PREFACE

No doubt some people never heard much in music before they acquired conscious insight into its large-scale form. And surely there are others who, having acquired analytical dispositions and descriptive technical resources in the course of their musical education, found their fundamental listening transformed to a truly significant degree. But I am not one of them, and I suspect that such listeners are not the norm among those who can rightly claim both to know and to love the bulk of what constitutes the broad repertoire of classical music. It is an implicit aim of this book to defend such listeners—ones who, though untutored, are experienced, attentive, and passionate.

The primary and explicit aim of this book, however, is to combat the notion, often only implicit in the writing of many music commentators and theoreticians, that keeping music's form—in particular, large-scale structural relationships, or spatialized representations of a musical composition's shape—before the mind is somehow central to, even essential for, basic musical understanding. What I maintain instead is that much in the aural comprehension of extended pieces of music that seems to implicate explicit architectonic awareness can be explained by appeal to tacit, unconscious correlation of present passages or bits with earlier ones, rather than explicit, conscious grasp of relationships of a broad-span sort.

I wish to impugn, by consequence, the supposition that a listener must acquire formal or structural knowledge in an explicit manner to achieve musical comprehension, even of extended compositions.

It may be said that traditional formal analysis, aimed at delineating musical shape in the large, was always meant primarily as a description of the musical object, or perhaps of what comprehending listeners heard on a subconscious level, rather than being promoted as a requirement for or avenue to musical appreciation. Yet it has often seemed to take on that latter role in many people's minds, and in many writers' hands. This book is intended, in part, as antidote to that tendency to misapply the results of musical analysis.

Now it is a further and separate question to what extent a listener who has achieved basic aural comprehension of a piece of music, or who is musically literate in a tradition generally, possesses knowledge of musical structure in an articulate manner, rather than behaviorally or experientially. It is the question whether such knowledge must be verbally expressible, at least under guiding or prompting. I am inclined to think the answer is no. Even if the comprehending listener must have internalized, through repeated listening, certain facts of musical structuring in order to follow a piece aurally as he or she does, this does not entail that the listener has encoded such facts linguistically, or has access to such facts in a linguistic mode, even after careful eliciting. To think otherwise is to overlook the extent to which concepts can inform perception tacitly, and the extent to which understanding may be embodied in a set of dispositions to respond or discriminate or reproduce, rather than a set of abilities to categorize or label or describe. Thus what is, admittedly, a usual concomitant of achieved understanding is by some wrongly made into a necessary condition of its presence.

Of course one grasps the form of a piece of music, in some sense, as one listens to it comprehendingly, and doubtless representations of some sort enable that grasp to occur, but there is little reason to think those representations of musical formedness are essentially verbal, or even verbalizable, ones. Those who propose the ability to offer descriptions of music as prerequisite to basic musical understanding make two mistakes: first, the representations in terms of which music is grasped may not be articulate in nature; second, even if they were, being able to access them after listening so as to produce descriptions of the music would at most

be evidential, but neither necessary nor sufficient, for having had a hearing experience of the right sort. The descriptivists concerning musical understanding confuse an ability commonly associated with comprehending listening—articulating in words what has been heard and responded to—with ones more nearly criterial of such listening.

The degree of linguistic expressibility of a listener's understanding of music is not, however, the main affair of this book, important as that issue is. The guiding concern is rather the degree to which such understanding requires reflective or intellectual awareness of musical architecture or large-scale musical structuring. Concatenationism, the view I derive from Edmund Gurney and, with qualifications, defend, says that that degree is approximately zero. All that basic understanding requires is, as it were, listening in the moment.

This book, though little, has been long in gestation. I have been mulling over the matters treated in it for more than fifteen years, and parts of the manuscript go back nearly as far. Whether it is a good thing I have at last decided to offer these observations and reflections in print will be for others to decide.

It is worth saying at the outset, though it will quickly be obvious, that this book is founded in the main on just one individual's listening experience of music—mine. I would probably never have had sufficient nerve to write about that experience, however, if I had not discovered in Edmund Gurney a kindred spirit of a century ago, and if I did not have the impression of a vast, silent legion of architectonically unconcerned music listeners for whom I hoped, in some part, to be speaking.

A different version of the first part of this book, roughly Chapters 1 through 3, appeared earlier as "Edmund Gurney and the Appreciation of Music," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 42 (1993): 181–205. I am grateful to Hebrew University, and especially Professor Eddy Zemach, for the opportunity to present these ideas publicly, in January 1992, at the Ninth Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter devoted to the philosophy of art.

I express special gratitude to the two readers of this book in manuscript, Douglas Dempster and Fred Maus, for providing many valuable suggestions, and for saving me from a number of errors. Doubtless many remain.

I am grateful also to Stephen Davies, Michael Slote, and most of all Georges Rey, who at different stages read complete drafts of the book and provided constructive criticism of it. That I did not take all their advice is my fault, not theirs. I thank also other friends and colleagues who influenced, through comments of one sort or another, the shape and content of this book: Mark DeBellis, Stan Godlovitch, Ruth Hachen, Daniel Herwitz, Monique Roelofs, Roger Scruton, Kim Sterelny, and Kendall Walton.

I thank the General Research Board of the University of Maryland for research leave during the Spring 1996 semester, a part of which was spent revising the manuscript of this book.

I thank once again Roger Haydon and the staff at Cornell University Press for the high level of support they have accorded me, as well as for the confidence they have shown in my work. Finally, I thank my brother, Leonard Levinson, and my cousin, Geoffrey Argent, my earliest companions in listening, who were there when the world of music first opened up for me, and when the ideas about its appreciation defended in this book were most likely already taking root.

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