REFERENCES


IS THERE A DELEUZIAN MUSICAL WORK?

MICHAEL GALLOPPE

“And in that one moment in time I will feel eternity”

—Whitney Houston, “One Moment in Time”

Since the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze is so popular among many different circles of the musical avant-garde, a new reader to his work might expect to find a full-scale philosophy of music in his books, rife with passionate details. But, upon broadly surveying his work, it is hard not to be a bit disappointed. One usually discovers that, despite Deleuze’s incredible ability to touch on nearly every academic discipline in some way or another, his best moments are usually very philosophical. That said, I do not think this means his philosophy has nothing to offer musicians and musicologists. Perhaps specifically musical problems can be unearthed and wrested out only if we arm ourselves with questions native to musicology, aiming them towards what
Deleuze does best: philosophy. We might ask: are there Deleuzian perspectives on musicological problems?

In this article, I try to find something like a “musical work” from the perspective of Deleuze’s philosophical orientation. But, since this thesis has no easy answers, I have kept the title of this article in the form of a question, and I have structured my analysis as an unfolding series. I will begin summarizing well-known formulations of the musical work: a Platonist view explored by Peter Kivy and a historicist view explored by Lydia Goehr. These are not exhaustive inquiries. They suffice only as points of comparison to the different iterations of a “Deleuzian musical work.” I then proceed with a bare-bones analysis of Deleuze’s philosophy. Finally, in the remaining sections, I will introduce increasingly complex and specific Deleuzian concepts to the problem of music.

Readers expecting an objective or empirical study of Deleuze’s writings on music will not find it here. Such a project strikes me as neither feasible nor wise; a good deal of variation and inconsistency crops up in Deleuze’s work, especially when the question at hand is not particularly native to his thought. So I try to chart something of my own path through this problem, retaining an external analytical perspective. I think this is the best way to reveal the difficulties I think Deleuze has, himself, in maintaining a fully consistent position. And of course, I have not undertaken this project to defend Deleuze’s philosophy as a better path for musical thought. I am just writing an exercise to turn over the problem of the musical work again.

1. A Platonist View

A Platonist, or transcendent, view of the musical work insists that works exist in some way ideally and eternally independent of human listeners or musicians. In this view, taken up occasionally by Peter Kivy, the musical work itself doesn’t have essential relations with extra-musical, empirical, conditional, cultural, historical, or worldly, contingent situations. Musical works simply acquire a fully immaterial dimension once they have been created. More radically, one could argue that musical works are always already immaterial, and composers and musicians merely discover them. Kivy does not offer a positive explanation of this transcendent view of the musical work; instead he defends musical “Platonism” from critiques. But this does not prevent us from attempting to define what such a Platonist position entails. The Platonist view, we could say, argues that the most real aspect of any music is our idea of it, since the idea of the musical work is what allows the work to persist eternally, across different situations. That is, following the Platonist doctrine that the thought idea is the purest form of truth, the Platonist position holds that the music can transcend particular performances and situations simply by being thought as pure form. The different words Kivy uses to refer to this idea (a “universal,” a “type,” a “kind,” or a “sound structure”) all reflect this Platonist immateriality that names the pure truth of music’s existence.

The Platonist musical work, which is really the musical work qua idea, can be a difficult position to defend. Kivy is aware of these challenges. The Platonist view needs many qualifications. Kivy writes of the ideal musical work:

It may not be true for improvisations, and it may not be true for certain kinds of electronic music. It may not be true in the absence of a notational system. Indeed, it may not be true for most of the world’s music. But for a great deal of the most valued art music of the West, since the development of a sophisticated musical notation, it seems to be true that there are musical works, and that there are performances of them.

Here, as in many passages of Kivy’s writing, he appeals to our intuition that “there are” musical works that somehow must endure as ideals between performances, despite any appearances suggesting that music is principally a concrete, worldly, practice. This view is certainly successful at grounding the musical work in an immaterial and universal principle. But it often has difficulty accounting for the complicated problems of reproduction, contingency, history, and culture. These comparatively “empirical” aspects of music tend to haunt the argument’s simplicity. Underscoring Kivy’s own reservations: how universally true is this ideal Platonist musical work? That is, if there are innumerable situations in which essential aspects of musical works are not simply immaterial, why insist on identifying their transcendent immateriality at all? At the very least, we might say that when we render immaterial what is musical about music we are quickly led to argue that all forms of musical practice are inessential to the work, as they must be cast into a parallel but fallen domain of sonorous, empirical materiality. The straightforward clarity of the Platonist view can perhaps be rendered adequate for limited situations, but it is just as likely to end up the bearer of an intractable, oppositional dualism.
2. A HISTORICIST VIEW

Lydia Goehr’s historicist view of the musical work raises similar objections. Her 1994 monograph, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* opposes most variants of what I am calling the Platonist view, instead replacing them with a historicist or genealogical view of the musical work. Her philosophy of music has at least three aspects. One, borrowing a Kantian framework, she reorients the being of the musical work from the analysis of actual musical works qua objects to the analysis of a regulating concept that enables us to experience music as a work. Put otherwise, rather than examine what is essential about musical works themselves, Goehr looks at the circumstantial discourses by which music, historically, was grasped phenomenally as works. Two, she insists that the power and usage of this concept (what she calls the "work-concept") changes throughout history. Specifically, she claims that, at least in the history of Western Art Music, the work-concept did not come into effective and common usage until around 1800. And three, the work-concept, in active use in history, attained a regulative, normative power over the reproduction of actual musical works. It becomes a horizon or an ideal that orients musical practice. She writes: "Given certain changes in the late eighteenth century, persons who thought, spoke about, or produced music were able for the first time to comprehend and treat the activity of producing music as one primarily involving the composition and performance of works. The work-concept at this point found its regulative role."6

Goehr’s innovations are thus two-fold: for music history, she reorients the old-fashioned history of exemplary musical works into a history of musical thought. For thinkers like Nietzsche or Foucault (with whom she does not engage, but probably could), this shifts the goal of inquiry from the realm of a narrative history of music to an institutional and genealogical investigation of the creation of musical thought. That is, she replaces an ontological inquiry with a historical, or epistemological inquiry. The question is no longer: *What is the musical work?* But, *when, how, and where did which people begin to think of music as musical works?* How was this knowledge produced? And how did this work-concept affect the relations between music and society? Add to this a second point of innovation: *vis-à-vis* the Platonist view, she has retained the musical work as an *ideal*, but it is an ideal that is an *open concept*—one that is open to variation, multiple meanings, or use in different contexts. To quote Goehr again: "[the regulative work-concept becomes] anchored in a practice through a kind of fictional or suppositional permanence. In this way they are seen to provide the ultimate grounding, the externalized and thereby transcendent principle of ordering, the externalized point of reference, for the practice."7 The work-concept retains some transcendent properties, except that we now have shown how this transcendent work is conditioned by the particular situations of the world in history. If the greatest weakness of the fully transcendent or Platonic musical work is its total lack of specificity or locatedness, Goehr has retained the basic properties of the work concept’s ability to abstract music, in what she calls a "principle of ordering," while making its actual worldly instantiation radically more specific.

3. A DELEUZIAN MUSICAL WORK

What would a Deleuzian musical work look like in relation to Kivy’s Platonism and Goehr’s historicism?

So far: Kivy explores the possibility of a transcendent musical work that is immaterial and perfect, and Goehr defends a musical work mediated by a concept far more contingent on history, and far more specific and situated within particular institutional practices. By comparison, Deleuze can be thought of as the thinker who, philosophically speaking, furthers Goehr’s implicit critique of Platonism, orienting his philosophy entirely around the real, unpredictable, improvisatory flux of the living universe. Deleuze wants to banish all transcendent thinking from philosophy, to achieve a thinking of pure immanence. He would reject Kivy completely, and he would probably find in Goehr’s historicism some residue of transcendent ideals; indeed, Goehr’s work examines the properties of a musical work as a kind of regulative ideal that is immanent to history, whereas Deleuze seeks a purely immanent form of thought. In the vocabulary taken up by Peter Hallward’s analysis, Deleuze’s relentless mission to purge philosophy of all transcendence moves him from the merely specific (which we see in Goehr’s historicism), to the even more empirical realm of the singular.8 In fact, Deleuze’s philosophical orientation is so empirical, it is, in a way, purely empirical; it is so specific to experience it actually exalts the empirical to a new realm of purity. This has the paradoxical result of evacuating the located specificity of experience altogether, purifying living things down to their very materiality—a life—an unsaturated, ahistorical becoming. For Deleuze, this is the only way to think the immediacy of life to Being: by rendering life so radically contingent that it can no longer be said to relate to any stable identity.
Now, what are the characteristics of this purely empirical and singular thought of a life? Drawing concepts from Henri Bergson’s philosophy, Deleuze posits that one facet of the universe can be thought of as virtual and the other thought of as actual. The virtual (a term that is meant to connote “virtue” and “virtuous” more than simply apparent or simulated) refers to the un-presentable but presupposed univocal whole that fuels the power of a life to persist in its own limitless self-differentiation. Before a life can be different from something else in the world, it must differ from itself in its very movement. The virtual says: a life differs from itself in its very being, ceaselessly. It is always producing differences, and we can think this specific production as presupposing “radiations in all directions.” In Deleuze’s 1968 book, *Difference and Repetition*, he simply calls this “differing in itself;” a difference without negativity or worldly relations, an uncountably and immeasurably infinite and continuous, intensive, and immanent differing. Precisely, the virtual is the *presupposed* ground of these endless differentiations. So, the virtual is really potentiality itself, the absolute potential of all life, insofar as this creative “fuel” is nothing less than “an abstract and potential multiplicity,” a “swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time.”

This virtual facet of life animates many similar Deleuzian concepts: deterritorialization, the body without organs, lines of flight, abstract lines, becoming-molecular, becoming-animal, the war machine, the rhizome, etc. All these concepts, in different moments, refer to the way a life can be thought of as purely immanent to its own becoming, rather than thought of as tied down to the dialectical or relational jurisdiction of worldly concepts and institutions. As Deleuze says: “A life contains only virtuals. It is made up of virtualities, events, singularities.” From the viewpoint of the virtual, there is never a privileged transcendent cause behind these events and singularities because they simply are produced. In a way, newness and continual creativity are forced by the relentless passing of time itself. The passing of time demands that before a life can be different from anything other to it, it differs from itself in its very movement. Before establishing any relation to the world, the virtual orientation of life creates its own medium of expression, moving in singular becoming.

And on the other side of things we have the actual. Deleuze’s “actual” (still borrowing from Bergson here) refers to the manner in which a life relates to and differs from things in its environment. It is the realm in which the singular virtual creatings of life are concretized, individuated, and differentiated into particular beings, particular subjects, specific objects, the state, institutions, historical totalities, social relations, cultural identities, territories. In the broadest sense, the differentiated world is what is actual, with all its situations, categories, laws, technologies, and knowable relationships. In our actual world, the virtual origin of living productive difference fuels the endless production of actual divergence and differentiation. Then life itself, since it immanently expresses virtual creativity itself simply by differing, creates something actual and worldly (for example, a symphony), only to move beyond it to supersede its formal actuality, again, by virtual force.

Now, a few key points:

1. The actual universe (or what Deleuze and Guattari often call “strata” in *A Thousand Plateaus*) is never completely abandoned by virtual “lines of flight;” the presupposed forces of the virtual on one hand and the actual world on the other are co-constitutive, even as Deleuze almost always comes back to the virtual aspects of the universe as the privileged point of philosophical orientation. “Every object is double without it being the case that the two halves resemble one another, one being a virtual image and the other an actual image.” How do the virtual and actual relate in the object? In the actual world, the singular infinity of virtual potentiality fuels a multitude of divergent, actual beings: “there is here no longer any coexisting [virtual] whole; there are merely lines of actualization, some successive, others simultaneous, but each representing an actualization of the [virtual] whole in one direction and not combining with other lines or other directions.”

2. The *virtual* is not the same as the *possible*; it is not the total set of worldly possibilities. For Deleuze, the problem with the concept of the possible is that it is too often based in our knowledge of something worldly or actual; it then, must “proceed by elimination or limitation.” With the possible, we think what could have been based on what appears to have actually happened. Mere possibilities are thus stuck in a representational, or negative understanding of difference, since their coherence is based upon the link of resemblance with some actual thing, already there. The virtual instead “must create its own lines of actualization in positive acts.” It is perfectly and positively creative in itself.

3. The virtual is more real than the actual categories of subject and object, which will have serious consequences. For example, from the perspective of the virtual, I am not “Michael Gallopo,” but rather a singular life (simply, what life is). The virtual engines or “desiring machines” behind this impersonal and singular life are
ones differing so quickly, so continuously in their very being, that they are far too fast for the name “Michael Gallope” to assert control over them. In a sense, I cannot say “Michael Gallope” quickly enough and with enough nuances to actually name the enormous bustle of anonymously living activity in my body. In itself, this impersonal and bustling singularity of a life maintains and organizes its own systematic properties without consulting any exterior actuality.

4. Finally, we can’t entirely do without the actual. That would risk absolute deterritorialization, or death, making a life nothing more than a chaotic or purely accidental bustle of indifferent matter that is purely external to itself. Instead, the intensity of vital existence maintains a special kind of internal coherence: “The vital difference can only be experienced and thought of as internal difference; it is only in this sense that the ‘tendency to change’ is not accidental, and that the variations themselves find an internal cause in that tendency.” This is why Deleuze refers to a being as a life, and not a thing or a force—it is living beings, held together in an actual body, that are fueled by the ideal and differential reservoir of virtual potentiality, of virtual force.

In the chapter entitled “How to Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?” in A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze shows that I am not “an organism” but simply a living body, since the concept of “an organism,” like my name “Michael Gallope,” is an actual way of understanding and governing what is real about my living body. Actual strata make life difficult; they use transcendence to control, regulate, and discipline the body. As a life, as an internally self-reproducing body, we need to orient philosophical thought toward the virtual forces immanent to the production of difference, and away from governing phenomena like “the organism.” “The organism is not at all the body, the BwO [body without organs, here another name for the virtual inspired by Artaud]; rather, it is a stratum on the BwO, in other words, a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that, in order to extract useful labor from the BwO, imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences.”

Here with a Marxist turn of phrase, the actual organism “extracts useful labor” because it holds a dominant, fundamental imposition upon an assemblage of living matter. A philosophy of the virtual gives us a way to think life beyond this actual domination.

In his late essay, “Immanence . . . A Life,” Deleuze calls the orientation of such a philosophy a “transcendental empiricism.” In his own words: “[The transcendental field] appears therefore as a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self. [Then] . . . we will speak of a transcendental empiricism in contrast to everything that makes up the world of the subject and the object.”

Since, like the organism, the orders of subject and object are transcendences that govern and organize a life’s relationship with the world, as concepts they do little justice to the qualitative multiplicity of living time—what Bergson calls durée, that purely empirical “rhizome.”

From another perspective, Deleuze insists that the coordinates of subject and object and the relationships they entail are too anthropological for the work of philosophy. He is instead focused on a philosophy external to the category of the human that can simply affirm what is real. Similarly, the anthropomorphic descriptions native to phenomenology, or any philosophical or “critical” correlation between mind and world are set aside. Philosophy needs to first of all create concepts that speak reality, that speak the truth of what is: Being is a clamoring, vital, productive, creative, self-differing aggregate of forces. The flux of differential becoming is what is real. Any representation we have of ourselves and our ideas cannot, under any circumstance, be as real as this.

Now, taking these Deleuzian concepts in hand, I will first suggest that if we are going to find anything like a musical work in Deleuze, it will be one that lets us tune in to the virtual, one that helps us escape our sedimented existence in actual, worldly relations. Like the calls-to-action of Deleuze and Guattari’s Capitalism and Schizophrenia books (Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus), a Deleuzian musical work will be a music that quite simply surpasses our specific and situated relationships to the world around us. For this Deleuzian ontology of transcendental empiricism, there is no specific listening subject, and along with this, no specific performer, no specific composer, and really, no specific musical object to speak of. This philosophy of music will not heed such limitations.

From this proposition, I have two preliminary remarks:

1. We know a Deleuzian musical work is not first and foremost a culturally or historically situated musical practice. What music does or expresses is rather indifferent to our apprehension of any specific situation in the world. So, instead of expressing or representing something about socio-cultural identity, history, or a composer or performer, music would challenge, or “deterritorialize” precisely these worldly, actual properties. What is musical about music is something that exceeds the boundaries of social formations. Music is really a flux of sensation that is so completely new from moment
to moment that it reminds us that a life is becoming new from moment to moment (so new, according to the logic of the virtual, that we cannot even say "I" again, quickly enough—still more intensely—the "I" of my life cannot feel, hear, listen, or sense quickly enough). Music is so powerful, it has already taken us away from our worldly situation, at an enormous speed. "Music strips bodies of their inertia, of the materiality of their presence: it disembodies bodies." Our bodies, normally in a kind of inert state of actual function and socially situated relations, are brought into immanently living, but impersonal forces of motion. Music is a disembodifying machine; it is a force that overwhelms us. In a way, the passing of musical time is too fast and too impatient to relate to a situated subjectivity. It simply does what it does, without regard for actuality.

2. In affirming this "virtual" aspect of music, we do more than deprive it of a worldly subject or situation, we take leave of all conventional object and concept-based philosophies of the musical work. For example, the absolute musical work native to Nineteenth century Europe, a work of form wrought by the efforts of composers, performers, producers, etc., that thing of written, reiterated and repeated sound: this concept of the work is left behind by Deleuze. It would be stuck deeply in the slow, concretized realm of actual existence. The flights of joyous and virtual musical becoming proper to a Deleuzian musical work leave the discrete "symphony" behind, becoming nothing but sensations, flowing through players and listeners alike. These are sensations that, in themselves, forget their capacity to remain faithful to the musical form, to a composer's specific expression, to a historical epoch, or to any situation. Music vibrates; it does and can because we are alive. Much like art in general, what is musical about music is its capacity to produce sensation, giving us an affirmation of the virtual becomings that flow through our bodies in sonorous form. It knows no distinction between the sonorous structure and our sensual bodies—it is a vibrating flux that, in itself, has no specific content or identity. Or, if music is thought of as retaining content, this content is akin to a mere play of forceful intensities, striving to accomplish nothing less than its own purification.

Returning to our original comparison: if Plato is the founding thinker of eternal ideals, and Goehr renders these ideals much more contingent upon the real empirical situations of history and the world (that is, she looks to the specific uses of the ideals rather than merely celebrating the ideals themselves), Deleuze’s philosophy destroys the regulative power of these abstract ideals altogether, refusing all moments of transcendent mediation. For him, since Being is one clamoring ocean of reality made of nothing less than the moving whole of differentiated beings, any ideal or fixed musical structures like the ones celebrated by a Platonist like Peter Kivy simply do not exist. Even a more specified notion of the transcendent musical work, such as Lydia Goehr’s historicist perspective, would remain too specific for Deleuze. Against any form of transcendence, Deleuze affirms the pure immanence of a life to this “clamor of Being.” He wants to make of the work pure sensation, without dialectical mediation through any kind of merely actual totality: subject, object, musical work, performer, composer, history, structure, score, notation, culture, and so on.

4. Or, More Precisely, Sonorous Sensation in Itself

Now we are ready to complicate the picture. Even if a Deleuzian musical work begins by attempting to move beyond any ontology of the musical object, and by moving beyond a historicization of its subjects and worldly situations, it does not make of music mere chaos. It is not a purely ephemeral, ineffable, or "drastic" affair in which the essence of music would be reducible to an infinitely flexible otherness immanent to musical performance. This sort of “ephemeral” musical ontology usually posits itself only by negating some prior foundation. It finds itself as a moment of resistance to musical works qua formal objects, to the authority of specific individuals (composer, performer, listener, etc.), to the authority of a historical context, or to a brand of meaning-attri-bution. Lacking the autonomy of the virtual, it seems to not formulate itself as a positive philosophy of music.

Remarkably, Deleuze tries to do precisely this; he tries to formulate a purely positive philosophy of music. He attempts to think the way in which music can be affirmed as built on the virtual, without any negative or relational dependence upon its actual coordinates like subject and object. We might even say that a Deleuzian musical work is self-founding or self-positing.

In their last book, What is Philosophy?, Deleuze and Guattari argue that a self-positing musical work is one with the self-positing of all art—it makes sensation. The formulation they produce has no negative reliance upon the preservation of a musical work or composer, recording, or performer as such. Instead, artworks are preserved in themselves, without actual support. They write:
Art preserves, and it is the only thing in the world that is preserved. It preserves and is preserved in itself. . . . It is independent of the creator through the self-positing of the created, which is preserved in itself. What is preserved—the thing or the work of art—is a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects. . . .

Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects.

The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself.25

In other words, it is not the musical work itself that is preserved (that would be something more like Nineteenth century absolute music), and it is not the composer or the performance or the musical culture that are preserved, it is the sonorous sensation itself that is absolutely preserved. What is sensation for Deleuze? It is what is left of art when you subtract out all subjects, objects, all worldly and actual attributes to art. You are left with nothing but a sensation itself—absolute sensation.

Now, this sensation in itself “exceeds any lived” because it does not wait for the experiential testimony of a living subject, like we see in phenomenology. In Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, Deleuze writes: “The phenomenological hypothesis is perhaps insufficient because it merely invokes the lived body. But the lived body is still a paltry thing in comparison with a more profound and almost unlivable Power [Puisance] of sensation.”26 Sensation in itself must exceed the individual experience of it, insofar as this experience requires the mediation of consciousness, cognitive faculties, social norms, languages, and habits. Thus, sensation cannot be mediated by any system external to its own logic; it remains immanent to itself.

In a sense, we can think the purity of sensation in itself as a directly un-negotiated coupling of matter and nervous systems. The “matter” of this formulation is not simply any material—it’s the paint of painting, the stone of sculpture, the sound of music, and the light of film that provide the foundation of all the artworks of the world. It is this material, then, that should be thought of as soaked through the nervous systems of the world, as already and forever one with them in a perfectly coextensive logic. If this is the most general formulation of Deleuze’s logic of sensation, each specific artwork is nothing more than an embodied individuation of this general process, formed into an isolated material that in itself constitutes a “bloc of sensations.” Now, music, specifically, of all the arts, simply carries this logic to the matter of sound. We can think of it as a sonorous vibration laced into the nervous systems of the living world, setting up the sonic facet of inhuman becomings on a cosmic scale.

Because a Deleuzian musical work must remain immediate to itself, there cannot be a perception of such music, since the musical work as an object of perception would have to be external to the living thing perceiving it. As an alternative formulation, Deleuze creates the concept of a “percept” to explain the impersonal, machinic, and absolute version of perception, unmediated by the activity or intentionality of an experiencing subject. “Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them.”27 With this, Deleuze adds the term “affect” which functions similarly: “Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them.”28 Together, percept and affect constitute a power far greater than anything attributable to music’s socio-cultural significance. As concepts, they mark the motion of cosmic, inhuman and impersonal becomings that render the apparent gap between material and nervous system null and void. In the end, we are drawn into the essence of art insofar as we see our own bodies as no greater than facets of the singular and infinite logic of sensation, one fueled by the virtual, by difference in itself.

So, to sum this up, a Deleuzian musical work cannot be separated from the aggregate of all nervous systems that have ever and will ever sense it. It is the self-positing, abstract, and autonomous unity of sonorous material and sensation that stands immediate to itself. It does not wait for the subject to interpret it as a representation of something, to attribute it a positive meaning, to historicize it, or to account for it in any medium external to it. It is, in itself, a self-positing preserved bloc of sonorous sensation, a compound of percepts and affects.

5. Setting Aside Deleuze’s Musicology, Here is a Concrete Example29

At the 1989 Grammy Awards, Whitney Houston sang a ravishing performance of “One Moment in Time,” a song penned by songwriters Albert Hammond and John Bettis for the 1988 Summer Olympic Games.30 I will not waste too much time describing it since the video is widely available on YouTube; last time I checked it had scored about 3.4 million hits. Now suppose we are asked: is this a musical work? And, if so, what is it in the music that makes it a musical work? There are many ways of going about answering this question: we could debate the authorship of the songwriting versus the performers, the arrangement,
the lyricist, the question of who or what commissioned it and funded its performances, its recordings, etc. We could insist that the work was reducible to the notes on the page, but then we probably couldn't say much about the exceptional, soaring melismatic interpretation Houston gives to Albert Hammond's melody in this particular AV clip. Or following Goehr's approach, we could even historicize it and debate whether or not the concept of the musical work is appropriate to the moment of the 1989 Grammy Awards at all.

But from the Deleuzian perspective I have sketched so far, we might instead begin with the sensational response of the audience and the musicians and for everybody who was there. And then we might think about the sensational response of everybody watching the television broadcast in 1989, and the millions of YouTube hits, and all the audiences to this moment we don't empirically know. Let us say, for all these people there is a moment where the intensity is and was the greatest. Maybe this moment is the one when the song majestically modulates from B major up a half step to C major and the audience bursts into spontaneous applause. (It happens about 4 minutes and 20 seconds through the clip.) This is when chills went down the spines of the audience, bringing them into a self-organizing applause machine, blowing through the airwaves like a spontaneous hurricane. This is the moment, we might say, when the audience is not receiving meaning from a musical object or even perceiving a musical object as such, but instead it is the moment when the these millions of bodies are affected beyond themselves as subjects, bringing them into assembled sensational motion outside their identity. I use the metaphor of a weather system because the two share the same property. According to this logic, no transcendent or governing cause administers applause or weather storms. Instead, a certain assemblage of material processes unfold among the elements at hand, leading them into an immanently self-organizing system. This assemblage can be thought of as a body that speaks an equally spontaneous language to itself, bringing the individual elements or bodies into a greater individuation, or a larger body. If we could draw an imaginary line, or create a concept that circumscribes the nervous systems of all those affected in the very motion of this sensational storm, and continue drawing that line around the sonorous matter itself in its vibrating flux regardless of all its technical displacements through television and YouTube, across twenty years of sensation: I suggest this would be the concept appropriate to the sensation of a Deleuzian musical work. This concept we have created marks a kind of "One Moment in Time"-musical-universe sufficient onto itself.

It might be objected that this "event" is not as spontaneous as I have claimed: after all, what could be more predictable than an applauded modulation up a half-step? Here, we need only shift our perspective away from the modulation as an anticipatable actuality. Practically speaking, we have to isolate specifiable properties of musical situations (like these modulations) only in order to create a concept that orients us towards the virtual facets of musical sensation. In truth, I claim nothing of scholarly value about the specific event of "One Moment in Time." I use it only to create a concept that attempts to immanently express musical sensation in itself, and nothing more. Any correlations between specifiable musical or social properties and affective results are implied only to affirm the sensational logic in itself as it has left the actual modulation behind.

6. The Plane of Composition

Now, all the concepts we create to philosophically mark the immanent movement of sensation in itself have something in common: they all attempt to think absolute sensation. This particular "One Moment in Time" concept we created to circumscribe the impersonal and inhuman affect flowing through millions of bodies being affected by Whitney Houston is drawn on an immanent "plane of composition" that holds all the music of the world together. This plane of "aesthetic composition" is a Deleuzian abstraction, a presupposed surface where the infinity of sensation unfolds in itself, through its own medium, in an eternal dance of artistic material and nervous systems. Its abstract quality as a plane marks its autonomy from the world; it is limitless and perfect in itself, intense sensation uncontaminated by any question of recognizing it, judging it, or even observing it.

Here are some more properties of this "plane of composition":

First, on the plane of composition any of the technical skill that is congealed into the artistic material (like the sound composed and performed for the "One Moment in Time" clip) is subsumed right as it becomes expressive, releasing the material to be sensational in itself:

There is only a single plane in the sense that art includes no other plane than that of aesthetic composition: in fact, the technical plane is necessarily covered up or absorbed by the aesthetic plane of composition. It is on this condition that matter becomes expressive: either the compound of sensations is realized in the material, or the
material passes into the compound, but always in such a way as to
be situated on a specifically aesthetic plane of composition. 32

Thus, to think sensation in itself we must eliminate any consideration of
the technical skill that Whitney Houston has, or that any of the
particular human songwriters, musicians, stagehands, and video editors.
This is first of all because these technical skills are the work of specifiable
human subjects. But still more dramatically, we must purge the whole
aggregate of congealed or specifiable technical gestures, in turn
eliminating every technique and every instrument. The sonorous
material of this song must be expressive in itself, coupled with nervous
systems, to be one with the plane of composition. Any consideration of
technicity, technique, technology or any other concept associated with
the Greek τέχνη, cannot play a role in our thought, since all techniques,
by any common measure, imply a specifiable or worldly execution. The
material of music is always sound in itself as coupled with sensation in
itself; it is not the sound produced by the work of specific or knowable
human bodies. Our concept that traverses the whole of the bloc of
sensation immanent to “One Moment in Time” is nothing more than a
collection of inhuman becomings. While expressive, they have set free a
sensation that is never more human than that.

Second, the plane of composition is made up of finite material striving
for infinite expression. Since we have taken leave of the specified
duration of the actual event of “One Moment In Time” in order to
circumscribe the fullest extent of its sensational power, in a way we have
lifted a sensation from the finite realm to the infinite.

At the same time the plane of composition involves sensation in a
higher deterriorialization, making it pass through a sort of deframing
which opens it up and breaks it open onto an infinite cosmos.
As in Pessoa, a sensation does not occupy a place on the plane with
out extending it, distending it over the entire earth, and freeing all
the sensations it contains: opening out or splitting open, equaling
infinity. Perhaps the peculiarity of art is to pass through the finite
in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite. 33

When we think of our song “One Moment In Time” as a sensation in
itself, it passes over all technology, institutions, and social formations
in order to harness the nervous systems of every living thing in its wake,
vibrating them with an unknowable singularity. This singularity is
infinite because it speaks its own language to itself, without limit. It
does not need to be translated by another medium. The material of art
always makes sensation via an immediate coupling.

Deleuze explains this “infinity” as embodying a unique temporality.
He speaks of features and figures of paintings, for example, surviving
their formal and material instantiation to make of themselves a pure
presence, standing up in their own eternity. They unequivocally refuse
common mediation via links of resemblance and representation.

Presence or insistence. Interminable presence. The insistence of the
smile beyond the face and beneath the face. The insistence of a
scream that survives the mouth, the insistence of a body that sur-
vives the organism, the insistence of transitory organs that survive
the qualified organs. And in this excessive presence, the identity of
an already-there and an always-delayed. Everywhere there is a presen-
ting acting directly on the nervous system, which makes representa-
tion, whether in place or at a distance, impossible. 34

Though the paintings of Francis Bacon are Deleuze’s topic here, it’s
not hard to extend this logic to our Deleuzian musical work. This means
that his highly unorthodox version of musical presence is not the
presence of a knowable musical work qua formal object (a specific
symphony, an aggregation of notes), as we might see in the writings of a
German Romantic like Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder. 35 And it is
certainly not the phenomenological experience of presence, as an object
present to consciousness in Husserl, or as an experiential presenting
without identity, as in the Heideggerian work of Jean-Luc Nancy. 36 It is
an inhuman presence that is made of nothing but the necessary and
immediate coupling of material to sensation. Thus, there is no question
of an adequate presence of a musical work, no question of resemblance
or representation of anything. It is present simply because the music is
nothing more than sonorous sensation in itself. And it makes an identity
of the “already-there” and the “always-delayed” because, in taking leave
of the actual world of formal musical construction, authors, performers,
and humans, it must take leave of the time of the world. This includes
everything from the musical time or temporality in actual notes and
gestures to the temporality of listening. This “already-there” and the
“always-delayed,” which are usually phenomenal or experiential
categories of time (what is given and what is in the future or yet to
come) must be identical in Deleuze’s logic because we have abandoned
the living experience that would have rendered the given world from the
uncertain future distinct in the first place. Instead, Deleuze attempts to
think a music in which we move to the eternity of a sensation that sings
One Moment in Time only to itself, collapsing the intervention of experience altogether.

And, finally, perhaps the most surprising aspect of the plane of composition is this: even as Deleuze has sought to surpass all forms of transcendental mediation, art requires one very exceptional kind of mediation. While the relationship between the material of music and the nervous systems that carry sensation is coextensive and immediate, the relationship between the whole of sensation in itself and the real forces of the virtual themselves is, in fact, meditated. Now: the virtual, being pure difference in itself, is so unmediated that its forces cannot be sonorous or sensible by themselves. Then music, like all art, uses a bloc of material (in this case sound) that must pass through the world, only to return sensation to its virtual origin. Music, then, has to be mediated even as its essence remains only sensation in itself, and even as music would strive to "restore the infinite." But this mediation has no governing control over the logic of sensation. Deleuze writes: "But if force is the condition of sensation, it is nonetheless not the force that is sensed, since the sensation 'gives' something completely different from the forces that condition it." The forces themselves are nonsonorous, and inaccessible to sensation; it is music's task to mediate the two: "Music attempts to render sonorous forces that are not themselves sonorous."37 In short, what distinguishes the virtual aspect of sensation from the virtual aspect of thought is that sensation must pass through the finite, material extension of the world, even as it reorients itself back toward the infinite. This is the mediation required of all art; only sensation requires this extra step. Thought does not.38

Then Deleuze poses a challenging question to his own logic. He asks "How will sensation be able to sufficiently turn in on itself, relax or contract itself, so as to capture these non-given forces in what it gives us, to make us sense these insensible forces, and raise itself to its own conditions?"39 This is, I would suggest, the most difficult question for Deleuze's "aesthetics" and maybe even his philosophy more generally. I look at this question as another way of asking an early question we posed in the discussion of the virtual: "How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?" In other words, is there an "ethics" of the virtual? Is there a way of practicing the virtual? Can we prescribe an orientation to the virtual? Can we teach it? If philosophy is obviously one good route to the virtual, since it involves reorienting our thinking towards the pure immanence of a "transcendental empiricism," are there exemplary musical works that give us access to such immanence?

7. Deleuze's Musicology

Though Deleuze equivocates occasionally, it seems that there are actual exemplary musical works that, in their specificity, tap into the forces of the virtual above all other forms of sensation, rendering the non-sonorousness of virtual force sonorous.40 So, finally I want to consider the ethical practice of making musical sensation. How do we do it? In other words, if it is not merely a matter of affirming what sensation does in itself in a song like "One Moment in Time," it is instead a matter of how we make sensation. This problem makes the whole project of a Deleuzian musical work still more complicated. Here is a passage of A Thousand Plateaus where Deleuze has takes a distinctly prescriptive and didactic tone that makes it clear that not merely any sonorous sensation will do when it comes to actual music. In it he asks us to think about how to create music that lasts, addressing us in the second person: "Your synthesis of disparate elements will be all the stronger if you proceed with a sober gesture, an act of consistency, capture, or extraction that works in a material that is not meager but prodigiously simplified, creatively limited, selected." For, as he reminds us in What is Philosophy?, "The artist's greatest difficulty is to make it stand up on its own."41 In other words, the music we create cannot be just a copying of chaos, it must have its own limitations and consistencies built into it that give it a body, that allow it to form a bloc. Or according to our original vocabulary, a Deleuzian musical work must be grounded in the actual, even as the forces it summons remain virtual. This is done through a perfectly traditional prioritization of artistic technique and skill, despite the certainty Deleuze otherwise has in affirming sensation itself over technique. (We can recall, that Deleuze, in fact, claims that sensation ultimately trumps technique in What is Philosophy?) Still, artistic technique in the most common sense remains the ground of all art. He puts it starkly in A Thousand Plateaus: "For there is no imagination outside of technique."42

We know, already, that a Deleuzian musical work is primarily an embodiment of the virtual. To understand this, we know we should first avoid thinking of it in terms of its formal properties (patterns, notes, structures, recordings, or synthesized sound). But it seems that, for Deleuze, we cannot simply disregard standard notions of musical form from the outset, and follow our own examples (like the one I have offered of Whitney Houston) to arrive at a generalized theory of sensation. Here is why: this risks bypassing the specificity of technique, which cannot be completely abandoned, or music would never exist at all—as any facet of expression.
Moreover, to say that the sensation itself (as absolute) is permanent in itself, does not render all musical sensation equally intense. There are some musical works that, due to properties in their actual form, or their manner of composition, produce more sensation than others, and thus contribute to the consolidation and preservation of sensation. More intense musical works typically challenge conservative and traditional practices of composition, making sensation by upending old-fashioned musical parameters, like basic sound forms, tonality, or the organization of rhythm into regular beats. Deleuze writes: “This is, precisely, the task of all art and, from colors and sounds, both music and painting similarly extract new harmonies, new plastic or melodic landscapes, and new rhythmic characters that raise them to the height of the earth’s song and the cry of humanity: that which constitutes tone, health, becoming, a visual and sonorous bloc.”

Following this, in the rare passages where Deleuze considers concrete musical examples, he typically mentions a musical parameter like melody, harmony, counterpoint, or rhythm and points out that a composer or a composition “deterioralizes” them by moving beyond musico-theoretical parameters, towards atonality, noise, and pure vibration. As much as this appears to be a simple modernist aesthetic position, for Deleuze, it is important to understand how this constitutes another way to move from the actual to the virtual. Disturbing traditional musical conventions opens actual music to the impersonal power of sensation itself.

While there are numerous places where Deleuze recuperates the specificity of actual music, the most sustained treatment appears in a short text entitled, “Boulez, Proust, and Time: ‘Occupying Without Counting.’” The text begins by rapidly assimilating on the one hand, Boulez's own reading of Wagner's treatment of the motif with, on the other hand, the conception of time embodied in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* [À la recherche du temps perdu]. Both authors understand the musical motif to be a figure that can potentially become autonomous from its context, developing itself according to its own logic. The motif leaves behind a context that is both structural (melody and harmony, for example) and/or narrative-based (characters, places, and names). For Deleuze, this autonomy results in motives that “ceaselessly transform themselves in time, diminishing or augmenting, adding or subtracting, varying their speed and their slowness.”

In the text on Wagner's Ring Cycle in *Orientations*, Boulez states that the ceaseless transformation of musical material is facilitated by the specificity of the Wagnerian themes, which “are based on arpeggios, or variations of arpeggios, and on dotted rhythms, which can be easily disassembled.” He explains that these developmental processes suggest a proto-Schoenbergian element that moves towards an increasingly abstract atomization of pitch material:

The actual appearances of these motives in time arise from a largely unspecified matrix, in which the accent can easily be shifted from the pitch to the harmony and from the harmony to the rhythm, or vice versa. It was from this technique, so novel in its day, that Schoenberg was much later to draw consequences that tended to reduce the matrix from which themes are drawn to the pure abstraction of simple intervals, rhythmic structure and tempo indications being added only later.

For Wagner, as for Schoenberg (and we can assume, eventually for Boulez himself), the minimal unit of the motif or interval is what provides the ground for this kind of musical deterritorialization. We hear a musical motif in its identity, only to see this motif undergo relentless transformations that leave no parameter untouched: from tempo to timbre and rhythm, all are variables for the malleability of musical material.

Even though these passages in Boulez’s writings do not descend into the level of detailed musical analysis, I think we can still see the logic at work here. While most musical motifs in classical music have structural characteristics that necessitate the co-implication of many parameters (melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, formal, and so on), what makes the Wagnerian motif exceptionally remarkable is its capacity to develop itself as if it were not governed by a more powerful formal process like sonata form or even simple modulation. If it were, that would bring in another governing transcendence, removing us from the sphere of pure immanence. Instead, these motives create their own developmental logic, and their own sense of musical time. What is created here, ultimately, is a concept Deleuze and Boulez share: the “sonorous bloc.” Like the “bloc of sensation” the “sonorous bloc” or “blocs of duration” mark a kind of music that is actively singular, self-poising, and developing autonomously from its contexts.

With regard to his own music, Boulez uses this same concept of the “sonorous bloc” to describe the assemblage of multiple pitches in his *Troisième Sonate: Formant III—Constellation-miroir*. “Blocs are structures based on perpetually shifting blocks of sound, and these may be struck vertically or may disintegrate horizontally in very rapid succession, so that the listener's ear retains the identity of the bloc.” These blocs replace the hierarchical orders of old-fashioned musical
parameters with a unified concept ("bloc") that does no more than assemble the sounds without prescriptively subordinating them to a privileged parameter like harmony. In other words, the bloc traverses all musical parameters in a "diagonal" as if the material developed in itself, according to its own singular logic.

This same tendency is refined further in Deleuze’s ensuing discussion of rhythm, which isolates the problem of musical time. The "bloc of duration" not only allow musical material to develop independently and singularly without regard to the authority of external parameters, but as Deleuze puts it, these blocs are likewise "inseparable from metric and chronometric relations which define divisibilities, commensurabilities, and proportions." In other words, we need actual, "striated," "pulsed," "metric," or worldly time to mark and set free a "smooth" time that can ride on the forces of the virtual. "From the striated a smooth or non-pulsed space-time detaches itself in turn, one which no longer refers to chronometry except in a global fashion: the cuts in it are undetermined, of an irrational type, and measures are replaced by undecomposable distances and proximities which express the density or rarefaction of what appears in them (statistical distribution [répartition] of events)." A distribution of musical events that is "statistical" rather than "metric" is one that has constructed a smooth musical order on the backs of metrical, or "striated" components. In sum, a non-pulsed, or virtual musical temporality is valorized because it is more real, because it expresses the reality of time, always seeking to refuse the organized transcendence of meter, even as it is remains dependent upon it.

With this logic, by moving from the striated to the smooth, we glimpse a musical temporality that knows no transcendent governance, producing a pure presence in its very actualization. The effect of this music is to "enlarge perception to the limits of the universe," to produce a "pure presence" which has, still, lost its relationship to the actual musical work that once moored it to the world. This special kind of perception where from the striated we find the smooth, "can be attained only if perception breaks with the identity to which memory rivets it." Thus, even as all music is built upon the foundation of actual meter, memory, and bits of musical material, it is the job of the composer to produce a presence that has left these materials behind in their actuality. This is accomplished through the use of what Boulez calls "fixed elements" [Fixe]. Like a leitmotiv, or a little motto, a fixed element "which works sometimes by astonishing simplification" is essentially a recognizable musical gesture that draws one into the complexity of the musical work. "[The fixed element] will allow one to identify the variation, which is to say the individuation without identity." The "individuation" here is such that the self-same identity of the musical material is surpassed by the more powerful logic of singular development. If such a passage has happened, we have indeed been traversed by the virtual.

Paradoxically, the permanent and absolute nature of a Deleuzian musical work must amount to something that endures indifferently despite any actual properties of the actual work. These Boulezian sonorous blocs, actual as they are since they are indeed written in the score, are, more importantly, "individuated without identity," developed according to a logic that allows them to escape onto the infinity of sensation itself, reminding us of our profoundly unsaturated and vital connection to the flux of the universe. Whatever the actual or composed relationship between smooth and striated time in Boulez's work, the only way this presence can unfold is to forcefully sonorize the production of difference in its very becoming: "This is why the fixed elements [in musical material] do not imply any permanence, but rather instanciate [instantânéiser] the variation or dissemination that they force us to perceive." Composed music, then seeks to become one with a sense of continuous variation in time, rendering the surging clamor of musical events into something that is in excess of its formal, notated origin.

Does this amount to another Platonism? It cannot, and here is why. We need only recall: for Deleuze, there is no link of resemblance between the virtual and the actual, something that is absolutely crucial for a Platonist view. For Plato a "virtual" idea would have to resemble its actual examples, which are then judged as imperfect by comparison. The "pure presence" of music for Deleuze cannot be presented as a more perfect version of merely actual musical things, it is something that, by definition, cannot be identified as such. For Deleuze, what is musical about music is always something that in the sensation of its becoming, leaves its actuality behind. Music is never preserved qua ideal object or immaterial thing, but only qua sensation.

8. MUSIC IN ITSELF

In the opening of this article, I insisted that I did not intend in any way to prescriptively advocate a Deleuzian perspective on music. Instead, I intended to conduct a philosophical exercise. To stress this point in my article, I have tried to bare an ambiguity I still sense in Deleuze’s writing. It is this. On the one hand, I have attempted to develop my concept of a Deleuzian musical work independently of Deleuze’s “musi-
ology.” I began this by relating it to Platonist and historicist views, and basing my subsequent elaboration on only the most consistent and salient themes of Deleuze’s philosophical orientation. This culminated in my explanation of Whitney Houston’s “One Moment in Time” as one with the logic of sensation in itself; this constituted a coupling of sound and nervous systems outside time, in its own planar eternity of self-organization.

But in my seventh section, I recognize that when it comes to music, Deleuze has highly particular tastes for modernist abstraction. In this regard, he is hardly shy about asserting certain composers and musical works as exemplary of his own philosophy. Here, he uses figures like Boulez as an occasion to keep developing his own concepts. Since, for Deleuze, the only difference between art and philosophy is one of medium, he finds no trouble in using music to do philosophy. Though both philosophy and music tap into the forces of the virtual, philosophy for its part occurs in the medium of thought, which is strictly speaking immediate to itself, running at “infinite speed.” But music is not simply immediate to itself; it is mediated by the actuality of created sound. It seems that, for Deleuze, music is a perfect opportunity to create concepts, since it has no other purpose than to render sensible these nonsensorous forces of the virtual.

Still—Why Boulez? While this article is not the place to explore this further, I wonder if, in the Boulez example, Deleuze (perhaps without knowing it) is still too dependent upon a regulative or proper musical unit of a note. Maybe these notes, which provide the historical foundation for classical motives, harmonies, melodies, and even metrical regularity, constitute the necessary “territories” along which Deleuze can affirm the development of singular, self-positing blocs of sensation in Wagner, Boulez, or elsewhere. Why couldn’t we find another “territory” (like musical tradition, or recording technology) to harness the forces of the virtual? Either way, the consequences of Deleuze’s orientation are important: this particular kind of notated music that rides the power of the virtual also necessitates the power of a historically specific definition of proper musical technique, suggesting a certain conservatism regarding the legitimacy of created musical works. Why this very particular (and historically determined) sobriety of musical expression? (Or, would Goehr’s work suggest a possible critique of Deleuze’s “musicology?”)

Even if these difficulties warrant their own close study, given the continual emphasis Deleuze placed upon the thoroughly philosophical orientation of his work, it would be ironic to dwell too long on a discussion of what makes a “proper” Deleuzian musical work. This is especially so because he was a philosopher who so profoundly attempted to turn his back on the resentful, guilt-inducing powers of judgmental authority. Following Artaud, Deleuze insists we should “have done with judgment.” In the essay that bears this very title, we are reminded that we need not dwell too long on Deleuze’s own particular tastes, judging them for better or for worse. Despite the complexities in rendering his philosophical position, we should never be at the mercy of another higher judgment that qualifies some actual compositions as “Deleuzian” and other as not. He writes: “If it is so disgusting to judge, it is not because everything is of equal value, but on the contrary because what has value can be made or distinguished only by defying judgment.” He continues, speaking against any alleged aesthetic conservatism, opening us to musical futures: “What expert judgement, in art, could ever bear on the work to come? It is not a question of judging other existing beings, but of sensing whether they agree or disagree with us, that is, whether they bring forces to us, or whether they return us to the miseries of war, to the poverty of the dream, to the rigors of organization.”

Then, why confront Deleuze with the question of a musical work? Why not simply explore a concept of “Deleuzian music”? Or “Deleuzian musical expression”? In the wake of Lydia Goehr’s book, that argues for the work-concept’s historical specificity, why retain a concept like das Werk when discussing a philosopher like Deleuze, who so powerfully rejected the specificity of history, in the name of singular, vital, and invariant logics of becoming? Isn’t this Deleuzian logic simply too unlike the standard, old-fashioned Nineteenth century notion of the musical work?

Yes and no. So often, debates about the musical work turn on a familiar dualism, not unlike the perspectives taken up by Kivy and Goehr, respectively. Arguments and defenses are made of the autonomy of musical structure, the invariance and immateriality of its form, or its “absolute” powers of expression that function beyond the capacities of language. On the other side, many more arguments stage a negative critique of this autonomy. The standard “negative” position claims that music must be contextualized, socially embedded, embodied, and understood exactly in terms of how it is practiced in a material world. But Deleuze offers a glimpse of something different: music for him is certainly based in a materiality of sound, but is not reducible to any social or perceptual situation. It has a strange kind of autonomy, one that is oriented towards the absolute, but not as a vehicle for the actual work’s content. Incredibly, he tries to think a musical work that is once more ideal and more empirical than the common perspectives. A
Deleuzian musical work would be more ideal than a Platonist view since the logic of sensation has no “fallen” or exterior moment like performance external to itself. And it would be more empirical than a historicist perspective since it takes no recourse to the regulative norms of any historical moment. It is too immanent to the empirical facet of life to be disciplined by regulative transcendence.

Of course, I also retain the term of the “musical work” with a measure of irony. In a fair number of Deleuze’s passages on music, he can sound a lot like a Nineteenth century aesthetician of music. Even as he gives us a way to think music as surpassing all human, worldly, identitarian, historicist, and culturalist parameters many times music must retain the marks of a skilled technical effort in order to “stand up on its own.” The intensities so prized by a Deleuzian view are inseparable from the rare sobriety of its technical genesis. But in my analysis here, I have chosen to spend less time on the ironies of his conservatism, preferring to clarify and strengthen this line of thought by *doing away* with the judgment of actual works. In the way “One Moment In Time” overcomes all its mediations, reproductions, and technical supports to expand the singularity of its sensation through a limitless assemblage of nervous systems, so does the logic of a Deleuzian musical work attempt to think the *work* of music into a singularity of cosmic power.

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**NOTES**

1. I do not intend to critique Kivy and Goehr’s views here. My summaries of their complex and nuanced contributions to the philosophy of music are here only to establish common points of understanding. I do this in the hope that this will make the philosophical challenge of thinking a Deleuzian musical work a bit easier.

2. Peter Kivy’s defenses of musical Platonism show up in the collection entitled *The Fine Art of Repetition* (1993). They are also discussed in John Andrew Fisher’s article “Discovery, Creation, and Musical Works” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1991). Kivy’s view maintains that a real musical Platonism requires that musical works preexist their actual composition; in its most radical version, it would mean that musical works are essentially *discovered*, as in the cases of mathematics and science, not merely created and invented.


4. Ibid., 59.

5. Goehr, marking a major turning point in the philosophy of music, rejects the analytic perspectives common in Anglo-American philosophy, claiming that their careful arguments about the identity conditions of the musical work naturalize music as ahistorical, unsituated, and overly abstract.

6. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, p. 113. That is, in its historically located but locally transcendent effect, this kind of idea regulates musical practice. In other moments, Goehr orient the regulative capacity of the work-concept towards a more Foucaultian perspective. She does this by emphasizing how an ideal like the work-concept can only function “regulatively” insofar as it is a product of worldly technology and discipline native to an epoch or situation. In this case, ideals would not normatively supervene from a philosophically transcendent position, or retain a presupposed identity across different contexts (like the “open” concept), but instead would be technically *made*; they would be unconditionally *immanent* to social processes. This is most explicit when Goehr is discussing the phenomenon of the work-concept’s “emergence.” She writes: “Emergence is not a process of creation *ex nihilo*, but a slow process occurring through the development of a practice, through the fostering of new theories and much more. A concept’s
emergence is not, furthermore, an event divorceable from its past or from the history of the practice within which it functions. The idea is to see emergence as part of the history of the practice itself.” (108). And earlier: “Emergence depends upon the development and crystallization of numerous moments ranging from the introduction of more and less specific theories that found new beliefs, values, concepts, and distinctions; to new rules, laws and normative principles; to new tools and institutional buildings; to new activities and modes of behavior.” (107).


8. Hallward’s article “The Limits of Individuation, or How to Distinguish Deleuze and Foucault,” uses the distinction singular-specific to draw a parallel distinction between Deleuze and Foucault. For Hallward, specific thinking explores the situated limits of worldly beings—institutional, cultural, historical, etc. The singular, on the other hand, creates its own medium of expression, according to a logic that is, in itself, limitless. I have adopted Hallward’s enormously salient distinction between the singular and specific at several moments in this paper. Hallward has most fully elaborated his perspective on Deleuze in his recent book, Out of This World: Deleuze And The Philosophy of Creation. While I am, in general, very sympathetic to his beautifully argued take on Deleuze, I hesitate to endorse his most radical formulation: “The main mistake to avoid here is again the assumption that the virtual and the actual enjoy equal powers of determination, that creating and creature reinforce one another in some sort of mutual co-implication. No: the creating literally does what the word says, it creates the creature, which itself creates nothing at all. The creaure determines the creaturium. There is no place here for something resembling dialectical feedback or progression.” (79). While I certainly agree that the virtual is the privileged orientation of Deleuze’s philosophy, I see in his discussion of music (among the other arts as well) something that appears a bit more dialectical, even if in a cryptic sense: there are indeed preferred actualities or musical specificities that, at times, seem to provide the ground for inhuman virtual becoming, making it harder for me to feel comfortable thinking that Deleuze maintains a perfectly consistent “orientation” towards the virtual. In section seven I will touch on this problem.


10. Ibid., 28–69.

11. Ibid., 50.


14. In a difficult chapter of Difference and Repetition, “Ideas and the Synthesis of Difference,” Deleuze explains the relationship between the virtual and the actual as one of “differentiation.” Differentiation with a “t” is on the side of the virtual, and has to do with a kind of Idea. Unlike the Platonist Idea, which has a link of resemblance with things in the real world, the Deleuzian virtual Idea (derived from an intricate re-reading of Kantian Ideas) never resembles anything in the world. It is a pure, structured potentiality—a differential multiplicity—including all varieties of singular elements and relations. Differentiation with a “c” is on the side of the actual. It uses the virtual, differentiated reservoir to create something differentiated in the extended, actual world of particular beings: “Differentiation is always simultaneously differentiation of species and parts, of qualities and extensities: determination of qualities or determination of species, but also partition or organisation.” (210).

15. Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, 209.

16. Deleuze, Bergsonism, 100.

17. Ibid., 97.

18. Ibid., 99, emphasis added.


21. As some of Deleuze’s commentators have noted, the virtual and actual are in an obscure and tense relation with one another. I refer the reader to a very instructive exchange between Peter Hallward and Christian Kerslake in the pages of Racial Philosophy 113 and 114. They emphasize two different approaches: Hallward looks to
Deleuze's pre-critical influences through Spinoza and Bergson, whereas Kerslake picks up Deleuze's modification of Kantian critical philosophy.

22. Deleuze, *Frances Bacon: Logic of Sensation*, 47.

23. I quote this phrase from Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*.

24. The ephemeral, ineffable or “drastic” aspects of music centered on a temporality of pure flux have been explored many times in the history of musical thought. Perhaps the most recent and famous exploration can be found in Carolyn Abbate’s “Music—Drastic or Gnostic?” *Critical Inquiry* 30 no. 3.


27. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 164.

28. Ibid.

29. Again, by Deleuze’s “musicology” I mean to refer to the claims he makes on behalf of actual musical works and composers. I have based this analysis primarily in Deleuze’s general philosophical standpoint and the general principles laid out in his “aesthetics” as rendered in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* and *What is Philosophy?*. In the seventh section, I do treat the topic of his “musicology” since it presents problems I think should be isolated from the logic I have attempted to unfold.


31. This kind of self-positing, self-maintaining system obeys the same logic of Peter Hallward’s succinct and accurate definition of “the singular” in an article that I have already cited: “The Limits of Individualization, or How to Distinguish Deleuze from Foucault.” He writes: “*Singularities* create their own medium of extension or existence; rather than move through a ‘universal’ field presumed to pre-exist it, a singular movement takes place as the unfolding of its own time and space” (93, emphasis Hallward’s).


33. Ibid., 197.

34. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 44.

35. In Wackenroder’s memorable story of “The Strange Musical Life of the Musical Artist Joseph Berglinger” actual music becomes fully present to Joseph’s listening. In a memorable passage that at first seems Deleuzian, Wackenroder writes: “Not the slightest tone escaped him and, at the end, he was very weak and fatigued from the intense attentiveness. His continuously active soul was entirely a medley of sounds—it was as if they were detached from his body and were fluttering about more freely, or as if his body had become a part of his soul—his entire being was embraced so freely and easily by the beautiful convolutions and innuendoes of the sounds imprinted themselves in his gentle soul.” It is only the romanticism of solitariness inferiority that keeps this story from narrating the passing of impersonal becomings: “He was always alone and quietly withdrawn and delighted only in his inner fantasies. . . . He valued his own inner soul above all else and kept it concealed and hidden from others.” See Wackenroder, *Confessions and Fantasies*, 149.

36. For representative works by these two phenomenological thinkers, see Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth To Presence*.


38. Special thanks are due to Peter Hallward for pointing out this difficult, exceptional, form of mediation.


40. Though Deleuze’s taste in music is usually fairly conservative, the most open and generous formulation of his “musicology” can be found in “Of The Refrain,” where music (as we commonly know it) is shown to be merely one facet of the rhythms embodied by all living things—a cosmic “refrain.” This chapter, of course, is not without its own taste for high art, but in Deleuze’s most politically democratic mode, where he speaks of a “people to come,” he suggests otherwise. The indecision seems to turn on the effect of mass media and modern technology: “The mass media, the great people’s organizations of the party or union type, are machines for reproduction, fuzzification machines that effectively scramble all the terrestrial forces of the people. The established powers have placed us in the situation of a combat at once atomic and cosmic, galactic. Many artists became aware of this situation long ago, even before it had been installed (Nietzsche, for example). They became aware of it because the same vector was traversing their own domain: a molecularization, an atomization of the material, coupled with a
cosmicization of the forces taken up by that material. The question then became whether molecular or atomic ‘populations’ of all natures (mass media, monitoring procedures, computers, space weapons) would continue to bombard the existing people in order to train it or control it or annihilate it—or if other molecular populations were possible, could slip into the first and give rise to a people yet to come.” Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 345.

41. Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, 164.
42. Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 345.
43. Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, 176.
46. Ibid., 267.
47. Boulez, “Sonata, What do You Want of Me?” [Sonate, que me veux-tu?] from Orientations, 151.
50. Ibid., 72.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. See Deleuze and Guattari, What is Philosophy?, 21.
54. As an aside, it could perhaps be suggested that beyond my own example of “One Moment in Time,” another “example” of a Deleuzian work might be one that does not rely upon an actual composition at all, but instead offers a prescriptive discipline of virtual listening. Pauline Oliveros’s practices of “Deep Listening” might emulate something like this: like yoga for our ears, Oliveros asks us to open our ears to the noise of the world, not through enframed indeterminacy as in the work of John Cage, but through a holistic meditative orientation to sound itself, where we abandon the highly selective, technical, and cultural habits of listening.

Deleuze would associate with the actual, instead purifying our sensation into virtual immanence with all vibration.

55. Deleuze, “To Have Done with Judgment” in Essays Critical and Clinical, 135.
REFERENCES


