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An Alternative Account of the Ontology of Musical Works: Defending Musical Stage Theory

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ABSTRACT. In this paper I present a novel account for the ontology of musical works: Musical Stage Theory according to which the musical work is the performance. I propose this account as an alternative to mainstream and well accepted views on the nature of musical works with a specific intent: suggesting a way to analyse the identity of musical works which gives due relevance to musical practices and, at the same time, is grounded on a solid ontological basis. To this end, in the first part of the paper I address how Musical Stage Theory deals with the sonic/performative dimension. A dimension which, in a sense, has remained as an afterthought in alternative theories. As for the ontological ground, I get inspiration for my approach from an independently motivated move proposed by Ted Sider in relation to the ontology of space-time: switching the focus from four-dimensional worms to instantaneous stages while maintaining a perdurantist approach. I suggest carrying out a parallel replacement in the ontology of musical works: the musical work is a stage that stands in a counterpart relation to other stages. In the course of the paper I describe the points of contact between my view and Sider's, the inevitable adaptations that should be done in order to apply his view to the case of music, and the benefits which result from this theoretical bridge. The application of Sider's stage view to the ontology of musical works produces some interesting results in the identification of musical works with entities uncontroversially accessible by the senses. In addition, it proves to be a useful tool to explain the different linguistic attitudes we bear in relation to musical works.

i. Introduction

In this paper I present a novel account for the ontology of musical works: Musical Stage Theory. I propose this account as an alternative to main-

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stream and well accepted views on the nature of musical works. In particular, my intent is that of defending a view of musical works which gives due relevance to musical practices and, at the same time, is grounded on a solid ontological basis. According to Musical Stage Theory musical works *are* performances. Every performance is thus a different work, even if, as I will explain, the act of grouping performances together according to a certain relationship also plays a role in our everyday notion of musical works.

In the first part of the paper I address how Musical Stage Theory deals with the sonic/performative side of music. In order to do so, I take as my starting point the intuitive *desideratum* of epistemological grasp (Grasp), namely that direct acquaintance with the sonic aspect of a musical work is a necessary condition for grasping its nature. As I will explain, this *desideratum* can straightforwardly be accommodated within Musical Stage Theory, whereas it proves to be at least *prima facie* problematic for the mainstream views in musical ontology, notably structuralism and perdurantism. Musical Stage Theory, in fact, gives a promising prominence to the sonic/performative dimension. A dimension which, in a sense, has remained as an afterthought in alternative theories.¹

Later in the paper, I discuss the details of Musical Stage Theory. My development of this account takes inspiration from a move proposed by Ted Sider in the ontology of space-time: switching the focus from four-dimensional worms to instantaneous stages while, at the same time, maintaining a perdurantist approach. I suggest carrying out the same replacement in the ontology of musical works. As explained in section 2.3 below, musical works are best considered as stages that stand in a special counterpart-like relation to other stages, namely what I shall call a Repeatability-relation.

In the course of the paper I describe the points of contact between my view and Sider's, the inevitable adaptations that should be done, and the benefits which result from this theoretical bridge. I conclude the paper by replying to some concerns which may arise due to the revisionary ideas

¹ I am referring here to mainstream views such as the type-token theory, especially in the sonic interpretation of it given by Julian Dodd (see Dodd 2000, 2007). Also contextualism and action theories, however, even if to a lesser extent than the sonicists, fail to fully acknowledge the relevance of the practical act of performing (see Levinson 1980 and D. Davies 2004).

put forward by Musical Stage Theory. In particular, Musical Stage Theory needs to undergo some revisions when confronting the *desiderata* of (Creat) creatability and (Rep) repeatability. As I will explain, I believe that the epicycles needed by Musical Stage Theory do not damage the theoretical benefits it brings.

2. Musical Stage Theory and the Stage View

2.1. Relevance of (Grasp)

The main claim of Musical Stage Theory can be summarised as follows:

Musical Stage Theory: the musical work is a stage/performance connected by a privileged relationship to other appropriate stages/performances.

According to Musical Stage Theory, then, the performance *is* the work. From the viewpoint of this account, the performative aspect of music supplies the essential focus for any adequate ontology of musical works. In this sense, Musical Stage Theory provides an ontologically straightforward reflection of a fundamental intuitive insight in musical epistemology: the idea that direct acquaintance with the sonic aspect of a work is necessary for its appreciation. This is so, of course, because, being identical with performances, musical works are sonic events of a particular kind and are thus immediately available to acoustic inspection - or, more generally, they are available to the sort of epistemic contact that is pre-theoretically required for our access to songs, symphonies, and sonatas.

This outcome of Musical Stage Theory is in striking contrast with the sort of indirect epistemic contact that is recognized by the main ontological views currently on the market. For instance, when type-token theories strive to account for (Grasp), they at best posit a kind of mediated (and arguably not well defined) relation of hearing a work-type 'through' its tokens (see Kivy 1993; Dodd 2007; S. Davies 2001). Indeed, even materialistically oriented views such as Musical Perdurantism struggle with (Grasp), since works-qua-fusions are not themselves perceivable in their

entirety.² Nominalists and action theorists meet similar issues (see Goodman 1968 and D. Davies 2004): neither a class of performances nor the composer's actions can be objects of acquaintance on the part of the audience.³

2.2. Ontological Soundness: Comparison with Sider's Stage View

With the aim of providing a sound and consistent ontological ground to my view, I appeal to Ted Sider's independently motivated theory about space-time: the Stage View (see Sider 1996, 1997). The revisionary approach provided by the Stage View can be applied to the analysis of the ontology of musical works with interesting results. Its novel account on the topic of identity can in fact give a reading of the identity of musical works which accommodates an analysis of the nature of works of music which is both nearer to actual musical practices and, at the same time, grounded on a solid ontological basis.

The analogies between the structure of Musical Stage Theory and Sider's account of persistence are various: (i) musical works are spatiotemporal stages just as continuants are in Sider's view; (ii) stages are connected by a unity relation which is interestingly parallel to Sider's I-relation; (iii) our linguistic practices about music systematically shift towards forms of

² I won't dwell too much on the shortcomings of the rivals of my account and focus on the positive side of the view. For more details on this last objection, see Dodd 2000, 2002, and 2004.

³ I feel that a specification is needed here. It can be argued that the strategy of privileging one *desideratum* over the others merely by appeal to intuitions is worrying. If all parties to metaphysical disputes weigh the *desiderata* differently by appeal to intuition, the risk is of reaching an impasse: each of us ends up with 'one point' but nobody gets the 'full score'. My reply to this is twofold: first of all I do not intend to reject the relevance of other *desiderata* in respect to (Grasp). The recognition of musical works as creatable and repeatable entities is indisputable. In addition, the greater amount of attention devoted to (Grasp) is not justified merely by intuitions. In order for intuitions to be a strong enough basis for claiming the relevance of (Grasp), it should be the case that everyone - or at least the majority of people - share the intuition that in order to have epistemic grasp on the work it is necessary and sufficient to listen to it. But this is not the case: many people, for example, believe it sufficient to read the score in order to fully understand the work. This common belief is exactly what I am aiming to counteract: the focus on (Grasp) is justified by the intention of highlighting how the acoustical aspect of the musical works is necessary for grasping its nature.

discourse, in a manner similar to Sider's; (iv) elements of contextualism are embedded in our linguistic attitudes as well as in the individuation of stages and counterparts. In the following sections I will address these points and delineate a comparison between Sider's theory and Musical Stage Theory.

Sider puts forward the Stage View in dialectic confrontation with other theories in the philosophy of space-time, namely endurantism and perdurantism (see Sider 1996, p. 433).⁴ The Stage View defends the claim that objects are instantaneous spatiotemporal stages. They are not three-dimensional entities which are "wholly present" at all times at which they exist' (Sider 1997, p. 3), as endurantists contend; yet, they are also not four-dimensional continuant objects which perdure through time as in the four-dimensionalist claim.

Just as Sider identifies objects such as persons with stages, my claim is that a work of music is the single spatiotemporal stage of the performance. As a preliminary note, it should be said that the application of Sider's view to Musical Stage Theory does not have the presumption of creating an exact parallel between the two accounts. Rather, the Stage View should be considered a methodological tool for Musical Stage Theory, not a mirror image of it. This can be observed in the fact that identifying the stage with a temporally extended performance does not allow Musical Stage Theory to be grounded on instantaneous stages like the ones Sider grounds his theory on. In fact, given the fact that performances are extended in time, they cannot be identified with instantaneous stages. But I believe this does not constitute a serious obstacle to the structure of the theory. Indeed, in parallel with Katherine Hawley's interpretation of the Stage View, a salient temporal interval may well be established, which allows to set the boundaries of the stage according to our interests (see Hawley 2001, pp. 59 *et seq.*). A singular stage, in the sense relevant for Musical Stage Theory,

⁴ Endurantists describe objects as enduring or three-dimensional entities which are "wholly present" at all times at which they exist' (Sider 1997, p. 3). Enduring objects do not have distinct temporal parts, instead they occupy in their entirety the spatiotemporal regions which compose their lives. On the other hand, perdurantism adopts a four-dimensional approach and claims that objects persist through time by perduring, that is by having different temporal parts. Objects are thus described by four-dimensionalists as four-dimensional worms made up of the sum of different spatiotemporal stages.

can thus be described as the sum of all the instantaneous stages that constitute a sound event, the salience of which is determined by the complete performance, from the first to the last note prescribed by the composition.

2.3. *Shifts of Reference*

The comparison with Sider's theory is particularly promising for Musical Stage Theory since it suggests an encouraging alley for overcoming certain *prima facie* shortcomings of the latter. According to Musical Stage Theory the musical work is the performance. Yet, in our practices we are used to connecting together different works-as-performances (from now on I will call work-as-performance the musical work as intended in Musical Stage Theory to distinguish it from other acceptance of the term 'work') and to referring to them under a single concept of 'work'.

Interestingly, Sider grants a similar shift when talking about persons and stages: 'The Stage View should be restricted to the claim that *typical* references to persons are to person stages. But, in certain circumstances, such as when we take the timeless perspective, reference is to worms rather than stages.' (Sider 1996, p. 448). This shift from talk about stages to apparent talk about worms is dictated by the interests of the speakers. Sider gives the following example: Jane wants to reach the farm and she asks how many roads she must cross to get there. In order to avoid misunderstandings, our answer should be 'three' even if the 'three' roads are connected miles away with each other. Instead of referring to the road, we refer to road segments to facilitate our talk (see Sider 1996, pp. 440-441). The reference to the four-dimensional worm or to the instantaneous stage is thus dictated by the frame of reference adopted by the speaker at the moment of utterance. The consideration of which temporal stage is the one the speaker is predicating on is relativised to frames of reference, too. The 'harmless indeterminacy' (Sider 1997, p. 199) which is implied by this relativisation involves a contextualist analysis of the truth value and of the target of the speaker's utterance.

For Musical Stage Theory acknowledging a similar shift of reference is important to explain the different linguistic attitudes we bear in relation to musical works. In particular, according to Musical Stage Theory, this shift happens between the level of discourse about stages-performances

to discourse ostensibly directed towards a more general concept of a musical work. In order to start building this wider account of musical work it is thus worth addressing the issue of how we can group performances together.

2.4. Grouping Performances Together: the R-Relation

Every work-as-performance is related to certain other stages through an ontologically important relation: the Repeatability-relation (or R-relation). In this sense, the common idea of repeatability is here understood not according to the traditional one-many relationship postulated by type-token theories, but instead as the interconnection between performances themselves. What determines the conditions of repeatability is the compliance with the requirements which inform the R-relation. In this respect, then, Musical Stage Theory follows Christy Mag Uidhir in his proposal of replacing the standard notion of repeatability with the notion of ‘relevant similarity’ (see Mag Uidhir 2013, pp. 165-196). His revisionary view is driven by the aim of preserving the ordinary assumptions of repeatable artworks inside a materialistic framework. For there to be repeatable and concrete artworks ‘*repeatability* must just be *relevant similarity*, such that, to be a *repeatable* artwork (or *F-work*) just is to be an individual and distinct, concrete artwork (or *F-work*) to which multiple other individual and distinct, concrete artworks (or *F-works*) may be *relevantly similar*’ (see Mag Uidhir 2013, p. 196).

The aforementioned R-relation between stages can be individuated by three main features which, in their articulation, show that it is possible to individuate different ways to group performances together. The features of the R-relation are: (i) a causal relation which links the works-as-performances together and which, at the same time, connects the works-as-performances to the relevant act of composition, (ii) the intentionality of performers to play precisely that performance, and (iii) a sufficient degree of similarity between the works-as-performances. These requirements can be considered a parallel of the unity relation in Sider’s Stage View: in building the Stage View, Sider employs multiple unity relations in order to explain how objects can display different kinds of identity relations through time. The example provided by Sider is that of the coin

and the lump of copper: when a coin gets melted the *coin I-relation* does not hold between the coin and the lump that results from the melting process. What still holds, instead, is the *lump-of-matter I-relation* (see Sider 1996, p. 443). I will come back to the contextual features embedded in our reference to musical works in the next section.

The (i) causal relation implies that we can recognise two performances, X and Y, as performances related to the same act of composition as long as they result from the attempt at following the instructions provided within a given act of composition. For example, Barenboim's and Michelangeli's performances of Chopin's *Sonata n.1* can both be inscribed within the group of performances related to the same act of composition because they both respect the instructions provided by Chopin for his *Sonata n. 1*. The causal relation between performance and composition can be weaker, if it depends only on the sum of constraints indicated by the composer, or stronger if it takes into account also the influence of performing traditions in vogue at the time. In the example above, the causal relation between a performance X and Chopin's *Sonata n.1* can be weaker if it keeps into account only Chopin's prescriptions, or stronger if it refers also to the performing style in vogue at Chopin's time. I believe that, at this stage, a weaker account of the causal relation which requires only the respect for the work-determining instructions is enough to determine the R-relation between performances. Further elements of consideration will then be introduced by the other requirements.

According to requirement (ii), the connection between performances should involve the performer's intentions: the performer intends to initiate a sonic event precisely by virtue of the causal connection in (i). This specification is essential not only to support the causal relation described above, but also to rule out those cases of unintentional performances such as the scenario of the wind blowing through the canyon (see Wolterstorff 1980, p. 74). It is here that the performer's role comes to the fore. This, in fact, does not rule out the possibility for the performer to give a personal contribution to the rendition of the composition, as long as her aim is always that of converting into sounds that composition and not a new work.

Lastly, the (iii) similarity which should occur among the stages related by the R-relation implies that all performances originating from the same

composition should share a sonic (harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic) profile. Of course, a certain degree of variability within the sonic profile of these performances is allowed. Dynamics, tempo, timbral shadings are all elements which cannot be prescribed in an unequivocal way by the work-determining instructions. In this respect, performers have the possibility to adjust the sonic rendition of the composition according to their own preferences. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that if the identification of a performance as authentic were based only on the similarity that it bears in relation to other performances of the same composition, this would easily lead to a slippery slope scenario. Variations in some of the essential parameters of the composition, no matter how slight, could result in unacceptable discrepancies between its first and last performances. Slippery slope cases can be avoided by taking into account also requirement (i) and (ii) in order to ground the R-relation on a more solid footing.

2.5 The Work-as-Construct

The individuation of groupings of performances, as we have seen, calls into question many elements in addition to the sonic profile we can perceive by listening to a performance. All these proveniential/historical features contribute to the formation of a concept of 'musical work' which seems to come to the fore in our linguistic practices. So, when I say 'I enjoyed Y's work yesterday night', I am apparently referring to a performance, i.e. to a stage. Yet, in other cases we adopt a 'timeless perspective' as when we say, for example, 'Y's work was performed in the late 19th century in front of Queen Victoria'. For, in this case, what is at issue is a talk directed towards a collection of R-related stages: a suitable stage/performance of it took place in front of a powerful monarch.

In Sider's analogous account of our discourse about objects, this consists in a shift from instantaneous stages to an aggregate of stages, where even the aggregate is recognised as an entity. My claim in this respect is more radical than Sider's: the shift which occurs in the ontology of musical work happens between the work-as-performance and what I will call from now on the work-as-construct. Unlike Sider, in fact, I do not consider the secondary level which is the apparent object of our linguistic practices as an entity to which they refer. The only entities which populate the onto-

logy of musical works are works-as-performances. The work-as-construct is a collection of information and notions we have in respect to the work which allows us to have a certain level of knowledge about it. Yet, I do not consider it as an entity which deserves the ontological characterisation as work. It is rather a linguistic and communicative tool which is useful in our linguistic exchanges and which allows us to understand each other and to have a common ground to refer to.

Just as in Sider's account, on the other hand, the aforementioned linguistic shift of perspective is grounded on contextually variable foundations. As for the R-relation and its features, sometimes we do not use all three requirements to name a performance or to connect it to its proveniential history. According to the frame of utterance or to the context in which the speaker is acting, different R-relations can be applied. Only the *intentionality*-R-relation, for example, can be applied when, for example, the speaker knows that the performer has the intention to play the performance X but she fails to do so because she is making too many mistakes. Or a combination of two requirements can be applied in the cases of arrangements and plagiarism. If Y is an arrangement of the work X, the performance of Y is *causally*-R-related and *similarity*-R-related to X since it is both related to the proveniential history of X and it shares similar features with X. Yet, it is not *intentionally*-R-related to X because the performer has the intention to perform an arrangement of X and not X itself. On the other hand, if the performer is playing X and X is plagiarising Y, that is, a plagiarist has published X presenting it as her own creation but X is instead plagiarising another piece, namely Y, then the performance is *intentionally*-R-related and *similarity*-R-related to X but it is *causally*-R-related to Y instead.

The articulation of the kinds of R-relation which a work-as-performance presents should not be seen as a downside for the clarity of the structure of the account. Taking into consideration the contextualist aspects inevitably implied by the analysis of the speakers interaction with musical works, in fact, also dispels some hurdles such as how to consider arrangements and plagiarism in respect to original works.

So far, I have described the main features of Musical Stage Theory. Now, I am going to address two main *prima facie* problematic issues for Musical Stage Theory: the issue of creation, and the problem of unper-

formed works.

3. Concerns and Replies

3.1. *Compliance with (Creat)*

The same shifting strategy between work-as-performance and work-as-construct can be applied for dealing with (Creat). Following Musical Stage Theory's central claim that the work is the performance, the temporal boundaries of the work are strictly speaking determined by its first and last notes. The creation and persistence of the work are indeed carried out all in the interval of the performance: a work comes into being with the playing of its first note and it persists until the last one fades away. The adoption of the shifting strategy devised above, however, allows Musical Stage Theory to provide an account of our pre-theoretic intuitions about musical creation which is compliant with ordinary beliefs.⁵ Saying 'The *Eroica* was created in 1803' means that the *Eroica* (the stage occurring now) has the tensed property 'having been created in 1803' by virtue of a previous stage S, such that (i) S has the property 'occurring in 1803', (ii) S is R-related to the present stage, and (iii) no other R-related stage occurs before.

This strategy makes it possible for the acceptance as true of the sentence 'The *Eroica* starts before the present performance's first note'. Still, this account of musical creation could still be considered unsatisfactory if, as common sense intimates, the creation of the work is identified with its act of composition and not with its first performance. Indeed, strictly speaking according to Musical Stage Theory a compositional act tout court is not a musical work. Barring cases in which an act of composition con-

⁵ Type-token theorists in particular struggle to account for (Creat). The debate surrounding the relationship between type-token and (Creat) is still open and it is not my aim to assess it in detail here. What suffices for my purposes is to note that any approach to (Creat) proposed by the type-token theory uncontroversially involves a revision of the everyday notion of (Creat). Some type-token theorists dismiss the idea of musical creation, and substitute it with explanations in terms of discovery and creativity (see Kivy 1993, p. 43 and Dodd 2000, p. 427); others, rest satisfied with an ontology of 'indicated structures' which at least bears an unclear and controversial relation to the everyday notion of composition as creation (see Levinson 1980, p. 20).

sists in a full-fledged performance, a composition is merely a set of instructions necessary to performers in order to transform it into sounds but which by itself is not sufficient to qualify as a stage/work. Reading the leaflet with the instructions to assemble a table may well be essential for giving the scattered pieces the shape and functionality of a table, yet we would not sit around the leaflet to have dinner with our friends. The same holds true for musical works: a musical work is a sum of sounds performed by respecting the instructions provided by the composer, it is not the composition itself. Nevertheless, even if it cannot be recognized as a work, the relevance of the act of composition is unquestionable: without it, it would be impossible to originate a sequence of performances, i.e. of works. Composition is thus not itself a work but it is a work *in potentia*. Musical Stage Theory can thus grant that when we say ‘The work W was created in 1850’, meaning that it was composed and not performed in that year, we are applying the expression ‘*in potentia*’ to our sentence. Whatever came to light in 1850 is, although in absence, an extensionless stage, since it is not a full-fledged performance, but it has the potentiality to become a stage as understood in the austere sense. I will come back to this issue in the next section when addressing the revisions that Musical Stage Theory needs to make regarding our linguistic attitudes towards unperformed compositions.

Is there a way to account for the commonsensical belief that the composing act ‘in some sense’ brings to life a work of music? There is, and it can be found again in the shift of reference between work-as-performance and work-as-construct. It is indeed possible to include the act of composition among the features of the work-as-construct. The composer’s action, as I said, is in fact essential for the future work-as-performance and, by itself, it gives us some information about the work.

3.2. Unperformed Works

Another concern is that, if musical works are performances, then compositions which are never performed do not have the status of musical works. The concern is legitimate: for Musical Stage Theory unperformed compositions are not musical works. They are merely potential works which can become *de facto* works as soon as they are transformed into sounds.

One could get around this worry by allowing that mental performances are works. In this way it would be possible to claim that also compositions which are never translated into sounds can be deemed musical works because they have been heard by the composer in her head or by whoever is able to ‘hear’ sounds only by reading the score. However, allowing mental performances to qualify as musical works is troublesome in certain respects. First of all, it is not obvious that every composer hears the notes of the composition in her own mind when composing. There are some cases, for example, in which the structure is too complex to be distinctly mentally reproduced even by the composer, or cases in which the composer uses patterns or sequences of numbers to build the composition, thus without hearing melodic lines in the head. And, more generally, mental renditions cannot be considered performances because they do not possess all the features which characterise the ontological profile of performances.⁶ In particular, mental performances involve neither production of sounds nor shareability. If a mental performance is heard only in the head of one person, in fact, it cannot provide interrelational information.

Still, the objection can be that, if unperformed compositions do not

⁶ I assume that the performance is an event which in turn can be understood as a fusion of zonally coinciding events or as a fusion of events connected by a dominant causal flow but spatially and/or temporally scattered. A performance is in fact divisible into temporal (e.g. the movements of a Sonata) or zonal (e.g. a performance of a band walking around the city) parts which are events themselves. As events, performances share most of the features which characterize accomplishments as described in philosophical literature (see Vendler 1957, Kenny 1963): performances (i) occur in time, (ii) have a goal, (iii) have temporal boundaries, (iv) can be complete or incomplete, (v) can be done quickly or slowly. To be considered a work, a performance should in fact be complete, from the first to the last note of the relative score, and its goal is that of providing an authentic rendition of the score itself. In addition to the features they share with general accomplishments, musical performances also possess other essential components: they include the presence of (vi) performer(s), (vii) instrument(s), (viii) an audience, and (ix) the production of sounds or, more generally, of sound waves. Performances are thus sound events but not every sound event is a performance. In order to qualify as performance, a sound event must display at least three characteristics: (i) a causal relation to an act of composition, (ii) the intentionality of the performer, and (iii) shareability, that is the possibility of being accessible and shareable. These requirements, as it is easy to see, are very similar to the features of the R-relation. This should not be surprising, since recognising a sound event as a performance is the first necessary step to group performances together.

deserve the status of work, the composer loses her valuable status as well. This objection is analogous to the one made by Levinson against the description of works as eternal and uncreated types (Levinson 1980, p. 9). For type-token theorists, claiming that works of music are not created does not result in a diminished value of the status of composers. They in fact still hold an irreplaceable task for the existence of musical works by being *discoverers* of them. My reply is along a similar line: the fact that unperformed compositions are not deemed works does not mean that the compositional process is superfluous. The choice of the set of instructions performers should comply with is the necessary first step towards the final product: the work-as-performance. Also, even if very few people are able to hear a piece of music only by reading the score – and, as I mentioned, it does not always happen – it is nevertheless true that the score provides some information about the piece even to those who are only scarcely musically literate. By reading the score it is in fact possible to know whether the piece will be short or long, which instruments it calls for, which dynamics are included (if they are indicated by the composer), whether the structure is simple or complex, and so on. For this reason, unperformed musical compositions, if not works-as-performance can be considered as part of the work-as-construct. They, or more specifically the set of instructions which is the only objective element which can be accessed, provide the audience with certain knowledge about the composition and can thus be included among the totality of elements which make up the general concept of work-as-construct.

4. Conclusion

With this paper I suggested an alternative theory for the ontology of musical works, namely the view according to which the work is the performance. The main drive behind this proposal is that of providing an account which both acknowledges the relevance of the sonic/performative aspect of musical works and which is ontologically solid.

As for the practical aspect, the identification of the work with actual performances guarantees the respect for the *desideratum* of (Grasp). It is in fact possible to have direct acquaintance with the work if the work is a single performance. The ontological ground to my view is provided by the

application to Musical Stage Theory of Sider's Stage View. Musical works can be analysed using the framework provided by Sider, thus considering them as stages linked together by a counterpart relation. Also, the shift acknowledged by Sider between the level of the single stage and that of the aggregate of stages has a useful application to explain our linguistic attitudes in relation to musical works. We, in fact, usually shift reference between the work-as-performance and the more general concept of work-as-construct.

Despite its benefits, however, Musical Stage Theory has limitations as well. Due to its revisionary approach, this view needs to reanalyse some of our commonsensical attributions. But this is not a concern exclusive of Musical Stage Theory. Every theory needs an assessment of intuitions and some kind of re-analysis of them. The fact that Musical Stage Theory requires some epicycles is not worrying. These reconsiderations are needed by the general Stage View, regardless of its particular application to musical ontology, to address some semantic objections. All things considered, in Sider's words, 'I think the benefits outweigh the costs' (Sider 1996, p. 451).

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