and the various elements (harmony, rhythm, melody, instruments, and so on) are identified and experienced as part of the whole.

Fundamentals of Musical Notation



By nature, music is susceptible to a wide range of personal interpretations evoked by tonal sensation. As a result, unless there is an awareness of what to listen for, the composer's ideas and their elaboration may, to the uninitiated, be replaced by visions of fantasy or become lost in a diffusion of sound. What is needed to avoid these common pitfalls is an understanding of the fundamentals of notation and the elements of music. This knowledge will permit the listener to follow the main melodic patterns in this book and the line scores contained in the accompanying workbook. Furthermore, a study of these preliminary but vital aspects will enable the reader to discuss intelligently the basic techniques as he encounters them in this survey of music history.

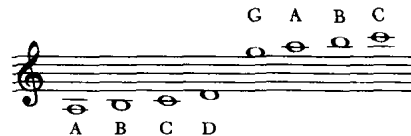
Musical notation includes: (1) a set of lines and spaces referred to as the great staff, (2) note symbols, (3) meter symbols, and (4) symbols and terms for expression.

The Great Staff The great staff consists of eleven lines with a space between each line. Each line has a given letter name as does each space, A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A, and so on; also, each consecutive line and space is referred to as a "step."



The Great Staff

The middle line, or "middle C," separates the great staff into two segments or ranges of sound: the high range indicated by the *treble clef sign* () encompassing the soprano and alto parts, and the low range indicated by the *bass clef sign* () encompassing the tenor and bass parts. *Leger lines and spaces* are added lines and spaces below the staff and above. These are to be used if a musical passage is to extend beyond the range of the bass clef or treble clef.




Leger Lines

Music for the keyboard instruments (piano and organ) is normally written on the great staff. Music designed for other instruments and human voices is written in either the treble or bass clef, depending on the range of the instrument or voice. The treble clef is used for higher-pitched instruments or voices such as flute, clarinet, soprano voice, and so on. The bass clef is for lower-pitched instruments or voices such as the trombone, tuba, and bass voice.

Vertical lines drawn through the staff are called *bar lines* which separate the notes into *measures*. The practice of using bar lines for this purpose began in the sixteenth century. Double vertical lines as found in modern music designate a sectional division or the ending of a composition. Repeat signs (double bar combined with two dots) signify that the preceding section (or section enclosed in these signs) is to be repeated.



Examples of Bar Lines

Note Symbols The relative duration in time of a musical tone, that is, its note value, is indicated by the shape of the written note. Also, each note has its corresponding *rest* symbol to indicate the measurement of silence. The whole note () is the note of longest duration, and following in a

decreasing order of time value, or duration, are the half note (♩), quarter (♪), eighth (♩), sixteenth (♩), and so on. Below is a table of common notes and their rest equivalents.

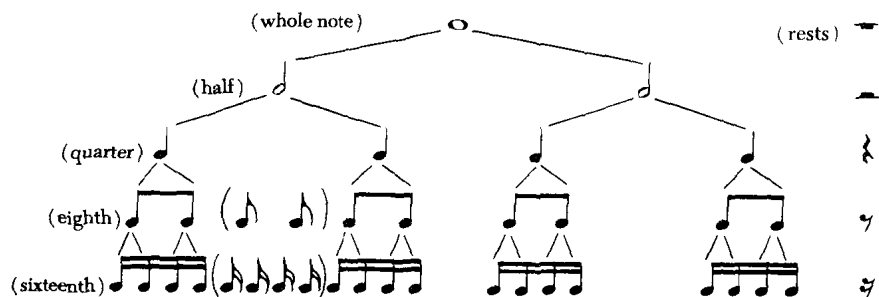


Table of Note Values and Rests

A dot placed after a note prolongs it by half again its duration, thus:

$$\text{♩} \cdot = \text{♩} + \text{♪} \text{ or } \text{♩} \text{ ♩}$$

$$\text{♪} \cdot = \text{♪} + \text{♩} \text{ or } \text{♪} \text{ ♩}$$

Increasing the Duration of Notes

A *tie* (—) is a curved line connecting two notes of the same pitch into a continuous sound. A *fermata* (⌣) indicates a momentary holding of a tone. Some articulation signs include the *accent* (ˆ), which means that a slight additional force or stress is to be given a note, and the *dot* (˙), which indicates that the note is to be played very short. A curved line beneath or over a series of notes signifies that they are to be played *legato*, meaning smoothly, in a connected manner.



Meter Symbols Appearing at the beginning of a piece of music (just after the clef sign or after the key signature if one is present) is a *meter* or *time signature* consisting of two numbers that indicate the meter of the music. The upper number represents the number of beats or pulses in each mea-



Duple Meter



Triple Meter



Compound Meter

sure, and the lower, the type of note value that is to receive one beat. For example, $\frac{3}{4}$ meter means that the basic beats or notes are quarter notes (lower figure), and there are three beats or counts in each measure. Meters are classified as duple ($\frac{2}{2}$, $\frac{2}{4}$), triple ($\frac{3}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, $\frac{3}{8}$), quadruple ($\frac{4}{2}$, $\frac{4}{4}$, $\frac{4}{8}$ [also written as C]), and compound ($\frac{6}{4}$, $\frac{6}{8}$, $\frac{9}{8}$).

Symbols such as \sharp and \flat appearing just before a note are called *accidentals* or *chromatics*. The \sharp (sharp sign) indicates that the written note is to be raised in pitch one-half step, for example from C to C \sharp ; the \flat (flat sign) designates a lowering of the pitch one-half step, for example from B to B \flat ; a \natural (natural) is used to cancel out a chromatic sign present in a measure, that is, to restore a note to its original pitch. The grouping of flats or sharps at the left-hand side of the staff designates the *key* of the music, that is, a certain number of sharps or flats placed together on the staff. The matter of keys and scales is taken up in subsequent pages.

Symbols and Terms for Expression By means of various terms and markings the composer may indicate the desired (1) tempo or speed of the music, (2) level of dynamics or volume, and (3) the general mood or feeling. Some of the common expression markings are as follows:

TEMPO	VOLUME	MOOD
Largo (very slow)	pp = very soft	dolce (sweetly)
Lento (slow)	p = soft	cantabile (in a
Andante (moderate)	mp = moderately soft	singing
Allegretto (quite fast)	mf = moderately loud	manner)
Allegro (fast)	f = loud	pesante (heavy)
Presto (very fast)	ff = very loud	marziale (march-
Ritard (rit.) = to	(to increase	like)
slow up	volume)	maestoso (with
Accelerando (accel.) =	(to decrease	majesty)
to speed up	volume)	
	<i>sf</i> = heavy accent	

The Elements of Music


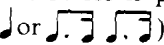
Over the centuries, various ways of manipulating tones have been devised for the purpose of obtaining a greater range of musical expression. Thus we find that the composer may alter or change the tone or tones as to color (*timbre*), speed (*tempo*), intensity (*volume*), highness or lowness (*pitch*), and duration (*rhythm*). Or, on a higher level, he may arrange the tones successively into *melody*, simultaneously into chords or *harmony*, or combine several melodies into *counterpoint*. These are the component elements of music, the materials from which a musical composition is created. Let us examine these elements in greater detail.

Timbre Each instrument and voice has a distinct tone color or timbre, as determined by the physical structure of the sound-emitting source. For example, the oboe has a rather reedy and somewhat nasal quality that is largely attributed to the double reed in the instrument's mouthpiece.

Tempo The speed of music may vary from extremely slow (designated by the term *largo*) to very fast (*presto*). We perceive the tempo in the *beat*, that is, a steady recurring pulsation felt in varying degrees in almost all music. In modern times an attempt has been made to classify the degrees of tempo by the use of the metronome invented in 1815. The tempo marking for "largo," for example, ranges from 40 to 60 beats per minute; "presto," on the other hand, has from 168 to 208.

Volume The intensity of the tone may range from very soft (indicated by *pp*) upwards through infinite shadings to very loud (*ff*). Volume markings first began to appear in the late sixteenth century. Volume may be changed gradually, either increased (marked *crescendo* in printed music) or decreased (*diminuendo*).

Pitch The relative height or depth of a sound, that is, its pitch, is determined by the rate of vibration of the sound-producing medium. The lowest pitch on the piano is $27\frac{1}{2}$ vibrations per second, the highest, 4186. The practice of pitch notation (staff lines and symbols) dates back to the Middle Ages. A standardized system of tuning all tones in the scale equally was not established until the eighteenth century. In 1939 the international pitch standard was set at $A=440$ vibrations per second.

Rhythm Rhythm, which may be defined as a feeling of forward motion, is the lifeblood of all music. Rhythm results from the repetition of a pattern of notes of differing time value. As the series is played, the notes having a slightly longer duration ( or ) tend to receive a greater stress than notes of short duration. This pattern of "stress-release" provides music with a forward, propelling movement, an effect also present in architecture, where a series of columns or spaces create visual rhythm.

Melody A melody (or *theme*) is a series of successive tones arranged into a logical pattern. Themes may vary in length from several tones to many measures. Further discussion of melody follows.

Harmony The technique of combining tones to form chords is referred to as harmony. We hear chords as tones juxtaposed upon one another, hence, harmony is the *vertical* aspect of music (that is, tones sounded simultaneously) as opposed to melody, which is the *horizontal* aspect of music (tones sounded in succession).

Counterpoint The technique of combining two or more melodic lines is called counterpoint or *polyphony* (pron. po-lif-o-nee).

Texture The particular manner in which tones are arranged in musical space is called texture. The three types of texture are: *monophonic* (only one melody or part), *polyphonic* or *contrapuntal* (two or more melodies or parts sounded together), and *homophonic* (a single melody and chords).

Melody and Its Components


Melody is the most essential of . . . the elements, not because it is more immediately perceptible but because it is the dominant voice of the music. . . .

Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*

The constituent parts of melody, those features that determine the character and effect of the melody, include the following: (1) the contour, which may be smooth (tones moving up or down the scale from one scale step or tone to an adjacent tone), or angular (wide leaps or *intervals* present between tones); (2) rhythmic pattern (the particular arrangement of note values); (3) compass (the distance or interval from the lowest to highest note in the melody); and (4) the inner progression of tones, which may be *diatonic* (the melody remaining within the key, no accidentals present), or *chromatic* (accidentals used). The following melodic example will illustrate these points.



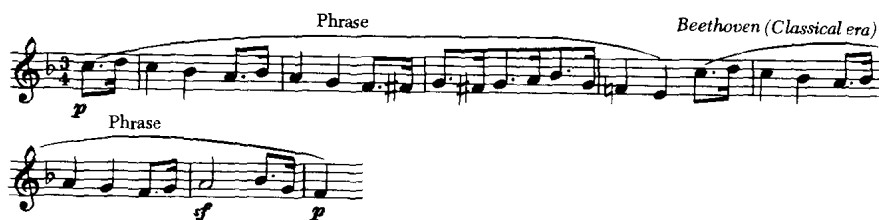
Sonata, Op. 49, no. 2, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

1. Contour: smooth, mostly step movement used.
2. Rhythmic pattern:  Meter: triple.
3. Compass: F# to E, or a compass of seven tones.
4. Inner progression: mainly diatonic, but chromatic in measure 7.
5. Other features: the character of the melody is dancelike; the melody is divided into two smaller units or *phrases*, the first of which ends in measure 4.

Phrase and Cadence A never-ending succession of tones, like a continuous, unbroken series of words, is monotonous and unmeaningful to the listener. Thus, in order to create order out of the vast tonal spectrum available, the composer divides the tonal material into melodic units called *phrases*. Phrases vary in length from one musical epoch to another. For example, in the Renaissance they tended to be long and flowing, while in the classical period they were of shorter length and had more clearly defined endings.

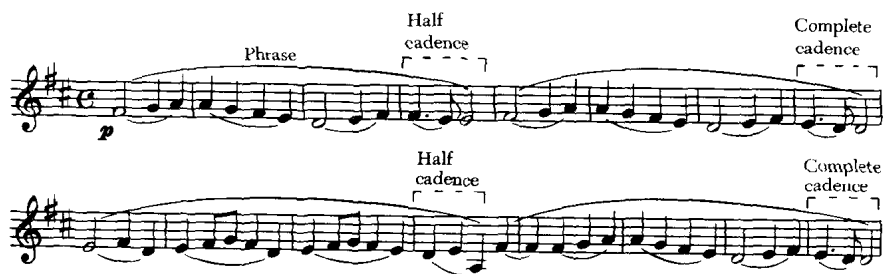


Pope Marcellus Mass, Giovanni da Palestrina (1525-1594)



Andante favori, Ludwig van Beethoven

Various kinds of musical punctuation called *cadences*, are used by the composer to set off phrases from one another. For example, note in the two melodies by Beethoven (see above and below) that a momentary pause occurs at the end of the first phrase. This is comparable to a comma in punctuation and is called a *half cadence*. Observe the definite close or stop at the end of the melody. This effect is equivalent to a period, and is referred to as a *complete cadence*.



Melody from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9

Scales and Modes The theoretical basis of melody is the *scale*, a series of tones arranged in an ascending or descending order. Each period in music history is usually associated with a particular type of scale system, either