enunciated above: Milton Babbitt's *Philomel*. The dramatic situation requires the soprano to take shape from her electronic surroundings, gradually turning her vocalization into articulate language as the protagonist she portrays, transformed into a nightingale, discovers her new voice. This is a voice in the process of finding itself, but once it has succeeded, there is no question as to its supremacy. So far as I know, this is the unique example of a composition that seems to create its own protagonist, who in turn creates her own song. As such it appropriately symbolizes the relationship between the vocal persona and the musical persona that envelops and includes it—between the protagonist's voice and the composer's.

5

A Lesson from Berlioz

To what extent can the concepts developed to explain the dramatistic structure of the accompanied song be broadened in order to cover purely instrumental music? In the foregoing discussion, it proved helpful to divide the all-embracing musical persona into vocal and instrumental components, but what if there is no vocal persona? Must we stop with the simple assertion that the musical persona is entirely virtual, that is, instrumental, or can we fruitfully subdivide the virtual persona? Specifically, might it not be illuminating to consider each instrument as playing a quasi-dramatic role? A piano, for example, could represent the *persona* of a solo sonata, the *protagonist* of a concerto, and one of the participating *characters* of a trio—granted that each of these must be recognized as only virtual in light of the analogical derivation of these concepts from those found applicable in a more literal sense to the voice.

At least one composer seems to have believed something of the sort. So far as I know, Berlioz never tried to expound a general dramatistic theory of instrumentation, but his treatise on the subject attests on almost every page his faith in the power and the duty of each instrument to individualize and bring to life the musical ideas assigned to it.

Here are just a few examples culled from his pages devoted to the woodwinds: "The feelings of being abandoned, forgotten, and mournfully isolated that this forsaken melody [at the end of the third movement of the *Fantastic Symphony*] arouses

in the hearts of some of its hearers would not have one quarter of their effect if it were assigned to any instrument but the English horn."[1] "The lower register [of the clarinet] is well suited, especially in sustained tones, to those *coldly threatening* effects, those dark accents of *motionless rage*, whose discovery is due to Weber's ingenuity."[2] "[The middle and higher registers of the flute] can be used for various kinds of melodies and accents, without however being able to match either the oboe or the naive cheerfulness of the oboe or the noble tenderness of the clarinet."[3]

It is little wonder that Berlioz's absorbing concern for the expressive character of the instruments should lead him to the concept of instrument as character—and that is exactly what happened. Here, for instance, is what he has to say about the use of the clarinet in its middle register: "Its voice is that of heroic love; and if the united brasses in grand military symphonies arouse us to thoughts of a troop of warriors clad in glittering armor, marching to glory or death, the sound of numerous clarinets in unison, heard in the same context, seems to represent their women: their beloved wives, their proud-eyed, deeply passionate lovers, who are inspired by the sound of arms, who sing in the midst of battle, who crown the victors or die with the vanquished."[4]

Today we are inclined to laugh at such instrumental personification as a typical excess of ingenuous Romanticism. It may therefore come as a surprise to find Stravinsky adopting a not dissimilar point of view, and in the very book that claims that "music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to ex-

1 Hector Berlioz, *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes* (Paris: Schonenberger [1843]), p. 124.
2 Ibid., p. 137.
3 Ibid., p. 154. But read further in this passage to discover what Berlioz considers the true expressive powers of the flute, as exemplified in the famous melody from Gluck's *Orfeo*.
4 Ibid., p. 138.

press anything at all."[5] In describing a lost *Chant Funèbre* that he had written to the memory of Rimsky-Korsakov, he states that "all the solo instruments of the orchestra filed past the tomb of the master in succession, each laying down its own melody as its wreath against a deep background of tremolo murmurs simulating the vibrations of bass voices singing in chorus."[6] Nor is this his only remark of the kind.

The practical results of Berlioz's dramatistic approach can be observed in the *Fantastic Symphony* and *Harold in Italy*. Despite their programs (expressly stated in the one case, implied in the other), the techniques they reveal have interesting applications to absolute music as well. Indeed, precisely because, like transcriptions, they contain a "silent" verbal component, they may help us shift our discussion from the vocal to the instrumental medium. So, before turning to the specific question of instrumentation, let us look briefly into Berlioz's attitude toward these "silent" words.

The only explicit program that Berlioz ever wrote is that of the *Fantastic Symphony*. There are two distinct versions.[7] In the earlier, the first three movements present "various situations in the life of an artist," and the last two, a dream induced by an overdose of opium. In the later version, the dream embraces the entire symphony. This modification emphasizes the fact that Berlioz's intent, even in the first instance, was not to describe scenes and incidents, but to depict his hero's reactions to them.[8] More than this, the transfer of the entire action

5 Igor Stravinsky, *Stravinsky: An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), p. 83.
6 Ibid., p. 37.
7 For the texts of both versions, together with a comparative discussion of the two, see my edition of the symphony in the Norton Critical Scores series (New York: 1971), pp. 18–35.
8 Berlioz makes this clear in a footnote to one of the early editions of the program, where he firmly rejects, for example, the "notion of painting *mountains*"

to the dream world may have been an indication of the composer's realization—subconscious, no doubt!—that the mental experiences informing his music were primarily those of the subconscious.

Berlioz's position, then, seems to be that an instrumental composition is the communication of an experience, transformed into abstract sound. A program can tell us something about the subject of that experience and the specific circumstances giving rise to it. But the experience the music records is not the event described by the program; it is the reaction of the subject to that event, a reaction that may be largely or entirely subconscious. What I call the complete persona of instrumental music is this experiencing subject.

Programs vary greatly as to the exactitude with which they identify the persona. Berlioz's lovelorn artist is a character whom we feel we know, and whose experiences we share. The figure behind *Les Préludes* is much less clearly individualized: he is Everyman, passing symbolically through the stages of life. The experiencing subject implied by *La Mer* is unspecified; he is characterized only by his reactions to varying aspects of the sea.

One principle is clear: the persona is always to be distinguished from the composer. We must recall here the difference between the John Keats who tells us of hearing the nightingale and the John Keats who wrote the poem. The same distinction applies to program music. Even if we decide that the subject experiencing "cheerful feelings on arrival in the country" is a character named Ludwig van Beethoven, this Beethoven is not the composer. He is an artistic construct—a self-portrait, as it were—through whose reactions Beethoven the composer con-

in favor of the attempt to express "the emotion aroused in the soul . . . by the sight of these imposing masses."

veys his message to us. Similarly, neither the embattled hero of *Ein Heldenleben* nor the paterfamilias of the *Sinfonia Domestica* is identical with the man who composed both works. Strauss seems to have grasped this principle imperfectly, if at all. Instead of taking advantage of the relative objectivity afforded by its exploitation, he devoted a great deal of energy to a fruitless endeavor to make us accept his own self-evaluation: to convince us, in musical terms, of his devotion to his artistic ideals and of his deep affection for his family. As a result, both works are marred by passages that are ludicrous for their bombast or their sentimentality.

Berlioz was wiser. The program of the *Fantastic Symphony* is, in its own way, just as autobiographical as those of the Strauss works, as the composer freely admitted in letters to his friend Humbert Ferrand. He wrote of a new symphony "in which the development of my hellish passion is to be portrayed";[9] later he referred to it as "my novel, or rather my story, whose hero you will easily be able to recognize."[10] Nevertheless, the hero is not Hector Berlioz but "a young musician." (So he is called in the programs; the sequel to the symphony christens him Lélio.) In choosing as his persona a figure *identifiable as* Berlioz but not *identical with* Berlioz, the composer was symbolizing—no doubt unconsciously, but nonetheless appropriately—the relationship of every composer to his musical voice. The persona's experiences are not the composer's experiences but an imaginative transformation of them; the reactions, emotions, and states of mind suggested by the music are those of the persona, not the composer.

The role of the young musician as the single experiencing subject of the *Fantastic Symphony* is clarified and strengthened

9 Hector Berlioz, *Lettres intimes* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882), p. 64. Letter of Feb. 6, 1830.
10 Ibid., p. 66. Letter of April 16, 1830.

in the second program, which envisages the entire work as a representation of his opium dream. According to the first program, the earlier movements might mistakenly be construed as attempts at objective narration of the hero's actions and states of mind; they might seem to present the hero as observed rather than the hero as observer. This would be especially true of the second and third movements, with their elements of literal description. The new program forbids us to think of the symphony in this way, for it insists that all is in the mind of the hero. The ballroom, the landscape, the piping shepherds, the thunder—what is significant is not that these are elements of a dream, but that they are all subjectively experienced. Only through the subject can we know them at all. Music, Berlioz is saying, can never hope to depict the external world of objects and events, nor should it even try to do so. Its field is the inner life of the experiencing subject. Thus, if the persona of the young musician symbolizes the composer's voice, the dream in the second program is no less than a symbol of musical content itself.

A musical composition, then, according to Berlioz, records and communicates an inner personal experience, and this is as true of a symphony as of a solo. Yet at the same time, within the complex orchestral texture of such a work as the *Fantastic Symphony* the instruments often appear to be leading lives of their own—to be speaking, acting, reacting, in quasi-human fashion; and here we return to the dramatistic concept of instrumentation that set us off on our investigation of this composer's views. For, side by side with his faith in the predominance of the musical persona, Berlioz exhibits a belief in the personality of the musical instrument. Almost more than any other composer he can convince us, not just that instruments *have* personality, but that instruments *are* personalities. One must be careful here. It is not the material instru-

ment that is personified, but the energy it transforms—kinetic into sonic—and transmits. Thus our discussion properly refers to the *sound* or *voice* of an instrument rather than to the instrument itself. But even Berlioz is not always precise in his usage, for the more correct locution would soon prove tiresome. Since the shorter version is clear enough as long as it is recognized as a convenient abbreviation, I have not hesitated to employ it.

Berlioz's complete musical persona—a *virtual orchestral persona* in this case—is thus a composite. Like the complete persona of an accompanied song, which was implied by the interaction of voice and accompaniment, this one too is an implicit persona, to be inferred from the interrelationships of its component instrumental personalities. (When the orchestra accompanies one or more voices, then the composite orchestral persona in turn becomes a component of a still more complex whole.) If we wish to think of the persona as a narrator, the instruments are characters in its story. Or if the persona is dreaming, the instruments people its dreams. The persona is in control; yet the instruments appear to move of their own free will.

Probably the most obvious example of instrumental characterization in the *Fantastic Symphony* occurs in the "Scene in the Country," where the oboe and the English horn represent two shepherds in friendly dialogue. This much we know from the program, but the meaning is made clear, by compositional devices as well: the placing of the oboe offstage; the quasi-recitative style; the antiphonal and imitative texture; the nature of the accompaniment, subdued where it is not absent altogether; above all, the return of the English horn at the end of the movement, waiting in vain for the oboe to answer its phrases. One should note, too, how Berlioz has reserved his instruments for this occasion. The English horn appears nowhere else in the symphony. Even the oboe color has been unusually

restricted in the preceding movements, appearing in pure form only in one episode and in the coda of the first movement (mm. 360, 456, 493 ff.). And throughout the third movement, after the introductory dialogue, the pure oboe color is restricted to two brief passages in which it echoes other instruments, just as it does in the introduction (mm. 67, 153-154). It is clear that the English horn and the oboe, although voiceless, assume roles as virtual characters, or, as I shall call them in order to distinguish them from actual characters, *virtual agents*. Like the characters in an opera, they must obey the formal demands of the music; but, again like operatic characters, they must appear to move freely—to compose their own parts, as it were. Here, too, the conductor is the surrogate of the composer's persona: That is, by directing the performance, he symbolizes both the composer's actual authority over the musical events and the persona's imaginary control. At the same time he must recognize the virtual agents' needs to express their own individuality. He is successful when he achieves the difficult balance between the requirements of the musical design and the instrumental agents' urge to freedom.

Unlike real characters, however, instrumental agents move on a purely musical, nonverbal plane, and they communicate solely by what I have called symbolic gestures; hence the division between the verbal-conscious and the vocal-subconscious components of the vocal psyche does not apply to them. Therefore we attribute to the agent what we deny to the character: full awareness of its musical nature and musical environment; indeed, that is all an agent can be "conscious" of, for it exists only in its musical context. Pursuing the vocal-subconscious analogy, one might say that the agent "thinks" only on the subconscious level—that the subconscious is the locus of its consciousness. (Thus we do not consider it dramatically inappropriate for instrumentalists, who personify virtual agents, to act

overtly aware of one another, or for a soloist to enter into a personal engagement, as it were, with the rest of the orchestra.)

Agents are by no means limited to leading roles; indeed, as we shall see, every orchestral instrument, at all times, either is or contributes to the formation of an agent. But only when a single instrument is individualized—when, for the duration of a movement, a theme, a measure, or only a short motif, it is clearly characterized in some way—does it become, like the oboe or the English horn of the "Scene in the Country," what I call a full-fledged *unitary virtual agent*. If such a unitary agent maintains its role fairly consistently throughout a movement or an entire work—as the solo of a concerto notably does (or, in another context, any member of a chamber ensemble)—it is a *permanent agent*. But in the course of a complex orchestral work most instruments perform shifting functions. Only from time to time will one achieve the rank of unitary agent. Berlioz often signals the emergence of such a *temporary agent*—especially when it might otherwise be overlooked—by the direction "solo." As he uses the term, it is not always to be understood in the normal orchestral sense of designating a leading solo part or melody. Instead it may indicate that the player should give special attention to a part that, although not necessarily predominant, has graduated from mere membership in the group to a more favored rank—that of temporary unitary agent.

The magical horn entries toward the end of the introductory Largo of the *Fantastic Symphony* (mm. 50 and 54) are marked in this way, and it is easy to see why they should be so designated: the horns clearly represent unitary agents here. But what of the first and second violins during the same passage? They are assigned characteristic counter-melodies in a layout obviously suggestive of a dialogue. Solo instruments performing these lines would certainly be recognized as temporary agents; accordingly, each violin section merits similar status. Although

we cannot call it a unitary agent, each section as a whole assumes the function of a virtual agent to be inferred from its unanimity of action and expression. Let us therefore call such a group an *implicit virtual agent*, as distinct from the more explicit unitary agent.

It is not feasible, even in a symphony by Berlioz, for all instruments always to realize what Elliott Carter calls their "built-in 'character-structures,'" so to speak, which can be suggestive of musical possibilities both on the level of sonority and on that of actual musical behavior."[11] Nor is it necessarily desirable. It is interesting and illuminating to find that Berlioz foregoes strict individualization when he introduces the most famous "character" in his symphony, the Beloved herself. Why does he assign her theme, the *idée fixe*, not to a solo instrument but to a combination of flute and violins? There are, I think, two reasons, one programmatic and one purely musical. In the first program, the Beloved never actually appears in the first movement—indeed, it is not clear whether she appears anywhere in the story, except in the fevered brain of the artist. In contrast to the real shepherds of the "Scene in the Country," she takes part in the opening movement only as an imagined character. At moments, however, particularly at the ends of movements, the Beloved's image seems to become clear to the hero, taking on a hallucinatory reality. At these points her theme is assigned to solo instruments—especially, as the symphony progresses, to the clarinets. (A solo clarinet depicts her, for example, at the end of the waltz and at the moment of execution. These partial statements of the theme, by the dulcet A-clarinet and the harsher C-clarinet respectively, prepare for its parody in the "Witches' Sabbath." There it is assigned first to the C-clarinet when the Beloved appears in the distance, and

11 Allen Edwards, *Flawed Words and Stubborn Sounds: A Conversation with Elliott Carter* (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 67.

to the squeaking E♭-clarinet when she arrives on the scene; it is soon doubled by other instruments as she is welcomed by the crowd.)

The musical reason for the nonsoloistic exposition of the theme is probably the more basic. The theme is not just the representation of the idea of the Beloved; it is the first subject of a sonata exposition. Hence it should not be heard simply, or even primarily, as a characteristic melody. Its line is a source of motivic material; its accompaniment provides harmonic and rhythmic connections with much that follows; even its tone-color is a subject for future development. Under these circumstances, the kind of expression called for by a unitary agent might well prove misleading. The theme is therefore stated by an implicit agent—one again implied by the unanimity of an instrumental group, this time a combination involving a mixture of tone-colors.

Berlioz called the *idée fixe* of the *Fantastic Symphony* a double one, for he thought of it as comprising both the melody and the "beloved image" it was intended to portray. The *idée fixe of Harold in Italy* is also double, but in a different way: it is both a theme and an instrument, a permanent unitary agent—the solo viola. Although the symphony is supplied with no program beyond the titles of the movements and occasional comments within them, it is almost certain that both melody and instrument represent aspects of the hero, another alter ego of the composer in the guise of Byron's Childe Harold, so perhaps we should call the *idée fixe* a triple one, since it embraces theme, instrument, and character. The theme, after an orchestral adumbration, is stated by the viola; thereafter it remains the viola's peculiar, but by no means exclusive, property. The problem of the overpersonalization of a sonata subject is avoided here, for the viola theme is announced in the introduction, not in the exposition proper. It does enter the sonata-allegro and

each of the succeeding movements in turn, sometimes stated by the viola, sometimes not; but it is always an observer, so to speak, rather than an actual participant in the form of the movement.

This twofold method of musical representation enables Berlioz to unify his symphony with a flexibility unknown to the *Fantastic*. The viola is not restricted to the theme; the theme is not restricted to the viola: the two enter into varied relationships with each other and with the other elements of the movements in which they take part. If the viola represents Childe Harold himself, the theme is probably intended to emphasize one facet of his nature, for example, his melancholy introspectiveness. But it is neither fruitful to speculate on the specific meaning of the theme nor possible to decide it. What is significant is the general principle illustrated here. The viola, like any other agent, can entertain many ideas, of which the Harold theme is one. The theme, like any other musical motif, can be repeated by one instrument after another, with or without variation, as if expressing the same idea occurring to each of several agents in turn. The analogical correlation between instrument and character is thus matched by that between musical idea and mental idea. Once more the program of the *Fantastic Symphony* furnishes a suggestive comparison. The original version explains the double *idée fixe* as follows: "The beloved image never appears before the mind's eye of the artist without being attached to a musical thought." Broadening this correspondence to fit any context, programmatic or nonprogrammatic, we might say that every musical gesture conveys an idea or image in the minds of the agent making the gesture and of the musical persona.

It is interesting to contrast what we might figuratively call Berlioz's "autobiographical technique" in the two symphonies. In the *Fantastic*, the artist-hero, although never to be confused

with the actual composer, nevertheless stands very close to him, for the artist can be identified with the musical persona of the symphony. In the later work, the distance between the composer and his representative, Harold, is much greater. The latter is not the persona of his symphony; he is a character in its implied program—the chief one, the hero if you will, but still only a character; and he is confirmed as such by being assigned one theme (among many) and one instrument (among many). Yet the symphony must not be considered as an attempt at objective narration, for, if I have interpreted Berlioz correctly, every composition reports a subjective experience. Who, then, experiences this symphony? Is it Harold himself, reviewing the scenes of his youth at some later period, or is it yet another surrogate of the composer, an unnamed persona? The music cannot tell us, nor has Berlioz revealed his intention in words. It is enough for us to realize that the programmatic technique here reveals a greater detachment of the composer from his subject, who is now treated as "he" rather than as "I." It should thus be no surprise that the composer's next symphony, *Romeo and Juliet*, eschews autobiography entirely, devoting itself instead to the exposition of a well-known literary theme, in part by frankly dramatic methods.

Harold in Italy, then, reflects the experience of an unspecified musical persona. What keeps it in the programmatic category is the fact that it is possible to fasten identifying labels on some of its virtual agents and their thematic ideas. But it is by no means necessary to do so, for the labels of a program have no intrinsic connection with the musical elements to which they are attached. Despite possible correspondences between music and program through imitative devices, coincidence of formal pattern, and agreement of general expressive character, any specific verbal formulation is bound to be largely arbitrary. Berlioz was aware of this, as he showed with respect to the *Fantastic*

Symphony when he used for the "March to the Scaffold" a movement originally designed for another context (the "March of the Guards" in *Les Francs-Juges*), and when he altered his original program. Moreover, his eventual permission to perform the symphony without distribution of the program implied that, however useful it might have been to him in forming and organizing his musical images, and however suggestive to the original audiences trying to understand his novel expressive intentions, it could nevertheless be dispensed with once it had done its job.

The concepts of persona, agent, and idea, on the other hand, are basic—and not to the comprehension of program music alone. Freed of the burden of verbal associations, they are applicable to absolute music as well. For that matter, absolute music can be defined as music in which persona, agent, and idea are verbally unspecified—and, it is important to add, unidentifiable.

It should be possible, then, to generalize the categories used to analyze Berlioz's approach to program music so as to throw light on all instrumental music. For any instrumental composition, like the instrumental component of a song, can be interpreted as the symbolic utterance of a virtual persona. This utterance may be a symbolic play, in which a number of virtual agents assume leading roles. It may be a symbolic monologue, in which a single agent addresses an audience. It may be a symbolic soliloquy, a private utterance that an audience overhears. Very likely it is a complex structure involving all these modes, which parallel the three voices Eliot found in poetry. But in every case there is a musical persona that is the experiencing subject of the entire composition, in whose thought the play, or narrative, or reverie, takes place—whose inner life the music communicates by means of symbolic gesture.

In broadening the concept of virtual agent to cover all

instrumental music, I must interpret it in a less restricted way than the above examples might imply; for I have in mind something less specific than Carter does when he speaks of the sense of instrumental personality developed during the classical period: "The sonorous characteristics and behavioral possibilities of the instruments play a role not only in that they suggest varied and distinct kinds of musical materials, but also in that they become dramatic identities that can be played off against each other in many ways and thus actually help create the musical argument itself."[12] For Carter, as, I suspect, for Berlioz, instrument *as* character depends on instrumental character. Hence Carter finds this dramatic element lacking, for example, in the relatively uniform instrumentation of the baroque. I interpret the Second Brandenburg Concerto, say, in which trumpet, oboe, violin, and flute state the same fugue subject in turn, as involving no less role playing or personalization than a Berlioz symphony or a Carter quartet. The drama is of a different kind—reasoned discussion and mutual emulation, perhaps, rather than emphatic self-expression—but it is drama nevertheless.

We have already seen how the unison of several instruments can imply the existence of a single virtual agent. The possibility of such implication, however, is not limited to this technique. Melodic doublings of all kinds, chords of uniform color, blocks of blended sound—all these can be media for the embodiment of implicit agents. Indeed, an implicit agent can be any recognizably continuous or distinctively articulated component of the texture: a line, a succession of chords, an ostinato, a pervasive timbre. It is an important part of the conductor's job to decide at every point whether a given instrument should be considered an individual or a member of such a group. As a member the instrument must inevitably sacrifice much of its freedom,

12 Ibid, p. 68.

but the implicit agent assumes a character of its own, analogous to that of a unitary agent.

Many instrumental components, although identifiable as unitary or implicit agents, are relegated to positions in the background of the musical texture, where they function as accompaniment. Under such conditions it would obviously be inappropriate for them to express their instrumental personalities obtrusively, but that does not mean that they must lack character. Indeed, one test of well-written music is the extent to which accompanying agents, while clearly subordinate, are individualized.

Agents, then, can be permanent or temporary, unitary or implicit, leading or subordinate. And every instrumental composition can be described in terms of the interaction of all its agents. Whether the work is for orchestra or for chamber group, for ensemble or for solo, intelligent performance demands that its agents and their functions be clearly distinguished.

What makes a unitary virtual agent of an instrument is its assumption of a specific role in a musical context. It is not the exploitation of its technical idiosyncrasies that turns it into a metaphorical character, but its individualization as the maker of a significant musical gesture. One obvious kind of personalization is invoked every time we refer to an instrument as "singing," and to its melody as a "voice," but this is not the only kind. A piano, which can simulate many voices; a bass drum, which can simulate none: these are no less open to personalization than the normally monophonic clarinet or horn.

As we have seen, the role playing of the unitary agent may be permanent, lasting throughout a given work; this is the case with the viola of Harold, or with the solo of a concerto. On the analogy of vocal protagonists, one might call obviously leading parts of this kind *virtual protagonists*; and indeed, the terminology is suggestively relevant to one way (although not the only

way) of listening to a solo concerto. Chamber music, too, depends on permanent characterization, although it is rarely desirable or even possible to single out any instrument as the protagonist.

Orchestral music, on the other hand, abounds in temporary agents. Some examples have already been cited from the *Fantastic Symphony*. Two more will serve to illustrate contrasting techniques by which such temporary personalization can be made effective. The recapitulation of the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony contains a famous oboe cadenza that fills in what, in the exposition, was a fermata on the dominant. Here is a perfect example of the gradual assumption of a role. A comparison of the exposition and the recapitulation of the opening theme reveals that the woodwinds play a much more striking part in the latter; here flutes, first oboe, clarinets, and bassoons all contribute to the harmonic background of the theme, in contrast to the exposition, in which only the bassoons are heard, doubling the cellos. It is from this new woodwind background that the oboe gradually detaches itself, assuming a melodic independence that flowers in the little cadenza. After its moment of glory, it returns to the background, again joined by its colleagues. Here, then, is a melodic line—a "voice"—that individualizes an instrument that has been almost constantly present but never in the foreground.

In contrast, a well-known movement by Tchaikovsky presents the extraordinary instance of a virtual agent created by the simplest possible gesture: a single sound, heard once only during the course of an entire symphony. Lacking obvious preparation and follow-up, its very isolation is a significant aspect, so to speak, of its personality. I refer, of course, to the famous gong stroke in the Finale of the Sixth Symphony. Technically, the effect is one of extreme simplicity. But once we begin to think of the gong in dramatistic terms, its role becomes bafflingly

mysterious. Was it always "there," waiting for us? Or was it engendered by the climax of the movement? Does it remain behind us as the movement continues? Or does it disappear once the energy of its single stroke is dissipated? (The hammer blows in Mahler's Sixth Symphony raise similar problems, together with an additional one: why was the third blow eliminated?) Questions like these can never be answered definitively, but every responsible performance must somehow come to terms with them.

At the opposite extreme from temporary characterization is the role of the pure solo instrument. The violin of a Bach partita, the piano of a Beethoven sonata—the agents these bring to life are coterminous with the musical personas of their respective compositions. Unlike the persona of an orchestral or chamber work, implicitly emerging from the collaboration of a number of agents, the virtual persona of a solo composition is unitary—identical with a single unitary agent. This union of virtual agent and musical persona is far closer than the corresponding relationship between vocal and musical persona in simple song, which is the nearest analogue in vocal music to an instrumental solo. There, it will be remembered, only the implicit musical persona can normally be construed as fully aware of both words and music. But the instrumental agent is imagined as existing precisely through its musical thought, and when, in a solo work, that thought is the complete composition, unitary agent and complete persona coalesce into one unitary virtual persona.

Often a single instrument—whether a solo or a member of a group—is responsible for a number of melodic lines or other musical components. In this case, the unitary agent's part, like that of a complex instrumental persona, embraces a number of subsidiary roles. Each of these can be construed as implying its own agent. Unlike the implicit agents defined earlier, which

were inferred from the unification of a number of individuals, these are inferred from the subdivision of a single individual's part. The performer on a keyboard instrument, especially, is responsible for many implied roles. An important part of his job is to decide just what, in every passage of a composition, constitutes such an implicit agent. This category should not be narrowly interpreted as including only leading components. Every note of the piece, like every instrument of the orchestra, must help define some agent, permanent or temporary. Whether to "bring out an inner voice," whether to play a passage as a melody with accompaniment or as a series of chordal blocks, whether to isolate accents or to incorporate them in a more inclusive line, sometimes even whether to play with one hand or two—all these decisions depend on an interpretation of the dramatistic structure of a piece, on an apprehension of the extent and nature of the role of each implicit agent, as much as on formal criteria narrowly defined. Or perhaps form, from one point of view, consists in the establishment and the precise definition of these roles.

A few examples may indicate how certain interpretive problems can be clarified by considerations of this kind. Why does the first movement of Beethoven's *Sonata quasi una Fantasia* Op. 27 No. 2 seem intolerably sentimental if the melody is made unduly prominent in performance? Is it not because a temporary implicit agent has been mistakenly converted into one that, by its insistence, seems permanent? Imagine the same movement transcribed for violin and piano. The violin, whether it is playing or not, is always "there"—a permanent agent. When it is silent it is resting, waiting for its next cue. The sentimental performance applies this kind of interpretation to the implicit agent of the melody. But this does violence to Beethoven's conception, according to which the melody is a temporary agent, arising out of the accompaniment and at times sinking
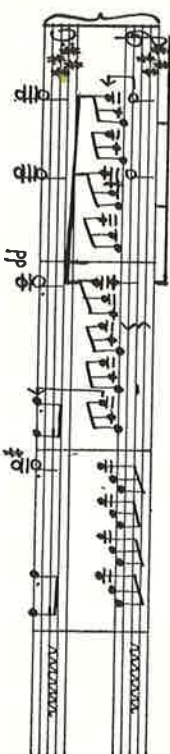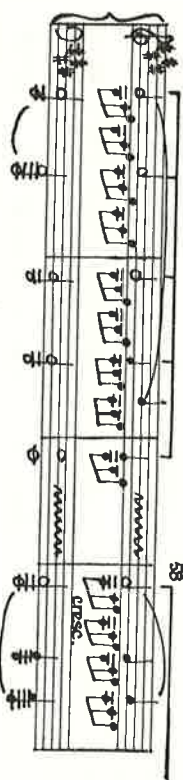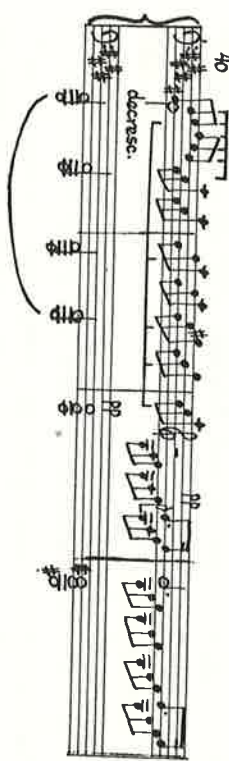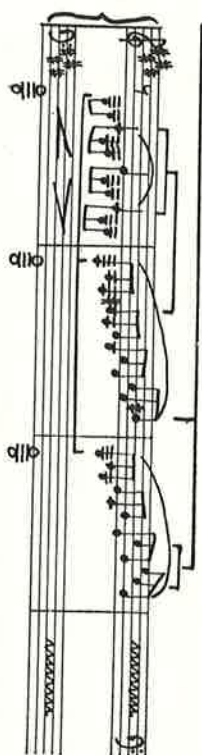
Adagio sostenuto
sempre pp e senza sordino
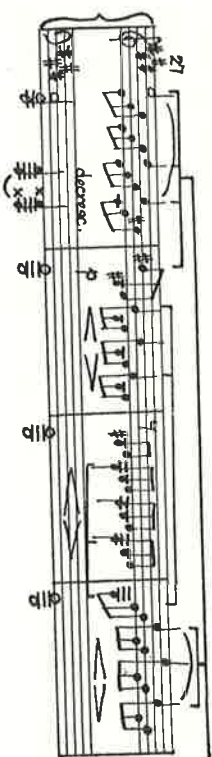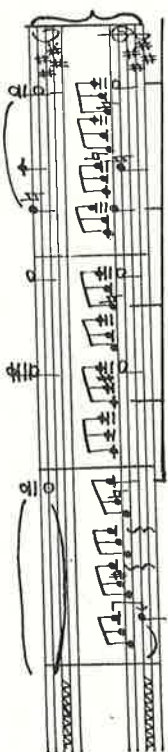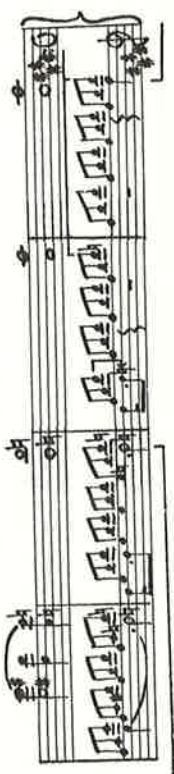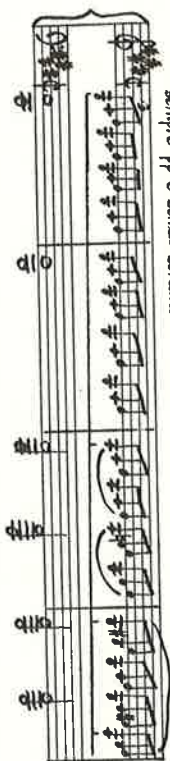
7. Beethoven, *Sonata quasi una fantasia* Op. 27, No. 2, first movement. The connecting beams suggest the way important melodic lines move from accompaniment to leading part and back again. Note especially in mm. 27–33 how the melody gradually dissolves into the accompanying arpeggios, and in mm. 40–46 how it emerges through the successive augmentations of the motif stated in triplet eighths at the beginning of m. 40.

back into it (Ex. 7). When it disappears for the last time, its motif is echoed by an inner voice, which at this point emerges to assume a temporarily individualized role. The plasticity of these relationships is vitiated if the melody—by transcription or by unbalanced projection—is allowed excessive predominance.

In contrast, Chopin's Nocturne in D-flat Op. 27 No. 2 can be fairly successfully transcribed. Its melody assumes the dominating role of a protagonist. Hence, when it is enriched by parallel thirds and sixths, the effect is not that of the entrance of a new agent, but rather of a pianistic simulation of the added opulence of double-stops on a violin.

But a succession of parallel intervals on the piano does not always imply a single agent. In Schumann's Romance in F-sharp Op. 28 No. 2 parallel thirds are consistently divided between the two hands; moreover, they are embedded in an accompaniment figure characterized by a contrary motion that emphasizes the independence of each hand—an independence confirmed by later developments in the piece. Thus the thirds are best taken as standing for not one but two agents, although some unanimity between the two is indicated by the parallelism and supported by the title.

Multiple stops on a solo violin, for that matter, are not necessarily to be construed as contributing to the elaboration of a single agent. Contrapuntal part writing, as in many movements by Bach, usually suggests two or more implicit roles. An especially interesting passage, where subsidiary agents implied in this manner assume full instrumental individuality, is found in Stravinsky's Violin Concerto. At one point in the last movement the solo violin embarks on several measures of two-part counterpoint, naturally rendered by double-stops (rehearsal no. 116). Here the polyphonic writing clearly implies two agents, and as if in fulfillment of this implication, another solo violin (drawn from the orchestra) takes over one of the melodic lines

(no. 117). The new agent's job is finished when the coda begins, *subito più mosso*, so it vanishes—ostensibly into the original solo part, actually into the violin section of which it is a member. An understanding of the way this role emerges, as if graduating from the imagination of the protagonist to achieve independent existence, is essential to its intelligent performance.

There are no rules to determine just which components and combinations should be considered as implying virtual agents; the decision in every case must be made according to the musical context. Sometimes, particularly in chamber music, the requirements of an implied role (for example, a melodic line) come into conflict with the demands of an individual agent for recognition. The resulting tension is often a source of great musical interest. To see a few of the ways that Beethoven exploits this tension in his late quartets, look, in Op. 130, at the end of the Alla danza tedesca, and at the interplay between the two violins in the Cavatina; in Op. 131, at the theme of the variations, and at the pizzicato transition that leads into the recapitulations of the Scherzo; in Op. 133, at the sections marked "Allegro molto e con brio." In each of these cases the principal melodic line moves from one instrument to another, temporarily creating what might be called a *simulated virtual agent*, an effect necessarily at odds with the permanent instrumental characterization. A development of the same technique underlies twentieth-century *Klangfarbenmelodie*.

The tension between melodic line and instrumental individuality is also involved—less overtly, but no less surely—in orchestral doubling and sectional reinforcement. When a line is assigned to a string section, or to several wind instruments, or to any other unison or octave combination, we almost automatically assume what I have hitherto implied: that a completely uniform effect is intended. Actually, in every case we should ask to what extent each member is to be considered as a

dramatic individual, and to what extent a mere component of an implicit agent. More frequently than we might expect, something akin to the multiple persona of the chorus functions in orchestral music. A multiple agent of this kind, rather than the implication of an individual agent, may often be what Berlioz has in mind when he puzzlingly designates an entire string section as "soli." The pizzicato contrabass interjections that underline the pauses in the opening theme of the Largo of the *Fantastic Symphony* (mm. 12 and 14) might profit from such an interpretation, which could lead to a livelier performance than one based on the assumption that a single agent is implied. And certainly the humor of the trio section in the third movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony depends on the effect of a number of contrabasses and cellos scrambling to keep their part in the fugato up to tempo. (Contrast this passage with the recitative for the same instruments at the beginning of the Finale of the Ninth Symphony. Here they evidently imply a single virtual agent—since it is to be transformed, in fact, into a single actual character.)

More complex doublings sometimes suggest that we are meant to be acutely aware that more than one kind of instrument is playing a single melody. The extraordinary octave combination of solo violin, oboe, and horn that Brahms introduces in the recapitulation of the Andante of his First Symphony (mm. 90–98) has been criticized for failure to blend; but doesn't the subsequent independence of both the horn and the violin indicate that the composer wants us to be aware of their individuality all along?

In general, however, the use of doubled and multiple parts tends toward implication of roles. Lines so performed are bound to be less personal to the individual performer, but by the same token they can appear to express the complete musical persona more directly. Instrumental music expresses the complete per-

sona more immediately than song, which communicates primarily through the vocal protagonist; in the same way music largely dependent on implied roles expresses the complete persona more immediately than music in which individual instruments retain the status of unitary agents. It is no accident that the nineteenth century saw the rise both of the symphony orchestra and of the solo piano, for both impose a style of composition rich in the implication of roles. In each, a single figure—the pianist or the conductor—represents the persona directly and visibly.

It is thus important to preserve in performance the solo or ensemble character of every component. To assign the Third Brandenburg Concerto to a body of symphonic strings, to transcribe the *Grosse Fuge* for string orchestra, to subject the winds of a classical symphony to indiscriminate doubling—such practices basically alter the expressive meaning of the music. The work thus produced may be a good one, but it is a new work. Compare, for example, Webern's Five Movements for String Quartet Op. 5 with his arrangement of the same work for string orchestra. In the latter, delicacy of individual characterization is necessarily sacrificed in favor of overall sweep and pervasive atmosphere.

In considering the relationships between instrumental agents and the players who bring them to life, one must never forget that the agents are, after all, only virtual. They are not embodied by their performers as vocal personas are. The instrumental performer, too, is in part an actor, but one that *symbolically personifies* the agent of which his instrument in turn is but the concrete vehicle—for, once more, the instrument as sound, not as object, is the locus of the agent.

It follows that a player, unlike a singer, is rarely to be thought of as composing his part. As I put it before, in con-

nection with the instrumental accompaniment of song, the music should give the effect of composing itself *through* the player. This phrase can now be expanded: the effect of composing itself through the player by means of an instrument. In a chamber work, for example, each agent is to be conceived as composing—experiencing, living through—its part under the guidance of the implicit persona, the central intelligence in whose mind all the agents subsist as components. What the performer does is parallel, but by no means identical. His task—as mind, that is, not as muscle—is to *think through* his own part in relation to all the others, and to the whole. Because of this close parallelism he becomes a symbolic personification of the agent.

I might just as well have said: the music should give the effect of composing itself through the instrument, by means of the player. For once the relationship of performer, instrument, and agent has been clearly established, it is unnecessary—indeed, hardly possible—to make a hard and fast distinction between performer and instrument. Whether one thinks of the performer as the motive power of his instrument, or of the instrument as an extension of the performer, for musical purposes they are almost as indissoluble as a singer and his voice. This is, in fact, the way we tend to think of a good performance: as the achievement, not of a musician or of an instrument, but of a compound creature, the musician-cum-instrument.

If good performance is inspired and controlled by the concept of the complete persona, it is no less an awakening of that persona. An instrumental persona, like its component agents, is actualized only through instrumental sound. Sounds are not a means of mediation by which we are enabled to hear music; they constitute the reality of music, and they effect the realization of its persona. The persona of a composition for a single instrument is *symbolized* by the musician-cum-instrument, but it

is *realized* in the voice of that instrument. The persona of a violin partita is a violinistic persona; the persona of a piano sonata is a pianistic persona. And the persona implied by a combination of instruments is realized in the sound of the combination.

The voice of an instrument is not to be narrowly construed as an abstract or ideal sound; it is the actual sound as conveyed through the mechanics of an instrument by the energy and dexterity of a player, and its character depends on the potentialities and limitations thus defined. Instrumental technique, that is to say, determines the nature of the persona to the extent that it defines the possibilities available to it. The positive content of instrumental virtuosity is to be understood in these terms. If we interpret a passage like the end of the second movement of Schumann's Fantasy Op. 17 as the pianist's struggle against the limitations of his instrument, we are endowing the composition with a spurious human protagonist to be portrayed by the musician. If we think of the performance as an extraordinary achievement of muscular coordination, we turn the performance into an athletic event. But if we regard the coda as the gesture of a pianistic persona that adopts extreme methods in order to express extreme attitudes, pushing musician-cum-instrument to unprecedented efforts, the virtuosity required for its realization becomes a symbol of the strenuous musical content. In contrast, music in which the effort required is not matched by a corresponding content does produce an empty display of pure athleticism.

There is a supposed category of abstract compositions, conceived for no specific instrument or instrumental combination, and even supposed to deny the necessity for such material aids to realization. *The Art of Fugue* is sometimes held to typify an ideal music of this kind, for which mere physical sound is only an approximate exemplification. Now, it may be possible in the

realm of Platonic Ideas to conceive of sounds that possess pitch but lack color; nevertheless, it is difficult for a mundane intelligence to understand how. If *The Art of Fugue* is to be apprehended as music, even in the imagination of a gifted score reader, it must be heard or thought of as a series of tones. Tones, whether real or imaginary, are necessarily associated with wave forms, and wave forms produce the effect of timbre. Thus, even if *The Art of Fugue* were indifferent to instrumental realization, that would not mean that the work could dispense with such realization. It would imply rather that the formal and expressive values the music incorporates are not closely associated with any specific instrumental characteristics and are hence to a certain extent independent of them. Actually, recent scholarship strongly supports the theory that the entire *Art of Fugue* was designed as a keyboard work.[13] If this view is correct, then the nature of the persona, if not uniquely designated (harpsichord, organ?), is nevertheless clearly defined in instrumental terms.

If we wish to find compositions that obviously permit a variety of realizations we should look in the literature of the sixteenth century—at Giovanni Gabrieli's canzonas, for example. Yet even here the choice of instrumentation is not unlimited. The musical values of, say, the first of his *Canzoni per sonar a quattro* ("La Spiritata") would hardly be preserved in an arrangement for vibraphone, ukulele, chimes, and contrabass—or, it might be added, in a version along the lines of Webern's idiosyncratic transcription of the six-part ricercar from *The Musical Offering*. For the style of any music tells us a good deal about the virtual agents required to project the characteristics of its persona. Thus our canzona suggests a performance by four instrumental voices, all capable of sustaining lively and

13 See, for example, Heinrich Husmann, "Die 'Kunst der Fuge' als Klavierwerk," *Bach-Jahrbuch* 35 (1938), 1–61.

emphatic melodic lines, mutually balanced in dynamics, and probably not greatly differentiated in tone-color. A setting that observes these limits will allow the persona to speak; one that violates them will inhibit it.

The canzona could be performed, then, by a brass quartet—to mention one group that meets the persona's requirements. But it could also be played by a full brass choir, or by a string orchestra, or by a single organ. We accept it as the same composition, regardless of whether it is performed by one instrument, or four, or many, because we recognize that its form depends on the interplay not of instruments but of instrumental voices. These can be assigned equally well to unitary agents or to agents implied by string sections or by keyboard lines. Gabrieli's persona in this case might be considered as indeterminate, since it does not call for a specific set of virtual agents; but it is not abstract. Its musical thought must still be communicated through instrumental sound, actual or imagined.

In sum, the concept of the complete musical persona must be as multifarious as that of musical composition itself. The persona may be unitary, as in a piano solo; or it may be implied, as by a group of instruments. It may combine verbal and musical components, as in song; or it may be entirely virtual, as in instrumental music. It may be well defined or relatively indeterminate. It is to be posited as an intelligence embracing and controlling all the elements of musical thought that comprise a work. These elements subsist in its consciousness, which is in turn awakened by the performance (in actuality or in imagination) of the gestures that express them.

Look once more at our readings of "Erlkönig," from yet another point of view. If the five voices of d suggest the component strands of a complex composition, then let a stand for the unification of them all under the control of the complete persona. And as the poetic persona expresses itself through the

narrative-dramatic line of the entire poem, so the musical persona is implied, not by any single component or progression, but by the interaction of all of them, by the comprehensive line of the whole. Above all, the persona is realized in the total rhythmic life of the composition, for the composite rhythm, more than any other musical element, controls the interrelationships of all motifs and progressions.

Sometimes the complete persona is summed up and visually represented by a single figure: the piano soloist, the conductor. Sometimes, as in a concerto or a song, there is a protagonist whose point of view offers us a mediated approach to a comprehension of the full persona. Sometimes, however, as in chamber music, the persona can only be inferred from the interaction of equal agents. The instruments, so to speak, evoke a subtle but discernible presence through their communication with one another—a communication for which the proper metaphor often ought to be "thinking together" rather than "talking together." That is why at a good chamber recital one frequently has the feeling that one is overhearing the players, who in turn symbolize the persona communing with itself. Here, certainly, we find examples of Eliot's private poetic voice as applied to musical composition. (An intimate solo performance can sometimes produce the same effect.)

Tape-recorded electronic music goes even further than chamber music in its lack of a single, easily comprehensible analogue of an often subtle and complex rhythmic structure, for it dispenses with the visual component altogether. Sometimes it is said that electronic music dispenses with the performer; sometimes, that it depends on a single ideal performance by the composer himself. But if it does, what we hear is not the performance; that was completed with the preparation of the master tape. What we hear is a reproduction, a recorded instance of that performance. The effect is not of the composer performing

---

the music, but of the music performing itself. Hence there is wisdom in David Lewin's remark: "It is . . . improper to say that a composer 'performs' his own electronic piece; rather he executes it, as a painter executes a painting."[14]

Agents, both unitary and implicit, may seem from time to time to take part in the progress of an electronic piece, but they are simulations: no instruments or performers are really there. The electronic persona is unitary, and it is uniquely embedded in and embodied by a single performance (or execution) of its music—a characteristic that it shares, amusingly enough, with the pieces Haydn and Mozart wrote for mechanical organs. (It may also be one that it shares with recorded performances of conventional compositions. When we listen to a recording what we hear is not a performance but the recorded instance of one. We should never forget this, even though we may not be prepared to admit that recorded "voices" and "instruments" are not real voices and instruments, but simulations.)

Some contemporary music—electronic or conventional—is so kaleidoscopic in timbre and pointillistic in texture that a dramatistic analysis would be hard put to find in it more than a rapidly shifting series of temporary agents, simulated or real. In this case it might be preferable to dispense with the concept of agent altogether and to hear the piece only in terms of the complete persona, which must marshal all elements, no matter how disparate, into some kind of comprehensible pattern if the music is to make sense. In music of this kind, certain tone-colors and textures may function as ideas rather than characterize agents. (I find it illuminating to listen to portions of Stravinsky's *Movements* and *Variations Aldous Huxley in memoriam* with the latter possibility in mind.)

Another extreme is exemplified by those avant-garde works

14 David Lewin, "Is It Music?", *Proceedings of the First Annual Conference of the American Society of University Composers* (1966), 50–51.

in which the histrionic element is so strong that the instrumentalists have become full-fledged play actors. For in these productions, which are properly speaking dramatico-musical rather than musical, they no longer symbolize virtual agents but portray characters. True, as characters they may be called upon to play their instruments; their real job, however, is not the playing but the impersonation. For as characters they are likely to have to do a number of things besides simply playing: to improvise, to record their own performances, to play against recordings of their own performances, to use their instruments for unusual purposes, and to do things completely unrelated to their musical abilities. Whether an implicit musical persona can take shape at all under such circumstances is doubtful.

Much contemporary music, however—even much electronic music—still depends on the joint continuity of line and timbre that I have discussed in terms of virtual personalization. This locution may seem only a more colorful way of talking about musical progression; even so, its use may demonstrate that in music, as in any art, formal and expressive concepts are not separable but represent two ways of understanding the same phenomena. For the sense of progression that animates persona and agent, and allows us to follow their fortunes, is the same sense of progression that underlies our comprehension of musical form.

At the same time, we must not forget that music consists of motif as well as progression, and dramatistic analysis may prove especially helpful in clarifying relationships between musical motifs and the larger forms to which they contribute. I have suggested that a motif is a gesture conveying an idea or image in the "mind" of an agent. But the idea is equally in the mind of the complete persona, as everything in the composition must be. In song, the situation may be more complex still, for a musical idea may often be taken as representing the subcon-

scious component of a vocal character's thought, even when that idea is instrumentally voiced. Such motifs may thus have a triple significance—for the character, for the instrumental agent, and for the complete musical persona. This is especially true of Wagnerian leitmotifs, which, contrary to common opinion, seldom represent persons or objects—except when they imitate sounds like Siegfried's horn. Usually a leitmotif corresponds to a character's unspoken attitude toward himself, another character, an object, or a situation. It presents a mental, not a physical image. Often the clearer such an image becomes—the closer a character comes to a conscious realization of its full import—the firmer its instrumental characterization becomes. Note, for example, how the "gold" motif—which, by this account, represents not so much the Rhinegold itself as its effect on others—moves from the tentative dominant of the horns to the definitive tonic of the trumpet as the treasure gradually reveals itself to the Rhinemaidens and Alberich (and to the audience) in the opening scene of *Das Rheingold*. The motif belongs, as it were, to the trumpet, and it is always announced by the trumpet when its significance is to be most immediately and vividly appreciated.

The investigation of the relationships between musical agents and the ideas they entertain often suggests a kind of "abstract program." In fact, it is usually a pattern of this kind, derived by analogy from a verbal program, that constitutes the musically relevant aspect of the latter. But the same kind of abstract program can be found underlying absolute compositions as well. Thus, in the traditional analysis of fugue, the use of the terms "subject," "answer," "exposition," "discussion," and "summary," suggests the model of a conversation on an announced topic. Among sonata-related forms, the solo concerto especially cries out for dramatic interpretation, for it displays attitudes on the part of the protagonist and the orchestra

that vary from mutual support to downright opposition. In particular, a work such as Berg's Violin Concerto, with its obvious personal references, cannot be intelligently followed without a tacit reliance on concepts that make its dramatistic structure comprehensible. Only within such a framework can one make sense of a musical design that juxtaposes original contemporary materials with quotations from the traditional literature of folk song and chorale. If one thinks of the solo violin as a virtual protagonist, one can imagine it as *listening* to the orchestra: developing the tone-row from hints thrown out by the other instruments; being reminded of the "Kärntner Volksweise" by the brasses; sharing with the woodwinds the evocation of "Es ist genug." It is not necessary, and not even advisable, to try to identify the respective roles here—as an individual and his environment, say, or as a young girl facing Life and Death. For a musician the roles "solo violin" and "orchestral instruments" are sufficiently clear, and they are much richer in suggestion than any specific programmatic interpretations. But I insist that they are *roles*. They are not mere elements of design, transformed into sound by human energy applied to mechanical contrivances; they are imaginary intelligences expressing themselves in the symbolic gestures of sound through the aid of sympathetic musicians-*cum*-instruments. The thoughts and attitudes they convey and the experiences they undergo are basically human, for in the last analysis all roles are aspects of one controlling persona, which is in turn the projection of one creative human consciousness—that of the composer.

6

Participation and Identification

Works of art that require realization in performance properly occupy an ill-defined area between ritual and game. All of them are basically dramatic, and their dramatic nature can come to full expression only when they successfully resist the temptation to occupy either extreme. True, ritual and drama probably had a common origin, but an important distinction has developed between them. Drama depends on the pretense that its characters are actually living through their portrayed experiences—ostensibly for the first and only time. Ritual, by contrast, is the frank repetition of a received liturgy; its efficacy as ritual depends on its being openly recognized and accepted as such a repetition. And at the other pole, games are forms of recreational activity whose course and outcome cannot be predicted, even (and especially) by the participants.

Today—as perhaps long ago—the tensions between these positions are often resolved in favor of the extremes. Some avant-garde theatrical productions seem to require their actors to assume the roles of celebrants rather than of characters, to recite prescribed formulas rather than to imitate actions. Other productions encourage improvised freedom to the extent that the actors (and often members of the audience as well) give the effect of participating in a rather poorly organized sports event.

Similar tendencies toward either ritual or game are discernible in certain musical manifestations today, most notably in theatrically staged multi-mixed-media presentations, or happenings, or what you will, that involve music, or sounds that,