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A SONG OF CONFUSION AND ANNOYANCE:
KANT ON THE BEAUTY OF ABSOLUTE MUSIC

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Philosophy and Religion
The University of Mississippi

by

RYAN W. TURNER

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ABSTRACT

Kant's evaluation of music in the *Critique of Judgement* stands as a blemish on an otherwise appealing system of judgments of beauty and of assigning aesthetic worth. In order to resolve this tension, I will present an argument in three parts. First, I will delve further into Kantian judgments of beauty to provide solid contextual grounds for why he draws his conclusions about music and will further elaborate on his various positions concerning music. Second, I will look at a few potential answers for the problem of music given by others in the philosophy of music and briefly evaluate their effectiveness. Third, I will turn to my answers for the central hurdles preventing Kant from classifying music as a beautiful/fine art form: the problems of representation, content, and beauty being symbolic of morality.

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A SONG OF CONFUSION AND ANNOYANCE:
KANT ON THE BEAUTY OF ABSOLUTE MUSIC

Though he is often thought of for his writings in ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology, Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* represents a landmark contribution to the philosophies of art and beauty. In fact, he stands among the few major philosophers who present a codified system of aesthetics as a significant portion of their overall philosophical thought. The detailed picture he paints of aesthetic judgments and his systematic treatment of the arts provides a useful paradigm for those of us who love discussing art and beauty to follow. However, Kant's otherwise interesting work in the first part of the third Critique is held back by the few perplexing claims he makes about the beauty of absolute music¹, or music that is purely instrumental. Unlike the relatively stable ideas that precede his discussion of music, his position on the art form is not altogether clear. In §51, his argument is that music's formal structure, as he understands it at least, is such that it cannot be reliably evaluated as beautiful in all instances, while in other passages make it seem as though he is generally annoyed by instrumental music.

This vague characterization of Kant's opinion of music requires further elaboration to show why they are problematic for his theories of beauty and art more generally, but for now, it is sufficient for describing the problem I seek to address here. Aspects of the aesthetics portion of the third Critique would be incredibly appealing if not for the vexing questions that arise because of what Kant says about music. Why, for instance, must we be able to be able to

¹ Hereafter, 'music' refers solely to absolute music unless otherwise specified.

distinguish vibrations of individual tones in order to determine the beauty of entire compositions, as he says we must in §14 and §51?

Kant's understanding of music's form certainly sounds strange, for tones are hardly, if ever, taken to be beautiful in isolation but always are listened to in the context of a rich tapestry of harmonies and melodies spread through time in rhythm. To say that we must reduce music to singular tones to find music's beauty would be to say that we must also reduce to singular letters the lines that make up each word in a poem to find its beauty or to single out a tenth-of-an-inch of marble in the statue of David to judge it to be the work of a master. Peter Kivy (2000) puts it best, stating:

...what Kant's musical formalism totally lacked was any real recognition of the 'logic' behind the form. He gave little evidence, in his reflections on music, of having any knowledge of the principles that lay at the heart of musical structure. His musical formalism was a fruitful idea, but an empty one, really. What it required was fleshing out in real musical terms (p. 60).

Without appealing to what actually constitutes music's structure, Kant lacks the tools necessary to make true judgments as to the possibility of its beauty or agreeableness.

Putting aside his formal considerations of music, another set of questions deals with whether or not Kant's personal taste colors his philosophical consideration. In §53, he likens music to "the practice of regaling oneself with a perfume that exhales its odours far and wide...[treating] all around to it whether they like it or not, and [compelling] them, if they want to breathe at all, to be parties to the enjoyment," essentially infringing on the freedom of unwary passersby (§53: 330). Not even the singing of hymns at family prayers escape Kant's scorn, "for they compel their neighbors either to join in the singing or else abandon their meditations" (§53:

330, footnote). In the same section, he cites music's "oppressive" tendency to be recalled by the imagination unbidden as reason for it having less aesthetic value. Is a song's tendency for getting stuck in your head truly reason enough to say music is not as valuable as the formative and rhetorical arts? In the coming sections, we will see that this may be a violation of one of Kant's tenets of beauty, but let us save that discussion for later. For now, suffice it say that Kant does not seem to have a great affinity for music.

These elements together—his confusion concerning music's formal elements and his general annoyance in being exposed to its practice—are comparable to a dominant chord in a harmonic progression never being properly resolved. My purpose will be an attempt to bring this harsh dissonance to a satisfying resolution. First, I will delve further into Kantian judgments of beauty to provide solid contextual grounds for why he draws his conclusions about music and will further elaborate on his various positions concerning music. Second, I will look at a few potential answers for the problem of music given by others in the philosophy of music and briefly evaluate their effectiveness. Third, I will turn to my answers for the central hurdles preventing Kant from classifying music as a beautiful/fine art form: the problems of representation, content, and beauty being symbolic of morality. By considering the unique tripartite relation of musical performance—that is, the interaction between contentless object, performer, and audience—I argue that music not only possesses the capacity to move one emotionally but also "has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication" for at least some participants in the relation and, by extension, furthers their moral education (§44: 306). These reasons in concert with the evaluation provided in the second section will prove that, by Kant's own standards, music should be reevaluated in his hierarchy of the arts.

SETTING THE STAGE

Kant's terminology in the third critique is very novel and idiosyncratic, so before any attempted resolution can begin, it will be necessary that we discuss his discussion of beauty from the first four moments along with his definitions for a variety of other terms, including free beauty, adherent beauty, fine art, agreeable art, etc. Then, I must explain Kant's various arguments concerning the beauty and aesthetic worth of absolute music. The next set of subsections will set the stage for the resolution of Kant's harmonic dissonance in the third *Critique*.

Kantian Beauty

Those familiar with the complexity of Kant's work in other areas of philosophy will not be disappointed in his aesthetics, as he puts forward some unusual suggestions as to what might be going on when we judge a thing to be beautiful. For Kant, pure aesthetic judgments of taste, for example, involve a delight in a particular mode of representation of an art object totally divorced from personal interest in its agreeableness, or how it pleases or displeases in sensation. That is, a desire or disgust for a particular piece of art or even for the experience of viewing a particular piece of art prevents a true judgment of beauty, for, then, one is only concerned with how an art object is useful for them. Objects of disinterested judgments are worthy of the label "beautiful" (§5: 211). Furthermore, judgments of beauty are distinct from those of delight in the goodness of objects, as delight in the goodness of objects manifestly imputes the interest of all rational agents (§4: 207-208).

His second definition of beauty involves a particular use of the concept of universality. More specifically, “the beautiful is that which, apart from any concept, pleases universally” (§9: 219). Kant is not suggesting that there is some rule by which multiple beautiful objects share in an objective sense of beautifulness, for then multiple subjects would be compelled to recognize it. Kant flatly rejects this notion from the very beginning of the third *Critique*. Rather, true judgments of beauty, according to Kant, are spoken in a universal voice such that when one makes the claim “thing X is beautiful” she is attributing that judgment to everyone. Because the judgment is unregulated by a particular concept, the cognitive powers of imagination and understanding the subject exist in a state of free play, wherein the inner imaginative world inspired by the art object and the subject’s reflection on what lies within it exist in harmony (§9: 217).

Beyond disinterest and subjective universality, Kant provides two additional aspects of beauty. From the third moment, he derives that beauty is a form of purposiveness in an object without the clear representation of purpose, or end (§17: 236). This is an extension of his claim about disinterest, for, as has already discussed, Kant couples his discussion of disinterest with a discussion of delight in the utility and in the goodness of objects. Just as delight in the utility or goodness of objects taints judgments of beauty, they cannot be founded on any known end, be it subjective delight/utility or objective goodness. The attribution of ends necessarily imputes interest to the judgment (§11: 221). And lastly, in the fourth moment Kant says, “the beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognized as object of necessary delight” (§22: 240). This sense of necessity here is not binding to the degree of logical necessity. Disinterest, universality, purposiveness, and necessity: with these four conditions met along with a feeling of delight, Kant argues we are justified in calling objects beautiful.

Later on, Kant makes a further qualification about beauty that will be important in considering the aesthetic worth of absolute music: the distinction between free and adherent beauty. Were one to make a judgment following the path shown by Kant in the first four moments of the third Critique—that is, if “the object is considered apart from its charms, and the judgment is not dependent upon any concept of what the thing is to be”—it would be called a free beauty (Weatherston, 1996, p. 57). However, adherent beauty combines a presupposition of a certain purpose of an artwork with the perfection of the object according to that purpose, where perfection is “the relation between the way we cognize the object (and the consequent harmony of our faculties) and the purpose of the art object” (p. 57) The advantage of adherent beauty over free beauty, according to Weatherston, is that it allows for the communication of certain aesthetic ideas, which, in turn, allow art to express moral ideas while still being free of mere agreeableness.

Fine Art

Jumping further into the first part of the third Critique, we see that Kant develops a theory of fine art. In §44, he starts with a few distinctions. First, he states that when art merely seeks “to actualize a possible object to the *cognition* of which it is adequate, performs whatever acts are required for that purpose, then it is *mechanical*” (305). Mechanical art is only beautiful when it immediately inspires a feeling of pleasure. Based on what seems like a combination of artist intent and the social/moral effects of the artwork, aesthetic art can be further broken down into two categories: agreeable art and fine art. Agreeable art, he argues, has simple enjoyment for its object and must include “play of every kind which is attended with no further interest than that of making the time pass by unheeded” (306). Here, he specifically cites the music of an orchestra at banquets as an example, for music in this context is used to promote “a genial spirit”

without anyone having to pay attention to it. Without inspiring reflection on the form of the art object, agreeable arts are fundamentally lesser.

Fine arts fill a fundamentally different role for Kant. The primary difference between agreeable art and fine art is that the pleasure inspired by fine art is accompanied by a particular mode of cognition, or representation. Because the pleasure associated with fine art is accompanied by a representation, the imagination can be tempered by reason. This mode of representation is “intrinsically purposive” and “although devoid of an end, has the effect of advancing the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication” (§44: 306). Fine art’s intrinsic purposiveness is fundamentally intentional, but it must lack the appearance of intentionality. That is, art objects must be pleasing in the mere judging of them such that they are not, *prima facie* at least, specified by the intentions of artists (§45: 307). Fine arts, moreover, are the products of genius, which is the innate talent in artists that gives structure to art.

For Kant, works of fine art must possess two characteristics: formal beauty and deep representational content (Kivy, 2002, p. 58). Early in the third critique, Kant clearly states that pure judgments of taste rely solely on the form of objects, and if objects lack a suitably appreciable form, then they cannot be adequately evaluated. He specifically cites a non-descript painting for illustration, arguing that although the colors may bring charm, it is the mastery of formal design in the painting that allow it to be judged accurately (§14: 225). We have already had a brief foray into some of the components of deep representational content in describing adherent beauty. For Kant, art has two kinds of content. First, art has its surface level content, or what Kivy calls ‘manifest content.’ Think of this kind of content as an artwork’s easily identifiable characteristics (e.g. the main plot threads of a novel, the subject of a painting, etc.). In arts of genius, the surface content “sets in motion, in its audience, a rich chain of ideas, the

‘aesthetic ideas,’ Kant calls them, which proliferate indefinitely, giving the work its deep, albeit ineffable content: it can be felt, so to say, but never explicitly stated” (Kivy, 2002, p. 57). That which is animated by the deep content of fine art is the viewer/listener’s spirit.

The final but most crucial aspect of fine art is that it must either reference or symbolize some moral content. Of this, Kant cannot be clearer:

The matter of sensation (charm or emotion) is not essential. Here the aim is mere enjoyment, which leaves nothing behind it with regard to the idea, and renders the spirit dull, the object in the course of time distasteful, and the mind dissatisfied with itself and ill-humoured, owing to a consciousness that in the judgment of reason its mood is contrary to purpose... Where fine arts are not, either closely or remotely, brought into combination with moral ideas, which alone are attended with a self-sufficing delight, the above is the fact that ultimately awaits them (§52: 326).

So, not only must fine art have deep content but also that content must itself be in concert with moral ideas.

Kant on the Beauty of Music

With all that out of the way, we can now turn to what Kant actually says about music. His first mention of anything related to the topic comes in §14 where he uses simple tones and colors to show how pure judgments of taste must be made without consideration of an object’s charm or of any other emotion it may inspire. Single tones or colors are “described by most people as in [themselves] beautiful, notwithstanding the fact that both seem to depend merely on the matter of the representations—in other words, simply on sensation, which only entitles them to be called agreeable” (224). Tones, he continues, can only be universally communicated if they are pure, and tonal purity depends on an evaluation of form. The forms of tones, as has already been

mentioned in this paper, are simply vibrations of the air. Should the apprehension of simple tones be disturbed by any other kind of sensation, then the state of purity is broken and the tone cannot be considered beautiful.

So far, I have only referenced Kant's discussion of pure tones, but it should be noted that simple colors act in a similar manner. This is especially important to consider near the end of §14: 224 as he makes a claim about composite colors² that he fails to make about composite tones. He says that "[c]omposite colors do not possess this advantage, not being simple, there is no standard for judging whether they should be called pure or impure." If one assume that by 'composite colors' he means non-primary colors, then any color other than red, yellow, and blue cannot be reliably judged to be pure and, therefore, beautiful. Though not as obvious at first, the problem of composite tones is even more staggering. If, for instance, we take a set of harmonies played in a solo piano composition, one could argue for the purity of the harmonies, as the sounds of the individual tones seem to be in sync, given that the piano is properly tuned. What if the piece calls for the piano to be out of tune? Furthermore, Kant fails to consider pieces that call for an assortment of instruments with each instrument having a unique voice. With all these voices in unison, Kant's conception of purity of tone could never be established by the mere judging of a piece of music.

This worry aside, Kant nevertheless allows for the beauty of pure tones and colors and even admits that their charm invigorates our perception of both paintings and works of absolute music. However, it is "the *design* in the former and the *composition* in the latter" that constitutes "the proper object of the pure judgment of taste" (§14: 225). His suggestion that tones and colors contribute to beauty is not meant to place them on equal footing with the artwork's form. The

² Kant's conception of composite colors is not well defined. He could mean non-primary colors, as I suggest. He could mean the kinds of unique colors created when artists combine different paints, or he could be referring to two colors sitting side by side. In any case, the comparison I want to make to all the ways tones combine is unaffected.

importance of his use of composition here should be highlighted, as his reference to composition as the ‘design’ for music seems to be his only appeal to another formal consideration for music other than sonic vibrations such that the former supplants the latter. In the proceeding sections, he moves away from this recognition and back toward the reduction of judgment of music to the cognition of single tones.

Music in Kant’s Hierarchy of the Arts

As previously mentioned, §51 and §53 in the *Analytic of the Sublime* divide the fine arts into categories and compares them for their aesthetic worth. Absolute music ranks near the bottom in terms of beauty but near the top in agreeableness and charm (Parret, 1998, p. 255). He classifies music under arts of the beautiful play of sensations, “which is a play of sensations that has nevertheless to permit of universal communication” and “can only be concerned with the proportion of the different degrees of attunement (tension) in the sense to which the sensation belongs” (§51: 324). The sense to which music belongs, of course, is hearing. More specifically, the cognition of and reflection on particular tones—that is, the apprehension of the mathematical characters of the proportions of their individual sonic vibrations—are what is required to reliably judge a work of music to be a beautiful play of sensations. However, most people lack the ability to judge tones this way, save perhaps those with perfect pitch. Therefore, music cannot be reliably judged as either an agreeable sensation or a beautiful play of sensations; it is situated in the void between agreeable art and fine art (Reed, 1980, p. 569). Call Kant’s argument here the tonal reduction argument.

The problem of assigning aesthetic worth to music is rooted in the tonal reduction argument for the following reasons. Only fine art inspires a particular mode of cognition that is universally communicable and that furthers the development of the culture of social and moral

capacities in the listener while agreeable art is only meant for enjoyment. In order to classify music as a fine art (i.e. a beautiful play of the sensations), we must be able to apprehend the purity of individual tones. However, according to Kant, the central mover of the mind in the apprehension of music is not the mathematical proportion of tones. Instead, those features only serve as:

...the indispensable condition...of that proportion of coming as well as changing impressions which makes it possible to grasp them all in one and prevent them from destroying one another, and to let them, rather, conspire towards the production of a continuous movement and enlivening the mind by affects that are in unison with it, and thus towards a contented self-enjoyment (§53: 329).

So, absolute music is of little value culturally, ranking somewhere close to joke telling (Weatherston, 1996, p. 56). However, the degree to which it moves the spirit emotionally is second only to poetry.

Kant gives three other arguments in §53 that have been alluded to here already. First, he criticizes absolute music for its transience because it moves the mind from sensations to indeterminate ideas (330). The ideas received through hearing music are indeterminate because they lack content, and content is necessary for the melding of imagination and understanding in a true judgment of taste. He juxtaposes absolute music with the formative arts, arguing that they are clearly superior because they move the mind from determinate ideas (i.e. deep content) to sensations and, thus, allow for the free play of imagination and understanding. Accordingly, formative art has an enduring impact on our rational nature. The sensations given by absolute music, conversely, fail to do so, extinguishing quickly “or, else, if involuntarily repeated by the

imagination, are more oppressive to us than agreeable.” Essentially, music is not as valuable because songs can, for lack of a better phrase, get stuck in one’s head.

Finally, absolute music’s medium, sound, does not lend itself well to being practiced in civilized society:

Over and above all this, music has a certain lack of urbanity about it. For owing chiefly to the character of its instruments, it scatters its influence abroad to an uncalled-for extent (through the neighborhood), and thus, as it were, becomes obtrusive and deprives others, outside the musical circle of their freedom. This is a thing that the arts that address themselves to the eye do not do, for if one is not disposed to give admittance to their impressions, one has only to look the other way (§53: 330).

Kant makes the analogy of music to the overuse of perfume, even going as far in a footnote to this claim as to accuse the singing of hymns at family prayers to be obnoxious. This argument together with the transience/unwanted recall argument and the tonal reduction argument are his justifications for music having lower overall cultural value than the rhetorical and formative arts.

CRITIQUING THE CRITIQUE OF MUSIC

Critical analysis of the four arguments against the value of absolute music has led to some disagreement among philosophers of music. A common complaint is that his understanding of music (or lack thereof) leads him to make some unjustified assumptions about its form. Martin Weatherston (1996) argues that Kant's misinterpretation of music's form and potential moral content is strange, considering the periods of music history he lived through: "...for the Baroque music of his youth, which showed a great interest in exploiting the formal aspect of music through polyphonic writing; for Classical music, which depends on the apprehension of long-term harmonic and thematic relationships; and for the Romantic music...since [it] explicitly attempted to express moral ideas through purely musical means" (p. 63). Further, he is in agreement with Kivy in that Kant's failure to consider rhythm, pitch, and timbre in his evaluation of music leaves his explanation of its aesthetic worth hollow. Had he realized that rhythm gives structure to harmony and melody through time; that by manipulating the pitch of tones, musicians refine his all-important mathematical proportions to enhance the beauty of music; or that 'timbre', or the unique sounds of individual instruments, are more aptly analogous to colors, his evaluation of music might be more convincing.

That music is tightly organized is easily established. A musician or conductor's assessment of the form of a piece involves considering its basic melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure through studying a the score, a musical term for the printed sheets of music that serve as a road map for the performance of piece. By glancing at a score, one can see that formal considerations in music truly dwarf the complexity of the recognizable forms of the rhetorical

and pictorial arts. Each instrument plays a specific role in the production of a piece with all of them working together in a determined way. The varying tonal colors of individual instruments provide effects ranging from warmth to shrillness provide a wide variety of tools for composers to use to shape their creations (Weatherston, 1996, p. 64). Appreciating the form of music may require some specialized knowledge, but it does not follow from music's form being not widely accessible that there is no form at all to be appreciated.

Music's formal considerations aside, whether music has semantic content must be considered. Kivy (2002) and Parrett (1998) argue that Kant is right about music's semantic emptiness but that its lack of content constitutes its greatest strength. Kivy (2002) follows the tradition of Arnold Schopenhauer, arguing that the primary strength of fine arts is that they are liberate us from the constraints of everyday life. Absolute music is most useful for this task because it makes no reference to the external world and, as a result, creates art worlds unique to individual works of music (p. 259). Parret (1998) approach is to show that absolute music is more prototypically art-like than any other art form considered in the third Critique because "[m]usic does not make us think; rather it causes us to reflect and to dream more than any other art: to bring about 'dream-like thought'"(p. 260). This state of reflection is exactly what Kant thinks fine art should inspire.

The most common tactic used to show that music has semantic content involves its ability to resemble emotions. Samantha Matherne (2014) argues that music can be judged as beautiful or agreeable depending on the attitude we take in the judging of it (p. 137-8). In explaining this, she juxtaposes a person in Kant's imagined social gathering in §41 actually paying attention to the background composition instead of enjoying the party. Further, she appeals to a speech-based resemblance theory of emotions to explain music's potential semantic content with a few

caveats. According to her, Kant actually argues, “familiar affects and tones are enriched with an aesthetic idea” instead of simply mimicking emotions (p.140). Next, she interprets Kant as arguing that music can further develop these aesthetic ideas and as developing a “compelling analysis of the phenomenology of our experience of emotion in music (p. 140).

The problems with her arguments are twofold. First, while attentiveness may be a necessary condition in true judgments of taste, talk of personal attitudes might verge on breaking the requirement of disinterest established in the first moment. It is not clear to me whether having devotion to a specific artwork would violate this for Kant. Second, even if it is the case that music has this capacity, whatever emotion it mimics would still be indeterminate such that all listeners would not be able to glean exactly the same semantic content and then have their spirits be moved by deep, aesthetic ideas. Overall, the strict reading of Kant proposed by Weatherston, Kivy, and Parrett is more appealing.

Kant, by omission, also dismisses the composer-performer-listener relationship that is unique to musical performance. The beauty of music is that it has its origins in the genius of a composer, but it is always delivered through an intermediary agent, the performer, whose is also a fundamental part of how a work is realized. The ideas imbued by the composer’s use of musical structures, how he or she builds up tension and brings it to a satisfying conclusion, and how he or she divides the sections of a piece of music into understandable parts with both similar and dissimilar ideas are all as fundamental to a characterization of form as the basic mechanics of its perception. Further, these emotions and ideas, though penned by the composer, are also infused with the performer’s interpretation before being delivered to the listener such that no single performance is the same as any other.

This feature of music leads to the sense of transience Kant references, for it can, to some extent, obscure an appraisal of its form envisioned by the composer by the mere appreciation of it by a listener. A performance of “Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity” from Gustav Holst’s *The Planet’s Suite* by the New York Philharmonic, for example, will not be numerically identical to a performance of that same piece by London’s Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. But, one can avoid that sense of transience by recognizing that certain fundamental features of a work remain constant through multiple iterations, making them at least qualitatively identical. The basic ideas established by a composer are constantly held through interpretations, transpositions, and changes in instrumentation. The opening fanfare of Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* has been transcribed many times for instrumentations that include instruments that were not introduced to the musical scene until well past the point of its composition, but, despite this, the spirit of his work is maintained.

Kant’s dismissal of the performer’s role also prevents him from seeing where music’s potential for moral instruction lies. I would agree that instrumental music, as a purely abstract expression of artistic ideas, is not primarily morally instructive for the listener, but the process of building up musical acumen provides a number of benefits that are at least analogous to developing morally traits. Generations of fledgling musicians have been taught the importance of both the individual voice and how the individual must give way to the collective in order to produce something truly special. For example, musicians often train both individually with specialists in their specific instrument, and through frequent contact with their musicians-in-arms in small groups and large ensembles, they are taught the value of healthy competition tempered by a love of those around them with whom they easily sympathize. Achieving musical excellence is all the more gratifying when surrounded by others intent on reaching it together.

The ever-present process of development for the novice and for the professional alike fosters creativity, critical thinking, perseverance, and a willingness to habitually work toward excellence. This process of musical development for the performer is at least comparable to the processes of inculcating certain mental and moral capacities, if it does not instill the capacities outright. Some philosophers, most famously Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, use the learning of instruments as a paradigmatic case for learning the virtues. That is, the virtues can only be learned if one approaches them like she would learn the flute or the violin: with habitual, consistent, and never-ending practice and performance. Further, empirical work into how learning to be a musician affects one's abilities in other areas of cognitive development exists and shows that music has some positive impact. However, my purpose here is only to prove that music deserves more attention than Kant gives it in this ranking of the arts. Alluding to the body of work done on the effects of music on cognitive development will suffice.

One might object that it is the listener to whom Kant claims the moral benefit must be directed. While my argument is that the moral benefit of absolute music is primarily for the performer, there are moral lessons that can be gleaned by viewing a performance if one thinks of the performer as a kind of moral exemplar. Allow me to immediately address the objection that artists (and often musicians especially) are often the agents that least deserve the status of 'moral exemplars.' However, I propose that the best kinds of musical performances, those that are the product of the genius of composer and instrumentalist, demonstrate a sort of unity of all of the virtues necessary to create their masterful art such that viewers can see the ultimate expression of musical excellence. This expression of excellence can, in turn, become an analogy for the expression of the perfect expression of moral virtue, and while the performer's personal life may be flawed, the act of performing to this degree makes her briefly a moral exemplar.

One could also object that this attempt to save music from Kant's critique that it lacks moral content fails because the moral content is not intrinsic to the art itself but only to how the art form is used in general. Because I agree with Kant that music lacks semantic content, there is no way to get around this objection other than to say that its instrumental value is sufficient evidence for proposing the need for its reevaluation.

The last and most easily dealt with arguments against music's value are the urbanity, transience, and unwanted recall arguments. The interpretation of Kant presented here, I think, has presented good evidence for Kant's general distaste for music in general. In at least two instances in §53 he all but calls the art form a blight on modern society simply because it extends its reach beyond those who are actively participating in its practice. These passages do not provide a disinterested account of music's beauty and are consequently tainted. Further, the transience and unwanted recall arguments seem to contradict one another, for how could music be transient if it is on constant replay in one's mind? These arguments are perhaps the easiest to combat of all the ones considered here.

REEVALUTING MUSIC'S PLACE IN THE HIERARCHY

Although he plants the seeds of musical formalism, Kant's song of confusion and annoyance rings out loudly as he progresses through the *Critique of Judgment*. Through explaining how Kant fails to consider what constitutes a musical work's true form and how he seems to be generally angry at music for disturbing his peace of mind, I hope to have shown how the dissonance in Kant's personal symphony needs to be resolved. Now, however, I would turn to what the symphony sounds like given the work that has been done here to resolve some of the issues Kant raises in the third Critique. Rather, can absolute music be considered a Kantian fine art? If the arguments presented here hold, music meets at least two of the criteria for fine art in that it possesses the capacity for developing the mental power and moral virtue of performers. More work must be done and/or appealed to establish a clear link between the practice of music and these capacities, but for now, the analogy should be enough to prompt its reconsideration. The semantic emptiness of absolute music, however, cannot be denied. However, Kant's failure to fully consider the merits of absolute music requires further examination.

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VITA

Ryan Turner received an Associates in Arts in Music Education from Jones County Junior College in May 2011 and a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies with emphases in philosophy and applied music from the University of Southern Mississippi in December 2014.