

Introduction

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Without question, Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) has proven to be one of the most influential and inspiring philosophers of our time. His influence on the humanities in Europe, North America, and beyond, continues to provoke new thought, challenge old ideas, and inspire scholars and thinkers of seemingly every conceivable discipline. Those familiar with Deleuze's oeuvre will undoubtedly be aware that his work was passionately devoted to the arts—film, painting, and so on. But few of the arts elicit the kind of lavish attention Deleuze accords to music.

Deleuze's writings on music are extensive, provocative, insightful, and not without complications or contradictions. But to date there has been very little response from actual music scholars.¹ What has trickled out has been piecemeal, often focused on only a small section of Deleuze's writings, and has too often treated these writings in a haphazard manner. As a corrective, *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music* demonstrates that Deleuze has impacted and has even greater potential to impact the field of music scholarship profoundly. This volume resounds as a holistic response to Deleuze from a cross-section of scholars, the majority of whom are musicologists and/or music theorists. Deleuze had much to say about music. Here, for the first time, is a coherent, comprehensive reply from the field of music studies.

There are two overarching concerns when attempting to expand our ability to think music through Deleuze—and neither can do without the other. First is the need to push beyond what Deleuze (often with Guattari) was able to do. For the authors in this volume the sense is clearly that Deleuze only scratched the surface of the infinite modes of musical embodiment. There is much, much more to be done. And yet the second concern makes a mess of this project. As will be clear from many of the chapters herein, much of what Deleuze wrote about music was not transparently consistent with his overall philosophical project. Not only is an extension deeper into music necessary, but it will serve as a corrective as well.

The results are as significant for music as they are for Deleuze studies in general. One of the problems the field of music studies has faced is its seeming isolation from the larger scholarly world. Much has been imported, but with less reciprocity.

¹ Though scholars in cultural studies, literature, and philosophy *have* written on Deleuze and music. Examples include Ronald Bogue's *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Ian Buchanan and Marcel Swiboda, eds, *Deleuze and Music* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); and Richard Pinhas' *Les larmes de Nietzsche* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001).

And what has been “brought in” from other fields has often been selected for its use-value. This self-selection evinces a certain immunity musicology has enjoyed from outside scrutiny, primarily, we imagine, because “outsiders” simply can’t understand the language music scholars speak, especially when it comes to technical descriptions or analysis of music. Consequently, music scholarship has evaded to a large degree much of the advances in critical thinking that have benefitted other fields, and therefore has failed to make the kinds of changes such a critique might demand.

In order to *press* this kind of scrutiny and change upon the (otherwise complacent) field of music studies, what is required is the kind of intervention that is able to pivot between music and philosophy adequately—in other words, an intervention by speakers of music’s internal language: musicologists who are willing to abandon their comfort zone and tackle difficult philosophical territory that might force a reevaluation of their most basic assumptions and beliefs. This volume binds together the projects of several such musicologists who have engaged the thought of Deleuze in sustained and serious ways. The resulting whole, we believe, can and should have a significant effect on how music is thought about and taught in academia. The collective voices of the authors in this volume are clear: no longer is it adequate to sustain a discourse on music that is rooted in extended, object-oriented metaphors, or that presupposes dualisms between “the listener” and “the music.” No longer is it adequate to excise musical repetition, or to reduce musical difference to the metrics of measurement. No longer are we justified in thinking of music as subordinated to more “serious” forms of thought. No longer are boundaries between music and the body, the body and culture, culture and politics, politics and environment, or those between music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology, or those between various cultural practices, or any number of other jurisdictional distinctions to dictate the form and flows of music and musical inquiry.

In extending the Deleuzian project more deeply into music, our writers are able to produce a better understanding of Deleuze’s various writings on music for the larger field of Deleuzian studies. This much is clear. But we believe there is more at stake. Deleuze’s repeated recourse to music tells his readers that a full exploration of his thought requires that music and philosophy constantly mediate one another through their extremes. The following chapters each address this imperative in singular fashion, moving between an intensive, informed engagement with these twin domains of thought and sound taken up at their highest pitch and intensity. For Deleuzian philosophy, one result is that, in grappling with the most demanding musical material, one can hope to push the faculty of thought beyond sedentary habit, toward the truly transcendental degrees of expression that Deleuze called for in *Difference and Repetition*. As Martin Scherzinger reminds us in his chapter, music has long been recognized to bear an uncanny power for deterritorialization. If this sublime character has been a commonplace of music and aesthetic studies for millennia, in the following pages readers will find novel *machines*, sound-

thought machines, whose mechanics are freely constructed from the toolboxes (or repertoires) of these two fields.

Just as we believe it is important for Deleuzian studies in general to “hear” the field of music speak, it is also important for music to hear itself speak outside its closed chambers—in other words, to discover *its* philosophical voice, *its* contribution to philosophy, one that is fully sufficient in its own right. Music is not *other* than knowledge. The production of concepts—which Deleuze considered the true vocation of philosophy—must emphatically include the production of musical concepts, and the pages that follow initiate this production, constructing a plane of musical thought that—finally—begins to force musical thought itself in the direction music has always excelled: to break free from the weight of structural doxa, from the analytical reductions that capture and overcode the infinite becomings of musical expression, to release instead the full intensity of the thought of sound. To sound the virtual can mean only this: the actualization of unheard ideas, decoded from the infinite flows of musical expression.