



## The Expression of Emotions in Music

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*The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4. (Jul., 1903), pp. 412-429.

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*The Philosophical Review* is currently published by Cornell University.

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## THE EXPRESSION OF EMOTIONS IN MUSIC.<sup>1</sup>

A COLLECTION of little lines, scattered about without plan or order, is a rather uninteresting, meaningless affair ; it has no further significance, and thus it fails to arrest our attention, and sends us on to other, more interesting objects. If, however, the lines are grouped into a geometrical figure, *e. g.*, a square or an octagon, our eye lingers a moment longer ; there is plan, unity in the grouping, and we are confronted with a recognizable form. And if, finally, they are arranged so as to give a crude representation of a house, a tree, or a human being, they immediately make an electric connection with our nature, to use an expression of Professor James ; they acquire a meaning, and thus possess an interest far beyond that of the collection or the geometrical figure.

So, also, if from a distance we listen to the hubbub of noises from a busy street. At first we get merely a medley of sounds, suggestive of their various origins, perhaps, if we attend to them separately, but without any further significance. If we pick out from this auditory chaos the rhythmic clatter of a horse's hoofs, we obtain a certain individualized, ordered series of sounds, an auditory form, somewhat comparable to the geometrical figure mentioned above. If, finally, we hear somebody shout from the street, announcing some public calamity or cause for rejoicing, we immediately prick up our mental ears and strain our necks to get a glimpse of the speaker. The sounds which produce this effect also have a significance, a meaning, an important symbolic value, and it is this which gives them their firm grasp on our attention.

Poetry, painting, and sculpture deal with meanings and symbolic values like these. Their creations are enlarged and complicated cases similar to those of the crude sketch and the significant utterance. Like these latter, they represent, have meanings,

<sup>1</sup>This essay is a condensation, with certain additions, of the first two of a series of lectures on "The Meaning and Power of Music," delivered at the College for Women, Western Reserve University, during the autumn of 1900.

only their representations are more delicate and detailed, their meanings more extended and comprehensive. Even the highest creations of these arts form no exception to this rule ; the statues of Phidias, the paintings of Raphael, the tragedies of Shakespeare, all have the function of imitating, portraying, expressing, and conveying meanings, as does the crude representation or the startling announcement from the street.

What, then, is the case when we turn from poetry and the fine arts to music? If I sound a tuning fork or strike the note C on the piano, nobody will find a representative value in the tone he hears ; this tone is a mere tone, and, as such, corresponds to one of the scattered lines, or one of the meaningless sounds referred to. Even when I combine it with E and G, I am confident in asserting that the resulting triad embodies no representative or expressive value, no meaning or significance, similar to that which we discovered in the sketch or the startling announcement. It corresponds rather to the geometrical figure formed from the scattered lines : it is an auditory form, pleasing to the ear, to be sure, but without any further recognizable purport. Indeed, even when I bind together a few elementary chords in successive tone-combinations, as students of harmony do in their first exercises, meaning and significance would still seem to be lacking ; I merely get an *extended* auditory form, a *succession* of pleasant tone-combinations, similar in its members to the triad C, E, G, and with an agreeable interconnection of these members. If the triad was comparable to a regular geometric figure, the chord-sequence in question is comparable to a shifting, connected series of such figures, similar to the changing shapes of a kaleidoscope.

Now, does the matter assume a different aspect when we come to longer musical passages, worked out in greater complication and detail, or to complete compositions, like the sonatas and symphonies of Beethoven? The scattered lines and the sounds from the street assume a representative, expressive nature ; does the music in itself also become expressive of extraneous facts?

The question, simple as it seems, does not admit of a simple answer. It is a question, indeed, to which the answers have been

highly divergent, and which has formed the basis of endless controversies. On the one hand, there are the 'formalists,' headed by the brilliant Viennese critic, Eduard Hanslick, who maintain that music is nothing but a beautiful play of tones—tones which are effective solely through their formal relations, and without pointing to or imitating extra-musical realities. On the other hand, there are the 'expressionists,' who maintain that music, like poetry and the fine arts, has, in addition to its purely formal aspect, a significant content, a meaning, on which it depends for its main effect, and which raises it from the level of a worthless kaleidoscopic pastime to that of a true and noble art.

The decision between these two views, as just stated, is not an easy matter. True, if music consisted only of the isolated tones and chords, or the harmonic exercises, mentioned above, we should not long hesitate as to our decision, but should immediately take sides with the formalists. But when we turn to compositions like the Pastoral Symphony of Beethoven, with its "Scene at the Brook," its "Peasants' Merry-Making," its "Storm," and its "Shepherd's Song," in which states of mind as well as objective occurrences are so charmingly suggested; when we recall the wonderfully descriptive overtures of Mendelssohn, the vivid tone-pictures of Berlioz, the exquisite sketches of Schumann; and when, finally, we consider the masterful delineations of emotional conditions and external events throughout Wagner's music-dramas — as exemplified, for instance, in Tannhäuser's description of his journey to Rome and the "Ride of the Valkyries" — we must certainly agree that the expressionists are not theorizing on air, and that it will not do lightly to pass over their arguments.

In view of such compositions, I think we cannot help admitting that music can and may represent extra-musical things. In the first place, it is able directly to imitate certain natural sounds, such as the songs of birds and the noises of animals. Examples of this are found in Haydn's *Creation* and Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. In the second place, it may symbolically suggest and represent many physical occurrences, through similarity of motion. It can flow along smoothly, swell forth suddenly,

gently subside again, sweep by majestically, burst forth in crashes, trip lightly, rustle delicately, move hesitatingly, boldly, calmly, playfully. And through these modes of motion it is able to suggest, and in a symbolic way portray, many natural, as well as artificial occurrences and actions. It can represent the fury of the storm, the bubbling of the brook, the rustling of the wind, the rotation of the spinning wheel, the trotting of the horse, and innumerable other poetic manifestations of nature and life. Examples of such dynamic tone-painting abound throughout musical literature. The storm scene of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, the prelude of Wagner's *Walküre*, the "Waldweben" of his *Siegfried*, and all the numerous spinning and cradle songs, are familiar examples. Thirdly, since emotional states also have a sort of internal motion, which can be pictured by the musical flow, music is able to portray and give expression to them. We have agitated, calm, stormy, hurrying, hesitating, rushing, energetic, playful states of mind and soul; and these are expressible through the similar and corresponding progressions of music.

The important question now arises whether music *must* thus, like poetry and the fine arts, give expression to extra-musical facts, whether it is of its *essence* to portray and imitate, and whether portrayal and imitation are a criterion of the value of any particular composition? Here we may at once drop the first two kinds of portrayal mentioned above, those, namely, of external, material sounds and occurrences; for, although we meet with them frequently enough, they are, on the whole, of a sporadic and interspersed nature: they occur in such relative scarcity that nobody, so far as I am aware, has ever yet sought for the office and function of music in them. It is rather the portrayal and expression of emotions which has at all times been regarded as the peculiar business of music, and, in my endeavor to decide between the expressionists and the formalists, I shall regard only this aspect of the matter. I shall ask myself: Is music merely a formal play of tones, a sounding kaleidoscope, as it were, without further import or meaning? Or has it, rather, the peculiar office of representing and giving expression to the emotions?

My position in this matter is a compromise, based upon certain distinctions between the meanings of the word 'expression.' In one sense of the word, I believe the formalists are right, in the other, the expressionists ; but, on the whole, I incline rather toward the position of the formalists, whose use of the word I consider a more precise one, and one more in harmony with its use in the other arts. If we mean by 'expression' that which corresponds to the definite embodiment of ideas in works of literature, or the definite representation of forms and scenes in sculpture and painting—if we take it as approximately synonymous with 'representation,' 'portrayal,' or 'imitation'—then I should say that the formalists were right, and that it was not the peculiar office of music to express or represent emotions. This is the sense in which we have been taking the word thus far, and I shall adhere to it for the time being, postponing a consideration of its other meanings until later. My contention will then be, that it is not of the essence of music to express emotions, that it need convey no meanings, and that its effectiveness, so far as apparent,<sup>1</sup> flows entirely from the mere tones by themselves and their combinations.<sup>2</sup>

In support of my view, I think it can be shown, in the first place, that there are innumerable compositions, many of them even masterpieces, in which we can detect no expression of feelings whatsoever, or in which such expression is not at all clearly evident. As Gurney says, "The great point, which is often strangely ignored . . . is that *expressiveness* of the literal and tangible sort is either *absent or only slightly present* in an immense amount of *impressive* music ; that to suggest describable images, qualities, or feelings, known in connection with other experiences, however frequent a characteristic of music, makes up

<sup>1</sup> I am careful to say, 'so far as apparent,' because the charm of music, although seemingly residing in the bare musical forms, might nevertheless be due to the hidden, unapparent relations of these forms to extra-musical things. The forms might, for example, be representative of the world-will, as Schopenhauer has suggested, and might owe their charm to this fact.

<sup>2</sup> I do not, of course, claim originality for all of the succeeding arguments, which have already for the most part been brilliantly stated in the pages of Hanslick and Gurney. All that I claim is to have clothed them in somewhat different terms, and to have brought them forth in new shapes and combinations.

no inseparable or essential part of its function ; and that this is not a matter of opinion, or of theory as to what should be, but of definite, everyday fact.”<sup>1</sup>

Take, for example, the *Andante* from Beethoven's tenth sonata. Surely an exquisite little piece, sparkling with beauties, in which almost every measure, like a separate gem, contains charms of its own. Yet could any one detect in it the expression of emotion ? Does the emotion lie in the first measures ? Or does it lie in the first part of the piece as a whole ; and, in that case, are the other parts mere continuations of the same emotion, or does every part express a different emotion ? Or, finally, is it exhaled by the composition in its entirety, rather than by any particular sections thereof ? For myself, I confess that I am unable to detect the expression of emotion in either the separate parts or the composition as a whole ; and yet I have frequently derived genuine æsthetic enjoyment from this composition. My enjoyment, however, was based entirely on the peculiarly musical aspects of the piece ; in hearing the same, I should, to use Gurney's words, be more likely to exclaim : ‘ How beautiful ! ’ or ‘ How indescribable, how utterly a musical experience ! ’ than ‘ How exceptionally peaceful ! ’ or anything of the sort. I enjoy the simple, delightful character of the main theme, the exquisitely appropriate changes from *staccato* to *legato* and from *piano* to *forte*, the interesting disguises of the theme in the variations, and the admirable grouping of these variations. I enjoy the music of it all, the pure music, its melody, harmony, and rhythm ; I seek for no extraneous meaning : the tones are complete and perfect all by themselves, and stand in no need of further commentary in order to thrill and satisfy me.

The same is true with many other compositions. Take Chopin's waltz in A flat major, for example, or the minuet from *Don Juan* ; take the fugues of the old contrapuntal masters, or the dance tunes of our own times : surely, it would seem somewhat arbitrary and unnatural to regard these as expressions of the emotions. Dance music may be gay in character, but we could hardly say, as a rule, that it was an *expression* of gayety : it is

<sup>1</sup> *The Power of Sound*, p. 314.

gay, but does not represent or express gayety. The main body of our enjoyment, in such music, certainly depends on purely musical elements, on the sweeping rhythms, catchy melodies, and sensuous beauty of the tones. But, as Hanslick says, in commenting on the wholesale exceptions to the expressionistic thesis: "If large departments of art, which can be defended both on historical and æsthetic grounds, have to be passed over for the sake of a theory, it may be concluded that such a theory is false."<sup>1</sup>

These considerations alone, it seems to me, would suffice for the establishment of the conclusions which I seek; but they are supplemented by others of almost equal force. Not only do we possess highly effective compositions without any recognizable expression, but we also possess expressive compositions with but moderate or little effectiveness. I refer especially to many of our operatic recitatives, which are written with a view to the faithful interpretation and support of the words, but which are often painfully tedious. I refer, again, to much of the programme-music of our own day, the avowed purpose of which is to represent and express, but which often falls far short of the excellence of the less expressive classic compositions. All degrees of effectiveness or ineffectiveness, indeed, are found coupled with expression. While expression does not necessarily point to effectiveness, however, formal beauty — beauty of melody, harmony, counterpoint, or rhythm — always does; we can always say with respect to a beautiful composition: 'What exquisite melody!' 'What rich harmony!' 'What interesting rhythm!' 'What magnificent counterpoint!' or something of the sort — but not necessarily: 'What wonderful expression!'

And, as we may have all degrees of effectiveness accompanying expression, so, to approach the question from the other side once more, we may have all degrees of expression accompanying effectiveness (or ineffectiveness). Many beautiful compositions, we have seen, are characterized by no expression whatever; but even where there is expression, it is in no constant relation what-

<sup>1</sup> *The Beautiful in Music* (translated by Gustav Cohen, London and New York, 1891), p. 43.



ever to the effectiveness. It may range through all degrees of prominence — from its most incipient and vaguest presence to the very definite and pronounced delineation of programme-music — without offering us thereby the least indication of the value of the music. We have little or no expression in many of the fugues and instrumental works of the older masters, and considerable in our modern romanzas and recitatives — and yet the former may be on a par with the latter, or even outrank them in beauty. We have more expression in Beethoven's fifth and sixth symphonies than in his eighth, and yet one would hesitate off-hand to pronounce any one of these markedly superior to the others. Marx divides music into three classes : tone-play, language of feeling (or music of the soul), and ideal representation (or music of the mind and spirit); and he places Beethoven's giant sonata, Op. 53 — the grand *Waldstein* sonata — into the class of mere tone-play, while sonatas like numbers one and two find their places under the heading of language of feeling. Yet who would for a moment dream of setting these earlier compositions above the magnificent *Waldstein* ?

In view of all these converging and mutually furthering lines of argument, it would seem as if our conclusion ought now to stand forth clearly. The whole literature of music, indeed, appears like an elaborate, systematic experiment, which demonstrates that musical beauty is not bound up primarily with the expression of emotions. This conclusion might perhaps have been arrived at even more quickly through methods of direct introspection. A careful examination of our state of mind, during the appreciation of a piece of music, would show, I think, that our enjoyment had its main roots, not in the recognition of any expression, but in the unique, indefinable, intrinsically musical qualities of the tones. The greater part of the musical beauty, from the point of view of expression, is left unaccounted for, and falls through the meshes of the interpretations. The expression becomes evident only upon the hearing of longer sections, or crops out merely at isolated moments, while the enjoyment is always present, and drops into the mind measure by measure, or even note by note. Even the most extreme expressionists, I believe, admit

that the interpretation cannot be hunted down to the individual measures and notes. Would not the conclusion seem to follow, then, that the musical beauty which adheres to the measures and notes, is not dependent on expression and interpretation?

But, pending the personal introspection which would be necessary for the establishment of this conclusion, the differences in the amount of expression which various people see in the same compositions, and the similarity of the enjoyment which may accompany all these differences, point to the same conclusion. We may have the most elaborate, minutely-detailed interpretations, on the one hand, and a total lack of all interpretation whatever, on the other, with many intermediate degrees between the two, and yet the enjoyment may in all cases be equally deep and genuine. Gustav Engel, for example, finds in the introduction to the second act of *Fidelio* the portrayal of the undeserved, severe suffering of a noble man, who, for the sake of virtue and justice, has become the victim of a villain. Hanslick, on the other hand, would probably find very little representation or expression whatever in this passage; and yet Hanslick's enjoyment is presumably just as real as Engel's. It is, of course, allowable to read meanings into music, and with some people such a procedure will cause a marked heightening of pleasure. What I maintain is that musical enjoyment is, in its essence, not dependent on such interpretations, and that it may also be reaped by those who abstain from making them.

This, indeed, is the crucial point, that compositions may be thoroughly enjoyed, not only by those who see in them the definite expression of emotions or other extra-musical facts, but also by those who regard them as purely formal combinations of tones. We may have interpretations of all degrees of definiteness—from the minutely detailed ones, similar to Engel's, through ever less and less detailed ones, down to the lack of all interpretation whatever, in formalists like Hanslick—and yet, we may venture to say, the enjoyment may be equally deep and genuine in all cases. This enjoyment can be explained just as easily by referring it to the exquisite instrumentation, the rich, unusual harmonies, the wonderful melodies, etc., as by appealing

to the emotions which are supposed to be depicted. What I mean is, that we need think of nothing but these beauties of instrumentation, harmony, and melody, as the cause of our enjoyment, without making any reference whatever to external meanings. We are, accordingly, brought back once more to the formalistic conclusion, that the expression or portrayal of emotions is not an essential function of music, and that this art is primarily nothing but a beautiful play of tones.

I would repeat, however, that this conclusion is bound up with one particular meaning of the word 'expression,' and that there are other meanings, in accordance with which it may be proper to speak of music as an expression of the emotions. It might be well to bring all the meanings together in one statement, for their better comparison and distinction. The following sentence will subserve our purpose: "The thoughts which Emerson expresses in these sentences, and which express so beautifully the underlying soul-life of the man, express much that I have often vaguely felt, but have never been able to express." In this statement there are at least three distinct meanings of the word in question.

The first meaning refers to the definite, specific thoughts formulated by the sentences under consideration, to that which they alone denote, and which perhaps no other sentences ever written precisely convey. It refers to their contents *par excellence*, to the ideas which they embody and present, as on an intellectual plate or tray, and as they are opposed to thousands of other ideas which they might possibly have embodied. Thus, if one of the sentences reads: "Self-trust is the essence of heroism," this sentence would, in the first sense of the word, express simply this fact, that self-trust is the essence of heroism, not that self-trust is not the essence of heroism, or that heroism is fine, or that two times two make four. In this sense, literature expresses or represents life; and in this sense, as we have seen, music need express nothing at all, and Hanslick is justified in calling it a purely formal art.

The second meaning, contained in the clause: "which express so beautifully the underlying soul-life of the man," does not refer

to the directly formulated content of the sentences, to that which they were *intended* to formulate, but to a secondary manifestation or side-branch thereof, to something which they exhale, as it were, and which is additional to their main purpose. It is in this sense that a man's literary or artistic taste expresses the nature of his education ; or his walk, voice, carriage, handwriting, and the like, give indication of his temperament and character. This use of the word is entirely distinct from the first. We might substitute certain other sentences for those under consideration, thereby completely changing their expression according to the first sense, and yet keeping the other intact ; for the substituted sentences might be as good an embodiment of Emerson's soul-life as the original ones.

The third meaning—embodied in the words : “ express much that I have often vaguely felt ”—differs from both the other meanings. What is here expressed was already present in the mind, although vaguely and indistinctly, and the word ‘ express ’ refers rather to its matching and reflection than to the formulation and presentation of definite new thoughts ; it refers rather to the correspondence of the thoughts phrased with my thoughts, than to their own specific content. The same sentences of Emerson might, in this sense of the word, exactly express what one person feels or thinks, and the opposite of what another feels or thinks ; and yet they would be identically the same sentences, in both cases, and would all along be expressing the same thoughts and personal traits, in the first two senses of the word.

The case of a pianist performing before an audience will also serve to illustrate the various species of expression. In the first place, the composition he is rendering may be expressive and representative of objective facts and feelings. This would correspond to the direct, specific embodiment of thoughts in the sentences above. Then, again, being selected by the virtuoso in preference to other compositions, it may be expressive of his tastes and personality—which would correspond to the reflection, in the sentences, of Emerson's nature and soul-life. And, finally, it may be expressive of the feelings of the listeners, in the sense in which the sentences are expressive of the reader's thoughts.

If a distinct designation of these various species of expression were desired, we might style the first an expression of *direct embodiment, representation, denotation, or content*. The facts expressed are represented or denoted by the words or tones, and directly held forth as their content. Three elements or factors are present in this sort of expression, two of them objective, *i. e.*, the work itself and its expressed content, and one of them subjective, the perceiving mind.

The second kind of expression, typified in the indication of the author's or virtuoso's personality, might be styled an expression of *indirect embodiment or connotation*. In this case the things expressed are not directly embodied or held forth, but are merely reflected or hinted at in a secondary, indirect manner. As before mentioned, it is in this sense that a man's footstep, carriage, handwriting, gesturing, etc., are expressive of his personality. It is not of the purpose or essence of these things to give indications of personality, and yet they may cast them off as sidegleams or exhalations. Though not *denotative*, they are *connotative* of the personality behind them. In the case of this second sort of expression, likewise, three factors are present: the expressing medium, the thing expressed, and the perceiving mind.

The third sort of expression, finally—typified in the agreement with the reader's thoughts or the arousal of the listener's emotions—may be designated as an expression of *parallelism, contagion, or sympathetic arousal*. The words or tones run along, as it were, in parallel motion with the thoughts or feelings; they form a sort of reflection of them and sympathetically awaken and nourish them. Only two elements or factors are operative in this case, instead of three: one is objective, the expressing medium or work, and the other subjective, the perceiving individual. The expressed content lies in the subject himself, instead of in the object, and the expression consists in drawing this forth and harmonizing with it, rather than in the presentation of a novel, objective content.

Now music in its entirety, like the single composition of the virtuoso, may be expressive in various senses: it may be so by denotation, by connotation, and by contagion or sympathetic

arousal ; but not all the different varieties are equally important. The first kind, as above indicated at some length, is not essential in nature ; I regard it merely as an incidental and contingent factor ; I agree with Hanslick that the intrinsic beauty of music is in no wise bound up with it, and that, while certain compositions may, to be sure, make use of such expression, great numbers of the finest works show hardly a trace of it.

The second sort of expression — by indirect embodiment — is also present in music : since everything we do or construct is capable of embodying expression in this sense, music, of course, is equally significant. But here, likewise, the beauty and effectiveness is in no wise bound up with the expression. Just as a disagreeable style of shaking hands or laughing may form an excellent indication of personality, so a mediocre composition may afford us a good insight into the nature of its composer or performer. The amount of connotative expression and the artistic excellence, in short, stand in no constant relation whatever to each other.

In regard to the third sort of expression, on the contrary, the case is different. Here I am not disinclined to agree with the expressionists, that expression forms an integral part of the very essence and purpose of the art, and that in its absence music sinks to a mere empty jingle of sounds, or to a dry and quasi-mathematic, intellectual pastime. I do not positively uphold this view, but merely grant its plausibility. Just as a speaker's peroration or poet's verse may exactly voice and match one's sentiments and thoughts, fitting them so beautifully as almost to draw them forth with magnetic force, so music, when one fully enjoys it and is completely carried away by it, might be held to elicit and draw forth the feelings, swaying to and fro with them as in a delightful dance of the soul. Every inner tension, every shade of feeling, is matched and answered by a corresponding movement of the tones. Our feeling, for instance, may be swelling with a *crescendo* ; then, just as it is about to call out 'enough !' and ask for a *diminuendo*, lo ! the tones have answered its call and the *diminuendo* has set in. Every tone of the musical progression finds a corresponding resonator in the soul, every slight-

est tendency of the soul finds firm, supporting arms in the music, which steady it and lead it to its fullest realization. Doubtless it is this arousing, furthering, and supporting of the feelings, this reciprocity of motion, this fluent 'give and take' between the feelings and the musical progressions, this delightful interplay of stimulation and response, on which the expressionistic thesis is largely based. But it is not necessary definitively to decide on the legitimacy of its conclusions at the present moment. The important thing to remember is, that there are various kinds of musical expression, and that the art of tones may very well be bound to the observance of one of these kinds, and not to that of the others.

It would be in order now, to prove that the actual differences of opinion, in reference to this subject, have had their basis in the different interpretations of the word 'expression,' and that, while one of the contending parties has upheld and the other denied the necessity of expression, both have had different kinds of expression in mind. Let us begin with the champion of formalism, Eduard Hanslick, and examine his use of the critical word. "The subject of a poem, a painting, or statue," he says, "may be expressed in words and reduced to ideas. We say, for instance, this picture represents a flower-girl, this statue a gladiator, this poem one of Roland's exploits. . . . The whole gamut of human *feelings* has with almost complete unanimity been proclaimed to be *the subject of music*. . . . According to this theory, therefore, sound and its ingenious combinations are but the material and the medium of expression, by which the composer represents love, courage, piety, and delight. . . . The beautiful melody and the skilful harmony as such, do not charm us, but only what they imply : the whispering of love, or the clamour of ardent combatants."<sup>1</sup>

It is quite clear that Hanslick is using the word in its first sense ; and the same is true likewise of that other profound and logical upholder of the non-expressive nature of music, Edmund Gurney. In Chapter XIV of his important work, *The Power of Sound*, he says: "So far we have been considering music almost

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 32 ff.

entirely as means of *impression*. . . . We have now to distinguish this aspect of it from another, its aspect as a means of *expression*, of creating in us a consciousness of images, or of ideas, or of feelings, which are known to us in regions outside music, and which, therefore, music, so far as it summons them up within us, may be fairly said to *express*.”<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the champions of musical expression, we first meet with the æsthetician, Hand. In his treatise, *Æsthetics of Musical Art*, he devotes considerable space to a consideration of the relations between music and the emotions. So far as I have read the book, I have met with no distinct and exact definition of the word ‘expression,’ but from numerous passages it is clearly evident that his conception of the same is entirely different from that of Hanslick and Gurney. “Representation and idea,” he says, “choose the words of language for their tokens, but where the feeling attains to expression without further mediation, musical sounds serve it. . . . [Music] gives only feelings and inner emotions — without signs that may be immediately associated with an idea, and not imitatively, whereby comparison may be made with an original. . . . We do not wish to perceive individual things, which, for the most part, fall to the lot of sensuous contemplation, nor does the real listener to music seek for a translation into ideas. . . . Truly, we cannot expect objective representations in music, but only inner conditions of life, and even these not in abstractions, but in immediate appearance, and for direct transmission into other souls. The excited and moved life of him who sings and produces music, propagates itself, exciting and moving, into the soul of the listener, and a more intimate conformity and blending is not possible. . . . The play of tones transplants us into the same state of feeling, and thus verifies the contents.”<sup>2</sup>

It is evident, I think, that Hand has the third species of expression in view. His remarks about the moved life of him who produces music propagating itself, exciting and moving, into the soul of the listener, and about the play of tones transplant-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 312. See also the quotation above, on p. 416.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from various sections of the translation by Walter E. Lawson, London, 1880.



ing us into the same state of feeling, and thus verifying the contents, seem to leave no room for any other interpretation. But still more certain is it, that the expression and representation he would claim for music is not of the first kind, dwelt on by the formalists. His divergence from the position of the latter is also brought to view clearly in the light of two statements from the authors before considered, the first of which is from Gurney and the second from Hanslick: "However *impressive* a phenomenon may be, . . . we have no right to call it *expressive*, unless we can say what it expresses";<sup>1</sup> and "The query 'what' is the subject of the music, must necessarily be answerable in words, if music really has a '*subject*.'" <sup>2</sup> Compare with this Hand's statements that the real listener does not "seek for a translation into ideas," and that music gives feelings and emotions "without signs that may be immediately associated with an idea, and not imitatively, whereby comparison may be made with an original," and the conviction must settle upon the mind that the two parties are disputing about altogether different things.

But Hand is not alone in his interpretation of the subject. Ambros, in his treatise, *The Boundaries of Music and Poetry*, says: "Music conveys moods of finished expression; it, as it were, forces them upon the hearer. It conveys them in *finished* form, because it possesses no means for expressing the previous series of ideas which *speech* can clearly and definitely express. . . . Now, *the state of mind which the hearer receives from music he transfers back to it*; he says: 'It expresses this or that mood.' Thus music receives back its own gift, and thus we perceive how the best intellects . . . could claim for music, as a fact beyond doubt, so to speak, the 'expression of feelings.'" <sup>3</sup>

Again, it is the third meaning of the term 'expression' on which the expressionist conclusion is based. The differences of interpretation, accordingly, seem to oscillate between the first and third uses of the word; but the second is sometimes also employed, as witness the following quotation: "The musician formulates the direct expression of man's innermost feelings and

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *The Boundaries of Music and Poetry* (translated by J. H. Cornell, New York, 1893), p. 53.

sensibilities. . . . The story of music has been that of a slow building up and extension of artistic means of formulating utterances which in their raw state are direct expressions of feeling and sensibility."<sup>1</sup> The term 'direct' must not mislead us into the belief that the author is here referring to expression by denotation; the connotative nature of the expression is confirmed a moment later, when the "dog reiterating short barks of joy . . . at the sight of a beloved friend or master," is instanced as a case of direct expression. To be sure, the author is not at present engaged in a consideration of the subject of formalism and expressionism: the quotation was introduced merely to show how indiscriminately all three interpretations are employed, and how, in consequence, misunderstandings can easily arise.

Is it a wonder, indeed, in view of the uncertain, shifting nature of the term 'expression,' that disagreements and controversies should result? And is it not evident that the variety of interpretations is, in fact, to blame for the differences of opinion? Ordinarily, of course, the use of the word 'expression' is attended by no difficulties, and there is no necessity of making its exact signification plain; but the art of tones seems to be a sort of critical region, where the various meanings diverge, and where the most various results ensue, according to our emphasis on the one or the other interpretation.

The question may now be asked: Which one of the interpretations is the more proper? To me it seems, as indicated above, that the preference should be given to the first, as agreeing most closely with the use of the word as applied to the other arts. We should hardly refer, when asked for the content of poetry or landscape-painting, to the mental and emotional states they arouse and express, but rather to the thoughts and scenes they set forth and portray. It is the absence of such a definite content in music that throws our mind over to the other sort of expression — by sympathetic arousal — and that leads us to regard music as an expression of the emotions. Poetry, likewise, might be considered expressive in this sense; the feelings it arouses, it seems to me, sway along with the words in very much the same manner in which the emotions awakened by music cling to the

<sup>1</sup> Parry, *The Art of Music* (New York, 1893), p. 4.

tones. But since poetry also has its direct, denotative sort of expression, we pay attention mainly to this, letting the other drop out of sight. If, however, instead of playing on our emotions with tales of love, war, heroism, and the like, and thus conveying definite, attention-absorbing meanings, it were to do so by symbolic means, by verses without any specific meanings, but which, nevertheless, aroused the same emotions as the representative words, some of the attention now bound to the specific content of the words would be set free, the rise and fall of the feelings in accordance with the cadences of the symbolic verses would obtrude itself, and poetry might also, like music, come to be regarded as an art which had the feelings for its subject-matter, and whose function it was to express these feelings.

And yet it would have gained this function, not by an addition of content, but rather by a loss; by the loss, namely, of those definite ideas which at present it is its function to express. Music, it seems to me, corresponds somewhat to such a denuded poetry — a poetry divested of its definite meanings and producing its emotional effects by mere symbols. If we are to adhere to one point of view, and pull together with the other arts, we are bound to say that music expresses nothing and has no contents in the sense in which this can be affirmed of the other arts.<sup>1</sup>

However, an author has the right to use his terms in any legitimate sense he pleases; and, if he chooses to employ the word 'expression' with another signification, we have no alternative but to follow him and judge of his statements from his own point of view. The important thing to establish is the fact that there *are* different interpretations and points of view, and that the differences of opinion are due to this circumstance. This, I dare to hope, has been accomplished in the preceding pages. The formalists, as we have seen, are right when they maintain that music need not be expressive in the sense of a definite portrayal or denotation; and the expressionists may be right when they insist that it shall awaken, nurture, and harmonize with the feelings, and thus express them by contagion or sympathetic arousal.

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<sup>1</sup> This, of course, forms no contradiction to the statement made above, that music can and may, incidentally and secondarily, express external things and emotions.