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CHARLES D. MORRISON

Introduction

One of the most fundamental, ongoing debates in music education involves scholars who argue for a “performance-based” curriculum and those who promote a curriculum that is fundamentally “aesthetic-listening based.” Rather than arguing for the *primacy* of either performance or listening (aesthetic or otherwise) as a basis for a music education curriculum, in this article I attempt merely to raise the profile, as it were, of the musical listening process *tout à fait*—that is, not aesthetic listening in particular, but all forms of engaged listening. With respect to curricular choices, I think it is unfair and unwise to subordinate the entire spectrum of listening on the basis of the problems associated with the traditional, admittedly anachronistic, theory of aesthetic attitude and the single, restricted mode of listening associated with that theory.

First, I explore David Elliott’s rationale for favoring performance over listening (not only aesthetic listening specifically)—in spite of his offering some very strong support for the enterprise of music listening—as well as his reasons for failing to include listening in his concept of “musicizing,” which otherwise embraces performing, improvising, composing, and conducting. Additionally, and most importantly, in connection with Elliott’s notion of musical listening as a form of “thinking musically,” I examine Matthew Lipman’s work on “higher-order thinking,” mental acts and states, and his view of thinking as performance. Here, I explore connections between listening and thinking, thinking and performing, and, ultimately, listening and performing. In the end I argue that engaged music listening is *itself* a form of “creative activity,” that it *is* in fact a complex and bona fide mode

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of “making” music, and that such listening *may well* have some important implications for music education.

Listening or Performing?

Elliott’s dismissal of musical listening as the principal focus for music education is directed in the first instance at *aesthetic* listening, characterized as it is on a detached, disinterested mode of attention that responds exclusively to so-called aesthetic properties, which apparently come to listeners intact and ready-made.¹ While we will revisit some of the problems associated with aesthetic listening later, it is important to note that Elliott’s concern with music listening as the main vehicle by which music education is taught reaches *beyond* the aesthetic. For example, he insists that music listening is “practice-centered” and, consequently, “to educate music listening beyond a novice level requires that music students be inducted into and immersed in musical practices through meaningful music making,”² by which he means music *performance*. Although Elliott suggests that performing and listening are two sides of the same coin, his claim that “making music involves a special form of music listening”³ favors the performance side of the equation. Musicing, by which he means music making, includes listening only insofar as it takes place in the context of and in the service of performing. There is musicing (that is, music making), and there is music listening.

Now, in the early stages of students’ musical-performance development, Elliott’s “artistic listening”—or any form of fully engaged, creative listening—may not be an option for them *while performing*, focused as they so often are on simply getting through the music mistake free. Experienced performers may well be able to engage in and benefit from a kind of “feedback loop,” in which their performing enhances their listening and their “listening-while-performing” enhances their performance. But I think it is risky to assume that music students will automatically, quickly, and effectively acquire advanced, finely nuanced listening skills during the act of performing.⁴

Moreover, while I acknowledge that Elliott is placing music listening specifically into the context of a music education curriculum, and while I am not advocating some form of wholesale replacement of performance with listening, nonetheless it seems to me that the unidirectional “listening-from-and-for-performance” view may be overlooking some important and ultimately pedagogically useful dimensions of the listening process. In allowing the musical listening process to develop on its own terms and for its own sake, a more reciprocal developmental process may emerge, in which performing informs independent listening and listening (outside the context of performing) informs subsequent performing. Furthermore, in the course of exploring such a view, it may well be that active, engaged, creative

listening will take on more of a music-making dimension in and of itself. For example, in addition to Elliott's notion that making music involves a special form of music *listening*, might it not also be the case that music listening involves—read: “is”—a special form of music *making*?

Elliott paves the way for the exploration of such a view, though, as noted, he himself continues to think of listening both in the service of performing and as an activity that clearly lies outside the realm of musicing. He paves the way for further consideration, though, by acknowledging that music listening is a form of “thinking musically” or, to use Donald Schön's terms, “thinking-in-action” and “knowing-in-action.”⁵ I see this characterization as a path to an elevated status for music listening for two reasons. The first concerns the acknowledgment that listening is a form of action—a *covert* form of action, as Elliott reminds us, but a form of action nonetheless. Both in general terms and certainly in the particular context of aesthetic engagement, music listening is frequently criticized for being passive and nonparticipatory and for its contemplation of complete, given objects. It is viewed as lacking creative and constructive qualities, particularly as compared to other performative activities such as those that Elliott groups under the rubric of musicing. Regarding listening as a mode of action, however, at least prompts one to ask whether such action or activity might not in fact boast creative and constructive features of its own. For example, Elliott suggests that “Music listening requires us to interpret and *construct* auditory information in relation to personal understandings and beliefs.”⁶ And “musical works are not simply perceived or even processed by listeners. The combined powers of human consciousness actively *construct* the complex physical events we experience as musical sound patterns.”⁷ We will come back to this important notion of “listening-as-construction.”

The second reason that Elliott's and Schön's references to listening are cause for optimism lies in their equation of listening with thinking. As Elliott argues: “In music listening, ‘getting something done’ is a matter of thinking and knowing in relation to auditory events.”⁸ Elsewhere, he refers to a perceived musical performance as a “*multi-dimensional thought generator*.”⁹ This is a good start, though, as mentioned above, he continues to think of listening in the service of performing, as an activity that clearly lies outside the realm of musicing, and as a dimension that acquires depth and sophistication only through the various modes of musicing, in particular performing. For example, he regards music making as fundamentally *procedural* in nature, by which he means that “[D]uring the continuous actions of singing or playing instruments, *our musical knowledge is in our actions; our musical thinking and knowing are in our musical doing and making*.”¹⁰ In terms of “formal” knowledge, a subset of “procedural” knowledge, he asserts that “[B]y itself . . . formal musical knowledge is inert and unmusical” and that it is only useful if in the service of musical thinking-in-action and

particularly if discussed and employed “in relation to ongoing efforts to solve authentic musical problems through active music making,”¹¹ by which he means performing.

We will revisit these caveats Elliott places on thinking musically, but let us first return to the optimistic part—the more general fact that Elliott equates music listening with thinking musically and Schön regards it as thinking-in-action—and explore how this linkage between thinking and listening might be used to elevate the status of music listening to a performative, creative, and constructive act, perhaps even a bona fine mode of musicing in its own right.

Thinking as Performing, Thinking as Creating

“Thinking is in many ways a performing art, and in some ways it is a creative art.”¹² This proclamation by education-philosopher Matthew Lipman resonates nicely with the aforementioned views of Elliott and Schön and provides a basis on which to tease out connections between thinking, performing, and listening. Lipman delves deeply into the process of higher-order thinking, which he understands to involve both critical and creative thinking. Critical thinking, Lipman asserts, is “skillful thinking, and skills are proficient performances that satisfy relevant criteria. When we think critically, we are required to orchestrate a vast variety of cognitive skills, grouped in families such as reasoning skills, concept-formation skills, inquiry skills, and translation skills.”¹³ Creative thinking, on the other hand, involves craft, artistry, and creative judgment¹⁴ and deals more with the realm of wholeness and invention. As Lipman characterizes it, creative thinking “is sensitive to the way in which the pervasive quality [of the specific inquiry situation] embodies values and meanings and will find itself in the grip of powerful schemata that will seek to compel the thinking to move in this direction or that.”¹⁵ “Flexibility” is an important criterion for creative thinking, for it facilitates a thought process that involves movement across various frames of reference, all the while achieving comprehensiveness.¹⁶ And as with critical thinking, creative thinking is also very much about judgment, whereby “the inventive conduct is guided by the qualitative context.”¹⁷ Finally, according to Lipman, higher-order thinking’s “twin pillars” of critical and creative thinking are complementary and, in fact, overlap each other, as creative thinking also invariably involves rational, methodical calculation, while critical thinking usually contains elements of intuitive spontaneity.¹⁸

The aforementioned critical and creative operations that make up the more comprehensive process of higher-order thinking—operations such as concept-formation, inquiry, invention, and utilization of multiple frames of reference—are in turn made up of more specific, detailed mental *acts* and mental *states*, which Lipman differentiates on the basis of the amount

of cognitive initiative involved¹⁹ and in light of the verbs associated with them.²⁰ Mental *acts* (for example, distinguishing, discriminating, choosing, and deciding) are characterized by what he terms “achievement” verbs: “A mental act is an achievement, a performance. One can feel oneself moving toward the making of a decision and then making it. . . . A mental act . . . is like a tiny work of art, a minuscule phrase or riff.”²¹ Mental *states* (for example, doubting, understanding, and appreciating), on the other hand, are characterized by verbs *not* associated with achievement. They are, as Lipman suggests, “homogeneously diffuse condition[s] primarily psychological in nature but capable of making some cognitive contribution to the life of the individual.” Thus, we *perform* mental acts but are *engaged in* mental states.²²

Lipman summarizes higher-order thinking (comprising critical and creative thinking, mental acts and states) as tending toward complexity; tending to display unity, integrity, and coherence; tending to seek intelligibility and a search for meaning; tending to display qualitative intensity; and tending to display largeness of scope and a broad range of applicability.²³ He also makes reference to Lauren B. Resnick, whose slightly more eloquent description of higher-order thinking gives one a good sense of the multidimensional and interactive nature of that complex process. She argues that:

Higher order thinking involves a cluster of elaborative mental activities requiring nuanced judgment and analysis of complex situations according to multiple criteria. Higher order thinking is effortful and depends on self-regulation. The path of action or correct answers are not fully specified in advance. The thinker’s task is to construct meaning and impose structure on situations rather than to expect to find them already apparent.²⁴

As will be demonstrated, if we pull out the defining features of the aforementioned modes of thinking—critical thinking’s cognitive operations of rationality, concept formation, and inquiry; creative thinking’s sensitivity to the qualitative dimension, its flexibility in employing many different frames of reference, and its emphasis on creative judgment; or higher-order thinking’s tendency toward unity, intelligibility, qualitative intensity and its inherent qualities of nuanced judgment, exploratory willingness, and invention and construction—we arrive at a list of profoundly performative and creative operations, qualifiers, and mental acts and states. Moreover, and most important for our purposes, it is a list of operations that is equally at home in the realm of fully engaged musical listening. That is, the richness of interplay between critical and creative thinking, mental acts and states, accounts for the complexity, indeed the wonder, of higher-order thinking to be sure, but it applies equally to the challenges and rewards of fully engaged listening, or what we might call “higher-order listening.” Neither thinking nor listening is simple or straight forward. As Lipman notes so eloquently, “The texture of higher-order thinking”—and I would add of higher-order

listening as well—"is not glassy smooth. It is coarse and nubbly, consisting as it does of a vast number of mental acts, each performed with some skill and each eventuating in some microscopic determination or judgement."²⁵

Clearly, there is a strong sense emerging from this work on higher-order thinking that it is complex, interactive, and performative: operations such as reasoning, considering multiple frames of reference both sequentially and simultaneously, and exercising critical and creative judgments, not to mention engaging in a myriad of mental acts, are operations that are literally performed and, moreover, are performed in tandem. But perhaps the most important aspect of higher-order thinking for our present purposes is its *creative* property—creative in the sense of bringing about something that did not exist prior to the higher-order thinking process being applied to or activated in a particular circumstance or context. What is created by or emergent from the act of higher-order thinking might be described variously as an understanding, an interpretation, a particular meaning, or even a more general (perhaps even ineffable) sense of meaningfulness. Regardless of what we call it, however, it is something realized, assembled, or constructed *by the thinker herself*. And this has profound implications when the operations and qualities of higher-order thinking are mapped onto the processes of engaged higher-order musical listening, to which we now turn. To explore further the way higher-order thinking concepts might also explain the performative and creative aspects of engaged music listening, I examine two musical-listening contexts: the perception of tonality and aesthetic listening.

Tonal Listening

Music composed according to the major-minor system is allegedly tonal. I say "allegedly" tonal because it is technically more accurate to say that such music is *potentially* tonal, for tonality is nothing if it is not about musical syntax, relationships, directedness, tension, and resolution, and these in turn are properties of tonal music that must be *heard*, qualities that must be *realized* by listeners, and relationships that must be *constructed* as much as perceived. That is, none of these features simply exists intact in the notes on the page or even in the notes as played.

Take a relatively simple tonal phrase: in order to hear it tonally (one mode of higher-order listening) one must hear *and* think in tonal terms. In the cognitive and perceptual assignment of tonal functions to the harmonies as heard, the listener is required to perform acts of comparison and classification of harmonies, but those acts in turn involve hearing relationships and realizing tonal hierarchies across the spectrum of harmonies heard. Already, we note the presence of critical and creative mental acts such as concept-forming, inventing, synthesizing, and assigning tonal meaning. Moreover, all of these acts of comparing, classifying, relating, and realizing

are performed on stimuli that are *unfolding temporally*, so the act of memory and state of anticipation are also very much involved in the creative processes of comprehending and synthesizing. A listener versed in tonal perception will of course perform these acts automatically, even intuitively, but also interactively, thereby superimposing a tonally directed structure *upon*, or at least realizing such a structure *in*, the succession of otherwise independent harmonies.

Perhaps the most fundamental feature of the tonal system is its underlying tonic-dominant polarity, the tonic establishing stability, the dominant instability. This relationship plays out on many levels in tonal music, virtually controlling the hierarchical relationships of successive harmonies in a single phrase but also determining large-scale formal organization in complete pieces; and the discrimination of and distinguishing between tonic and dominant polarities at each of those levels, as well as the perceived resolution from dominant to tonic, again at each of those levels, are crucial cognitive and perceptual acts required of anyone claiming to be involved in higher-order *tonal* listening. Again, we see evidence of the critical and creative operations of concept-formation, invention, comprehension, creative judgment, and the assignment of hierarchical *tonal* values. But perhaps most importantly, the tonality-defining progression of dominant-to-tonic (regardless of the level at which it is played out), or the tonally deceptive progression of dominant to something other than tonic, determines or, alternatively, undermines the music's tonality in meaningful ways *if and only if a listener perceives those resolutions or deliberate deceptions*. If a listener does not impose those hierarchical relationships and syntactical resolutions or deceptions onto the music—if a listener is not profoundly sensitive to the state of tension created by the dominant and the relative state of stability in its resolution to the tonic—there is not much the composer or performer can do to “will” the music into existence as a *tonal* entity. Moreover, these details of tension and repose, tension and deception, as felt by engaged listeners adopting a more synoptic stance to the music, may well inform performance decisions in a way that would not be possible during the moment-to-moment stance necessarily adopted by many student performers. It is not the case that these nuances would not be available to students while performing; it is, rather, that independent, engaged listening may offer up different kinds of considerations for performers than the ones available only through performing.

In these examples of tonal perception, involving numerous interacting and interdependent mental acts and states, listeners are literally transforming musical raw materials—or let's say “neutral” materials—into something that is meaningful tonally. They have, in the terms Resnick uses to describe higher-order thinking, “constructed meaning and imposed structure.”²⁶ The composer and performer provide the *opportunity* for such a tonally meaningful and constructive experience, but it is the listener who

actualizes that experience. And in musical educational terms, the rich array of processes involved in actualizing the musical experience *as listeners* may well feed back to the world of performance, whereby listening-while-performing is enhanced in meaningful, even pedagogically useful, ways.

Aesthetic Listening

The second context for consideration of interactions between higher-order thinking and listening is that of “aesthetic” listening. While many regard aesthetic listening as any form of listening that considers the music (and particularly the “work” of music) on its own terms, divorced as it were from any external context (for example, historical, cultural, political, ideological, etc.), I regard aesthetic listening less as an umbrella for those forms of engagement and more as a particular (and, yes, legitimate) mode along-side many others. So, for example, the tonal mode of engagement described above is not necessarily a subset of aesthetic engagement but, rather, a mode of listening in its own right. That is, a purely cognitive and critical tonal hearing of a piece of music would not automatically be considered aesthetic, in spite of the fact that such a hearing allegedly considers the music only “on its own terms.” With creative actions on the part of the listener, however, hearing tonally may well be the trigger for aesthetic engagement; movement from the critical awareness and categorization of dominant and tonic to the more directly felt sensation of resolution from tension to repose, mentioned above in connection with tonal listening, might be thought of as one such example.

As alluded to above, aesthetic listening continues to have its share of critics. For example, David Elliot reacts negatively to four assumptions on which aesthetic listening is based: (1) that music is a collection of objects or works; (2) that musical works exist in order to be listened to in one way only—namely, in an aesthetic way; (3) that music’s value is exclusively intrinsic and internal; and (4) that aesthetic listening yields aesthetic experiences consisting of an emotional, disinterested pleasure arrived at through concentration on the work’s internal, aesthetic properties.²⁷ It may be possible, however, to think of aesthetic value in the listening experience as arising without strict adherence to these assumptions. For example, the whole concept of “musical works” is highly problematic, as it ignores the various musical traditions in which there is no such concept at all; but this is no reason to ignore aesthetic richness in the listening experience, whether one is listening to music that is characterized as a performance “of a work” or to an improvisation, which clearly cannot be so conceived. Additionally, the notion that music is meant to be listened to in only one way, regardless of whatever way that might be, is preposterous, perhaps even impossible; invariably, whether consciously or not, different modes of engagement (*one*

of which may well be aesthetic) are going to be activated in any fully engaged listening experience, as will be discussed below.²⁸ And, the assumption that music's value is internal and intrinsic speaks against most of our musical experiences; *pace* the purists, while internal and intrinsic properties of music are indeed valuable, they are not the only sources of significance, for it is more often the case that it is the *intersection* of those qualities with the rest of our lives that makes music profoundly meaningful to us. Finally, it is not only through the conscious, deliberate adoption of a disinterested aesthetic attitude that an experience of aesthetic richness occurs; in fact, I would suggest that it is *rarely* through such an attitude that such an experience occurs.

Where, then, does this leave aesthetic listening? How can it be defined in terms of performative and constructive higher-order listening? Let's consider first the (often problematic) issue of aesthetic properties, which allegedly are the focus of our aesthetic listening (attitude) and the contents of our aesthetic experiences. First off, it is unlikely that such properties exist as objective aesthetic properties in the music itself, waiting as it were for passive listeners to simply recognize them. Were that the case, we should be able to define those objective aesthetic properties completely and with certainty and consistency, which we cannot. In fact, there is strong support for the view that aesthetic properties are *not* objectively fixed in the object.²⁹ For example, David Fenner asserts that aesthetic properties are a matter of the relationship between the object and the subject; it is the subject—the listener in the case of music—who teases out the aesthetic properties from the objective base properties.³⁰ And Noël Carroll refers to aesthetic properties as “respondent-dependent,” which, although they are properties of the object, are nonetheless properties that are experienced by observers and listeners: “We experience aesthetic qualities as qualities of objects . . . rather than as properties of ourselves. But these properties of objects can only obtain in relation to subjects like us.”³¹

Regarding the nature of aesthetic properties, Fenner suggests generally that some properties of art objects seem to be obviously aesthetic or, at least, routinely contribute through attention paid to them to the richness of the aesthetic experience.³² He also offers more specific examples of aesthetic properties, citing things like balance, symmetry, elegance, harmony, grace, unity, variety, complexity, and simplicity as “first-order aesthetic properties.” These are properties that emerge from more fundamental “base properties” such as color, brilliance, shape, line, etc., but that are not as aesthetically advanced as “second-order aesthetic properties” such as beauty, sublimity, and aesthetic goodness.³³ Carroll offers similar suggestions as to what might be included in a list of generally agreed-upon aesthetic properties and, like Fenner, he contends that these properties are dependent on human perception.³⁴

It is important to note that aesthetic properties emerge through a process of dialogue between the temporally unfolding music in performance (not a static, abstract musical “work”) and an actively engaged, receptive listener.³⁵ Moreover, engaged dialogue involves many of the same processes identified as fundamental to higher-order thinking: the awareness, experience, and appreciation of symmetry, to take one example of an aesthetic property, requires listeners to engage in cognitive and perceptual acts of judgment, measurement, discrimination, and memory. And it is difficult to imagine these critical and creative acts operating solely in a musical vacuum—that is, arising only in regard to music’s internal properties and devoid of, say, cultural and historical context. True, symmetry itself will (necessarily) be defined in a particular musical parameter (symmetry of phrases, of pitch register, of section length, and so on), but mental states of anticipation and expectation, and acts of memory and discrimination, invariably will rely on historical and cultural awareness. Moreover, the participatory, constructive, and performative nature of higher-order thinking is very much a part of an aesthetically sensitive listener; this is not only apparent in the discrimination of symmetry (to stick with the same example) as a first-order aesthetic property but also in any second-order aesthetic property (for example, beauty) that may or may not arise as a consequence of the appreciation of a first-order property. The dialogue alluded to above involves the constructive nature of the listener in connection with the determination of the first-order property and the emergent nature and appreciation of the second-order property that follows. Finally, the emotional or even associational experiences that may well accompany or be triggered by such appreciation clearly moves the aesthetic significance—for example, value, meaning, meaningfulness—beyond the parameters of the music itself. But in doing so, the ongoing dialogue between extra-musical factors and the internal musical parameters that trigger the external processes is precisely what prevents a musically damaging separation of the extra-musical experience from the music. Aesthetic significance might be thought of as a kind of qualitative dimension hovering, as it were, above the quantitative dimension of the lower-order musical properties that trigger that particular mode of significance.

Clearly, this example of aesthetic listening and appreciation involves only one musical property (I have used symmetry as an example) and perhaps a limited portion of an unfolding musical performance (or even an improvisation), having little or nothing to do with a musical “work” as such. It is indeed only *one* mode of engagement, but, as will be suggested, one that is nested within a more complex web of interacting threads or modes of engagement. In addition, the aesthetic property in question, as would be the case with virtually any other aesthetic property, may well be defined in terms of a particular internal musical parameter, but its significance may extend beyond the parameters of the music itself. As with “listener-imposed,” or

at least “listener-realized,” tonal properties, whose *potential* significance is built into the music but realized by listeners (or not), aesthetic properties arise through a transformative awareness on the part of aesthetically sensitive listeners, who impose aesthetic meaningfulness onto otherwise neutral stimuli. Like tonal listening, aesthetic listening is active listening; it is creative, constructive, and transformative. It is the listener who accords tonal, aesthetic, and other kinds of meaning and significance to musical properties, realizing (or not) those potentialities set in place by composers and performers. Raw materials are transformed in the ear and mind of the listener.

As with tonal perception, it is aesthetic engagement’s transformative and constructive qualities that make it relevant to the world of performance and to the world of music education based on performance. The freedom that engaged listeners enjoy, the synoptic stance they can take, and the multiple modes of engagement they can entertain, may well provide access to features and nuances of the music not necessarily available to student performers while in the complicated act of performing. Moreover, those details may well find their way back into the performance process, informing the latter in unique and creative ways.³⁶

Listening as Thinking as Performing as Making

The foregoing scenarios are designed to demonstrate that, as with higher-order thinking, higher-order listening involves a rich interaction between critical and creative thinking and listening and numerous interdependent mental acts and states. Just as thinking involves many trains of thought simultaneously and interactively, so, too, the listening process is never about one and only one mode of listening, be it tonal, aesthetic, or otherwise. Lipman’s characterization of the complexity of higher-order thinking highlights this complexity with language that, once again, could accurately be used to describe higher-order listening, as substituting “listening” for “thinking” in the following description demonstrates:

some thinking [listening] is criterion-governed and some is governed by values that flood the entire context in which the thinking [listening] takes place. Some thinking [listening] moves smoothly and routinely. . . ; some ranges at will . . . with the result that we see one kind of thinking [listening] as linear and explicative and the other as inventive and expansive. Some thinking [listening] seems to be purely computational; some seems conjectural, hypothetical, and imaginative. Some thinking [listening] is a mere collection of thoughts that are pressed together mechanically. . . ; in other cases, the thoughts are related to one another organically, each assuming a distinctive role but cooperating with the others in the overall division of labor to give us a more complete picture. Some thinking [listening] is quantitative, some qualitative; some expository, some narrative.³⁷

As important for our purposes is the fact that the various critical and creative modes of listening are not only interactive and interdependent but also transformative and constructive. That is, they bring about something that would not have come into existence were it not for the performance of those clusters of activities by musical listeners. Thus, higher-order listening *can* be thought of as a form of making and perhaps even a form of musicing. But what exactly is made or constructed through the process of higher-order listening? To suggest that listeners literally make the music would be to enter into an ontological debate, necessitating a much longer conversation. But there is certainly the making of *something* in all of this creative and cognitive activity, and what is clearly being made by the listener, as alluded to above, is his or her *experience*.³⁸ Just as composers and performers provide potentially tonal progressions, relationships, and resolutions—all of which are ultimately realized by tonally aware listeners—and just as aesthetic properties are not objectively present in the music but imposed on the music by aesthetically sensitive listeners, so, too, the listening experience as a whole is not handed ready-made to the listener but created by her and, moreover, created through significant and complex cognitive and perceptual effort.³⁹

If we reexamine Elliott's comments that "*our musical thinking and knowing are in our musical doing and making*,"⁴⁰ and that formal musical knowledge is only useful if employed "in relation to ongoing efforts to solve authentic musical problems through active music making,"⁴¹ it would seem that there is a strong sense in which actively engaged, higher-order *listening*—consisting as it does of a rich interplay between critical and creative thinking, mental and perceptual acts and states—is in fact a legitimate, even skillful, example of such "musical doing and active music making."

Performance is held to be the hallmark of music making. Thinking, as Lipman, Schön, and Resnick would have it, is itself a complex and creative form of performance. And listening, as the foregoing has attempted to illustrate, is a discipline-specific mode of creative and critical thinking. Listening, then, is nothing if it is not itself a form of performance. The various activities Elliott includes under the rubric of musicing are all observable while listening is not, and this it seems to me is his principal reason for not including listening as a viable mode of musicing. In spite of the private, covert nature of the musical listening experience, however, the range and depth of active processes involved in truly engaged higher-order listening are no less impressive than those involved in the other modes of musicing. And the phenomena constructed by listeners, their musical experiences, may be no less complex and creative than those offered up by performers, even if they are of a more personal nature. Finally, higher-order listening does indeed inform virtually all other modes of musicing and should be recognized as a constructive activity in its own right, and one that sheds light on performance perspectives in unique and creative ways, making it

well deserving of a place alongside the performance-oriented facets of music education curricula.

NOTES

1. David J. Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophical of Music Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33, 36.
2. *Ibid.*, 101.
3. *Ibid.*, 103.
4. Group improvisation is the possible exception to this. Groups of musicians performing from scores can manage their way through a piece without too much regard for their fellow performers. So long as they play in time—and, yes, this does indeed require a minimal level of listening to one another, or at least attention to a conductor, if there is one—there need not be sensitive, nuanced listening to those around them. In group improvisation, however, one's responses invariably must be made in relation precisely to what others are doing; and this requires much more than a superficial level of attention to what is going on around them. I would suggest, perhaps provocatively, that the level of awareness and attention paid by truly engaged listeners is not that different from musicians improvising in ensemble fashion, and it may be considerably deeper than some performing musicians with only small parts to play in large ensemble works.
5. Elliott, *Music Matters*, 80.
6. *Ibid.*, 80.
7. *Ibid.*, 83.
8. *Ibid.*, 80.
9. *Ibid.*, 92 (emphasis in original).
10. *Ibid.*, 56 (emphasis in original).
11. *Ibid.*, 61.
12. Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 74.
13. *Ibid.*, 124.
14. *Ibid.*, 21.
15. *Ibid.*, 193–94.
16. *Ibid.*, 206.
17. *Ibid.*, 85.
18. *Ibid.*, 86.
19. *Ibid.*, 96.
20. Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 141.
21. *Ibid.*, 143.
22. *Ibid.*, 148–49.
23. Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 1st ed., 94.
24. *Ibid.*, 69.
25. *Ibid.*, 95.
26. *Ibid.*, 69.
27. Elliott, *Music Matters*, 23.
28. Arnold Berleant's *Re-Thinking Aesthetics: Rogue Essays on Aesthetics and the Arts* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate Press, 2004) offers an extensive criticism of the Enlightenment notion of aesthetic theory, particularly its concept of disinterestedness. Berleant, too, introduces the concept of "engagement," although more as an alternative to disinterestedness. And, although he develops the concept of engagement in ways different from the present essay, his analysis of the failures of traditional aesthetic theory is an important contribution to contemporary aesthetic theory.

29. The term *object* here and in the two following quotations is often held to be one (of many) problematic features of the traditional, Enlightenment concept of aesthetic attitude; in fact, it is the first of four assumptions concerning aesthetic listening that Elliott finds problematic. At the risk of appearing to side-step this issue, I suggest that it is possible to think of *object* in this context less as a fixed "thing" and more in the sense of the "object of one's attention." In this sense, an improvisation to which one is listening would be the object of her attention but would not necessarily be construed as an "object" in the more restricted, problematic sense.
30. David E. W. Fenner, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 105.
31. Noël Carroll, *Philosophy of Art* (London: Routledge, 1999), 158.
32. Fenner, *Aesthetic Attitude*, 105.
33. *Ibid.*, 14.
34. Carroll, *Philosophy of Art*, 157.
35. Michael J. Parsons links some of the vital features of thinking that we have been exploring with the concepts of aesthetic response and perception as construction when he comments that "[t]hinking consists of the discrimination and manipulation of the elements of that stuff [paint, in the case of paintings; sound, in the case of music], the response to their meaningful variations and nuances and to the constructions, combinations, and qualities they make possible." See his "Cognition as Interpretation," in *The Arts, Education, and Aesthetic Knowing*, ed. Bennett Reimer and Ralph A. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 72.
36. We should not ignore unique and creative information flowing in the other direction. It is not the intention here to suggest that listeners alone provide the keys to music's mysteries. At the end of the day, to be heard, music must be played. And just as there may be details that flow more meaningfully from a listening session to a performance, so, too, there are many, perhaps more, details that can only come from the performance. The intent here is less to foster an either-or approach than a both-and approach, acknowledging, even celebrating, the unique perspectives each can offer the other.
37. Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 195-96.
38. John Dewey is explicit on this point: "For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience." See *Art as Experience* (1934; New York: Perigree Books, 1980), 54 (emphasis in original). Arnold Berleant also reinforces the creative contributions of the perceiver in creating experiences: "So a work of art is the artist working and producing an object, which is his or her work. Yet the working of art does not stop at this point. Others work with it, too, in the activity of appreciation, for responding to art is its own re-creative work, originating experience as the artist led the way" (*Re-Thinking Aesthetics*, 7).
39. This sense of participation and construction by the listener is nicely reinforced by Nelson Goodman, when he notes that "the forms . . . in our worlds do not lie there ready-made to be discovered but are imposed by world-versions we contrive—in the sciences, the arts, perception, and everyday practice. . . . [these] are matters determined not by passive observation but by painstaking fabrication." Elsewhere, he suggests that "[f]ar from merely recording what is before us, perception participates in making what we perceive. . . . Thinking in words or pictures or other symbols [for example, musical materials and constructs] may involve not only preparation for producing, or judging, but also for perceiving—seeing, hearing, etc.—such symbols." See his *Of Mind and Other Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 21, 25 respectively. And John Dewey, whose concept of aesthetic response is profoundly interactive and participatory as compared to the more problematic traditional version of aesthetic theory, argues in *Art as Experience* that "The esthetic experience . . . is thus seen to be inherently connected with the experience of making [and I would argue the making of experience] (49)." Dewey's theory of esthetic response is much

closer to the broader theory of engagement put forth in the present essay than it is to the Enlightenment theory of aesthetics. And although somewhat dated, his work on aesthetics is curiously fresh, breaking down barriers between art and everyday living in ways that are entirely relevant to aesthetics in the twenty-first century.

40. Elliott, *Music Matters*, 56, emphasis in original.

41. *Ibid.*, 61.