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Music as a Model of Aesthetic Experience in Arnold Berleant's Environmental Aesthetics

Abstract:

This article explores Arnold Berleant's environmental aesthetics with a focus on his innovative use of music as a model for aesthetic experience. Berleant challenges the dominant Kantian framework of disinterested contemplation by proposing an aesthetics of engagement – an immersive, participatory, and multisensory approach rooted in the everyday. Music, in Berleant's theory, does not exist as a fixed object but as an event of experience that resonates within a perceptual field. The paper examines his critique of aesthetic objecthood, the role of titles in music, the concept of the aesthetic field, and the phenomenology of musical performance. It concludes by evaluating the universality of Berleant's model and its applicability to both contemporary and historical works of art.

Keywords:

Arnold Berleant, environmental aesthetics, aesthetics of engagement, music philosophy, aesthetic experience, phenomenology, musical performance, Kant, art theory

Introduction

Environmental aesthetics, as a subdiscipline of Western philosophy, emerged approximately fifty years ago, although its historical roots trace back to the eighteenth century.[1] British and Scottish thinkers began to show increasing interest in nature, particularly through landscape painting. Earlier artistic forms – such as poetry and literature – also demonstrated a deep aesthetic sensibility and the creators' capacity to engage with nature's beauty. The gardens described in Jean de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and Boccaccio's *Decameron* are not merely backdrops for religious or moral reflection;[2] they are vivid and symbolically rich expressions of the human-nature relationship.

This artistic sensitivity, however, did not constitute an autonomous aesthetic domain. The concept of artistic autonomy crystallized in the Baroque landscape painting of Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa, and Gaspard Dughet (also known as Poussin). Their works significantly influenced aesthetic thought, which underwent considerable transformations at the end of the eighteenth century. Beauty, once associated with love, desire, and madness, was redefined as disinterested contemplation – separate from personal, religious, or practical concerns. Classical ideals of proportion and harmony gave way to the triad of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque. These categories, which more effectively captured the evolving artistic sensibilities of the time, became central in the writings of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Burke, Alison, and especially Kant.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, aesthetic reflection focused predominantly on art. However, recent decades have witnessed renewed interest in the aesthetics of nature and the environment. Ronald Hepburn played a pivotal role in this shift. In his 1966 essay "Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty,"[3] he argued that aesthetic experience should not be limited to art but should encompass the broader environment. Hepburn's insights have since been expanded by numerous scholars who have extended traditional aesthetics to include ecosystems,

1) The title of this paper refers to Obidzińska, *Art and Philosophy*.

2) Parsons and Carlson, "Environmental Aesthetics."

3) Hepburn, "Contemporary Aesthetics," 285–310.

gardens, landscapes, architecture, and urban planning. This shift led to a rethinking of traditional assumptions and the emergence of environmental aesthetics, also known as eco-aesthetics.

A puzzling feature of environmental aesthetics is its overwhelming emphasis on the visual. This visual bias raises the question of whether a framework shaped primarily by the visual arts can adequately account for other, materially and perceptually distinct art forms. The only significant attempt to address this gap is found in the work of Arnold Berleant, an American philosopher, musician, and musicologist. Berleant is a leading figure in environmental aesthetics whose ideas transcend traditional music aesthetics despite his background as a pianist and scholar. While his oeuvre contains relatively few musicological texts in the strict sense,[4] music occupies a central methodological position in his thinking. For Berleant, music functions as a model for a general theory of art and aesthetics within an environmental framework.

Against Kant

Berleant's theory stands in direct opposition to Kantian aesthetics. Although Kant himself lacked practical artistic experience, his philosophical system has proven remarkably durable. Within this framework, artworks are understood as distinct objects possessing internal unity and ontological independence. Consequently, aesthetic appreciation requires disinterested contemplation – a mentally distanced attitude. The notion of aesthetic distance highlights the separation between aesthetic and practical attitudes toward objects. Taste, in this view, involves judging an object or its representation with a completely disinterested sense of liking or disliking. Such disinterestedness positions the viewer as a passive, primarily visual observer, disconnected from the socio-cultural context of the object.[5]

The Kantian model became foundational for Western European art theory and led to its instrumentalization as a normative framework for art criticism. Aesthetics, in its critical form, dictated standards of artistic perfection and authenticity. Creativity was evaluated according to these norms, which were rooted in philosophical assump-

4) Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Music*; Berleant, *Aesthetics Beyond the Arts*; Berleant, *Re-Thinking Aesthetics*.

5) Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 252.

tions. Artistic practices that did not align with the established canon were often marginalized as decorative, kitsch, or applied arts. In contrast, Berleant draws on Merleau-Ponty's[6] phenomenology and the pragmatism of William James[7] and John Dewey[8] to formulate a theory that rejects the fundamental premises of Kantian aesthetics. He opposes the passive, disinterested viewer with the concept of engagement – defined as valued, personal participation in a fulfilling aesthetic experience. Engagement implies the lack of autonomy of art and its tangible presence in everyday life. Art is not an isolated entity requiring specific conditions for its existence or reception. Instead, it consists of objects that function within ordinary contexts and do not necessarily belong to an established artistic domain.

Following Dewey, Berleant sees art as an extension of the multisensory environmental experience, in which perception, organisms, places, and human activities are intertwined. Artistic experience grows from daily life and is inseparable from it.[9] For Berleant, there is no dichotomy between subject and reality. Art stems from and returns to primary experience – whose value lies in the pleasure of creation and perception. Berleant's critique of artistic autonomy and disengaged perception applies especially to music, a medium that Kant famously dismissed for lacking semantic or communicative content:

> Poetry, after all, is more at stake, he wrote, not only in relation to eloquence, but also in relation to every other fine art: painting (taken together with sculpture) and even music. For the latter is only a fine art (and not merely a pleasant one) because it is a vehicle for poetry. Among poets there are also not as many people with flip-flops (unfit for [other] occupations) as among musicians. For poets also appeal to the intellect, while musicians only appeal to the senses.[10]

6) Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 123; Wilkoszewska, "Czy istnieje eko-estetyka?" 136–42.

7) Stępnik, *Pragmatism of William James*.

8) Dewey, *Art as Experience*.

9) Rachoń, "Doświadczenie estetyczne," 242.

10) Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 186.

For Romantic thinkers, music's abstract nature elevated it to a transcendent realm. Goethe wrote, "It is perhaps in music that the dignity of art is most apparent, because music has no material element to be considered . . . it elevates and ennobles all that it expresses."[11] Arnold Berleant positioned music at the opposite end of ontological conceptualization, arguing that its immateriality and intangibility underpin its capacity to generate or superimpose meanings that emerge through the aesthetic experience. While for the Romantics, music – owing to its physical intangibility and linguistic ineffability – was regarded as a transcendental art that reached toward the sublime, in environmental aesthetics it becomes a medium that is realized and fulfilled through lived experience in the here and now, grounded in and mediated by the concrete environment.

In liberating music from the constraints of Kantian doctrine, Berleant was compelled to address earlier assumptions concerning, first, the musical work as a discrete aesthetic object; second, musical meaning as an expression of emotion; and third, the principle of disinterestedness in the aesthetic appreciation of music.

What Is Not Music

In contrast to traditional aesthetics, which centers on the phenomenology of the musical work, Arnold Berleant argues that the musical aesthetic object does not, in fact, exist.[12] To speak of music as an object would require accepting its separateness and abstract nature – qualities that demand a special cognitive effort for proper perception. Yet, as the environment cannot be disentangled from the beings who dwell within it, so too is music inseparable from the listener; it emerges into being and finds significance only through the contours of lived experience.

At the core of Berleant's theory lies the concept of experience as the foundation of aesthetic value. The non-verbal and inexpressible content evoked by music resonates with the surrounding environment, forging an experiential rather than representational connection.[13] His radical formalist stance on musical meaning is

11) Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, 420; quoted in Goehr, *The Musical Work*, 246.

12) Berleant, "Musical De-Composition," 239–54.

13) Berleant, "Embodied Music," 143–55.

unsurprising given his influences and intellectual milieu. Drawing from Hanslick,[14] Schoenberg,[15] Schopenhauer,[16] Stravinsky,[17] and Adorno,[18] Berleant maintains that music expresses nothing beyond sound and denies that emotions are embedded in it. Because emotions are internal states of consciousness, they cannot be projected onto sound. Music, he insists, does not communicate emotions, experiences, or meanings – it is self-referential.[19] The listener's emotional responses are not dictated by musical content but arise from the personal experience of engagement with the sound. Music is thus an event that occurs through and within experience.

Arnold Berleant considers the non-referentiality and asemantic character of music more broadly through the example of the relationship between musical titles and the actual possibility of understanding their content. The knowledge contained in a title about the ideas that initiated the composer's imagination may at most offer some hint regarding the circumstances of the work's creation and its intended design, but it does not bring us any closer to recognizing the aim or object of the sonic image. An example of such a relationship can be found in *Enigma Variations* by Edward Elgar (1898–1899), in which each of the fourteen variations was conceived as a sonic portrait of one of the composer's friends. However, the information about these individuals is reduced merely to the initials of their names, which makes the portraits announced in the titles purely auditory and invisible. We know that these works are some kind of portraits, yet the identity of their models remains impossible to uncover. There is only the music that constructs the portrait, without being an instrument for identifying its "original."

Musical portraits are also the subject of the cycle for flute and piano *Joueurs de flûte*, Op. 27 (1924) by Albert Roussel. Each of the four movements is given the name of a mythical or fictional figure: Pan, Tityre, Krishna, and Monsieur de la Péjaudie. The listener may possess some knowledge about them; thus each movement is, in

14) Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful.*

15) Rognoni, *The Viennese School of Music*.

16) Ibid.

17) Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music*, 110.

18) Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, 35.

19) Kivy, *Music Alone*, 174.

a sense, a portrait of the flutist to whom it is dedicated. The Greek satyr plays a sensual, melismatic melody; the shepherd from Virgil's *Eclogues* performs cheerful staccato figures; Krishna presents a melody in a modal, oriental idiom. Finally, Monsieur de la Péjaudie is a flute-playing character from the novel *La Pêcheresse, histoire d'amour* by Henri de Régnier (1864–1936), published in 1920, a few years before the composition of *Joueurs de flûte*. For the listener, this is the most difficult movement to interpret, according to Berleant, because anyone unfamiliar with Régnier's novel is left to imagine Monsieur de la Péjaudie solely on the basis of the music itself – which, in Berleant's view, is extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible.

The portraits of these fictional flutists were dedicated to the memory of four outstanding French flutists active during the period when the composer was working on *Enigma Variations*: Pan to Marcel Moyse (1889–1984), Tityre to Gaston Blanquart (1887–1963), Krishna to Louis Fleury (1878–1926), and Monsieur de la Péjaudie to Philippe Gaubert (1879–1941). Taking these dedications into account, the individual movements of the cycle might be interpreted as portraits of these musicians. However, unless the listener is a historian, a flutist, or an enthusiast of French concert life in the first half of the twentieth century, it is highly unlikely that they have ever heard these performers or even know anything about them.

Thus, they are in no position to imagine the portrayed artists or their playing. Nevertheless, Albert Roussel must have had some reason for linking a particular contemporary flutist with a given movement and, consequently, with its literary "counterpart." Yet we know nothing about this, and therefore, for us as listeners, all knowledge of the flutists is simply and exclusively music. The music itself embodies their figures, and any reconstruction of extra-musical relationships between the works and the depicted images is a task for the historian and cannot be derived from the music itself.

All these images – both of fictional and historical flutists – are real in the sense that they exist only as musically created portraits. The music of Pan is not an imitation or "reconstruction" of the playing of the mythical satyr; it is a sonic embodiment of Pan. Music expresses only the movement of sounds, even when it is furnished with a title. The title is attached to the music but is not contained within it. It is merely a thread connecting the music with a figure, an event, or a mood. The name of the flutist gives each movement its identity, but the meaning of each figure is constituted

through sonic experience. The *Flutists* is not about flutists; they are the music itself, and their being materializes only in the sounding duration and its perception.[20]

Music, then, resonates with the human world not through representation, but through direct and participatory experience. Unlike other art forms such as painting or literature, it does not refer to external concepts or narratives. It creates no explicit knowledge and offers no semantic content. Understanding music, in Berleant's view, requires a full empathic and embodied participation in the sound world. Music exists only in this shared, wordless presence.[21]

Music in the Aesthetic Field

Central to Arnold Berleant's aesthetics is the concept of the aesthetic field, defined as "the context in which art objects are actively and creatively experienced as valuable."[22] Berleant conceptualizes the environment not as a passive backdrop but as a contextual field in which the individual is an integral and active participant in the aesthetic process. Four interdependent components constitute the aesthetic field: (1) creation – the activity of the artist shaping the auditory or artistic experience; (2) the object of aesthetic perception, which may be a natural phenomenon, the scent of a flower, a discovered object, a building, a landscape, a novel, a piece of music, or even an idea in conceptual art; (3) performance – the act or event that focuses attention on the aesthetic object; and (4) reception – an active, engaged process that realizes the potential contained within a performance, score, or medium. In music, this includes both live sound and recorded media. These four functions – creative, attentional, performative, and receptive – coexist within any situation in which musical perception is realized. They are mutually related and, together, constitute an aesthetic field, a "musical environment." The aesthetic situation centers on a perceptual experience that engages all the senses. This experience is mediated by cultural contexts that shape perception and evaluation.

Berleant emphasizes that every form of art includes a performative dimension. A viewer who actively looks at a painting, reads a novel, or listens to music also becomes a participant in its realization. The qualities of art emerge through this interplay among

20) Berleant, "Music as Sound and Idea," 95–100.

21) Berleant, "Musical De-Composition," 239–54.

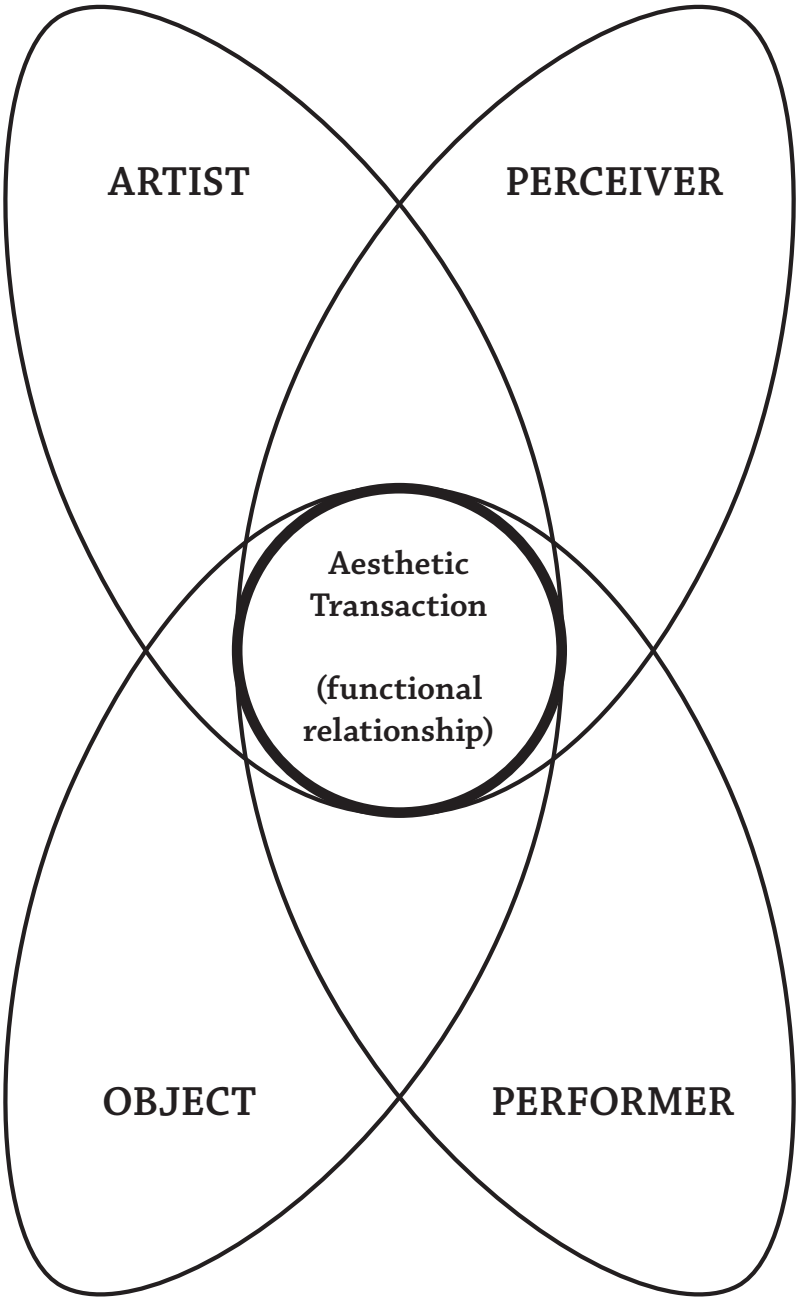
22) Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 50.

artist, performer, audience, and object. The aesthetic field thereby transcends the traditional subject-object dichotomy. It constitutes a unified perceptual environment that integrates all its dynamic components. The aesthetic field allows for the unity of experience, though the specific functions of its elements may vary according to the medium, object, or audience. It is within this network of interactions that art is understood and appreciated. Perceptual involvement extends beyond art itself, entering into broader domains of human experience. The aesthetic field is also a site where various sensory responses converge. Its structure is shaped by psychological, material, technological, and historical factors. Perception and aesthetic preference are influenced by prevailing technologies, modes of artistic production, and the working methods of artists. These elements, in turn, shape the scope and nature of aesthetic experience. Furthermore, the functioning of the aesthetic field is affected by socio-cultural factors, including religious, moral, and philosophical ideas; artistic traditions and theories; levels of societal knowledge; and dominant worldviews. Aesthetic perception is thus inseparable from the history of ideas, social history, and cultural anthropology.

For Berleant, aesthetic experience is not an isolated, purely subjective phenomenon. It is embedded in and shaped by culture. Even when alone, the individual carries internalized cultural values that influence perception. Aesthetic encounters often occur in social institutions – concert halls, theaters, galleries – where public reception further modulates individual experience. In this sense, aesthetic experience is not set apart from ordinary human activity but is one among many dimensions of human engagement with the world. It is an extension of daily life that becomes aesthetic when marked by specific perceptual and valuative characteristics.

Musical experience within the aesthetic field is unique. A musical event is inherently social and rarely occurs in isolation. Music performance involves complex organizational structures and often requires technical preparation. Far from being extraneous, such preparation is an essential element of the aesthetic field. The interaction between artist, performer, audience, and object is vital, and each element shapes the event's aesthetic significance. Berleant argues that aesthetic experience is communal and can only be fulfilled in a social context. In *The Aesthetic Field*, he includes a diagram titled "The Aesthetic Transaction," depicting this reciprocal network of relations among artist, object (focus of attention), performer, and viewer – a closed loop of interaction that constitutes aesthetic meaning.

Figure 1: Transactions in the Aesthetic Field according to Arnold Berleant. Source: Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field*, 50.



Musical Performance

In Arnold Berleant's environmental aesthetics, the concept of a musical work as a fixed object is largely absent. He typically refers to music as the "object of aesthetic perception" or the "focus of attention," without attributing to it a clearly defined ontological status. Despite persistent efforts by some aestheticians and musicologists to define music as a concrete object, Berleant insists that it remains fundamentally elusive. Music eludes definitive identification or localization, for it does not constitute a discrete ontological entity. Musical sound exists only within a contextual field and manifests through the multifaceted experience of active listening. While one can indeed speak of a perceptual focus in any aesthetic situation, such focus does not require an identifiable object. Nor is it limited to one sensory modality. The aesthetic experience of music, for Berleant, involves the perceptual engagement of the entire person – a biocultural being embedded in a specific historical and social milieu.[23]

Berleant does not address traditional ontological debates – whether music is a physical, mental, ideal, or intentional object. He also avoids the common preoccupation with the status of the musical score. For him, notation serves only as a "point of focus" and not as a binding authorial record that dictates the performer's interpretation. What initiates the aesthetic field – whether a score, a sound, or a gesture – is less important than the process of creation, performance, and reception it sets in motion. The aesthetic value of music arises from its inseparability from the act of creation and performance. Music is not a product; it is a process. The focus of attention in the aesthetic field may be directed toward anything that initiates the processes of creation, performance, and reception.

In this context, the fidelity of a performance to the composer's original intention appears to be of limited significance, and, in any case, does not constitute a subject of separate consideration in Berleant's thought. Accordingly, the essence of aesthetic activity lies not in an autonomous object but in processes inseparable from acts of creation and performance. Sound production is often seen as a mechanical precursor to aesthetic experience, but Berleant refutes this assumption. Music can only exist if sound is generated – mechanically or electronically – and this generation always requires

23) Berleant, "Further Ruminations," 129–37.

human participation. The performer, by producing sound, becomes a co-creator of the aesthetic field. Similarly, listening is not a passive act but one that engages attention, memory, and knowledge. The audience, through focused listening, applause, or emotional response becomes an integral part of the musical experience.

In his 1999 essay "Notes for a Phenomenology of Musical Performance," Berleant offers a compelling description of a pianist's performance that may reflect his own experience as a performer, which informs the present description. His focus is not on technical execution, fidelity to the composer's intentions, or artistic interpretation. Rather, he describes performance as a universal, phenomenological event that reveals the performer's inner experience. This performance is viewed from two perspectives: the objective view of an external observer and the subjective view of the performer. The opposition of analysis "operating always in immobility and intuition settling in the midst of variable mobility or (...) in permanence" was taken by Berleant from Bergson's philosophy, citing his *Introduction to Metaphysics*.[24]

To a concert audience, performance is an observable sequence of actions: the pianist enters, adjusts to the instrument, performs, bows, exits, and perhaps returns for encores. This account captures the theatrical structure of performance but omits any reference to consciousness, emotion, or perception. These deeper elements of experience, Berleant argues, are only accessible through intuitive, direct engagement. Performance, at its core, is a metaphysical event in which ordinary perception and transformation acquire a deeper significance. As the performer approaches the piano, space-time expands. This is not a neutral or static backdrop, but a dynamic, lived medium. The performer energizes space, fills it with movement, makes it dense, fluid, and nearly tangible. In this temporal-spatial field, perception shifts. Silence before the first note becomes a void, and as music emerges, the space becomes charged with presence. The performance transforms emptiness into form and meaning. This process involves the fusion of the pianist, the sounds, the audience, and the hall into a single, continuous experience. Space, time, and motion are not separate but mutually constitutive. Musical performance reveals the interconnection of body, perception, memory, and social presence. It evokes a sense of reverence – almost sacredness – as sounds are shaped from silence, as presence materializes from absence. The perform-

24) Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 57.

er's sensory awareness sharpens: hearing becomes more acute, touch more sensitive, perception more vivid. Ideally, this somatic awareness aligns with the music's expressive flow, creating a harmony between experience and expression. The performer and music become one, as in other performative arts. Each element of the musical environment contributes to this experience. The audience senses the performer's presence; the performer senses the audience's attentiveness. When successful, this exchange produces a powerful sense of connection. Poor acoustics or visual barriers diminish this experience, as musical perception is multisensory – hearing is intertwined with vision, touch, and proprioception. Music is not only heard; it is felt.

Performance, in Berleant's view, expands our understanding of music and human experience. It addresses fundamental dimensions of time, space, embodiment, emotion, and identity. The most meaningful performances become ritualistic acts – ceremonies of presence, shaped by conscious and shared participation in living sound. The essence of musical experience lies in the shaping of auditory space – an unfolding continuum of sound and silence. Yet before a single note is played, the silence that precedes music is not neutral; it resembles a vast, formless void in which the performer appears as a fragile presence suspended in an unfathomable abyss. This charged emptiness is not merely the absence of sound but a precondition for its emergence. Centered in the performer, a dynamic, spatial-temporal field begins to radiate outward, gradually enveloping the audience. As the pianist begins to play, the concert hall transforms into a resonant body, rendering the sonic texture of the performance almost tangible, as if sound itself were grazing the skin of the space.

In this moment, the indeterminacy of time and space – the initial formlessness – is incrementally imbued with meaning. Through the act of performance, the musician brings a world into being, shaping a perceptual field that is stretched, dense, fluid, and palpably alive. From the depths of indefinite silence, the music enacts a genesis, a re-creation of the real. Sound, performer, and audience begin to interweave in a seamless fabric of embodied experience, where distinctions between body and space, time and movement, dissolve into a dynamic continuum. Time manifests spatially, space becomes temporally animated, and the movement of sound becomes the generative principle of an audible space-time.

While it is possible to conceptually isolate the elements of space, time, and motion for analytical purposes, such abstraction fragments the integrity of the lived

experience. From the pianist's perspective, these dimensions are not separate but co-emergent, intensifying into a perceptual clarity unique to the act of performance. The metaphor of creation is particularly apt here: there is something sacred in the unfolding of this event, as if one were standing in a cathedral moments before a liturgy begins. In that anticipatory silence, humility, vulnerability, and reverence are awakened – not toward a specific deity, but toward the act of creation itself.

This sense of reverence, tinged with awe, reflects the miracle of drawing structured, meaningful sound out of undirected emptiness. The performative act becomes a kind of sacred ritual, a metaphysical event wherein sound is conjured *ex nihilo*, and its shaping becomes an expression of presence itself. As long as the performer remains fully attuned to the immediacy of this becoming, the miraculous character of music never entirely vanishes. In such moments, the musical event transcends mere aesthetics and takes on the character of ritual – a communal entry into a charged space of presence, in which every gesture resonates with the dynamic actuality of life itself. In this light, music becomes sacred – not by invoking a religious tradition, but by evoking a mode of being that surpasses the confines of the isolated self, inviting participants into a shared act of creation.

Completion

The development of art in the second half of the twentieth century and the emergence of a wide range of experimental and interdisciplinary artistic practices have rendered the traditional separation between the viewer and the artwork increasingly inadequate. The contemplative, distanced aesthetic experience rooted in disinterested observation no longer fits the ways in which contemporary art is produced and experienced. For Arnold Berleant, the foundation of a new aesthetic model lies in the notion of engagement – emphasizing context, participation, and multisensory perception. Perception, as Berleant defines it, is a complex function that synthesizes all sensory modalities, including kinesthetic and somatic awareness. This shift reframes aesthetic experience as a dynamic process of interaction rather than a static contemplation of an object.

What makes Berleant's project especially significant is his use of music as a model for aesthetic theory. Music, with its immediate, immersive, and non-material nature, offers a unique perspective on aesthetic experience in general. It enables us to

reimagine aesthetic value not in terms of fixed meaning or representational content, but through shared presence and perceptual awareness. In this way, music reintroduces us to a purified form of aesthetic experience – one that is rooted in presence and unfolding, not objectification.

In *Further Reflections on Music*, Berleant poses a compelling question: "How would we design aesthetics if we used music as a model of perceptual experience?" His answer involves a rejection of object-centered theories in favor of a framework that recognizes the performative, embodied, and contextual nature of artistic experience. It would be an aesthetics based on participation, in which creativity, perception, valuation, and performance are integrated in a holistic perceptual field.

Berleant's aesthetics of engagement offers a profound alternative to the dominant paradigms of eighteenth century aesthetics, which are rooted in Enlightenment ideals. The Enlightenment project distanced artistic creation from practical function and posited the work of art as a self-contained object. In contrast, pre-Enlightenment conceptions emphasized skill, performance, and integration with daily life. Berleant seeks to recover this continuity by shifting emphasis from the object to the act, from contemplation to participation. Importantly, Berleant considers his model to be universally applicable – not only to contemporary art and everyday aesthetics, but also to historical forms such as seventeenth century Dutch landscape painting or canonical works of music and literature. However, this raises the question of how well this model fits music that explicitly emerged from Kantian aesthetics – such as the works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, or Chopin. These compositions are typically understood as autonomous, complete works with fixed structures and authorial intent. While Berleant's framework offers valuable insights, applying it to these classical works may be challenging. The fixed form, historical distance, and compositional complexity of such works can inhibit the kind of active, creative dialogue that the theory promotes. Nevertheless, this limitation points not to a flaw in Berleant's model, but to an open field of inquiry. How we engage with art from different historical periods – and how new aesthetic models can adapt to these variations – remains a vital and evolving question for philosophical aesthetics.

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