

SHEET 1

Guten Mittag, danke Oliver und danke für die Einladung heute. Ich werde heute in mein Vortrag Thinking about meaning in music: a history reden über die Entwicklung in das Denken über Musikalische Bedeutung die letzte circa 200 Jahren. Ich werde meinen Vortrag auf Englisch halten da ich in diese Sprache ein wenig flüssiger bin und mein Proposal auch auf Englisch geschrieben habe. Die Diskussion danach können wir gerne auf Deutsch halten.

On January 12th, 2007 world renowned violinist Joshua Bell played an unannounced impromptu concert in the Washington D.C. metro. He was dressed in street clothes and there was nothing to distinguish him from the average street musician apart from his good looks and impeccable playing. Let's take a look.

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Bell played for 43 minutes and 1097 people walked by of which 7 stopped to listen and 27 gave him a tip. He made 32 dollars and change during his performance. This experiment challenges some of our fundamental preconceptions on musical perception and meaning. Mr Bell is widely recognised as a brilliant player and the musical works he performed on this occasion have been heralded as great works of art. Wouldn't the emotional content or so called *meaning of the music* be transported to the passersby to induce some kind of effect? Or is music simply fancy wallpaper readily to be ignored? As Steven Pinker famously put it: nothing more then auditory cheesecake to be enjoyed whenever we feel like it?

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So how is musical meaning established? Anthropologist Judith Becker asserts that the meanings ascribed to music are defined by the relationship between the listener and the music. In my view several factors play a role in defining this relationship, namely:

- a. The music itself as performed and composed dictates *a broad yet limited range* of interpretation
- b. The listener interprets the music according to his/her cultural-sociological background and neurological / biological constitution
- c. The social, historical context determines what *repertoire* of possible interpretations is available to us.

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This historical, embodied complex of factors that informs our *signification* of musical practice may be described with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of Habitus. I don't want to go into the concept of Habitus but will suffice by saying that it may be understood as ,a system of cognitive and motivating structures' influencing musical practice and signification. Now we come to my point, for as Monique Scheer points out, the emotional norms in the habitus ,are informed and authorized by orders of knowledge'. In this case, what holds true for emotion also applies to ideas.

I believe the totality of ideas on musical meaning forms an order of knowledge that stands in a reflexive relationship to musical practice and production. In other words, our ideas about how music expresses, represents and contains meaning have helped determine how we give meaning to music. As musicologist Nicholas Cook states : ,Musicological knowledge can shape perceptions. ' (Cook, 2001) Now ,within these ,orders of knowledge' we find certain general patterns of change and development, which might allow for something like a history of thought pertaining to meaning in music:

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The central assumption behind my research is that in Western-European thought there is a continuous development and interrelatedness between ideas pertaining to musical meaning, many of which have shaped our historically, socially and culturally constructed expectations, emotions and dispositions towards music over the past two centuries.

Of course the broad character of this assumption needs to be circumscribed by a few reservations to define and limit the scope of my thesis. The matter of musical meaning has been a constant theme in western musical thought, however I have decided to limit myself to a period which consists of roughly the end of the 18th century until the present. Apart from the fact that a larger timeframe would substantially reduce the thoroughness and cohesiveness of my argument, this demarcation is justified by the fact that an important part of the western contemporary concepts on musical meaning were arguably formed during the last two hundred years, beginning with the so called *Sattelzeit*.

The term ‚meaning‘ in my research refers to the extramusical concepts, emotions or ideas which music has been thought to represent, express or symbolise. I find that the German term ‚Gehalt‘, as used by philosopher Harry Lehmann is similar to the concept of musical meaning I employ in my research. "Gehalt" for Lehmann is always *mediated content* that is only first made accessible through the experience and the interpretation of an artwork. It is systematically differentiated from *content or "Inhalt"* which means, for example, something that can be represented in a picture.

Finally, it is clear that musical practice, production and discourse are inextricably intertwined. This being said, although musical practice and production figure prominently in my research, the emphasis will be on the development and interrelatedness of ideas on musical meaning.

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So, why should anybody do this study? What is the relevance of my research? First to my knowledge there is no structured work describing the historical development of thought on musical meaning over the last two centuries. Secondly my study will further clarify the

premises and ideas behind our historically constructed dispositions that continue to influence our perception of music and the meanings we attribute to it. Thirdly, the role of emotion in the musical experience is central to most approaches on musical meaning. Therefore, the examination of historical and contemporary ideas on musical meaning promises to shed an illuminating light on the history of emotions. For example Cook and Dibben note that the different approaches to musical emotion: ,have helped to bring about the very responses and practices which they purport to describe.‘ A fourth dimension of my research relates to the fact that musical performances as well as intellectual debates and ideas about music are a sphere wherein political and sociological relations become visible. Music is used to demarcate and strengthen positions between and within communities that define themselves through identification with certain aesthetic principles or artistic movements (Müller, Osterhammel, 2012). Some of the concepts and ideas pertaining to musical meaning have been developed and used in precisely these kind of contexts.

A fifth relevant aspect of my study is that it will (in a limited way) address the interplay between dominant ideas on musical meaning and the actual music produced within a certain timeframe. Directly related to this is my final point that might also be seen as a part of my general assumption, namely: ideas on musical meaning and the music produced within a certain timeframe might be seen as the expression of a *Zeitgeist* or (if you will) *Habitus*. In reading the various texts on musical meaning these more general tendencies are difficult *not* to be perceived.

These *phases* in thought and musical practice often overlap and even exist simultaneously. Events that cause these structures of meaning to collide may result in conflict and force previously implicit meanings to be made explicit. I think these conflicts, sometimes the cause of social scandal, often mark the transition between one structure of meaning to the next.

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I have identified a number of such pivotal musical events or periods over the last two hundred years that will function as departurepoints for my discussion of the various concepts of musical meaning. These so-called Timeslots may in turn be divided into four

basic categories that bear as working titles the names of major cultural movements: Romanticism, Formalism, Postmodernism and Reflexive Modernity. As a kind of preface I will include a short, basic introduction to classical musical esthetics of the 18th century. Many of the events discussed were cause for scandal in their time, while a few simply serve to illustrate some of the concepts on musical meaning. I will now present to you an overview of the historical development outlined by our little mindmap by looking at the various timeslots I have identified.

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From roughly the 17th century onwards music was regarded as executing the function of what the Greeks called *Mimesis* or imitation of reality. In fact, since language seemed to be doing a much better job at this the music mainly served to illustrate the text. Music simulated or mirrored the feelings that were present in the drama. Instrumental music was considered inferior, or merely, as Kant put it ,a play with aesthetic ideas ... by which in the end nothing is thought.' (Kivy, 1993). Instrumental or absolute music was regarded as a closed system of internal reference that in itself possesses no significant meaning.

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In early romanticism the notion of music as *mimesis* is replaced with a concept of music as an expression of the Self. Musical practice becomes in part a kind of purification of the soul or what the Greeks called *Catharsis*. Often, musical romanticism is said to begin with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1811), but the development culminating in this work started with his Eroica. The Eroica premiere in 1805 provoked great discussion and marked a significant change in musical direction for Beethoven that some of his contemporaries found difficult to accept. One contemporary wrote: ‚Referent gehört gewiss zu Herrn von Beethovens aufrichtigsten Verehrern; aber bei dieser Arbeit muss er doch gestehen, des Grellen und Bizarren allzuviel zu finden, wodurch die Übersicht äusserst erschwert wird und die Einheit beinahe ganz verlorengeht.‘

Beethoven's musical romanticism is preceded and heavily influenced by *literary* romanticism. From around 1790 writing music became a prominent theme in literature as evidenced by among others the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul and W.H. Wackenroder. These works will be an important source to identify early romantic concepts of musical meaning. For example, E.T.A Hoffmann states (I believe this is in reference to Beethoven's 5th symphony) that absolute music discloses a realm *,that has nothing in common with the external sensual world that surrounds him, a world in which he leaves behind him all the definite feelings to surrender himself to an inexpressible longing.*' The expression of the Self through music is thus not limited to the expression of emotions but reveals knowledge of a world, entity or even God that cannot be expressed through any other medium. For example Heinrich Heine praised the music of the popular composer Albert Gottlieb Methfessel for being marked with the *,unnachamlichen Stempel der Wahrheit*'.

Due to this heuristical function music is assigned a spot at the top of the hierarchical order of the arts. Ironically music is granted this position thanks to the *unspecific* nature of its referential content. Whereas in classicism its lack of specificity back-benched music, in romanticism music's infinite space for interpretation made it ideally suited to fulfil its newfound metaphysical function

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The themes introduced by literary figures, philosophers, composers and critics such as Hoffmann, Schopenhauer, Beethoven and Heine form the background for many of the debates and theories on musical meaning in the nineteenth century. They laid the groundwork for new interpretations that integrated nationalist and historicist ideas and emphasised music's capacity to unite people and forge communities. For example, according to romantic musical ideology the romantic composer was connected with the larger entity of his people whose culture and spirit he uniquely expressed through his music.

It was especially the newly formed middle class in Germany that latched onto these ideas. They used romantic transcendental ideas concerning musical meaning to legitimize novel musical practices in the concert hall. For example, whereas previously the aristocracy

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was in the habit of talking loudly during performance, the new transcendental function assigned to music, demanded silence and dimmed lights as in the concert halls. These practices in fact served to assert the *Bourgeoisie* as a new superior social class and to emancipate themselves from the political aristocracy. The tamburini scandal in London discussed by Oliver in his book is also illustrative of this movement.

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By the mid 19th-century the romantic concept of musical meaning was challenged by several critics, composers and philosophers. The resulting disagreement was played out in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* and has famously become known as the ‚Musikerstreit‘.

The *Musikerstreit* took place between a ‚progressive‘ group of composers and critics from Leipzig which were called the ‚Neudeutsche Schule‘ with among its most prominent advocates Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. Wagners position is best explained by his own words from the introduction to *Opera and Drama*: ‚der Irrtum in dem Kunstgenre der Oper bestand darin, daß ein Mittel des Ausdrucks (die Musik) zum Zwecke, der Zweck des Ausdrucks (das Drama) aber zum Mittel gemacht war‘. In Wagners *Gesamtkunstwerk* the idea was that the mythical drama was driven by a hidden force being expressed in the music. This is a very simplified version of Wagners ideas, but here we find again the romantic concept of music as an expression of an ineffable (in German *Unausprechlich*, *Unbenennbare*) entity.

The opposing camp was based in Vienna, regarded as conservative and built around the composer Johannes Brahms and the critics Franz Brendel and Eduard Hanslick. As you surely know Hanslick was a music critic and lecturer who heavily influenced musical thought in the 20th century with his book *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (1854). He defended a so-called formalist approach to music according to which *music cannot represent extramusical content in the sense of specific emotions or feelings. The beauty of music lies in the selfless contemplation of the structural, formal properties or pure tonal relations of the music.* The musical work in Hanslicks view is an autonomous entity

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independent of personal, historical or political events and independent of the interpretation of the performer or listener. The conflict here is obvious for if music cannot express extramusical content how can it express the Drama driving the music?

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In the end Hanslick won. *Vom Musikalisch Schönen* was *wrongly* interpreted as a definitive repudiation of music's ability to bear expressive or referential meaning. Thus, thanks to a radical formalist interpretation of Hanslick's ideas musical meaning as a topic for musicological, academic discussion was off limits from the end of the nineteenth century through most of the 20th century. In this vein Robinson notes: 'In recent times, formalism has distinctly had the upper hand, alike in composition, music theory, and philosophy of music' Susan Langer remarked that this 'somewhat unhappy effect' of formalism also influenced the attitude of the general public. The obsession with form and structure led to the prevalent opinion that someone not equipped with the proper tools for musical analysis is incapable of saying anything valuable about music.

More or less simultaneously the boundaries of Western tonality, long since challenged by composers like Wagner, Stravinsky and Debussy, finally collapsed, resulting in the search for new musical material that eclipsed the interest in musical meaning or content. *Musical thought and practice in this period is pre-occupied by the question of medium and material as opposed to matters of content and meaning.* This development helped reinforce the position of formalism as the dominant musicological discourse.

The next section of my presentation will discuss several answers to the formal problems posed to composers and thinkers in roughly the first half of the twentieth century as they lead to three scandals.

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On 31 March 1913 Arnold Schönberg conducted the *Wiener Konzertverein* in the *Musikvereinssaal* in Vienna performing works by Alban Berg, Webern and himself. It would

turn out to be the most severe of several scandals and a tumultuous uproar in the concert hall. One critic wrote about that night: (LANGSAM) "In das wütende Zischen und Klatschen auch die schrillen Töne von Hausschlüsseln und Pfeifchen – und auf der zweiten Galerie kam es zur ersten Prügelei des Abends". Concerning the representation or expression of extra-musical meaning in music Schönberg was quite clear: „Music does not express the extramusical“ and elsewhere he added: „Beauty, an undefined concept, is quite useless as a basis for aesthetic discrimination, and so is sentiment.“

Schönbergs ideas were further developed by such composers as Pierre Boulez and Karl Heinz Stockhausen in the style of serialism - which might be seen as the most strict musical application of formalism. Musicians and theorists alike aspired to the conditions of science and mathematics. Indeed it was this movements‘ earlier work in the 1950‘s that provoked Susan McClary to state that, in both musicology and compositional practice, „music mattered precisely because it had managed to transcend mere meaning.“

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In a sense a more radical attempt to go beyond tonal harmony within the Western musical tradition, was presented by the incorporation of sounds previously not associated with the musical domain at all. As early as 1913 Luigi Russolo, a member of the Futurist Avant-Garde, wrote in his famous manifesto *The Art of Noise*: „We must enlarge and enrich more and more the domain of musical sound. Our sensibility requires it“

In his *Musique Concrete* the french sound engineer Pierre Schaeffer hoped to achieve this goal. In collaboration with Pierre Henry he wrote an opera with the title *Orphée 53* fusing new sounds with the traditional form of the opera. The piece premiered at the Donaueschinger Musiktage in 1953 but was not received kindly by the German public. The journalist Walter Dirks reports: „Am Schluss des "Orphée 53" waren eine griechische Hymne an Zeus, das Geheul der Furien und anderes, nicht Identifizierbares so ungeheuerlich und so maßlos ausgebeutet, dass der ganze Saal um Mitternacht ins Toben geriet, es war nicht mehr zu unterscheiden, was wütender Protest, was fanatische Zustimmung, was amüsiertes Ulk, was Nervenentladung – und was das Stück selber war. Mit solcher Musik könnte einer eines Tages einen Krieg entfesseln.“

What provoked such extreme reactions from the audience? Perhaps it was because here the question of musical meaning simply becomes a part of the way we give meaning to sound in general. In my thesis I would like to further consider the consequences this type of musical practice had and still has for our ideas on musical meaning.

So how did formalism establish itself in the sciences? Well, in musicology and philosophy formalist analysis can be divided in several approaches among which semiotics, symbolism and heuristics. Although formalist analysis was pervasive it does not mean that the expressive properties of music were always denied, but often the issue was dismissed as overly speculative, subjective or simply a small part of the problem. For example Cokers book ‚Music and Meaning‘ from 1972 devotes a chapter to so-called ‚Extrageric Musical Meaning‘ in what is basically a formalist work on musical semiotics.

As my dissertation is first and foremost a history of expressive or representational meaning I have chosen to focus on formalist approaches that grant a central role and credibility to extra-musical meaning. For example Susan Langer and Peter Kivy both developed theories one might call a form of ‚enhanced formalism‘. In this time period of say 1913 to 1970, there were also a few authors who more radically departed from formalism and tried to formulate an account of music that *was* based on it’s expressive and representational properties. For example the psychologist Leonard B. Meyer wrote a book called *Emotion and Meaning in Music* in 1956. Also there is a famous work by Deryck Cooke called *The Language of Emotion* in which the author tries to determine the emotional meaning of musical phrases all the way down to the level of specific musical intervals.

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I have no time to delve into these theories here but a central critique of many of these theories - as well as most romantic and formalist theories on musical meaning - is their glaring ethnocentricity. Already in 1960 the composer and marxist Luigi Nono complained that his contemporaries ignored the historical and cultural context in which music was and is created. Even though he can easily be criticised for seeing the world through Marxist-Red

glasses, Nono's insistence in these matters as well as his imperative to be aware of music's social role and responsibility, seem to precede the introduction of these ideas by the New Musicology movement some twenty years later. Nono wanted to give politics a place in what was at that time the a-political world of *Neue Musik*. This is evident in Nono's musical theatre piece *Intolleranza* which had its premiere in Venice in 1961 and was the cause of a big scandal.

Another critic of formalism who taught with Luigi Nono at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse in the 50's was the philosopher Theodor Adorno. Although Adorno and Nono certainly have their differences both emphasize the sociological aspects of musical practice, embedding these in a critique of respectively consumer culture and late capitalist society. Although Adorno was deeply involved in *Neue Musik* and emphasised the importance of technical coherence, he was also critical of the positivist scientific attitude towards music: ‚Blindheit gegen den Sinn, oder Verzicht auf Sinn überhaupt gegenüber blossen Tönen, hat mittlerweile derart sich verbreitet, dass an Sinn überhaupt zu erinnern sich dem Verdacht romantischer Rückständigkeit aussetzt, wo in Wahrheit auf die Raison d'être von Kunst reflektiert wird.‘

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From about 1980, under the influence of among others Adorno's social critique, analyses of musical works were undertaken, that approached music as a cultural or social construct reflecting and shaping social relations, ideologies, gender division and political ideas. This loose cluster of researchers was labeled *New Musicologists*. Looking back on this period, Susan McClary, one of the most prominent of these writers, describes how *simultaneously* composers gained renewed interest in communicating with the audience. Both scholars and musicians were injected with postmodern ideas that rejected the historical narrative by musical theorists and musicologists that music was ‚autonomous‘ from cultural context, its patronage or tradition. In postmodern music this led to the *reevaluation* and subsequently the renewed *appreciation* of musical tradition as well as the wish to cross the boundaries between high and low culture. This in turn expressed itself in a musical style that advocated and exhibited eclecticism, the mixing of popular and elite styles, a return to standard

tonality and non-linear (or circular) musical procedures. Famous examples include Steve Reich, Philipp Glass and Frank Zappa. As a consequence of personal taste I shall choose to focus on Frank Zappa in my thesis.

Although this public-friendly postmodern approach seemed to eradicate the potential for scandal in contemporary music, the return to tonality and easily accessible musical forms was initially considered controversial. For example, the orchestral piece ‚Morphonie – Sektor IV‘ by German composer Wolfgang Rihms, that premiered in 1974 at the Donaueschinger Musiktagen, was considered a scandal as a result of its break with serialism. Similarly composers like Glass and Reich have been criticised for writing too popular and simple music.

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The contribution to the debate on musical meaning made by ethnomusicology and anthropology also calls attention to the cultural relativity of musical meaning. For example, anthropologist Judith Becker mentions that in Western culture emotion is seen as an authentic expression of the individual - as we have seen this idea can be traced back to romantic ideas concerning musical meaning. In other cultures the display of emotion in relation to music is often viewed as an expression of social relations. In this sense, emotions can usefully be viewed as being about an individual within a community, rather than being exclusively about internal states.

As the musical *pendant* of these insights I am contemplating a discussion of the world music phenomenon. In the nineties the Cuban group Buena Vista Social Club took the world by storm thanks to their ‚discovery‘ and subsequent promotion by guitarist Ry Cooder. Their success was a part of the general euphoria surrounding world music that might be considered the arrival of postmodern ideas on cultural diversity into the pop mainstream.

Ethnomusicology & New Musicology put musical meaning back on the map. Still, these approaches do not necessarily provide us with an adequate explanation for musical meaning. Now please bear with me... The relation between the musical sign (the music itself) and the social, political or even ideological concept signified by the music often remains unclear. As

Cook notes (2007) the only model for this relation provided by social constructivism is the classical *de Saussurean* model wherein the relation between sign and signifier is considered as arbitrary. In effect this provides for an unlimited number of interpretations, which cannot be empirically or objectively verified. In this sense we are reminded of 19th century theories that used the ineffability or unspecific nature of musical meaning on which to project their subjective interpretation or ideology. In a similar vein Ruth Katz remarks that cultural relativist ideas on music are in a way similar to romantic nationalist ideas on music as expressive of the spirit of the nation or *Volksgeist*.

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The final section of my thesis uses as a working title a term used by the German philosopher Harry Lehmann to describe the artistic period that comes after postmodernism. The sense in which Harry Lehman use the term Reflexive Modernity is different from the manner in which the term is used by Sociologists like for example Anthony Giddens, in the sense that it describes a specific artistic phenomenon. According to Lehmann the artworld is going through what he calls a *Gehalts-Aesthetische Wende*. In modernism and postmodernism music and esthetics were preoccupied with the medium instead of the message - now this process is shifting in favor of the message.

The specific aesthetic turn postulated by Lehmann seems to be in accordance with the general atmosphere in academics since the 90's to take musical meaning more seriously. While the question of musical meaning was originally mainly a problem for philosophy, the arts and -from the end of 19th century - musicology, it has now come to involve a host of disciplines. From the humanities these include sociology, anthropology, ethnology and history. From the *sciences* among others psychology, neurology and biology offer contributions to the debate. This has interdisciplinarity has resulted in an extreme diversity in theories on musical meaning in recent years.

Pearson and Armin use an amusing Indian parable to explain the situation. Three blind men come upon a elephant. One has the elephant by the tail and thinks it is a rope, the other is touching his trunk and believes it is a snake, while the third feels the elephants' feet and imagines it is a tree. Of course, the elephant in this story resembles music. Like the

blind men in the parable, music scholars, in their analysis of music, grope around the various aspects of music and then substitute the aspect for the whole thing.

Indeed, so far the theories and concepts discussed tended to focus on just certain aspects of the equation; either the context in which the music is produced, its expressive properties or the music itself. In closing I would like to discuss two authors who provide a more comprehensive account of musical meaning and might be seen as representative of a more contemporary approach.

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Ian Cross is director of the Cambridge Center for Music and Science. His interdisciplinary approach draws on ethnomusicological, neurological and evolutionary- biological research to show that by looking at the *function* of music as an adaptive trait in evolution we can make sense of the -I quote- ,myriad and divergent meanings that have been attributed to music.‘

As in other disciplines a formalist conception of music was dominant in neurology. The conventional scenario for neurological research followed the western paradigm of ,Ernste Musik‘ as a product to be consumed and appreciated passively. The research resulting from this scenario shows an underlying biology involving mainly the neurological domains for perception and motor control.

In most cultures (including our own) music involves an active participation of the attendants in which music, dance and even lyrics are not necessarily separable. The research resulting from this scenario shows an underlying biology involving (besides perception and motor control) neurological processes associated with *social interaction and communication*. Music addresses apparently *multiple cognitive domains* simultaneously. It is, neurologically speaking, a domain-general activity facilitating redescription and integration of representations across domains.

It is due to this capacity of music that it possesses what Cross calls a *floating intentionality* which basically means that music can be about several different things at the same time. Thanks to this *floating intentionality* music enables a riskfree interaction between musical participants. It, and I quote, ,allows each participant to hold on to their

own interpretations of the meaning of the collective musical act without ever having to make those interpretations explicit for each other. At the same time, music's immediacy of meaning -it's *apparent* honesty- legitimates the sense that what each participant feels and understands is also felt and understood by others.' (Cross, 2011, p.6) Thus music, still according to Cross, should be understood foremost as a communicative medium that may promote, create and maintain social relationships and ingroup solidarity.

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The musicologist Nicholas Cook, also from Cambridge, uses a similar concept of *unspecific* meaning to evade the arbitrariness of social constructivism and rigidity of formalism. Every musical work has a cluster of semiotic potential with an indeterminate but not unlimited number of possible interpretations or properties. The meaning a piece occupies within a certain culture is dependent on its emergent properties - which properties emerge depends on the performance, the recipient of the piece and critical discourse. So, for example, in their work critics choose certain properties of the semiotic cluster over others, thereby influencing the meaning that is given to a piece within a certain culture. As stated before: 'Musicological knowledge shapes perceptions.'

Now, although we might not be able to articulate all potential meanings in a work, Cook says we do experience them at a prelinguistic level. Tentatively, he also suggests that these potential meanings may form the base for an unarticulated feeling of solidarity between participants in a musical act. Cook aims to rehabilitate this underestimated somatic experience of music to provide a counterweight to analytic and interpretive discourse.

In the writings and music of jazz pianoplayer Brad Mehldau we find parallels that may serve to illustrate the concepts put forward by Ian Cross and Nicholas Cook. Bear with me for the following lengthy quote of Mehldau: 'Our very muteness towards music, though, is often the precondition of a deep solidarity that its listeners experience amongst each other. It involves a preternatural kind of group knowledge, a resounding "I know that you know." I don't know what you know, but that's not important. I'm satisfied by the mere knowledge

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that music pushes your buttons like it does mine. There is something in the world out there that correlates with both of us immediately, albeit in different ways.‘

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In this presentation I have tried to show that writing a history of ideas pertaining to musical meaning is a project worth pursuing. As stated at the beginning to my knowledge there is no structured work providing an overview of the historical development on ideas pertaining to musical meaning over the last two hundred years. Ideas on musical meaning are like a self-fulfilling prophecy simultaneously describing and shaping the way we hear, produce and experience music. My study would help explain the premisses and ideas behind the cultural and social dispositions that influence the meanings we attribute to music. I have indicated that there exists a certain historical development and interrelatedness between ideas pertaining to musical meaning that deserves to be explored further. Throughout the last two hundred years authors have struggled with the same questions surrounding music's mode of representation, assumed ineffability, specificity and relation to emotion and feelings of community. The general shifts from romanticism to formalism and finally social constructivist and more interdisciplinary approaches suggests a certain *Zeitgeist* or *Habitus* (in)forming the historical development of our ideas on musical meaning. As my study progresses I hope to further explicate these general tendencies.

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Thank you for the invitation and I hope we will see a lot more of each other in the future.