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Why can't I change Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*?

David Friedell[1]

Abstract Musical works change. Bruckner revised his *Eighth Symphony*. Ella Fitzgerald and many other artists have made it acceptable to sing the jazz standard "All the Things You Are" without its original verse. If we accept that musical works genuinely change in these ways, a puzzle arises: why can't I change Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*? More generally, why are some individuals in a privileged position when it comes to changing musical works and other artifacts, such as novels, films, and games? I give a view of musical works that helps to answer these questions. Musical works, on this view, are created abstract objects with no parts. The paradigmatic changes that musical works undergo are socially determined normative changes in how they should be performed. Due to contingent social practices, Bruckner, but not I, can change how his symphony should be performed. Were social practices radically different, I would be able to change his symphony. This view extends to abstract artifacts beyond music, including novels, films, words, games, and corporations.

Keywords Music · Abstract objects · Ontology of art · Change · Rohrbaugh · Evnine

1 Introduction

Bruckner composed his *Eighth Symphony* in 1887 and revised it in 1890. He changed, among other things, the tonality of the third movement. "All the Things You Are," a jazz standard composed in 1939 by Jerome Kern for the unsuccessful

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musical *Very Warm for May,* is typically performed without its original verse. Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, Jo Stafford, Sarah Vaughan, and many others sing only what was originally its chorus. "Happy Birthday to You"—perhaps the most familiar song in the English language—often concludes with the words "and many more," but this was not originally the case. "L'chah Dodi," a Jewish liturgical song, acquired different melodies in Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities.

In these cases, people perform musical works differently over time.[1] But that is not all. What counts as a *correct* performance changes, too. When Bruckner revised his symphony, he changed the correct way to perform it. The jazz community has made it acceptable to sing "All the Things You Are" without its original verse. There may be other correct ways to sing it, but this is now at least *a* correct way. There are now different ways to correctly sing "Happy Birthday to You" and "L'chah Dodi."

Some theorists deny that musical works change in these ways. Musical Platonists, for instance Dodd (2007) and Kivy (1987), think musical works are eternal, immutable abstract objects. They are *immutable* in the sense that their intrinsic properties do not change. A standard Platonist line is that each ostensible change people make to a work—no matter how minor—involves a discovery of a different (albeit related) work (Dodd 2007: 53–56). On this line, Bruckner did not change his *Eighth Symphony*. Instead he composed a symphony in 1887 and then another very similar one in 1890. Similarly, Platonists may deny that there is a unique song— "L'chah Dodi"—that Ashkenazi and Sephardic communities sing differently. There are instead two (related) songs that go by the name "L'chah Dodi."

Conversely, Rohrbaugh (2003) and Evnine (2009, 2016: 137–138) think the intrinsic properties of musical works change. They think Bruckner changed his symphony in 1890 instead of composing another one. But there is a puzzle. Imagine I propose a new melody for the ending of the last movement of Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*. No matter how hard I try, I will fail. I may perform the symphony differently (with the help of an orchestra), but I cannot change it. Bruckner has the power to change the symphony, but I do not. Why not?

One might insist that Bruckner is the only one who can change his symphony, simply because it is *his* symphony. He created it and thus has total creative control. At best, this explanation is incomplete. Jazz standards and folk songs often change without their creators' input. Moreover, we may change many things we have not created. I can refinish my kitchen table, even though I am not its creator. So, it will not suffice to point out merely that Bruckner, but not I, created his symphony.

A view of musical works, then, should explain not only Bruckner's transformative power but also my inefficacy. We may phrase the underlying puzzle more generally: why are some individuals in a privileged position when it comes to

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[1] When I speak of musical works in this paper I confine myself to works that are intended to be performed—i.e. works for performance. I will not discuss works for playback. This second category plausibly includes works in electronica, rock, R+B, and hip-hop that, instead of being designed for performance, are intended to be recorded and later played back. See, for instance, Gracyk (1996), Davies (2001), and Kania (2006) for discussion of works for playback. Ferguson (1983) denies there are such works.

changing or revising musical works and other artifacts, such as novels, films, and games? I call this *the revision puzzle*. I will give a view of musical works that helps to solve the revision puzzle. On this view, musical works are created abstract objects with no parts.[2] Rules, granted normative significance by social practices, govern how musical works should be performed. Different rules may apply to a work at different times. These normative changes explain how works change. When works do not change, such as when I fail to revise Bruckner's symphony, it is because social practices do not allow change to happen.

Consequently, my view occupies a middle ground. Like Rohrbaugh and Evnine, I preserve the intuitive ways in which musical works change. There is only one Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*. Bruckner changed it. He didn't compose a new work in 1890. In a move that is friendly to Platonists, however, I deny that such changes alter intrinsic properties of musical works. Changes to how works should be performed alter only their extrinsic properties. This idea promises a unified solution to the revision puzzle for artifacts beyond music. Changes to a symphony's notes, a game's rules, a novel's words, and a word's spelling are all, on my view, socially determined normative changes to the extrinsic properties of these artifacts.

One need not accept my specific view of musical works in order to adopt my general solution to the revision puzzle. For instance, Caplan and Matheson's (2006) version of musical perdurantism and Moruzzi's (2018) musical stage theory both take musical works to be concrete objects. Both views allow for the paradigmatic changes that musical works undergo to be socially determined changes to the works' extrinsic properties. Accordingly, these views are consistent with my general solution to the revision puzzle. I will give a reason to prefer my specific view that musical works are created partless abstracta, but I will not conclusively argue for this view. Ultimately, the view should be of special interest to those who think both that musical works are abstract and that the revision puzzle is a genuine puzzle.

The paper will proceed as follows. In Sect. 2, I will introduce my view of musical works. In Sect. 3, I will show how the view helps to solve the revision puzzle with respect to musical works. I will explain why my view is in a better position to solve the revision puzzle than Rohrbaugh's and Evnine's views. I will also discuss why musical perdurantists and musical stage theorists may adopt my more general solution to the revision puzzle. Last, in Sect. 4, I will show how my view applies to abstract artifacts beyond music, including fictional characters, novels, films, games, and words. Although I will not conclusively argue for my view, I will show that it has advantages.

2 The view

I start with three claims about musical works. First, people create musical works. They bring them into existence. This is a deeply intuitive feature of musical works (Levinson 1980: 8). Second, works are abstract objects. They are not located in

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[2] More precisely, they have no proper parts. When I talk about parts I confine myself to only proper parts.

space. Consider Seeger's *String Quartet*. Its performances and copies of its score are spatially located, but the quartet itself is nowhere.[3] Third, musical works are objects that have no parts. In other words, they are what metaphysicians call *simples*. Often when theorists, such as Ned Markosian (1998), talk about simples they have in mind concrete simples. But there is precedent for believing in abstract simples. McDaniel (2003: 266), for instance, suggests that numbers are abstract simples.

On my view, then, musical works are created abstract partless objects. The most surprising aspect of this is perhaps the claim that works are partless. We talk as if musical works have parts. We say movements are parts of symphonies and that lyrics and verses are parts of songs. Moreover, it is natural to think a musical work is a sequence of sounds—more precisely, a *type* of sound sequence that can be instantiated when the work is performed. Types of sound sequences are commonly called *sound structures*.[4] Plausibly, if works are sound structures, then types of sounds are parts of works. There are many reasons, then, why one might doubt my claim that musical works are partless.[5]

Before explaining how I think musical works are related to sound structures, movements, lyrics, and verses, I must discuss a central concept: *performance rules*. Performance rules prescribe a way to perform a particular musical work. They specify a variety of features. Sometimes they dictate which instruments should be used and which notes should be played. Sometimes they dictate that musicians should improvise in a particular key. Performances of works do not always perfectly follow the rules. People make mistakes. Performance rules settle how works should be performed, not how they are performed.[6]

Anyone can try to prescribe a way to perform a musical work. Social practices, however, affect which rules become the work's performance rules—which rules determine a *correct* way to perform the work. For instance, social practices pertaining to Western classical music typically privilege the original composer's intentions. This helps to explain why I cannot change Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*. If I propose new performance rules for the symphony, they do not become its rules. They have no effect on what is a correct way to perform it. But social practices do

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[3] Many theorists agree that musical works are abstract—for instance, Dodd (2007), Evnine (2009: 209, 2016: 137–138), Kivy (1987), and Levinson (1980, 2011). But this is controversial. Caplan and Matheson (2006), Tillman and Spencer (2012), and Morruzi (2018) offer materialist views of music. Cox (1986), as well as Cray and Matheson (2017), propose that musical works are ideas. Davies (2003) claims that musical works are actions. See Goehr (1992) and Kania (2013), for instance, for discussion of anti-realist alternatives.

[4] See Levinson (1980) for critical discussion of the view that musical works are sound structures.

[5] Dodd (2007: 48–53) relatedly claims that works are "unstructured."

[6] It is hard to say exactly what makes a performance be of a particular work. Following Davies (2001: 166–175), I think a necessary condition for a performance to be of a particular work is that the performance be causally connected in the appropriate way to the creation of the work. On this line, a performance in a distant galaxy may coincidentally sound exactly like Seeger's *String Quartet* but fail to be a performance of that quartet. The performance is not causally connected in the appropriate way to Seeger's creation of her quartet.

not always privilege the original composer. I will further discuss how musical works change in Sect. 3.[7]

A work's performance rules determine which sound structures it has. Consider Seeger's *String Quartet*. Seeger proposed performance rules for this quartet.[8] Thanks to certain social practices, her rules became the work's rules. Any performance that follows these rules produces an instance of a particular sound structure. This sound structure is *String Quartet*'s sound structure. The quartet *has* this sound structure. All of this is consistent with correct performances of the quartet (i.e. those that follow its performance rules) instantiating the same sound structure but sounding different from each other. Such performances may differ in timbre, dynamics, phrasing, tempo, and other qualities. Performance rules often leave such things open to interpretation (Davies 2001: 20; Godlovitch 1998: 86).

Some works have distinct sets of performance rules. "L'chah Dodi" has Sephardic rules and Ashekanzi rules. Singing the song by following its Sephardic rules instantiates a sound structure. Singing the song by following its Ashkenazi rules instantiates another sound structure. "L'chah Dodi" accordingly has a Sephardic sound structure and an Ashkenazi one. It has (at least) two melodies.

These considerations motivate the following proposal.

> **Sound Structure**: a musical work w has a sound structure s if w has a set of performance rules r, such that there cannot be a performance of w that both follows r and does not produce an instance of s.

The basic idea is that, if all performances of a work that follow the same performance rules instantiate a particular sound structure, then the work has that sound structure. This proposal is consistent with works, such as "L'chah Dodi," having distinct sound structures that correspond to distinct sets of performance rules.

This proposal accounts also for many improvisational works. Consider Ellington's jazz standard "C Jam Blues." Performances of "C Jam Blues" sound vastly different from each other, given that its performance rules call for ample improvisation. Although its rules are more flexible than those of Western classical music (setting aside concertos with improvised cadenzas), "C Jam Blues" has a sound structure: a sparse melody involving C and G notes. Musicians correctly performing "C Jam Blues" produce instances of its sound structure and improvise their own melodies.[9]

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[7] Some theorists, such as Abell (2012), Danto (1981), and Dickie (1974), claim that social practices affect whether something is an artwork. Goehr (1992) argues that what counts as a musical work is socially constructed. I take no stand on what makes some musical works be artworks. (Note that some of my examples—namely, "Happy Birthday to You" and "L'chah Dodi"—are arguably not artworks.) Nor will I discuss whether being a musical work is socially constructed. Rather, I appeal to social practices in order to explain what makes musical works have the performance rules they have.

[8] Seeger specified these rules by producing a score. Scores, although common, are merely one way of specifying performance rules.

[9] I am omitting some controversies surrounding jazz. For instance, Kania (2011) denies there are jazz works, whereas Davies (2001: 16–19) claims that jazz-standard performances are themselves works rather than performances of works.

Some musical works have no sound structure. Consider Cage's "Child of Tree." One performs this piece by using ten preselected "instruments" that are either plants or made from plant materials. Common choices include branches, leaves, and amplified cacti. The performer has complete freedom to perform their own melodies and percussive sounds. Hence, although performances of the work produce instances of sound structures, the work itself has no associated sound structure. This is no problem for my view. Not all musical works have sound structures. Works may have performance rules without having sound structures.[10]

There is a caveat. I have given a sufficient but not necessary condition for a musical work to have a sound structure. Here is why the condition is not necessary. Imagine a song, "Coin Flip." "Coin Flip" has only one set of performance rules. Its rules require a guitarist to flip a coin in the middle of performing. If the coin lands on heads the guitarist plays a certain melody. If the coin lands on tails the guitarist plays a different melody. We may imagine that part of the fun for the audience is seeing which melody will be performed, the "heads melody" or the "tails melody." Intuitively, "Coin Flip" *has* a sound structure that correct performances instantiate when the coin lands on heads but not when the coin lands on tails—even though all of its correct performances follow the same set of performance rules. This case thereby shows that the above condition is not necessary for a musical work to have a sound structure. Note that "Coin Flip" is different from songs, such as "L'chah Dodi", that may be performed differently due to having different sets of performance rules. People who sing "L'chah Dodi" with a Sephardic melody follow a different set of performance rules from those who use an Ashkenazi melody. "Coin Flip", by stipulation, has only one set of performance rules.

I propose similar sufficient conditions for a work to have lyrics, movements, and verses:

Lyrics: A musical work w has lyrics l if w has a set of performance rules r, such that there cannot be a performance of w that both follows r and does not involve a performance of l.

Movement: A musical work w has a movement m if w has a set of performance rules r, such that there cannot be a performance of w that both follows r and does not involve a performance of m.

Verses: A musical work w has a verse v, if w has a set of performance rules r, such that there cannot be a performance of w that both follows r and does not involve a performance of v.

These proposals give sufficient but not necessary conditions. Still, these proposals and the one above about sound structures roughly characterize how musical works are related to sound structures, lyrics, movements, and verses. Often (though not always), each set of a work's performance rules dictates that performers should

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[10] Wolterstorff ([1975](#): 135–136) makes a similar point about Cage's *4'33*. However, that work arguably has a sound structure: a single, sustained rest.

instantiate a particular sound structure. Something similar is true of lyrics, movements, and verses.

Here is an analogy to further clarify. Consider a law that dictates that a road has a speed limit of fifty kilometers per hour. The law governs how people should drive on the road. It pertains to the road but is neither identical to nor part of the road. Moreover, the rate of fifty kilometers per hour is neither identical to nor part of the road. Rather, this rate is closely associated with the road, due to the law in question. I propose something analogous about musical works. A work's performance rules govern how people should perform the work. The rules pertain to the work but are neither identical to nor part of the work. Moreover, sound structures—as well as lyrics, movements, and verses—are neither identical to nor part of musical works. Such things are closely associated with works, due to performance rules.

One might insist that movements are parts of symphonies and that verses are parts of songs. I deny this. I grant that *performances* of movements and verses might be parts of *performances* of musical works. But performances are events. This does not mean that movements and verses themselves are parts of musical works. Granted, we often talk as if works have parts. Such talk conveys something true but is, strictly speaking, incorrect. At least, if there is a sense in which sound structures, lyrics, movements, and verses are parts of works, it is different from the normal sense of "part."

Thus far, I have presented (but not defended) a view on which musical works are created abstract partless objects. In Sect. 2.1, I will further clarify the view and respond to an objection. In Sects. 3 and 4, I will discuss some advantages of the view.

2.1 What are musical works like?

If we accept that musical works are created abstract partless objects that sound structures are neither part of nor identical to, it is natural to ask: what are the works themselves like? There are two things one might want to know when asking this question. First, one might want to know what ontological category musical works belong to. What sort of thing are they? Musical works, on my view, belong to a *sui generis* category of created abstract partless objects. They do not belong to a more familiar ontological category. They are not types. They are not sets. They are not properties.[11] As I will discuss in Sect. 4, the category of created abstract partless objects includes many other kinds of objects beyond music.

Second, when asking "What are musical works like?" one might want to know what their *intrinsic* properties are.[12] I borrow a characterization of the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction from David Lewis. He writes, "A thing has its intrinsic properties in virtue of the way that thing itself, and nothing else, is." (Lewis 1983:

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[11] Currie (1989), Dodd (2007), Levinson (1980), and Wolterstorff (1975), for instance, claim that musical works are types. Caplan and Matheson (2004: 129) consider a view on which musical works are sets. Letts (2018) claims that works are properties.

[12] Note that this is different from asking what are the *essential* properties of musical works. I briefly discuss essential properties in Sect. 3.

197). Properties that are not intrinsic are extrinsic. *Has-a-screen* and *has-mass* are intrinsic properties of my laptop computer. *In-a-café* and *belongs-to-me* are some of its extrinsic properties. On my view, *has-a-sound-structure*, *has-lyrics*, *has-a-movement,* and *has-a-verse* are extrinsic properties of musical works. These are properties works have not just in virtue of the way they are. Works have these properties in virtue of the way their performance rules are. So, one might ask, what intrinsic properties do musical works have?

Setting aside the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction momentarily, here are some important properties of musical works: *is-created, is-abstract*, *is-partless,* and *is-an-object*. It follows trivially that works have many other properties. They have properties that, necessarily, all objects have. Such properties include *is-self-identical*, *is-colored-if-red*, and *is-a-walrus-or-not-a-walrus*. They have negative properties that, necessarily, all abstracta have, such as *is-not-a-walrus* and *is-not-red*. Given that they are created, they also have temporal properties. For instance, Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* has the property *is-older-than-two-hundred-years*. It is controversial which of the properties just mentioned are intrinsic. It is controversial, for instance, whether *is-abstract* and *is-older-than-two-hundred-years* are intrinsic.[13] I take no stand here. Consequently, it is hard for me to say precisely what are the intrinsic properties of musical works. I instead propose the following: musical works have no (or hardly any) important intrinsic properties, other than those that follow from their being created abstract partless objects. To put the point loosely: there is not much more to say about what musical works are like other than that they are created abstract partless objects.

It will help to compare musical works to spacetime points. Spacetime points, supposing there are such things, are located in space but not extended in space. They are simples. They are too small to have parts (Markosian 1998: 216). Plausibly, they have all the same intrinsic properties as each other. They differ primarily in where they are located. I construe musical works similarly. They, too, are partless objects that are not extended in space. The main difference between musical works and spacetime points is that works, since they are abstract, are not even located in space. Another difference is that people create musical works. For this reason, works have different temporal properties. Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* is older than Ellington's "C Jam Blues." Still, musical works have for the most part all of the same intrinsic properties. They have different extrinsic properties. They have different performance rules, sound structures, lyrics, verses, and movements.

It will help to consider also Amie Thomasson's (1999) view of fictional characters. Thomasson thinks Emma Woodhouse is an abstract object created by Jane Austen. According to the first line of the novel *Emma*, Emma is handsome, clever, and rich, but she—the character—is none of those things. She is merely handsome, clever, and rich according to the story, and this amounts to a relation that

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[13] See, for instance, Denby (2014: 95) for discussion of whether *is-abstract* is intrinsic. See, for instance, Sider (2000: 85) for discussion of whether temporal properties are intrinsic. It is controversial whether some of the properties I have mentioned are even genuine properties. For instance, Armstrong (1978) denies that there are negative properties. Zangwill (2011) argues that negative properties are less real than positive ones.

obtains between her and the story (and perhaps Austen as well). Thomasson does not tell us much about what fictional characters themselves are like. I do not say much about what musical works themselves are like. I do not think there is much to say, other than that they are created abstract partless objects. Musical works, like fictional characters on Thomasson's view, are intrinsically boring. Most of their interesting properties are extrinsic.

One might object that my view ignores many intrinsic properties of works. Consider the following sentences:

(1)   Mahler's *Third Symphony* is long.
(2)   Farrenc's *Third Symphony* is in G-minor.
(3)   Joplin's "The Entertainer" is vibrant.
(4)   Beach's *Gaelic Symphony* is beautiful.

(1) and (2) ostensibly attribute non-aesthetic properties: *is-long* and *is-in-G-minor*. (3) and (4) ostensibly attribute aesthetic ones: *is-vibrant* and *is-beautiful*. One might claim that all of these sentences accurately attribute intrinsic properties to musical works. If this is right, then works have many more intrinsic properties than I have claimed.

I will mention two ways I can respond to this objection. The first option, inspired by Wolterstorff (1975) and Dodd (2007: 46–47), is to claim that sentences (1)–(4) are true but that their predicates are polysemous. On this line, Mahler's *Third Symphony* is long but in a special sense of "long." "Is long" picks out the property *is-such-that-there-there-cannot-be-correct-performances-of-it-that-are-not-long*. This is a property the work has not just in virtue of the way it is. It has this property in virtue of what its performance rules are like. On this line, then, (1) attributes an *extrinsic* property to Mahler's *Third Symphony*. Similar things may be said about sentences (2)–(4).

A common objection to this kind of polysemy-strategy draws on linguistic data. Consider two sentences from Letts (2018: 66).[14]

(5)   *The Festive Overture* is loud, and so is your shirt.
(6)   *The Festive Overture* is loud, and so was the performance I heard last night.

(5) is infelicitous and jarring. This is consistent with *The Festive Overture* being loud in a different sense than shirts are loud. (6), conversely, is felicitous. One might think this shows that *The Festive Overture* is loud in the same sense that performances are loud. One might conclude that "is loud" is not used polysemously in (6)—and similarly object that the predicates in (1)–(4) are not used polysemously.

I am unsure whether this objection works. Consider:

(7)   He is healthy, and so is the food he prepares for his family. (Hawthorne and Lepore 2011: 471.)

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[14] (Ostertag (2012: 366–367), Predelli (2011), and Kleinschmidt and Ross (2012, 135–137) also discuss this objection.

(7) is felicitous. It seems wrong to conclude that (7) says a person is healthy in the same sense that food is healthy. Plausibly, (7) says the person and the food he prepares are healthy in two different but related senses of "healthy." The person is in good health; the food is conducive to good health. If this is right, then perhaps musical works are loud, long, vibrant, and beautiful in senses of these terms that are different but related to senses in which performances are loud, long, vibrant, and beautiful. Maybe the polysemy-strategy is right after all.

Even if the polysemy-strategy fails, there is a second option. I may give an error theory. On this line, sentences (1)–(4) are false but convey something true about musical works and their performance rules. I take no stand on whether the error theory is better than the polysemy-strategy. Both approaches are reasonable. Either way, sentences (1)–(4) on my view do not accurately attribute intrinsic properties to musical works.

3 Change

My view accounts for how musical works change. Bruckner revised his *Eighth Symphony*. "All the Things You Are" may now be correctly performed without its original verse. "Happy Birthday to You" now often concludes with the words "and many more." "L'chah Dodi" now has Sephardic and Ashkenazi melodies. On my view, these works get new performance rules and thereby new sound structures and lyrics. For instance, Bruckner gave his *Eight Symphony* new performance rules. In doing so he changed how people should perform the work, including what notes they should play toward the end of the third movement. As a result, the sound structure that correct performances of this work instantiate is different from the sound structure that correct performances previously instantiated. This is how the work acquired a new sound structure.[15]

As described above, Platonists typically deny that musical works change in these ways. Conversely, Rohrbaugh's continuant-view (2003) and Evnine's hylomorphist proposal (2009: 209, 2016: 137–138) allow for works to change. Rohrbaugh thinks musical works are "continuants": non-physical individuals that depend for their existence on physical things, such as scores and performances. Rohrbaugh claims works are "temporally flexible," by which he means that their intrinsic properties may change. He thinks this happens paradigmatically with folk songs that are sung differently over time (Rohrbaugh 2003: 188).

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[15] The extent to which musical works may change is open to debate. Some readers might find it intuitive, for instance, that Seeger's *String Quartet* couldn't have gone from having its initial sound structure to moments later having the structure associated with Beyoncé's album *Lemonade*. I think that, perhaps, even this change is possible. I find it intuitive that at least some radical changes are possible. Mahler could have revised his *Third Symphony* so that it became only three minutes long. Folk songs acquire completely different melodies and lyrics. I find it intuitive that musical works may even cease to be musical works! Someone may create a song and then turn it into a poem, by discarding the melody and keeping only the lyrics. Eventually they may turn the poem into a speech by making the words less poetic and more literal. The song, the poem, and the speech—it seems to me—are all the same object. I will not defend such speculations here.

Evnine, inspired by Levinson ([1980](#)), thinks composers create musical works by indicating pre-existent sound structures.[16] Evnine thinks a musical work is constituted by, but distinct from, its sound structure. In other words, he thinks a musical work is made of a sound structure. Similarly, he thinks clay statues are constituted by clay.[17] He thinks musical works change by being constituted by different sound structures at different times. Likewise, he thinks a car may be constituted by different mechanical parts at different times. In this way Evnine agrees with Rohrbaugh that works are temporally flexible. A disadvantage of Evnine's view is that, since he takes works to be constituted by sound structures, he cannot account for works, such as Cage's *Child of Tree*, that have no associated sound structure. As mentioned above, such works are no problem for my view.

There are reasons to think my view is better than both Rohrbaugh's and Evnine's views at explaining how works change. Rohrbaugh and Evnine agree that Bruckner revises his *Eighth Symphony* by changing its intrinsic properties. On Evnine's view, the work is literally made of a sound structure in 1887 and then a different one in 1890. On my view, Bruckner changes the work's performance rules and thereby changes its sound structure. But he does not change what the work is made of or what its parts are. It has no parts! Bruckner changes only the work's extrinsic properties.

Even Platonists allow for changes to abstract objects' extrinsic properties. For instance, mathematical Platonists accept that π hasn't always had the property *being-thought-about-by-Leibniz*. It acquired this property sometime after Leibniz's birth. Platonists deny merely that we change the intrinsic properties of abstracta. Some non-Platonists deny this, too. For instance, Thomasson ([1999](#): 43–55), despite thinking that authors create abstract fictional characters, accepts that we cannot causally interact with characters after they are created. Those who agree with Platonists and Thomasson that abstracta are in a deep sense immutable should prefer my account of how musical works change to Evnine's and Rohrbaugh's accounts; on my view, only extrinsic properties of musical works change.

Moreover, a view of music should explain more than the fact that works sometimes change. It should explain also cases in which works do not change. That is, a view of music should address the revision puzzle: why are some individuals in a privileged position when it comes to changing musical works and other artifacts? My view explains, for instance, why I cannot change the sound structure of Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*, even if I sincerely propose new performance rules for it. Social practices pertaining to Western classical music determine that I cannot change how this symphony should be performed. My proposed performance rules, unlike Bruckner's, do not become the work's rules. My proposed rules have no normative force. Nobody respects them. People care about Bruckner's intentions, not mine. My proposal does not change how the work should be performed and thus

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[16] Levinson uses 'indication' as a technical term. Levinson ([2013](#): 53–55) claims that indicating a sound structure involves (a) selecting notes, (b) taking an attitude of approval toward those notes, (c) appropriating those notes, and (d) establishing a rule about how those notes should be performed.

[17] Many theorists have proposed that clay statues are constituted by but distinct from clay. See, for instance, Baker ([2007](#)), Koslicki ([2004](#)), and Thomson ([1998](#)).

fails to change its sound structure. Analogously, if I declare a new speed limit for a road, I do not thereby change its speed limit. Social practices determine that only government officials may make this change.[18]

Rohrbaugh and Evnine, however, are left with a mystery. They think Bruckner may change the intrinsic properties of his symphony. Nobody else has this power. Contrast this case with Jackson Pollock's *Convergence*. Imagine I splash red paint on it. Perhaps, social practices determine that I vandalize the painting and that a similar act by Pollock would be a mere alteration. Nonetheless, social practices do not prevent me from changing the painting's intrinsic properties. It is hard to see how they could. Regardless of what society thinks or does, anyone can change a painting's intrinsic properties. The same is true of other kinds of artworks, such as sculptures, and even all concrete artifacts. I can refinish my kitchen table, even though I am not its creator. I can change the bricks of buildings that were built centuries ago. It is a mystery, then, on Rohrbaugh's and Evnine's accounts, why Bruckner and only Bruckner can change his symphony's intrinsic properties.

Perhaps, if pressed on the issue, Rohrbaugh and Evnine would agree with me about the importance of social practices. That is, they might claim that social practices explain why only Bruckner can change his symphony's intrinsic properties. I do not claim that it is impossible to give such an explanation. But it is hard to see how such an explanation would work. In so many other cases—paintings, sculptures, tables, buildings, and so on—social practices do not, and ostensibly cannot, prevent individuals from changing an object's intrinsic properties. Social practices, however, commonly prevent individuals from changing normative and extrinsic properties of objects. Any vandal with a jackhammer can change a road's surface. Given our social practices, only a select few can change a road's speed limit. I can bend my fork but cannot change the socially determined fact that it is proper to put it to the left of my plate.

My view, then, has two main advantages over Rohrbaugh's and Evnine's accounts: (a) my view allows for a work's sound structure to change, while still being consistent with the view that abstracta are in some sense immutable, and (b) my view more easily appeals to social practices in order to solve the revision puzzle.

Social practices, of course, are contingent. An upshot of my solution to the revision puzzle is that, were social practices radically different, I would be able to change the sound structure of Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*. This is a feature—not a bug! Imagine all composers, performers, and fans of Western classical music task an international organization with determining how symphonies should be performed. Imagine this organization grants me supreme power to make musical decisions. I am thereby able to change the performance rules and the sound structure of the symphony. Of course, even if I were to make such changes, people would still be able to perform the symphony as Bruckner intended in 1890 for it to be performed. I cannot change that.

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[18] See Irvin (2005) for related discussion. Irvin claims that artists often determine certain features of their artworks by enacting a "sanction" that is related to their intentions and artistic conventions.

To appreciate the contingency of social practices we need not consider such science-fiction. We may reflect on the diversity of social practices in the real world. Practices do not always privilege the intentions of composers. Many musical traditions privilege the intentions of performers. This is what enables jazz standards, folk songs, and "Happy Birthday" to change.

Even in Western classical music composers do not always get the last word. Bruckner died before he could complete his *Ninth Symphony*. Bach died before he could complete *The Art of Fugue*. Artists have proposed completions of these works. Letocart and Schaller, for instance, have proposed influential completions of Bruckner's *Ninth Symphony*. Platonists may insist that Letocart's completion and Schaller's completion are two works that are distinct from Bruckner's incomplete symphony. I think instead that Letocart and Schaller have proposed ways of performing Bruckner's *Ninth Symphony*. Similar things happen in literature when writers die. Fitzgerald's friend, Edmund Wilson, finished *The Last Tycoon* after Fitzgerald died. Wilson's version is the canonical version. Robinson's *Memoirs* were finished by her daughter. Wallace's *The Pale King* was posthumously finished by his editor. Sometimes things get complicated. Sometimes it is hard to know which ways of performing a musical work are correct—and which versions of literary works are canonical—but this is to be expected. Socially determined normative facts are often complicated. That is why, for instance, we have lawyers and judges to help us settle complicated legal disputes.

I should highlight a worry one might have with my account of how musical works change. Sometimes, changes to a work's performance rules do not seem to change the work itself. For instance, it is now acceptable to use a guitar to perform Bach's works that were once deemed only for lute. Intuitively, these works haven't changed. Only what counts as an acceptable way to perform them has changed. Contrast this case with the German national anthem, *Das Lied der Deutschen*. After World War II, Germany removed the first stanza due to its problematic political connotations. Intuitively, the anthem genuinely changed. My view, however, treats both cases as involving, fundamentally, the same kind of change. Both cases involve changes to a work's performance rules. It is now acceptable to perform Bach's lute compositions with a guitar. It is no longer acceptable to sing Germany's national anthem with the first stanza. Some theorists might worry that my view thereby conflates two different kinds of changes.

There is room on my account to explain why we think of Germany's national anthem, but not Bach's instrumental works, as changing. Performative changes that involve elements we closely associate with a work—for instance, a work's lyrics or sound structure—are colloquially described as changes to the work itself. Changes to a work's peripheral elements, such as its instrumentation, are less often described as changes to the work itself. Still, on my view, this is a difference without a deep metaphysical difference. All of these changes are changes to how a work should be performed and affect only a work's extrinsic properties.[19]

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[19] An underlying issue is the accuracy and authenticity of performances of musical works. See, for instance, Bicknell (2018), Davies (2001), Dodd (2015), Goehr (1992), and Kivy (1995) for discussion of authenticity of performances.

I have claimed a musical work's sound structure can change over time. This issue is distinct from the question of whether a work, when it first existed, could have had a different sound structure from the one it actually had. Now is a good time for me to say something about the latter. I agree with Rohrbaugh (2003) that works may have been created with different sound structures. Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou's piano solo *Homesickness* is largely in D major with a section in G major. She could have created it with a sound structure that was entirely in D major.

One might wonder if I think any properties of works are essential. I think some are. Works are essentially created abstract partless objects. Moreover, as Levinson (1980), Rohrbaugh (2005), and Evnine (2009) claim, works are essentially created by their actual composers. For instance, *The Creation* is essentially created by Haydn. It could not have existed without Haydn creating it. Someone else could have created a work that sounded exactly the same, but it would not have been *The Creation*.[20]

3.1 Stage theory and perdurantism

I have argued that my view of music more easily solves the revision puzzle than Rohrbaugh's and Evnine's views. One may accept my claim that musical works are created partless abstracta, however, without thinking that social practices are involved at all in a work's changes. More importantly, one need not accept my specific view of musical works in order to accept my general solution to the revision puzzle. I will explain in this section how musical perdurantists and musical stage theorists may adopt my general solution.

Moruzzi (2018) defends musical stage theory. On her view, a musical work is an individual performance. Caplan and Matheson (2006) defend a related view: musical perdurantism. On their version of musical perdurantism, a musical work is a fusion of all of its performances. Both views take musical works to be concrete rather than abstract.

One might worry that Moruzzi's stage theory faces an immediate problem. Consider the sentence, "Seeger's *String Quartet* has been performed for many years." Intuitively, it is true. How can it be true if a musical work is an individual performance? Moruzzi addresses this issue. She claims that, although works are individual performances, there is a privileged relation that connects performances with other performances.[21] When we say "Seeger's *String Quartet* has been performed for many years" we are not talking about an individual work per se but instead a fusion of works/performances that share this privileged relation. This fusion is precisely the fusion that Caplan and Matheson would identify with the

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[20] The connection between essence and modality is more complicated than my comments might suggest. I think all essential properties are necessary properties. Following Fine (1994), however, I think not all necessary properties are essential. See, for instance, Brogaard and Salerno (2007) for an account of essence that is consistent with this observation.

[21] See Moruzzi (2018: 345) for details on this privileged relation. The relation has a causal component, a component that takes into account the intentions of performers, and a component that includes sonic similarity.

work itself. Moruzzi calls such fusions *works-as-constructs*. She calls individual performances *works-as-performances.* She thinks that, strictly speaking, only *works-as-performances* are musical works.

We can now see how Moruzzi, Caplan, and Matheson may adopt my general solution to the revision puzzle. Caplan and Matheson may claim that Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony* is the fusion of all of its performances, including those that happened before and after Bruckner revised it in 1890. Sound structures, since they are abstract, are not part of the concrete fusion. Caplan and Matheson may agree with me, then, that changing a work's sound structure does not involve changing any of its intrinsic properties. They may claim that Bruckner changed merely what counts as a correct performance of the work and in doing so changed which sound structure performances should instantiate. Moreover, they may agree with me that social practices enabled Bruckner to make this sort of change and prevent me from doing so.[22]

Moruzzi may say something similar. Works are individual performances on her account and thus do not undergo relevant changes. She may claim, however, that, just as "Seeger's *String Quartet* has been performed for many years" is about a fusion of related works, so is the sentence "In 1890 Bruckner changed his *Eighth Symphony*." That is, when we ostensibly talk about the ways in which musical works change we are not talking about works-as-performances but rather works-as-constructs. Again, works-as-constructs are the very fusions that Caplan and Matheson identify with works. Moruzzi, like Caplan and Matheson, may claim that social practices enable certain individuals to change certain extrinsic properties of these objects, including what counts as correct performances of them.

Here is the crucial similarity between Moruzzi, Caplan, Matheson, and myself. We all may claim, *pace* Evnine and Rohrbaugh, that paradigmatic changes to musical works (or works-as-constructs in Moruzzi's case) are changes to an object's *extrinsic* properties. We are thus able to adopt my general solution to the revision puzzle. That is, we may easily appeal to social practices to explain why some individuals, but not others, are able to change the relevant extrinsic properties. As noted above, social practices commonly regulate who may change some of an object's extrinsic properties, rather than intrinsic ones. This is true of concrete objects, such as roads and eating utensils. Similarly, social practices regulate who may change certain extrinsic properties of musical works.[23]

Given the potential for common ground between Caplan, Matheson, Moruzzi, and myself it is fair to wonder whether one should prefer my view to their views. An advantage of my view is that it straightforwardly allows for musical works that have never been performed. On my view, a composer may create a work and even assign it performance rules, without the work ever being performed. Since Moruzzi

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[22] See Tillman and Spencer (2012: 257) for related discussion. They propose that, even if musical works are fusions of performances, individual performances may still count as correct or incorrect in virtue of things that are not part of the fusion, including the intentions of composers.

[23] Other theories are consistent with my general solution to the revision puzzle. For instance, the broad framework of Cray and Matheson's musical idealism is consistent with my solution, even though they ultimately deny that works change (Cray and Matheson 2017: 709).

identifies works with performances, she accepts the counterintuitive claim that there are no unperformed works (Moruzzi 2018: 346–347). Caplan and Matheson are committed to this claim, too, because they take works to be fusions of performances.

On the other hand, an advantage of Moruzzi's view is that it gives a straightforward account of how we directly access musical works. We listen to them by listening to performances, since that is just what works are on her view (Moruzzi 2018: 348). Caplan and Matheson, conversely, think we never directly access works in their entirety. Instead, we directly access parts of them, since individual performances are parts of the work (Caplan and Matheson 2008: 80–82). Moruzzi's view fares better than my view in this respect, too. Presumably, we cannot directly access abstracta. Given this assumption, my view is committed to the claim that we directly access performances of works but never works themselves (or any part thereof). This is a disadvantage of my view.[24]

I will not try to weigh here the advantages or disadvantages of the proposals under consideration. Ultimately, my view should be of special interest to theorists who think works are abstract and who accept that the revision puzzle is a genuine puzzle. This is because my view more easily solves the revision puzzle than Evnine's and Rohrbaugh's views, both of which take works to be abstract.

4 Other abstract artifacts

My view applies to abstract artifacts beyond music. Consider words. Following Kaplan (1990, 2011), I think a single word may be spelled and pronounced differently. The word "color" is spelled with a 'u' in Canada and without one in the United States. The word "data" has at least two familiar pronunciations. Words, Kaplan writes, are neither "strings of letters" nor "pronunciations"; they "must be something more abstract, something that *has* spellings and pronunciations (Kaplan 2011, 506)" [original emphasis]. I agree. I think words are created abstract partless objects. They *have* spellings, pronunciations, and meanings, but these things are neither identical to nor part of words. Just as musical works have performance rules, there are rules that determine how words should be spelled, pronounced, and used.

My view extends to many other abstract artifacts. Novels and poems are created abstract partless objects that have verbal structures. Films are created abstract partless objects that have image/sound-structures. Games, such as chess, are created abstract partless objects that have rules. Corporations are created abstract partless objects that have employees and shareholders. Fictional characters are created abstract partless objects that have associated properties; for instance, Sherlock Holmes, though not literally a detective, is associated with the property *is-a-detective*. These cases involve distinct *having* relations. What it means for chess to have rules is that while playing chess one should follow those rules. What it means for a corporation to have employees is that those employees are tasked with doing

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[24] It might not be a big disadvantage, however. Dodd (2007: 92–100) argues that musical works are indirectly audible but no less so than material objects.

work for the corporation. Despite such differences, in each case things stand in a *having* relation without standing in a relation of identity or parthood.

Evnine may claim that abstract artifacts are *constituted* by objects I claim they merely *have*. Indeed, Evnine (2016: 139–146) claims that fictional characters are constituted by their associated properties. On his view, Jane Austen's Emma is constituted by the properties *is-handsome, is-clever,* and *is-rich*, among many others. Evnine, however, has trouble accounting for other kinds of abstract artifacts.

Imagine the president of a cooking club announces at a club meeting, "I hereby declare we have a new position: the treasurer of this club. I open the floor for nominations." Plausibly, the president thereby creates the *position* of treasurer of the club.[25] One might think the treasurer position is identical to the plurality of individuals who occupy it. This proposal has two problems. First, intuitively the position may exist even if nobody ever occupies it. Second, imagine that someone serves as the only treasurer ever of the cooking club and also as the only president ever of a local chess club. If club positions are identified with their occupants, it follows that the position of treasurer of the cooking club is identical to the position of president of the chess club. That is implausible.[26]

I propose that the position of treasurer of the cooking club is a created abstract partless object. The position may subsequently *have* individuals who occupy it, but such people are neither identical to nor part of the position. It is hard to see how Evnine can account for this case. Specifically, it is hard to see what he should claim *constitutes* the position. It would seem odd for him to claim the treasurers constitute the position, since the position may exist without anyone occupying it.

My view, then, extends to an especially wide array of abstract artifacts. Like musical works, these other abstract artifacts may change. "Awful" went from meaning only *awe-inspiring* to meaning also *very-bad* in the 19th Century. Chess acquired the *en passant* rule in the 15th Century. Corporations, such as Google, hire new employees. In all of these cases abstract objects get new extrinsic properties. How we should use "awful" changes. How we should play chess changes. Who is tasked with working for Google changes. Moreover, my view helps to solve the revision puzzle in connection to these artifacts. Due to social practices I cannot singlehandedly change the meaning of "awful," chess's rules, or Google's employees. I cannot change "awful," chess, or Google for roughly the same reason I cannot change Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*.

5 Conclusion

I have proposed a view of music on which musical works are created abstract partless objects. The view has advantages over other views considered in this paper. Crucially, it helps to solve the revision puzzle. It helps to explain why Bruckner, but

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[25] I discuss this example in Friedell (2017: 448).

[26] Ritchie (2013) similarly argues against accounts that identify social groups with pluralities or fusions of their members.

not I, may change his *Eighth Symphony*. The key idea is that paradigmatic changes that musical works undergo are socially determined normative changes in how they should be performed. These changes alter only musical works' extrinsic properties. Rohrbaugh's continuant-view and Evnine's hylomorphist proposal have a harder time solving the revision puzzle. Moreover, theorists who think abstracta are in a deep sense immutable should prefer my view to Evnine's and Rohrbaugh's views, since my view takes only extrinsic properties of musical works to change. Another advantage my view has over Evnine's is that my views allows for works with no sound structure, such as Cage's *Child of Tree*. Other theories, however, such as Moruzzi's musical stage theory and Caplan and Matheson's musical perdurantism, are consistent with my general solution to the revision puzzle. A reason to prefer my view to these two alternatives is that my view allows for the existence of unperformed works. A final advantage is that my view applies to an especially wide array of abstract artifacts beyond music.

My view, however, has disadvantages. Some theorists might worry that melodies and lyrics are not part of musical works on my view, at least not in the normal sense of "part." Some theorists might worry that my view conflates genuine changes to musical works and mere changes in how works ought to be performed. Moreover, unlike Moruzzi's stage theory, my view does not allow for us to directly access musical works.

I have not settled whether my view's advantages outweigh its disadvantages. But I hope to have shown that the view deserves a place at the table. At the very least, I hope to have raised a puzzle—why can't I change Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony*?—that will be appreciated even by those who reject my solution.

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