



---

Motion and Feeling through Music

Author(s): Charles M. H. Keil

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (Spring, 1966), pp. 337-349

Published by: [Blackwell Publishing](#) on behalf of [The American Society for Aesthetics](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/427969>

Accessed: 04/06/2012 15:42

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*Blackwell Publishing* and *The American Society for Aesthetics* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

CHARLES M. H. KEIL

## *Motion and Feeling through Music*

IN HIS BOOK *Emotion and Meaning in Music* Leonard Meyer<sup>1</sup> has managed to fill a great deal of the gap in our knowledge defined by the question, What is a musical experience? In attempting a very short sequel to his work my primary purpose is to discuss an aspect of music that I feel has been neglected in his studies.

To do this effectively, I find it convenient to define my general position vis-à-vis the positions delineated so clearly by Meyer at the outset of his book and in his more recent articles, "Some Remarks on Value and Greatness in Music"<sup>2</sup> and "The End of the Renaissance."<sup>3</sup> To begin with, I am primarily concerned, as is Meyer, with teleological or goal-directed (*ibid.*, pp. 172-173) music, although I will try to demonstrate that the goals to which music may direct itself are not always as circumscribed as he would have us believe. Second, we share an emphasis (in this discussion at least) on understanding music itself irrespective of any referential or extramusical content it may possess.

At this point, however, our positions begin to diverge. Among those who are interested in "The understanding of and response to relationships inherent in the musical progress" Meyer distinguishes two points of view: "the formalist would contend that the meaning of music lies in the perception and understanding of the mu-

sical relationships set forth in the work of art and that meaning in music is primarily intellectual, while the expressionist would argue that these same relationships are in some sense capable of exciting feelings and emotions in the listener" (Meyer, 1956, p. 3). *Emotion and Meaning in Music* demonstrates quite effectively that formalist and expressionist points of view tend to be complementary rather than conflicting, "for the same musical processes and similar psychological behaviour give rise to both types of meaning." Meyer develops this thesis with materials from the Western compositional tradition, using the concept of syntax and certain corollary concepts such as norm-deviation, tendency-inhibition, and the net effect is impressive. The thesis established, he attempts, with somewhat less success I think, to transpose the theory into the musical systems of other cultures.

Meyer's relative failure to extend his generalizations to styles outside the Western stream stems in part, at least, from the fact that syntax and syntax alone provides the core of his theory; that is, he develops his thesis by first examining the form of music, a succession of tones, and then relating this form via psychological principles to meaning and expression. This procedure assumes that for analytic purposes music can be fixed or frozen as an object in a score or recording, and it implies not only a one-to-one relationship between syntactic form and expression but a weighting in favor of the former factor to the detriment of the latter. This tight

CHARLES M. H. KEIL is working in music and aesthetics in Africa, supported by the Foreign Area Fellowship Program. His book *The Urban Blues* is being published by the University of Chicago Press.

equation of form and expression that for Meyer equals "embodied meaning" yields excellent results when applied to the generally through-composed and harmonically oriented styles of our own Western tradition, and in fact it is with only a few reservations that we can extend the equation to the evaluation of this music, saying, "Music must be evaluated syntactically" (Meyer, 1959, p. 496). When, however, this equation and the corresponding evaluative criteria are applied to non-Western styles or to certain Western compositions *in performance*, we often find that something is missing. It is that something, or at least an important part of it, that I will attempt to specify in some detail.

All music has syntax or embodied meaning and indeed perhaps the analyst's primary obligation is to elucidate the syntax or grammatical rules of the musical system or style with which he is dealing. Consider, however, the system or style in action, music as a creative act rather than as an object, and remember that outside the West musical traditions are almost exclusively performance traditions. In some music, and I am thinking specifically at present of African and African-derived genres, an illumination of syntactic relationships or of form as such will not go very far in accounting for expression. The one-to-one relationship postulated by Meyer will not hold; syntactic analysis is a necessary con-

dition for understanding such music but not sufficient in itself.

In addition to embodied meanings we must talk about aspects of the on-going musical progress that can be subsumed under the general heading of "engendered feeling." For the sake of brevity and, hopefully, greater clarity as well, these aspects will be listed at the outset. In making this list of polarities my primary reference points are Meyer's theory (as formulated for the Western compositional tradition) and the musical idiom that I am best acquainted with, jazz. I hasten to add that these contrasts are loose and fuzzy; they are meant to be thought-provoking rather than precise, hence the logical interconnectedness of the notions in either column is conjectural, to say the least.

There are a number of valid objections to be met and ambiguities to be clarified with respect to this preliminary and rudimentary chart of the musical experience and though I would much prefer to remain suggestive rather than explicit, I will try to delineate point by point what is meant by "engendered feeling."

In an effort to meet some objections head-on, first let me repeat that every piece of teleological music involves both syntax and an elusive quality designated here as "process." For example, a good composer gives some spontaneity to his form and, conversely, a good improviser tries to give some form to his spontaneity

TABLE 1  
*Table of Contrasts*

	Embodied Meaning	Engendered Feeling
1. Mode of Construction	composed	improvised
2. Mode of Presentation	repeated performance	single performance
3. Mode of Understanding	syntactic	processual
4. Mode of Response	mental	motor
5. Guiding Principles	architectonic (retentive)	"vital drive" (cumulative)
6. Technical Emphases	harmony/melody/embellishment (vertical)	pulse/meter/rhythm (horizontal)
7. Basic Unit	"sound term" (phrase)	gesture (phrasing)
8. Communication Analogues	linguistic	paralinguistic (kinesics, proxemics, etc.)
9. Gratifications	deferred	immediate
10. Relevant Criteria	coherence	spontaneity

(cf. ¶1 and ¶10). In any case, whether the notes are written or improvised, whenever music is performed the processual aspect becomes important.<sup>4</sup> Second, it may appear that the columns of concepts above simply reassert the formalist-expressionist split so carefully patched up by Meyer. Again, let me reiterate that my ultimate aim is to reveal just that part of expression not inherent in form or syntax, hence the accent on just those aspects of music that are in one sense, yet to be specified, less syntactic.

Third, the metaphysical specter of mind-body dualism seems to emerge from these polarities, specifically at ¶4 on the list. Although hardly a philosopher or physiological psychologist, I would agree with Meyer that the mind-body duality is something of a false chicken-and-egg sort of issue. Yet it would seem that the dualism dilemma was resolved a little prematurely along Christian Science mind-over-matter lines. I would particularly take issue with the following paragraph:

On the one hand, it seems clear that almost all motor behavior is basically a product of mental activity rather than a kind of direct response made to the stimulus as such. For aside from the obvious fact that muscles cannot perceive, that there seems to be no direct path from the receptors to the voluntary muscle systems, motor responses are not as a rule, made to separate, discrete sounds but to patterns and groupings of sounds. The more order and regularity the mind is able to impose upon the stimuli presented to it by the senses, the more likely it is that motor behavior will arise. Such grouping and patterning of sounds is patently a result of mental activity (Meyer, 1956, p. 81).

Common-sense and day-to-day observation of children learning by doing as much as by thinking would seem to cast considerable doubt on some of the statements above, but recent experiments have demonstrated quite convincingly that our muscles are perceptive.<sup>5</sup> Could it be that in some cultures children learn to dance before (or even while) they learn to listen? Watching an African father support his infant while it pumps its legs up and down to the "high-life" coming over the radio, one is tempted to think so.

Which leads to another possible objection: the right hand column above seems

to be flirting seriously with referentialism in that a music-for-dancing or choreographic reference is implied throughout. Far from being a mere flirtation, there often seems to be an out-and-out romance going on between music of the "engendered feeling" type and the dance. If this were a court of law, I would have to sustain this objection, I suppose, but there are three counter-statements and a summation to be made. 1. In many cultures music and dance are so tightly intertwined that a clean separation of the two seems not only impossible but fruitless if it were possible—like separating myth from ritual, or mind from body, for that matter. 2. Styles of music "designed for dancing" have a way of evolving into music "for listeners only," e.g., modern jazz; although Thelonious Monk<sup>6</sup> regularly leaps from the piano to choreograph a chorus or two and other jazzmen have their characteristic stances and movements, the jazz audience now remains immobile save for some head-bobbing, toe-tapping, and finger-popping. Yet the music persists and though its choreographic or motor element is less visible perhaps, it is still essential to an adequate analysis. 3. No less an avowed formalist than Stravinsky states, "The sight of the gestures and movements of the various parts of the body producing the music is fundamentally necessary if it is to be grasped in all its fullness."<sup>7</sup> Can we then dismiss choreographic expression as extramusical?

Toward the end of his book Meyer paradoxically manages to make the point of this sequel while missing the point altogether:

Unfortunately little of the extensive research done in the field of primitive music is of value for this study. First, because the primitives themselves do not make musical creation a self-conscious endeavor, they have neither a theory of music nor even a crude "aesthetic" which might serve to connect their musical practices to their responses. It seems clear that on the most primitive level music is, on the one hand, so intimately connected with ritual and magic that its aesthetic content is severely restricted and, on the other hand, that it is so closely associated with bodily effort that its shape and organization are to a considerable degree products of the physical activities connected with ritual, labor or expressive behavior (Meyer, 1956, p. 239).

May I suggest, first of all, that it may be our notion of an aesthetic that is rather crude and restricted, not necessarily that of the primitives? Need an aesthetic be exclusively verbal? Can we not infer a great deal from choreographic responses or "symbolic action,"<sup>8</sup> from the "conversation" between dancers and musicians (the stimuli and responses go in two directions, I suspect), not to mention the relationship between man and instrument? If music "is so closely associated with bodily effort," why not build a bodily aesthetic adequate to the task? John Blacking<sup>9</sup> in his brief discussion of Hornbostel's<sup>10</sup> "motor theory" of African rhythm has asked essentially the same questions and I strongly second his motion that greater attention be paid to this problem.

Having answered objections with queries, let me return now to some of the above mentioned terminological ambiguities.

Contrasts ¶1 and ¶2 are well amplified by the exceptionally articulate (musically and verbally) jazz pianist, Bill Evans, and the liner notes he has written for a recent Miles Davis album are worth citing at length.

There is a Japanese visual art in which the artist is forced to be spontaneous (¶10). He must paint on a thin parchment with a special brush and black water paint in such a way that an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break through the parchment. Erasures or changes are impossible. These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands (¶7 and ¶8) in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere (¶4).

The resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of ordinary painting (¶5 and ¶6), but it is said that those who see well find something captured that escapes explanation (¶9).

This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection (¶4, ¶7, and ¶9), I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician.

Group improvisation is a further challenge. Aside from the weighty technical problem of collective coherent thinking, there is the very human, even social, need for sympathy from all members to bend for the common result. This most difficult problem, I think, is beautifully met and solved on this recording.

As the painter needs his framework of parchment, the improvising musical group needs its framework in time (¶5 and ¶6). Miles Davis presents here frameworks which are exquisite in their simplicity and yet contain all that is necessary to stimulate performance with a sure reference point to the primary conception.<sup>11</sup>

The numbers inserted in this discourse on jazz essentials refer to other points in Table 1, and in fact, this brief text might easily stand by itself as an expanded definition of process (¶3). Further definitions of process can be culled from a recent interview with another outstanding jazz pianist, Paul Bley. Although talking about music in general, many jazzmen would find his imagery particularly appropriate to describe a successful piece of music in their idiom,

Basically the body of music that exists is like a river meeting a dam—constantly accumulating. It'll find the weakest spot, and finally it will break through and continue—but it will still be a river. Or, further along in the discussion, You can approach a piece as an anti-piece for example. But whatever you use, there has to be a *groove to get into*. That's the hard part. Once you're into it, you don't have to keep deciding whether or not the next phrase is going to be good or not. A soloist can usually tell by the first phrase whether it's going to be a good solo. When you *get into something* to start with, don't worry about the rest of the set; it's going to be beautiful. If anything, just hold back, because it'll all come out eventually anyway. The important thing is getting on the *right track*—the *right pattern*—in the *right way* and exerting the control and practice necessary to get it.<sup>12</sup>

The phrases I have emphasized in this statement, the extended river simile and Evans' analogy to Japanese art, do not add up to a very concrete definition of process, simply because, as used in this context, it is an abstract concept covering an infinite number of "vital drive" principles, which brings us to contrasts ¶4, ¶5, ¶6, and ¶7

and the empirical problems about which this theory revolves.

What is this groove, track, pattern or something that Bley and other jazzmen feel is so important to get into? What is this thing called swing, vital drive, or process? Aside from a close examination of the music itself we have only a brief chapter from a book by the French critic, André Hodeir,<sup>13</sup> to help us. It is from Hodeir, in fact, that I have borrowed the term *vital drive*. Although he designates the phenomenon and stresses its importance, he goes no further.

There is another element in swing that resists analysis and that I would hesitate to mention if my personal impressions had not been echoed by many jazz musicians. What is involved is a combination of undefined forces that creates a kind of 'rhythmic fluidity' without which the music's swing is markedly attenuated (Hodier, p. 207).

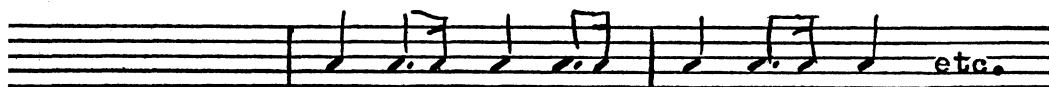
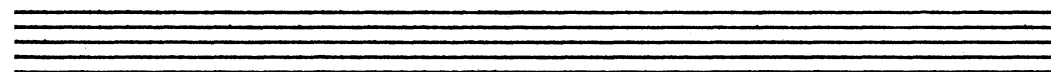
All we have then from Hodeir is one more ambiguous term to add to our burgeoning catalogue. In all fairness, he offers a number of important insights into process that will be incorporated here before admitting defeat at the strategic moment. His general failure devolves from a misordering of the elements in swing which in turn is related to his initial denial of what I feel is a fundamentally sound assertion made by Joost Van Praag as far back as 1936, "Swing is a psychic tension that comes from the rhythm's being attracted by the metre."<sup>14</sup> The word *psychic* here might involve us in more mental-motor (§4) controversy, so for the sake of non-argument may I offer *organismic* as a temporary surrogate—a term sufficiently general but with strong motor connotations. The focus of attention that this definition gives us is crucial; the tension generated by a complex relationship between meter and rhythm. But here again a qualification must be made by defining meter, à la Meyer, as "an awareness of the regular recurrence of accented and unaccented beats" thus leaving room for a primary pulse, "an objective or *subjective* [emphasis added] division of time into regularly recurring, equally accented beats" (Meyer, 1956, pp. 102–103). Quite

clearly it is to the pulse that the rhythms in Van Praag's definition of swing are attracted. It is a subjective pulse that Richard Waterman is speaking of when he uses the concept "metronome sense" as the ordering principle in the polymetered rhythms of West African ensembles.<sup>15</sup> In jazz groups polymeter or even a sense of polymeter may or may not exist, but the subjective pulse or "metronome sense" remains the center from which all vital drives derive.<sup>16</sup>

Vital drive may be generated in a number of different ways and a more detailed look at the mechanics of this process as exemplified in jazz may prove serviceable in explicating contrasts §§5, §6, and §7.

The best starting point is probably rhythm section attack:<sup>17</sup> the interplay between bass and drums. By attack<sup>18</sup> I mean simply the type of contact the player makes with his instrument in the initial production of a note. Every drummer has what is known in the jazz argot as a distinctive tap,<sup>19</sup> that is, a manner of applying stick to cymbal. The basic tap may be notated approximately as in Example 1, or somewhat more accurately as in Example 2. But the fact is that taps cannot be notated.<sup>20</sup> For syntactic purposes we might write down a reasonable facsimile of a tap with all its variations (and there are many) vis-à-vis the improvisations of a soloist, and note how the rhythmic structures of the two patterns complement each other and interact, but we would only be talking about a small part of what the drummer contributes to the music. For the primary goal of his characteristic and internally consistent tap is to create as much vital drive as possible, to build a groove or track for the soloist to get into and this is done by pulling against the pulse.

Although each drummer has his own way of doing this, for heuristic purposes we may distinguish two common approaches or attacks—those who play "on top" of the pulse and those who "lay back" behind it. The former school (e.g., Kenny Clark, Roy Haynes, Billy Higgins, Jimmy Cobb, Frank Dunlop, Osie Johnson, as the desig-

**Example 1****Example 2**

nation *on top* implies, attacks the cymbal so close to the pulse as to almost be ahead of it or "above" it when dealing with those notes in the tap that fall on 1, 2, 3, and 4 of a 4/4 measure. It is primarily by "playing" with the syncopated beat in between the pulses (cf. examples above) that "on top" drummers generate vital drive. Some drummers eschew the "middle" beat altogether on occasion, playing "straight four" on the cymbal and elaborating the pulse with sporadic accents on the snare or bass drum. In the hands of a master (e.g., Louis Hayes, who uses rotary draw-away motions when applying this tap), this "straight four" technique may be dull as dishwater syntactically but electrifying as a part of process. Although it is difficult to generalize about the attacking motion, "on top" drummers tend to keep the stick close to the cymbal, arm fairly stationary with the stroke moving perpendicular to the cymbal, such that each beat lands on the cymbal in the vicinity of its predecessor.

Conversely, drummers of the "lay-back" school (e.g., Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Art Blakey, Pete LaRoca, Elvin Jones) seem to attack horizontally, so to speak,

placing each beat on a different part of the cymbal as the arm moves back and forth slightly. In the pattern given in Example 2, the lay-back drummer places a slightly delayed accent on the notes marked plus, letting beats 1 and 3 "lay back" still farther behind the pulse, so that only notes 2 and 4, the off-beats, seem to coincide with the metronome.<sup>21</sup> In keeping with the motion described, the "plus 1" and "plus 3" parts of this tap are played on one side of the cymbal and the 2's and 4's on the other. Clearly "lay-back" drummers take more drastic (or less subtle if you prefer) liberties with the pulse than their "on-top" compatriots.

This dichotomy by no means exhausts the typology of taps. For example, Connie Kay employs what might be called a "flattened-out" tap in which the syncopation is almost but not quite eliminated; Frank Isola is perhaps the only other drummer that uses anything like the same attack. More recently some drummers, notably Sonny Murray who uses thick knitting needles in place of sticks, have developed a tap that might be described as "reflex-textural." Murray seems to let his hand re-

spond by itself to the music (provided by pianist Cecil Taylor) and while it is sometimes difficult to pick out any recognizable rhythmic pattern in his playing, the resultant echo-effect is certainly tension-producing.

As far as bassists are concerned, a similar broad division can be made on the basis of attack or in this case pluck. This distinction is not formally recognized by jazzmen in their argot, but it exists nonetheless, I think, and the opposition will be described here as "stringy, light, sustained and bass-like" versus "chunky, heavy, percussive and drum-like." The former school (e.g., Paul Chambers, Scott LaFaro, Ron Carter, Steve Swallow) plucks higher up on the strings, away from the bridge, usually with the full side of the finger, and the tone "emerges." The latter group (e.g., Wilbur Ware, Henry Grimes, Percy Heath, Milt Hinton, Ahmed Abdul Malik, Gene Ramey, Eddie Jones) plucks lower down on the strings, nearer the bridge, usually with the tip of the finger, and the tone "bursts."

Classifications of this sort are rather tenuous for no jazz bassist or drummer attacks "time" in quite the same way as any other. Nevertheless, I would like to take the discussion a few steps further by examining briefly the various bassist/drummer combinations (cf. Table 2), and by relating these rhythm teams to the "comping"

or chording instrument (piano, guitar, etc.) found in most jazz groups and to the soloists. In general, chunky bassists and on-top drummers combine effectively, on the one hand, while stringy bassists and lay-back drummers work well together, on the other. Although there are certainly some notable exceptions to this rule, the groups of Thelonious Monk and Miles Davis, two outstanding leaders in contemporary jazz, illustrate this contrast very nicely. Monk consistently prefers chunky bassists and almost invariably they are coupled with on-top drummers<sup>22</sup> (Petitfroid/Clark, Malik/Haynes, Ore/Higgins, Warren/Dunlop, Sam Jones/Art Taylor), the exceptions being some excellent earlier recordings in which lay-back drummers Art Blakey and Shadow Wilson are coupled with chunky bassists Percy Heath and Wilbur Ware respectively. Miles Davis' rhythm teams are organized on the complementary principle, that is, he invariably employs stringy bassists and shows a marked preference for lay-back drummers (for many years Paul Chambers/Philly Joe Jones<sup>23</sup> and more recently Ron Carter/Tony Williams), although at one point Jimmy Cobb (predominantly an on-top drummer) and Chambers made up the rhythm team and again Miles, too, has occasionally brought a group into the recording studio that had a "Monk type"

TABLE 2  
*A Set of Bassist/Drummer Combinations*

	Bassists	
	chunky	stringy
Drummers on-top.....	A. Malik/R. Haynes P. Heath/K. Clark M. Hinton/O. Johnson J. Ore/F. Dunlap	P. Chambers/K. Clark
lay-back.....	W. Ware/P-J. Jones	P. Chambers/P-J. Jones S. LaFaro/P. Motian S. Swallow/P. LaRoca R. Carter/T. Williams

("Four-fold table schemes" are very much in vogue with social scientists but this one is simply illustrative and not statistically significant.)



rhythm section (Heath/Clark, Pierre Michelot/Clark). These rhythm section preferences are guided, I think, by the manner of phrasing used by the leader-soloists, in this example, Miles and Monk. Not only is Monk's syncopation (phrases §7 in Table 1) remarkably irregular ("predictably unpredictable" as one writer put it) even for a jazzman, but he places his notes (phrasing, §7) against the pulse with vicious consistency, hence his preference for a firm, even heavy, rhythm team whose pulse is relatively explicit and in the case of the bassist, at least, sometimes openly objective. Miles Davis is primarily a melodist and his lyrical phrasing is inconsistent in the sense that during a given phrase some notes may fall behind the pulse, others ahead of it, still others directly on it. He often tends to float around and above the pulse rather than to attack it directly and thereby contribute cumulatively to the vital drive. In other words, he needs a rhythm section that can swing well on its own, with or without him.

I should point out here that in my opinion a *good* string/lay-back team can generate considerably more vital drive *by itself* than the best chunky/on-top combination, although the latter teams are better in terms of consistency. For example, when a jazz soloist wants to make a record in New York and has not been working regularly with any particular rhythm team, he can be more confident of making a good showing by bringing together a chunky bassist, typically Milt Hinton or George Duvivier, and an on-top drummer, usually someone like Osie Johnson or Roy Haynes, even if the two men have played together infrequently prior to the recording. The three other possible combinations (cf. Table 2), if made impromptu, are somewhat risky: a chunky/lay-back team sometimes generates a rather sluggish vital drive (e.g., some Wilbur Ware/Philly Joe Jones recordings), a stringy/on-top team usually doesn't lack for drive but may rush at fast tempos (Kenny Clark/Paul Chambers),<sup>24</sup> and when a stringy bassist and lay-back drummer get together anything can happen.

The foregoing examples are extremely oversimplified for the best jazzmen are incredibly adaptable when faced with the task of generating a vital drive around a common pulse; for in the words of Duke Ellington, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Charles Mingus, bassist extraordinaire, and Danny Richmond, drummer, have been known to create a number of different vital drives within a single piece;<sup>25</sup> Mingus shifts his attack and Richmond adjusts accordingly, or vice versa. One thinks also of Roy Haynes, a thoroughly on-top drummer, replacing Elvin Jones (who likes to lay back his tap as far as it will go) with the John Coltrane Quartet for a month or so; after a few nights' work his playing became practically indistinguishable from that of his predecessor, at least as far as the overall "engendered feeling" of the group is concerned. The Coltrane group,<sup>26</sup> by the way, features a unique yet prototypical process that deserves a full monograph of analysis, if only we had an adequate theory and method to meet the challenge. For when we add a third variable to the picture, a pianist whose placement of chords has a great deal to do with vital drive, and begin to talk about rhythm sections rather than simple teams, processual permutations become very complex indeed. Introduce more variables, that is, soloists whose placement of notes may be just as important to process as the contributions of any rhythm section member, and one can begin to see why jazz critics, with the noteworthy exception of André Hodeir, have studiously avoided the very essence of their subject matter.<sup>27</sup>

Returning to the table of contrasts (§5 and §6), the foregoing examples should somewhat facilitate the clarification of terms. In composed music the structure or architecture is obviously of great importance; broadly speaking, melody rests upon harmony and embellishment upon melody. For example, to the extent that an artfully embellished melody inhibits the tendency toward an expected harmonic resolution, we have embodied meaning. Furthermore, retention is important, for to

understand properly a variation or deviation one must remember the theme or norm; it pays to know the score.

In improvised music, the fitting analogy is not to a building but to a train (or the above mentioned river): "Swing is possible . . . only when the beat, though it seems perfectly regular, gives the impression of moving inexorably ahead (like a train that keeps moving at the same speed but is still being *drawn ahead* by its locomotive" (Hodeir, p. 198). To the extent that the rhythms conflict with or "exhibit" the pulse without destroying it altogether, we have engendered feeling, and for a solo to grow the feeling must accumulate. Pursuing the contrast, it pays to keep careful track of the pulse.

Finally, to comprehend syntax thoroughly it is necessary to focus on the vertical dimension, to examine the constituent notes of each chord, to be able to distinguish the various architectonic levels at any point in the progress, to delimit the range of melodic variations possible over a given ground bass. Something approaching complete comprehension of the processual aspect will only be possible when we are able to determine accurately the placement of notes along the horizontal dimension. Where is each musician placing his notes in terms of the subjective pulse? This is a difficult question to answer, but some progress might be made by gathering together a group of competent musicians and asking them to match their perceptions and intuitions with respect to a given rhythm section stimulus. Although the thought is somehow distasteful, it may be that instruments something like the melograph or the device used by A. M. Jones<sup>28</sup> can be used to measure objectively the tensions between the attacks of drummer A and bassist B. How far can the beat be laid back, or is this phenomenon some sort of illusion? Quite obviously our explorations of this processual nexus have hardly begun.

A section of Meyer's text provides a good introduction to contrasts ¶7 and ¶8.

A sound or group of sounds (whether simultaneous, successive, or both) that indicate, imply,

or lead the listener to expect a more or less probably consequent event are a musical gesture or 'sound term' within a particular style system. The actual physical stimulus which is the necessary but not sufficient condition for the sound term will be called the 'sound stimulus.' The same sound stimulus may give rise to different sound terms in different style systems or within one and the same system (Meyer, 1956, pp. 45 ff.).

Meyer goes on to develop a language analogy—the meanings a word may have in different contexts, the meaningful relationships between sentences in a paragraph, and so on—but a stricter analogy to linguistics can be made with equal or greater profit, for Meyer's "sound term" corresponds quite closely to the notion of a morpheme, and a sound stimulus seems clearly to be on the phonemic level: notes may be considered as phones, and so forth. This analogy could be carried further, but I think the suggestion, made often before, that musicologists primarily concerned with syntax might add considerable rigor and new insights to their studies by collaborating more closely with linguists should be taken seriously. On the processual side, a kinesic analogy can readily be made, and it is with the researchers exploring this field that collaboration may be of inestimable value. Birdwhistle,<sup>29</sup> Hall,<sup>30</sup> and others have demonstrated that a vast amount of communication is non-verbal, bodily and largely unconscious. The problems they deal with in segmenting a continuum of body movement into significant units on the general linguistic model—kines, kinemes, and gestures—are very much like those faced in a processual analysis of music. When a man winks while gazing at a pretty girl, is he attempting to cope with a piece of dust in his eye or making a pass? The answer depends upon what happens next. Similarly, when a jazz saxophonist comes up with a triple forte screech, is he having reed trouble or is it the climax of his solo? Only the gesture's place in the overall process can determine the answer. This illustration is gross and subject to distortion but suggestive, I think. The analogy between music and both kinesics *and* linguistics may be confusing at first, for while in face-to-face interaction a wink is a wink and a

word is a word, in music the same note or set of notes may be both a "sound term" and a "sound gesture." I am insisting on this relatively abstract distinction, for in jazz, it seems to me, the net effect of an entire piece may focus on one or two significant gestures; indeed, a vital drive may be seen as a device for holding our attention and increasing our involvement so that a single phrase that is "weighted just right" will have maximum impact, e.g., a good "break" in the earlier jazz styles, the few seconds of "squatting and tooting" that inevitably climax one of John Coltrane's half-hour solos, the soloist whose phrasing is consistently behind the pulse and then for one dramatic instant squarely on top of it. The "gesture" suddenly bursting forth from the midst of "process" may be something of an illusion for in some instances, e.g., those in which the jazzman is more of a stylist than an innovator, it may be possible to show how an apparent bolt from out of the blue has actually been prepared for syntactically by the improviser. In general, however, an analyst who attempts to cope with the sound and fury of a contemporary jazz solo (e.g., one by Cecil Taylor, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman) in purely syntactic terms will be forced to quit in frustration; there is little in the way of a consistent terminology to be grasped and the usual criteria of clarity, unity, order, are largely irrelevant. Careful, even microscopic, observation of the movements associated with the music-making, particularly the motions of those entrusted with the creation of vital drive, paying attention to the manner of phrasing used by each participant, noting the characteristic "sound gestures" of the soloist, in short, employing the processual approach advocated here with as much precision as our elementary knowledge allows, will lead eventually, I hope, to more intellectually and emotionally satisfying results.

If the primitive theory that I have attempted to evolve here has any validity, it follows that we must be willing to employ two sets of criteria in evaluating music, depending upon whether the processual or syntactic aspect is dominant. In classi-

cal Indian music, to use a difficult example, syntactic criteria seem most applicable to the initial phases of a raga's development, whereas the accelerating rhythmic interplay between sitar and tabla during the concluding portion calls for a processual evaluation.

In order to specify more concretely the relevant criteria for processual music a discussion of gratifications seems unavoidable. In one sense, there are certain obvious parallels to be drawn from Meyer's discussion of value in music wherein he bestows the label *masterpiece* upon those works in which resistances, uncertainties, tensions, and the overcoming of obstacles manifest themselves most markedly; in good music, if I may paraphrase Meyer, resolutions must be anticipated and patiently awaited, gratifications must be deferred. His citation of Robert Penn Warren's definition of a good poem is apt: "A poem, to be good, must earn itself. It is a motion toward a point of rest, but if it is not a resisted motion, it is a motion of no consequence."<sup>31</sup> In syntactically organized music the points of rest are largely harmonic and the resistances and uncertainties are the product of melodic elaborations, usually reinforced with rhythmic deviations, to be sure. On the processual side, the pulse provides the resting points and the rhythms (in the sense not only of syncopations but of note placement), the resistances. There are at least two levels of feeling to be distinguished, for to the extent that vital drive is constant throughout, as it usually is, the resting point is reached only at the conclusion of the music, while the soloist "landing on" the pulse at scattered intervals can release some tension at points within the piece as well. In improvised music uncertainty would also seem to be more of a constant; you never know from one performance to the next what shape a solo will take or when the significant gestures will emerge. Paralleling Meyer then, the greater the processual tension and gestural uncertainty a jazz piece has the higher its value.

In an important sense, however, music which has engendered feeling rather than embodied meaning as its primary

goal also stresses immediate gratifications to the detriment of delayed or deferred satisfaction. Somewhat paradoxically, I must admit, the pulse-meter-rhythm tensions of jazz are immensely gratifying, even relaxing<sup>32</sup> in themselves, in a way that extended arpeggios in composed music are not. To the extent that you feel like tapping your foot, snapping your fingers, or dancing, gratification is also constant, and when a jazz fan does not feel like doing this, he begins to question the merits of the group that provides the stimulus. Similarly when a jazz buff wants to convince you that a particular performer is great, he is likely to point to a single gesture or a portion of the music in which the musician is playing with the pulse in a particularly perverse manner, asking simultaneously, "Isn't that bit a gas?" To exaggerate slightly, a classics fan will wait respectfully until the piece is finished or, better still, put a score in your lap and ask "Do you see how beautifully it all fits together?"

In music where good process and spontaneity are the avowed goals it seems unfair if not ludicrous to frame an evaluation exclusively in terms of coherent syntax and architectonic principles. Meyer's remarks with respect to this problem are particularly pejorative and reveal a rather restricted view of Freud that, as Meyer himself admits, borders on the puritanical. For example,

The differentia between art music and primitive music lies in speed of tendency gratification. The primitive seeks almost immediate gratification for his tendencies whether these be biological or musical.

Or,

One aspect of maturity both of the individual and of the culture within which a style arises consists then in the willingness to forego immediate, and perhaps lesser gratification, for the sake of future ultimate gratification. Understood, generally, not with reference to any specific musical work, self-imposed tendency-inhibition and the willingness to bear uncertainty are indications of maturity. They are signs, that is, that the animal is becoming a man. And this, I take it, is not without relevance to considerations of value (Meyer, 1959, p. 494).

In Meyer's defense it must be added that

by primitive he means music that is dull syntactically, that is repetitive, cliché-ridden, of small tonal repertoire, etc.,<sup>33</sup> and not necessarily the music produced by non-literate peoples. Nevertheless, such statements are first of all rather silly from an anthropological perspective, for every culture demands varying sorts of conformity, toleration of uncertainties, and deferment of gratifications from its members; these demands are no greater for participants in our civilization than those made upon Kalahari Bushmen, though they may be somewhat different. Second, why should we assume that immediate gratifications are evil and brutish? Meyer insists that value correlates with the inhibition of natural tendencies and the overcoming of obstacles, and for syntactic music in which intellectual control is at a premium this may be so, but what of music where inhibition itself is the primary obstacle? In our culture (and perhaps in others where hyperconformity must be fought), it may be that music whose goal is engendered feeling, spontaneity, and the conquest of inhibition is of far greater value than music which aims to reflect our civilization and the repression-sublimation-Protestant-ethic syndrome upon which it is based simply because, like much great art, it offers an antidote, a strategy for dealing with our situation<sup>34</sup> rather than reinforcement of it. I suspect as do other critics that we admire many modern painters—Picasso, Klee, Kandinsky, Miro, Chagall, Pollack—more for their sophisticated childishness than for their maturity. Many modern jazzmen, notably Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, and Charles Mingus are equally serious about being infantile. At the very least, art of this sort deserves to be evaluated by canons other than those associated with a Meyerish concept of maturity, i.e., unity, control, clarity, variety, although admittedly such general concepts can be twisted to at least partially fit music of the processual sort. In a long, involved, and erudite sequel to Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London, 1930), Norman O. Brown offers some interesting notions that may be sug-

gestive in concluding this attempted sequel to Meyer's work. Although any crystallization of his thought into a few neat slogans does Brown a grave injustice, he argues generally for release from repression, resurrection of the body, and a return to the perverse, polymorphous playfulness (and immediate gratifications) of childhood. The latter qualities of childhood alliterated so playfully by Brown (and Freud before him) strike me as a peculiarly appropriate set of criteria for establishing value, if not greatness, in jazz. Just how one goes about measuring perversity or playfulness I am not at all certain, but where process and spontaneity are the ends in view I think we must make the effort to analyze and evaluate in these terms, for as Brown notes in speaking of art: "Its childishness is to the professional critic a stumbling block, but to the artist its glory."<sup>35</sup>

Finally, I must ask myself the same nasty question that I have directed to Meyer: Will a theory based almost exclusively on one musical idiom, in this case jazz rather than classical music, have any validity when applied to the music of other cultures? I am convinced, of course, that ultimately the answer will be an emphatic Yes. My conviction rests on two assumptions: first, that the vast majority of cultures the world over have musical styles that are performance-oriented, dance-derived, and at least partially improvised; and second, that a processual methodology will be developed in the coming years so that this rudimentary theory can be tested, elaborated, and refined accordingly.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>1</sup> (Chicago, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> *JAAC*, XVII, 4 (1959).

<sup>3</sup> *Hudson Review*, XVI, 2 (1963).

<sup>4</sup> Performance and process are synonymous in the sense that the "embodied meaning" column relates to a Beethoven cello sonata while the "engendered feeling" list refers to a Casals performance of that sonata. In this light the "presentation" contrast (§2) may seem confusing, but I am arguing that in music composed for repetition, "engendered feeling" has less of a chance or, conversely, the more the music is left *in the hands* of the performer (impro-

vised), the more likely it is that "engendered feeling" aspects will prevail.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Held and Sanford Freedman, "Plasticity in Human Sensorimotor Control," *Science*, CXLII, No. 3591, 455ff.; Wilder Penfield and Lamar Roberts, *Speech and Brain Mechanisms* (Princeton, N. J., 1959); D. O. Hebb, *The Organization of Behavior* (New York, 1959).

<sup>6</sup> Barry Farrell, "The Loneliest Monk," *Time Magazine*, February 28, 1964, pp. 84-88.

<sup>7</sup> Stravinsky, quoted in Meyer, 1956, p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Burke's works are well worth reading for anyone interested in elaborating a theory of music along the lines presented here. J. L. Moreno's *Psychodrama* (New York, 1946) is also recommended in this connection, especially for its treatment of spontaneity.

<sup>9</sup> John Blacking, "Some Notes on a Theory of African Rhythm Advanced by Erich von Hornbostel," *African Music*, I, 2 (1955), 12-20.

<sup>10</sup> Erich M. von Hornbostel, "African Negro Music," *Africa*, I, 1 (1928). Reprint from International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, *Memorandum* IV, pp. 1-35.

<sup>11</sup> Bill Evans, "Improvisation in Jazz," liner notes to *Miles Davis: Kind of Blue*. Columbia Records LP-1355.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Bley, "Paul Bley" interviewed by Don Heckman, *Downbeat Magazine*, March 12, 1965, pp. 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence* (New York, 1956), pp. 195-209.

<sup>14</sup> "Etude sur la musique de jazz," in *Jazz Hot* (January, 1936), quoted in Hodeir, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> "African Influence on the Music of the Americas," in *Acculturation in the Americas*, ed. Sol Tax (Chicago, 1952).

<sup>16</sup> Marshall W. Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (New York, 1956), Mentor Paperback, pp. 11-14.

<sup>17</sup> Although not concerned with vital drive or swing per se, Hornbostel and Blacking justly place strong emphasis on attack.

Hornbostel states: "African rhythm is ultimately founded on drumming. Drumming can be replaced by hand-clapping or by the xylophone; what really matters is the act of beating; and only from this point can African rhythms be understood. Each single beating movement is again twofold: the muscles are strained and released, the hand is lifted and dropped. Only the second phase is stressed acoustically; but the first inaudible one has the motor accent, as it were, which consists in the straining of the muscles. This implies an essential contrast between our rhythmic conception and the Africans'; we proceed from hearing, they from motion; we separate the two phases by a bar-line, and commence the metrical unity, the bar with the acoustically stressed time-unit; to them, the beginning of the movement, the arsis, is at the same time the beginning of the rhythmical figure" (*op. cit.*, p. 26).

Elaborating upon this statement, Blacking feels that "the contrast which Hornbostel suggests is therefore not so much one of procedure as of *attitudes* towards movements and the productions of

sounds." Blacking documents this shift in emphasis by comparing the technique of a Chopi xylophone player with that of a concert pianist. "One has a similar impression of downward 'attacking' movements when one watches the performance of a virtuoso pianist.... Closer analysis of his movements will usually reveal that there is a constant lift, which makes the downward 'thrust' more of a downward 'drop.' Some piano teachers insist that all the muscular effort must be made when preparing to play each tone, so that the note is actually struck during a moment of muscular relaxation. The fingers are allowed to fall on to the keys rather than compelled to hit them: thus, contrary to what may seem natural, the louder one plays the more relaxed one is" (*op. cit.*, p. 15). The Adler system of drumming so popular with today's jazz percussionists is derived from the same foundation of note preparation.

<sup>18</sup> Characteristically, Hodeir relegates the crucial notion of attack to a footnote, i.e., "the rhythmic phenomenon is not simply a question of *time values*; the succession of *attacks* and *intensities* is also an important part of it" (p. 196).

<sup>19</sup> I am speaking here of jazz since the introduction of the "ride cymbal" during the 1930's.

<sup>20</sup> Of course, no rhythm can be notated *accurately*—there is always performance tradition which gives "life" to the notes (cf. footnote 7)—but it has often been observed that the standard notation system is particularly ill-suited to the transcription of jazz (or African) rhythms.

<sup>21</sup> In actual practice beats 2 and 4 are usually reinforced by the "chap" of the sock-cymbal apparatus manipulated by the left foot.

<sup>22</sup> *Monk's Dream: The Thelonius Monk Quartet*, Columbia LP, CL1965.

<sup>23</sup> *'Round About Midnight: The Miles Davis Quintet*, Columbia LP, 949.

<sup>24</sup> *Bohemia After Dark*, Savoy LP, MG12-17.

<sup>25</sup> *Mingus Presents Mingus*, Candid LP, 8005.

<sup>26</sup> *Coltrane: The John Coltrane Quartet*, Impulse LP, Mono-A21.

<sup>27</sup> Realizing, I suppose, that purely syntactic evaluations do not really do the music justice, this sort of criticism is also avoided and, excepting the sometimes insightful semi-sociological work of Nat Hentoff, Martin Williams, and LeRoi Jones, jazz criticism is largely in limbo.

<sup>28</sup> *Studies in African Music*, I (London, 1959), 13.

<sup>29</sup> Ray L. Birdwhistle, *Introduction to Kinesics* (Louisville, Ky., 1952).

<sup>30</sup> Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York, 1959); and "A System for the Notation of Proxemic Behavior," in *American Anthropologist*, LXV, 5 (1963), 1024-1026.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Meyer, 1959, p. 489.

<sup>32</sup> Hodeir stresses quite correctly the fact that "Relaxation plays an essential role in the production of swing" as well, although his argument that a great many Negroes are naturally endowed with "complete neuro-muscular relaxation" while white men invariably have to work very hard to attain it, leaves something to be desired (pp. 206-207).

<sup>33</sup> Even this qualified definition of *primitive* reveals the analyst's syntactic blinders; in music concerned with process, constant repetition, the use of clichés, and exceedingly small tonal repertoires can sometimes be employed to create great tension and vital drive.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. footnote 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Life Against Death* (Middletown, Conn., 1959), p. 58.

<sup>36</sup> Finally, I should like to thank Leonard Meyer (composer, critic, and teacher), Rozwell Rudd (jazz trombonist), Louis Feldhammer (a perceptive layman), and Angeliki Keil (psychologist and wife) for the comments which have helped me revise this paper and which have also been instrumental in generating an excessive number of footnotes!