

Preface

For centuries, the mysterious connection between music and the emotions has been at the center of much research and debate. As a result, a universe of information has become available to anyone who wishes to delve more deeply into the subject. One could ask then, assuming *Ecclesiastes* is correct in the assumption that nothing is new under the sun, whether there is truly a need for yet another addition to this already vast universe of information. I believe the answer is yes.

This document aims to re-address centuries-old questions regarding the connection between Western classical music and human emotions. For example, why is it that western classical music is still relevant and a part of society in the early 21st century?

Several answers are possible. One might say that the fact that one still finds beauty and an aesthetic pleasure in music is the reason. A more sociological reason would be that in attendance or participation in classical music concerts still implies belonging to certain social, economic and cultural echelons. Another answer, and the one that is the most relevant to this discussion, is that Western classical music arouses human emotions. Beethoven's symphonies are still relevant to modern society because the drama they depict still profoundly resonates within humanity and though hundreds of years have elapsed, we can still relate to Beethoven's anger and love.

But why is it that emotions are aroused when we listen to music? And what parts do the composer and performer play in their arousal? These are all important questions, with many possible answers. For the purpose of this preface, it is sufficient to say that recent research in neurophysiology, psychology, anthropology and advanced mathematics give some new and interesting answers to these perplexing questions.

Perhaps there is nothing new under the sun, but the ways in which we view the old and the familiar can change. The goal of this document is not only to reexamine the basic questions regarding music and the emotions, but also to assist performers in learning and understanding more about this subject and in learning how to utilize their emotions in performance.

Methodology

This document is divided into two main sections. The first section, which is comprised of the first three chapters, is a collection of new and old information on the subject of music and the emotions, and serves as the foundation for the second section, where the practical implementation of this information is discussed.

The first section includes: Chapter 1, which, on the one hand, explores the definition of emotions according to modern psychology and neuroscience and, on the other, examines the origins of music, as part of the evolution of early-human communication systems; Chapter 2, which presents an overview of important theories on

the subject of music and the emotions, such as those of Leonard B. Meyer and Deryck Cooke; and Chapter 3, which examines the concert hall variables and processes by referring to the principles of network science.

The second section includes: Chapter 4, which discusses the Emotional Understanding Method, designed to assist performers in integrating their emotions into their performance, and Chapter 5, which examines different ways of merging the performer's emotional and structural understandings of the score.¹

Perspective

Unlike some of the other writers on the subject of music and the emotions, who have put the philosophical questions regarding this subject at the center of their investigations, I choose to put the implied practical questions and their potential effect on the classical music world at the center of this particular investigation. In other words, the problems facing performers, teachers and audiences, as a result of dealing with this complex issue, will be the departure point here.

¹ A special note should be made concerning the scope and choice of materials for this document. In this day and age, the collection and presentation of information is a tremendous challenge. The vast universe of information and its accessibility give the term *relevant* a new meaning. The position taken in this document is to allow only information relevant to the issue of music and the emotions to be addressed, with very few exceptions. For those who wish to continue the research into the different domains, a selected bibliography and footnotes have been supplied.

Let us take a closer look at the classical music world from the performer's perspective. In her eyes, it is a world that aims to preserve the music of the past and to create and perform new works in a society that generally values mass entertainment. It is a world pulled between, on the one hand, the growing numbers of conservatory graduates and on the other, the dwindling numbers of audience members. It is safe to assume that most performers in the classical music world share the same vision: not only to perform classical music and engage both young and old audiences in the present, but also secure a place for this music in the world of the future. There are several ways of achieving this vision, such as fighting for music education in the public schools and for more government funding for classical music projects. However, in addition to these important steps, I believe something else needs to happen. I believe that most audiences have lost their ability to identify with the emotional content of the music. Unless performers clearly state, present and explain this content in the music, making the audience realize the relevance of classical music to their own lives, there is a strong chance that classical music, as we know it, will disappear.²

Therefore, the priorities of classical musical performers must change. Instead of concentrating on perfection and technical acrobatics, musicians should concentrate on showing a real understanding of the musical structure, learn how to involve their emotions in a constructive way, to express the emotional conflict of a piece, and to use the technical mastery of their instruments to achieve the best possible performance.

² I'm not the only advocate for this approach. See the writings of David Homan, composer and executive director of the America Israel Cultural Foundation, and Bruce Adolphe, *Of Mozart, Parrots and Cherry Blossoms in the Wind* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999).

One of the assets we have as the classical music world is the rich tradition and heritage of knowledge, a heritage which includes the performances and writings of the great artists of past and present as well as the research of important scholars. Great thinkers such as Leonard B. Meyer and Deryck Cooke have helped us recognize the role emotions play in the creation and performance of music. Their impressive work should have propelled the music world to move in the direction of the previously proposed vision, but since no practical implementation of their theories was made available, their important realizations have been lost to the library shelves. At the same time, new information regarding music and the emotions from such diverse domains as psychology, neurophysiology, anthropology and advanced mathematics has been also ignored.

In order to grow and allow for the vision to become a reality, the classical music world needs to learn to embrace the merger of structure and emotion. Performers must take responsibility for their interpretations, must engage themselves and their own experiences in the creation of an interpretation, and by doing so, must learn to engage their audience members in the music's innate drama.

The task upon which this document embarks on is therefore multi-layered: to first gather new and relevant information for the discussion of music and the emotions in the 21st century; to challenge century old judgments on the function of emotions in both human life and in music; and most importantly to offer a practical tool for performers to improve their understanding of how emotions function in music, and assist them in merging this understanding with their structural understanding of the score.