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ABSTRACT: The following study represents work-in-progress. In
this preliminary study I will explore the topic of subject-object
dualism as it arises in musical analysis. My work is strongly
influenced by Martin Heidegger's "fundamental ontology," which he
presents in his important philosophical work, *Being and Time*
[1927].(1) I will argue that Heidegger's critique of Rene Descartes'
systematic reduction of intellectual certainty to a fundamental "first
fact of knowledge"--the famous *cogito, ergo sum*--offers us a
useful guide in the consideration of dualism as it occurs in musical
analysis. Heidegger's notion of destructuring (*Destruktion*) will
prove to be especially valuable in investigating this problem.   The
exploration of subject-object dualism will then lead to consideration
of musical understanding and musical meaning, and concepts derived
from the writings of Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer will be
employed as I suggest a number of preliminary solutions to problems
that will arise in the discussion of these issues.

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1. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and
Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).
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PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUND
[1] By the term "subject-object dualism," I mean the separation that
occurs--however tacitly--whenever we approach a piece of music as
an object in some world "out there," an object distinct from ourselves
as perceiving and conceiving subjects. It is probably safe to say that
in our analysis of works we tend to assume this subject-object
distinction; while we are mostly not at all clear on what the specific
nature of the musical object is, we nevertheless proceed as if that

problem can be "bracketed" in analytical discussion.(2) As the Polish phenomenologist Roman Ingarden has shown, however, the ontological status of the musical work is a rather complicated philosophical question; our tacit acceptance of a musical work as an object may be disrupted, for example, when we engage questions of variant performances of a single work (Is the work its performance?) or various editions of the score (Is the work its score?).(3)

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2. Cartesian dualism is sometimes discussed in terms of a mind-body, or mind-world split. For discussions of subject-object dualism as it arises in the consideration of music, see F. Joseph Smith's chapter, "Cartesian Theory and Musical Science," in his *The Experiencing of Musical Sound: Prelude to a Phenomenology of Music* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1979), 119-42; as well as his "Music Theory and the History of Ideas," in F. Joseph Smith, ed. *In Search of Musical Method* (London: Gordon and Breach, 1976), 125-49. See also Thomas Clifton, "Music as Constituted Object," in *In Search of Musical Method*, 73-98 and Lawrence Ferrara, "Phenomenology as a Tool for Musical Analysis," *The Musical Quarterly* 70/3 (1984): 355-73.
3. Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of its Identity*, trans. A. Czerniawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). A helpful summary of Ingarden's essay is provided in Edward Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Linclon: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 441-43. Ingarden's arguments certainly merit far more careful consideration than the scope of this paper allows; I hope here merely to offer a sense of what some of the questions are that surround the discussion of the musical object.

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[2] Ingarden thinks of the musical work as an "intentional object," by which he means that it is an object for me and towards which my consciousness is directed. Phenomenologists tend to hold that the notion of intentionality, first proposed by Franz Brentano but most often associated with the work of Edmund Husserl, transforms the Cartesian subject-object split in an important way.(4) For Husserl, consciousness is always consciousness of something; there is no subject without an object. Likewise, there are no objects independent of subjects. Thus, intentionality places the subject and object in a richly interdependent relationship.

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4. For a clear account of Husserl's position and on the historical and intellectual context in which it arose, see David Woodruff Smith and Ronald McIntyre, *Husserl and Intentionality: A Study of Mind, Meaning, and Language* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1982). For a general introduction to Husserl's philosophy and the phenomenological tradition, see Joseph J. Kockelmans, ed., *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and its Interpretation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967). Don Ihde offers a summary of intentionality in his *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), Chapter 3 especially. While Ihde addresses the topic of sound generally--and consequently music constitutes only one aspect of his study--his book provides a valuable introduction to phenomenological thought and method.

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[3] Husserl also distinguishes between the usual ways we have of thinking about things in the world, which he calls the "natural attitude," and the "phenomenological attitude." The phenomenological attitude entails "bracketing"--that is, setting aside in full consciousness of doing so--our usual theories and ways of

accounting for things in the act of perception; focus is placed on the phenomenon of our conscious experience itself. Husserl conceived of phenomenology as a method that was applicable to many disciplines, and indeed, in the years following the publication of Husserl's central texts (*Logical Investigations* [1900, 1901], *Ideas I* [1913], and *Cartesian Meditations* [1931]), a number of scholars have adopted a phenomenological approach in a wide variety of fields. In their application of the phenomenological method, music theorists have tended to bracket our usual theories and analytical methods, coaxing the reader to hear the music in a fresh manner; and understandably the emphasis in these studies often seems to fall on the perceptual experience of the music itself, and especially on the temporal dimension of that experience.(5)   But despite the central notion of intentionality, phenomenologists tend to preserve the conception of the musical work as an object, even if the phenomenological method reveals it to be a richer object than we might have previously imagined.

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5. See, for example, Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); David Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology,
and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986): 327-92; and Judy Lochhead, "Temporal Structure in Recent Music," in F. Joseph Smith, ed., *Understanding the Musical Experience* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1989), 121-65.
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[4] Heidegger was assistant to Husserl in Freiburg during the 1920-23 period, and his writing in the mid to late 1920s is sometimes thought to constitute an extension of the Husserlian project; in fact, Heidegger himself describes one aspect of his work during this period as "hermeneutic phenomenology." Many philosophers, however, hold that Heidegger's work breaks with Husserl's project in important ways.(6) One way in which Heidegger breaks with Husserl's work is by subjecting the phenomenological attitude itself-- and, consequently, the Cartesian subject/object split--to phenomenological scrutiny. But in order to understand Heidegger's critique of Descartes--and by extention, Husserl--it is important first to survey the broader concerns Heidegger addresses in Being and Time.

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6. Hubert L. Dreyfus, in his *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary of Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), explores this issue in detail (see especially pp. 46-54). Dreyfus's position is that "Heidegger succeeds in taking over Husserl's definition of phenomenology and totally transforming it for his own ends, making 'phenomenology' mean exactly the opposite of Husserl's proposed method for spelling out the intentional contents of his own belief system and thereby arriving at indubitable evidence" (30).
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[5] One of the central arguments Heidegger makes in *Being and Time* is that the Western philosophical tradition has "forgotten" the question of being.(7) Philosophers have tended to think of being as if it were a substance; we ask the question in the form "What is being?" But Heidegger sees the question as something more like "How is being?" This way of formulating the question seems strange to us, and Heidegger argues that this is because in many ways our language itself participates in this "forgetfulness of being." Heidegger would like to retrieve what he views as the all-important question of being, but in order to accomplish this he has to overcome what he takes to be fundamental biases that he sees as embedded

within the philosophical tradition, within the language that that
tradition, and within Western culture generally.

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7. In the following paragraphs I offer a much simplied overview of
some of the important issues in *Being and Time*. Far more
detailed expositions of Heidegger's work can be found in Dreyfus,
Being-in-the-World; Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on
Heidegger's Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970);
and John Richardson, *Existential Epistemology: A Heideggerian
Critique of the Cartesian Project* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).
For the purposes of this study, I am avoiding the use of the standard
Heideggerian terms (*Dasein*, *Zuhandenheit*, *Vorhandenheit*,
sein bei, *Mitsein*, and so on); the use of this specialized
vocabulary would only unnecessarily complicate the brief
consideration of Heidegger's ideas that the scope of this study
allows.
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[6] In order to get to the question of being, then, Heidegger
"destructures" the tradition; that is, he attempts to bring to light the
underlying assumptions that generally go unexamined in the
philosophical discourse. These assumptions, according to Heidegger,
are so commonly held and so fundamental to our way of thinking
about things that they are almost completely transparent to us; we are
generally unaware of their presence in our thinking. But if we can
tease out these assumptions, we can begin to see how our thinking is
over-determined by these assumptions, and how this over-
determination closes off other kinds of solutions to certain central
philosophical problems than those commonly held within the Western
tradition. Heidegger pursues three basic strategies for disrupting our
assumptions: he offers detailed critiques of the tradition; he pursues
his infamous word etymologies; and he focusses attention on our
everyday ways of coping in the world (this last aspect, and especially
Heidegger's discussions of *Angst* and *Sorge*, has often been
interpreted as existentialist).

[7] It is, then, in the context of retrieving the question of being that
Heidegger focusses attention of the subject-object split, especially as
it is asserted by Descartes in his *Discourse on Method* [1637] and
Meditations on First Philosophy [1641]. Descartes sought the
basis of absolute intellectual certainty; he employed a method of
doubting everything in order to come down to the foundation for all
certain knowledge. In Part Four of his *Discourse on Method*,
Descartes comes to the conclusion that while he could doubt all
knowledge gained both by the senses and by rational means, the one
thing he could not doubt was the very fact that he was doubting.
This reduction leads to the famous *cogito, ergo sum*--I think,
therefore I am.(8) From this first principle of certain knowledge,
Descartes rebuilds his understanding of the world through a rational
methodological procedure.

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8. Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations of First
Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett
Publishing, 1980), 17.
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[8] Heidegger finds in Descartes' first principle a strong statement of
something he takes to be an assumption in all Western philosophy
since Plato: we tend to privilege rational procedures in acquiring
knowledge over other possible ones. But in Descartes especially, the
subject, certain of its own consciousness, is to be distinguished from
the world that this subject places before itself as an object. This
subject-object distinction is taken as self-evident--becoming thus,

transparent--and forms the foundation for all knowledge. In our daily lives, we can readily detect the presence of notions like "scientific method" and "objectivity" in our assumptions about knowledge and its acquisition. In dealing with a situation "objectively," we set our rational selves over against whatever we mean to investigate. In terms of Heidegger's larger concern with the question of being, the result of the subject-object split is that we tend to place being before us as if it too were an object--some kind of entity or state that we could explore objectively. But Heidegger's argument is precisely that being is not such an entity at all, and the reason why such a statement seems so peculiar is because the notion that it should be an object is so deeply engrained in our usual ways of thinking that we find it difficult to imagine things any other way.

[9] Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" is an attempt not so much to answer, but rather to raise the question of being in a way that avoids the assumptions that the tradition imposes on us. In pursuing this goal, Heidegger turns to our everyday coping in the world around us. Heidegger argues that in our daily lives we interact with the things around us not so much as objects in the Cartesian sense, but rather as things that are situated within a vast network of contexts. When I type this paper (or as you read it), the computer is not so much an object in front of me as much as it is a tool within the larger context of what I am trying accomplish by writing the paper. It resides in a context with the printer, the coffee pot, and a large number of things in my office that are typically viewed in the context of some task at hand. It is only when something happens that interrupts my work in some way--the screen locks or the power goes out, say--that I look at the computer as an object. If I am qualified to do so (and I am not), I might open the computer up and have a look at the circuit boards. But whatever I do, the disruption of my work transforms my conception of the computer; and if I attend to this shift, I will find not only that the computer becomes an object for me, but also that it was not really an object in the same sense before the disruption. The argument that Heidegger wants to make is not that philosophy should abandon the subject-object split; this, of course is impossible. Rather, Heidegger wants to show that this kind of Cartesian dualism is not the foundational fact of understanding; the subject-object split is instead derivative of another aspect he wants to uncover: being-in-the-world.

MUSICAL OBJECTS
[10] As was mentioned above, music theorists and analysts tend to assume that the musical work is an object, even if it is a richly faceted one.(9) We have a tendency to "measure" works according to objective standards: on the most fundamental level we speak of intervals, rhythms, or timbres--all aspects of the physical make-up of sounds that can be measured empirically. Other aspects of music that are less physically tangible--aspects such as form, harmony, counterpoint, voice leading, and motive--are sometimes thought of as if they were physical properties that operate according to certain kinds of laws. While the notion that the major triad is the "chord of nature" or Schoenberg's notion that dissonances are merely remote consonances are mostly viewed with suspicion by today's theorist, the scholarly literature is replete with unsubstantiated assumptions that, for example, tonality acts like a musical force that creates a hierarchical relationship among tones.

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9. David Lewin ("Music Theory") makes a similar point, though he casts it as "distinguishing X from Y" (375). Lewin goes on to argue that while such dualism "in thinking about perception does not in itself pose a danger for music theory," the "X/Y paradigm" is less useful in describing the relationship to music in which composers or performers participate. This latter type of experience is discussed

very much in terms of what Heideggerians might call "involvement,"
though Lewin himself does not use this term.
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[11] Now it is not so much that I would want to challenge such
fundamental notions in the current discourse as form or tonality. To
have such shared assumptions is part of what constitutes participating
in a culture. These shared assumptions, it seems, are necessary and
unavoidable. But to the extent that they are shared, they also
become transparent to us.(10) In his *Truth and Method* [1962],
Heidegger student Hans-Georg Gadamer calls such shared
assumptions "prejudices," arguing for the retrieving of an
understanding of the positive role such prejudices play against an
Enlightenment conception that all prejudices need to be erased.(11)
Prejudices cannot ever be eliminated--there is no way to retrieve, in
historical writing for example, the past "as it really was"--but
prejudices can be understood and accounted for in interpretation.(12)

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10. This principle underlies Thomas Kuhn's writing on the history of
science; see his influential *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,
2nd rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
Heidegger's perspective has had an enormous influence on French
philosophy since the Second World War; one can hardly imagine the
work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jacques Derrida,
and Michel Foucault without *Being and Time*.
11. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans
Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum,
1991), 271-85 esp.
12. For a detailed discussion of Gadamer's philosophical
hermeneutics in the context of musical scholarship, see Thomas
Christensen, "Music Theory and its Histories," in Christopher Hatch
and David Bernstein, eds., *Music Theory and the Exploration of the
Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9-39.
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[12] If we are to follow Heidegger's model, we need to destructure
certain aspects of our discourse to tease out the prejudices. As a
very simple example, let us take a focal concern of many music
theorists: tonality. At the undergraduate level, we teach tonality as if
there were a wide consensus among us on what we mean by the
term, and I think in a very general sense there is. Disagreements do
arise, however, and the famous Schenker-Schoenberg polemic is one
of many that could be cited, both historically and in the current
literature. But when we discuss tonality, we tend to speak in
theoretical terms; that is, we speak of tonal movement as abstract and
not as the exclusive property of any particular work. One says
"dominant tends to resolve to tonic," or "a tonic chord may be
embellished by a subdomiant chord over a tonic pedal in the bass."
Many of us teaching from a Schenkerian orientation teach the
students a four-stage "phrase model," according to which the
sequence tonic-predominant-dominant-tonic becomes the basic
paradigm for harmonic progression and tonal prolongation.

[13] At least once each term, however, a student writes a progression
such as I - ii - iii - IV, plays it at the keyboard, and wonders what is
"wrong" with the progression. To this student it sounds fine, and if
the course were devoted to writing music in the style of Lionel
Ritchie it would be fine; but that is not the kind of music that is a
central concern in such a course, and this cuts right to the heart of
the problem. Theories of tonality do not describe properties that a
particular musical object has in isolation; they describe how that
piece relates to other pieces. If you have a theory of tonality, it has
to arise from actual or potential pieces of music. When we teach
tonality in music from the common-practice period, each example is

viewed--often tacitly--against the practice of composers in that particular tradition. I do not mean that we refer to specific musical examples (which we may or may not do), but rather that we tacitly refer to a body of music with which we are to some degree--often to a great degree--familiar. Thus, understanding and meaning arise in tonal analysis only when one "situates" a particular example within a not-always-consciously circumscribed literature. To the student who writes the Lionel Ritchie progression, the answer is not "this is a bad progression," but rather "good progression, wrong style."

[14] It is useful--and sometimes essential--to discuss tonality as if it could be "disembodied" from real pieces that reside with myriad other works within cultural traditions. This kind of thinking, though, has a tendency to reinforce the notion that a musical work is a kind of self-contained object, and analyses according to this idea can tend to reinforce the idea that such an object has certain properties that can be duly noted and interpreted. Such "objectification" of the musical experience is not restricted to the harmonic analysis of tonal music, however, and could be uncovered in music-theoretical writing addressing any of the aspects of music mentioned above. I would argue, however, that this is not really the way we understand music in the most fundamental sense, and thus, it is not ultimately in these terms that music becomes meaningful for us. Following Heidegger, I want to argue that "objective" theoretical thinking is derivitive of a more fundamental kind of musical experience.

MUSICAL WORLDS
[15] If there is a mode of experiencing music that is more fundamental than the usual rational one to which we most often attend--that is, if there is a mode of musical experience that corresponds to being-in-the-world--What is it? or perhaps better, How is it? I argued above that when we think of a particular piece in terms of its tonality, for example, we are really situating that piece within a literature; and when we situate a piece in this way, we are not necessarily conscious of doing so. Thus, what I am proposing is not simply a modified Heideggerian style theory in which one would consciously situate works within specified literatures. I am also not arguing, that in hearing a piece of music, say a Beethoven string quartet, we consciously say to ourselves: "Ahah! This bit is just like a passage from Haydn, and that other bit is very like a Mozart passage I know." This is, of course, something we all do to some extent; but this kind of intertextuality is also not what I am getting at. I am instead arguing that we never hear the Beethoven string quartet in isolation from other works; or perhaps it would be better to say, we never *prefer* an interpretation of the Beethoven in isolation from other works (we can, after all, imagine a culture that prefers to hear works in isolation from all others, but Western culture is not that way). The question now arises: If these other works are present in our understanding a particular work, and if those other works are not present for the most part through quotation or allusion, how are they present?

[16] Particular pieces of music are situated within what I shall term "musical worlds." The musical world of a piece is a number of other works that form a kind of background--a body of other pieces that create a purely musical context for some particular piece. The musical world of a piece is usually not something of which we are conscious when we listen, but is the product of our cumulative experience in music. The exact pieces that make up a musical world could never be exhaustively listed; in a certain sense they are what is closest to us in our musical experience, but by virtue of this they are also what is most difficult to articulate in a conscious manner: musical worlds are transparent.

[17] The ways in which we typically go about training ourselves and

others in music, however, betray the underlying presence of musical worlds. It is fairly clear that we operate in most instances according to the assumption that in order to understand music, one needs to know a lot of music. This assumption is typically tacit until some circumstance disrupts it and brings it to our attention. For example, if I am teaching a class in harmony--to return to the example used earlier--and am faced with a few students in the class who know very little Western art music from the common-practice period, it becomes very difficult to play a particularly unlikely harmonic progression and say: "Now use your ears; does this sound like something you might hear in Mozart?" Not knowing the literature to which I am referring, the only honest answer the student can give is: "How should I know?" On the other hand, those students who have more experience with that literature can immediately answer "No" to this question, though they may have to pause to figure out why the progression does not work according to the theoretical principles discussed in class. In the first instance the musical world in which I am asking the student to situate the progression is unavailable to him/her; in the second instance the student cannot satisfactorily situate the progression within the musical world that I specify. Similar instances abound in teaching performance and composition. In teaching jazz or rock improvisation on the guitar, for instance, it is almost impossible for the student to make any progress if s/he is unwilling to dedicate his/herself to listening to hours of music in the style; the student must build an appropriate musical world in which to maneuver when improvising.

[18] In many ways much of this is self-evident; but when differences arise between theories or analyses, the difference can often be traced to a lack of clarity with regard to the musical worlds that form the background of each opposing point of view. To use a brief example, many of the differences between the harmonic theories of Schenker and Schoenberg can be traced to the fact that the two theorists were generalizing across two different bodies of music. As is well known, Schenker restricted his analyses for the most part to pieces he considered to be masterworks. Schoenberg, too, considered those pieces; but Schoenberg included the music of Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler, and many others (including himself). It might even be said that Schoenberg extended his generalizations to pieces that had not yet been composed (or pieces that might have been composed). It is, thus, inevitable that differences should arise in their respective theories. The problems enter when we suppose that there must exist one single unifying theory of tonality. Tonality is not something akin to a physical property; unlike Earth's gravity, tonality is not the same for all terrestrial places and times. Tonality is a way of situating pieces within a--perhaps extremely large--group of pieces. This being the case, the question is not "How does tonality work?" but rather "How does tonality work with regard to these pieces?"

[19] Returning, then, to the subject/object split: I am arguing that at the most fundamental level we do not experience a piece of music as a self-contained object. A piece is rather more like a location within a rich network of other pieces in our musical experience. *Musical understanding arises when we are able to situate a particular piece within a musical world, and musical meaning arises as we appreciate the particular way in which the work is situated.* The work is not so much an isolated point as much as it is a location of gathering together. We may explain aspects of this gathering together in terms of tonality, form, row structure, or motivic development, but such descriptions will always be derivative objectifications of a more basic kind of musical experience. By making such a claim I am not coming out against dualism in analysis; I am instead arguing that dualism is already once removed from what is most fundamental in musical experience. Musical analysis always presumes a musical

world, even if the analyst rarely articulates this transparent background.

[20] A number of questions remain to be addressed with regard to the position outlined above. For example, Lydia Goehr has recented dealt at some length with the notion of the musical work in Western art music.(13) She traces the origins to this way of thinking about music back to the beginnings of the nineteenth century. There are a number of other kinds of music, both non-Western and Western, for which the idea of a musical "work" does not apply. In rock music, for example, it is difficult to think in the traditional terms of "pivotal works." In a tradition that does not privilege the notion of the work, how does this difference impact the musical world of the listener as sketched above? Hermeneutic positions such as the one I am forwarding are also often subject to charges of relativism, subjectivism, and solipsism. Critics might question whether, for instance, we each carry around our own musical worlds, or whether we carry around one or many musical worlds. How do our musical worlds change as our experience grows? Such questions are the topic of my on-going work on this philosphical problem. I welcome suggestions and discussion from interested readers.

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13. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). See also Patricia Carpenter, "The Musical Object," *Current Musicology* 5 (1967): 56-87.

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