

Matthew Shlomowitz

Lecture about Bad Music

Composed: 2015

Duration: 42 minutes

First performed by Plus Minus at the Ultima Festival, Oslo, Norway on 11 September 2015

Commissioned by the Ultima Festival

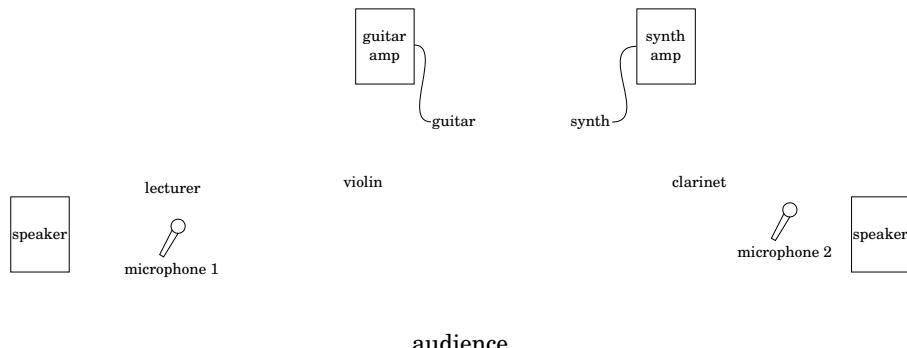
A lecture about bad music

For lecturer, violin, clarinet, electric guitar and synthesiser/sampler.

Performance instructions

The score is in C. Boxed texts in the score and parts are spoken by the lecturer throughout the performance. In the second part of *Novelty Piece*, there are three short texts spoken by the violinist, clarinettist and synthesiser player, the performers leave their playing position and walk to microphone 2 for these moments.

Set up



Required equipment

- Stereo PA
- 2 vocal microphones
- guitar amplifier
- guitar distortion and volume pedals
- 88-note keyboard
- keyboard amplifier

Synthesiser

Four synthesised sounds are specified:

- flute
- electro synth sound
- angelic synth pad
- viola (or other contrasting sound)

In *ABCDE Piece No. 2*, two pitches play different sounds. The synthesiser also controls the drum machine sounds — kick and snare drum samples assigned to two low notes, which are played by the lecturer in *Heavy Metal Piece A* 4-bar looping ‘jungle’ drumbeat sample at 160BPM is used in the *Finale*.

Lecture about Bad Music

Matthew Shlomowitz

The four musicians enter stage, taking the usual pre-performance bow. Play **Bad Piece No. 1** three times. At the end of each performance the musicians relax, wait a few seconds and then perform the piece again.

Bad Piece No. 1

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
flute

Detailed description: A musical score for four instruments. The Clarinet in B_b and Violin play eighth-note patterns. The Electric guitar and Synth (labeled as flute) play sixteenth-note patterns. The score is in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 40. The Clarinet and Violin play 'Detached, even' notes. The Electric guitar and Synth play 'Detached, even' notes. The score ends with a 16th note followed by a fermata and a repeat sign. The Electric guitar has a box around it with the text 'simple bright clean sound'.

cl

vln

egtr

syn

Detailed description: A musical score for four instruments. The Clarinet (cl) and Violin (vln) play eighth-note patterns. The Electric guitar (egtr) and Synth (syn) play sixteenth-note patterns. The score is in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 40. The Clarinet and Violin play 'Detached, even' notes. The Electric guitar and Synth play 'Detached, even' notes. The score ends with a 16th note followed by a fermata and a repeat sign.

We are recreating an experiment the German psychologist Max Meyer conducted in 1903. You have now heard the same terrible piece of music three times. You should have hated it the first time you heard it. But, according to the results of the original experiment, you should have felt increasingly pleasure with each successive performance and, in turn, gradually revised your opinion of the piece in a positive direction. In psychology, this phenomenon — the phenomenon of first hating something, but then coming to like it through repeat experiences — is known as the 'exposure effect'.

Play **Bad Piece No. 1** two more times.

Can we say a piece of music is inherently bad, or are such judgements purely subjective? Historically, this question has been framed in terms of beauty. One of the big questions within the philosophical field of aesthetics is: can something be inherently beautiful? The classical philosophers believed in objective beauty. They believed a thing will be beautiful if the parts are organised to form a coherent whole and according to certain values regarding proportion, harmony and symmetry. An example of an appealing proportion is the ratio found in the golden section, a point we will reach later in this lecture! The inference is, that if you make something that adheres to these values, then beauty can reliably be achieved.

The notion of objective beauty was discredited during the eighteenth century. For instance, the philosopher Edmund Burke formulated the following example to make the point.

Swan and Peacock

Lecturer A swan has a very long neck $\text{♩} = 80$

Clarinet in B \flat

Violin

Electric guitar

simple bright clean sound

Synth

electro synth

=

lect 2

a medium sized body

lect 3

vln

egtr

15

syn

and a tiny tail.

f

f

=

lect 5

cl

15

syn

Burke asks: is this a beautiful proportion? It must be, because everyone thinks swans are beautiful.

lect 6

cl vln egtr syn

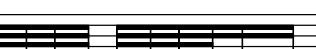
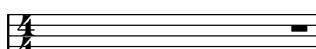
15

But this is rather confusing, as everyone also thinks peacocks are beautiful, and peacocks have a pretty short neck

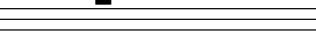
2 2 2 2

But this is rather confusing, as everyone also thinks peacocks are beautiful, and peacocks have a pretty short neck

lect 7 $\frac{2}{4}$ | an average sized body | $\frac{4}{4}$

cl $\frac{2}{4}$ γ |  | 

egtr $\frac{2}{4}$ |  | 

syn 15 $\frac{2}{4}$ |  | 

an average sized body

9
lect and a tail that is longer than
neck and body combined

vln

15

syn



and a tail that is longer than
neck and body combined

10 lect

cl vln syn

Swan

15

13 lect

cl vln egtr syn

Peacock

15

16 lect

cl vln egtr syn

2 4 4 Swan 4

15

lect 19

Peacock

This musical score section starts with a flute part (cl) featuring sixteenth-note patterns. The violin (vln) and electric guitar (egtr) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and chords. The synthesizer (syn) adds rhythmic patterns. The score includes a dynamic marking *f* and a tempo marking $\frac{2}{4}$ followed by $\frac{4}{4}$. Measures 19 and 20 show the flute and violin playing eighth-note patterns. Measure 21 begins with a forte dynamic and continues with eighth-note patterns for all instruments.

lect 22

Swan and Peacock

This section of the score continues with the flute (cl) as the primary melodic instrument, accompanied by the violin (vln), electric guitar (egtr), and synthesizer (syn). The flute has a sustained note in measure 22 followed by sixteenth-note patterns. The violin and electric guitar provide harmonic support with sustained notes and chords. The synthesizer adds rhythmic patterns. The score includes dynamic markings *f* and *p*, and a tempo marking $\frac{2}{4}$ followed by $\frac{4}{4}$. Measures 23 and 24 show the flute and violin playing eighth-note patterns.

Musical score for Swan and Peacock, featuring staves for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Electric Guitar (egtr), and Synthesizer (syn). The score is divided into three systems by vertical bar lines. Each system contains three measures, numbered 25, 27, and 29 respectively. The instruments play a variety of rhythmic patterns and harmonic textures, including sixteenth-note figures, sustained notes, and complex chords. Measure 25 starts with a dynamic of *f*. Measures 27 and 29 also feature dynamics of *f* at specific points. The score is set in a key signature of three sharps (F major) and includes a bass clef for the synthesizer's lower octave.

25

cl

vln

egtr

15

syn

27

cl

vln

egtr

15

syn

29

cl

vln

egtr

15

syn

31

cl vln egtr syn

15

33

cl vln egtr syn

15

37

cl vln egtr syn

15

40

cl vln egtr

15

syn

42

cl vln egtr

15

syn

Does that simply mean that there is no objective basis to our judgements? We'll return to that question later, but now let's go back to the music you heard at the beginning. I composed that piece especially for this lecture. I tried to write a piece that has no inherently positive attributes. If I was successful, you should have experienced no pleasure the first time you heard it. But equally, according to the exposure effect, you should have begun experiencing a little pleasure when you heard the piece a second time and the amount of pleasure should have increased with each repetition. An interesting aspect of Max Meyer's experiment is that it begs the question: what constitutes bad music?

I found it harder than I expected to compose a bad piece, a piece that would give you, the audience, no feelings of pleasure. I began with the following proposition: music is inherently bad when it has no order. I set about composing music on my computer by assembling unrelated musical ideas in a random way. I wrote a bunch of pieces and played them to friends to get feedback. They told me that the pieces were not so bad and that they did perceive order and even a sense of cause and effect. I suppose the explanation is that our brains are wired up to look for, and even construct, a sense of cause and effect, even when it is not there. Here is one of the pieces I composed, but decided not to use.

Bad Piece No. 2

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
flute

d = 56

=

cl

vln

egtr

syn

ff *detached* *p* *p*

ff *mf* *p*

ff *p*

ff *f*

8

cl vln egtr syn

16/4 4/4 16/4 16/4

ffff ff ff ff

mf mf mf mf

p ff mp mp

f f

=

12

cl vln egtr syn

16/4 5/4 16/4 4/4 5/4

f f f f f

mp ff ff ff ff

ff ff ff ff ff

In that piece, I also tried to compose musical ideas that lacked salience. By salience I mean that the ideas lacked definition and identity, and lacked noteworthy or memorable features.

I also tried to make it unfocussed and lacking in purpose. But, I decided not to use that piece because I became worried that it in fact might have great clarity of purpose in expressing a state of confusion! After all, how can we tell the difference between a piece that is confused and a piece that has the aesthetic goal of expressing a state of confusion?

As I listened to my drafts over and over again, I was also becoming increasingly fond of them. I had the problem that as composer I was not immune from the exposure effect. I could not put myself back in the shoes of someone hearing these pieces for the first time.

Repetition Piece

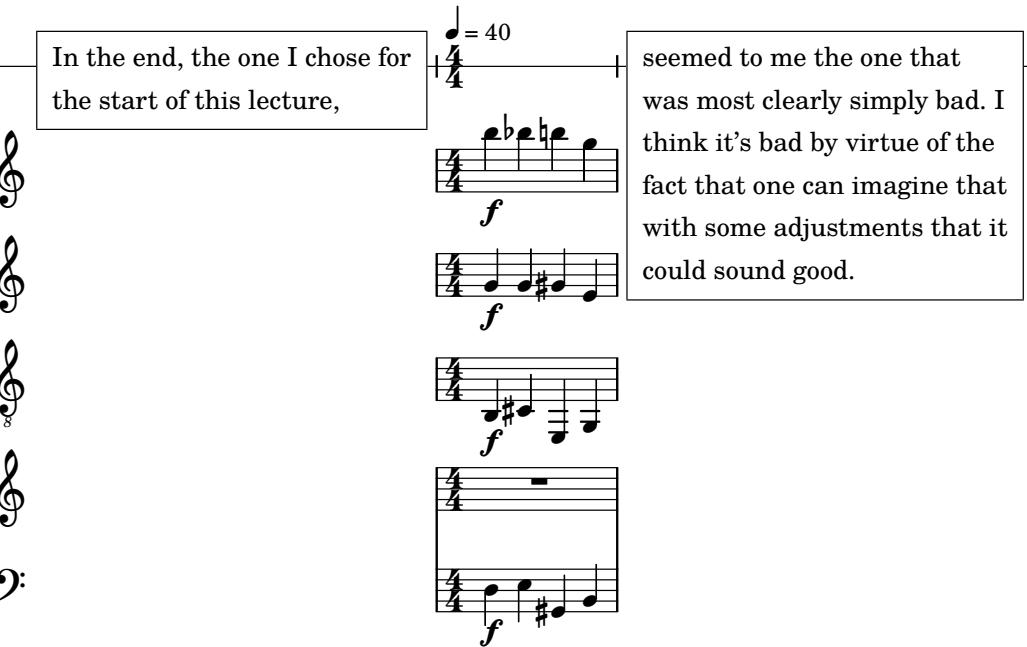
Lecturer In the end, the one I chose for the start of this lecture, $\frac{12}{8}$

Clarinet in B_b 

Violin 

Electric guitar simple bright clean sound $\frac{12}{8}$

Synth flute $\frac{12}{8}$ angelic synth pad $\frac{12}{8}$



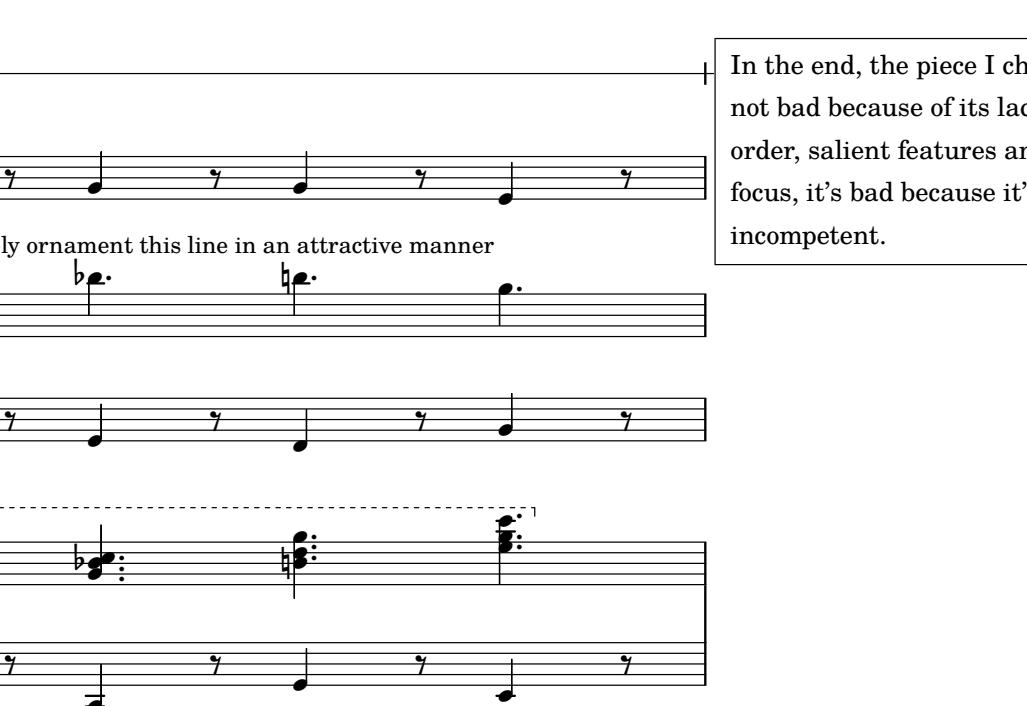
lect 2 $\frac{12}{8}$ $\frac{12}{8}$

cl $\frac{12}{8}$ mp Expressively ornament this line in an attractive manner $\frac{12}{8}$

vln $\frac{12}{8}$ mf legato $\frac{12}{8}$

egtr $\frac{12}{8}$ mp $\frac{12}{8}$

syn $\frac{12}{8}$ mp 8va $\frac{12}{8}$ $\frac{12}{8}$ flute $\frac{12}{8}$



×11

repeat under spoken text
Begin next text on page 13

lect 3 $\frac{4}{4}$ = 80

cl $\frac{4}{4}$ f ppp

vln $\frac{4}{4}$ f ppp

egtr $\frac{4}{4}$ f pp

syn $\frac{4}{4}$ f ppp

Repeating bar softly underneath spoken text

Another reason a piece of music might be inherently bad is because it is overly repetitive. In the field of Psychological Aesthetics there is a theory called 'processing fluency', which refers to the ease with which information is processed. The ability to process information fluently gives us pleasure. In turn, a highly repetitive work will produce a positive reaction. This pleasure will be short-lived, however, as once the listener understands what is going on, boredom will set in and a negative reaction results. The state of diminished interest is called 'habituation'.

Lecturer pauses for a few seconds whilst repeating music continues

David Huron proposes that highly repetitive musical works will be experienced positively if that repetition is offset with a small degree of variation. The next piece has a large amount of repetition to engender the positive feelings that result from processing fluency, whilst the small degree of variation will defer the negative feelings that result from the onset of habituation.

Variation Piece

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
flute

f

f

f

f

f

f

Musical score for orchestra and strings, page 3, measures 3-4. The score includes parts for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Electric Bass Guitar (egtr), and Synthesizer (syn). The Clarinet and Violin parts feature eighth-note patterns with grace notes. The Electric Bass Guitar part consists of sustained notes with grace notes. The Synthesizer part features eighth-note patterns. The score is in 3/4 time, with measure 3 ending on a forte dynamic and measure 4 continuing the rhythmic pattern. The parts are grouped by measure with vertical bar lines.

5

cl vln egtr syn

7

cl vln egtr syn

9

cl

vln

egtr

syn

10

2

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 11. The score includes parts for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Double Bass (egtr), and Synthesizer (syn). The Clarinet and Double Bass parts feature sixteenth-note patterns. The Violin part includes a dynamic instruction 'f' (fortissimo). The Synthesizer part has a dynamic instruction 'ff' (fortississimo). The score is in common time, with measures 11 through 15 shown.

repeat under spoken text

Begin next text on page 17

14

lect cl vln egtr syn

Repeating bar softly underneath spoken text; lecturer waits for a few seconds before beginning next text

Another way Huron suggests a composer can maintain listener interest with a minimum of composition effort is through the occasional deployment of novelty. Novel musical ideas will now be introduced at strategic moments to take care that you do not succumb to habituation.

Novelty Piece

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
flute

18

cl vln egtr syn

5

cl vln egtr syn

7

cl vln egtr syn

9

cl vln egtr syn

repeat under spoken text
stop immediately at the words
"A reflective person might pause,"

Begin next text on page 20

lect 11

cl vln egtr syn

Repeating bar softly underneath spoken text; lecturer waits for a few seconds before beginning next text

Let's now return to a state of pure repetition. Huron proposes that after a number of repetitions listeners will habituate and in turn responsiveness and pleasure will decline. On the face of it, that seems reasonable. But, let's now consider this statement: excessive repetition is an invitation to 'listen in'.

A purely repetitive work may lead listeners to a state of disinterestedness, but we can also imagine a listener who becomes highly interested. Highly interested in the way that the musical idea resonates in the space in which it is performed. Highly interested in the small details within the musical idea that they missed in the first 10 statements, including the incidental sounds - such as the sound of the guitarist's hand moving along the instrument's neck - and the environmental sounds of the room. This person might also tune in to non sonic aspects, such as studying the way the musicians communicate with one another. Such a listener might note that in this context of extreme repetition, one element that sometimes changes is the facial expressions of the performers. A reflective person might pause,

Musicians stop.

pause, to appreciate the physical feat involved in performing such vigorous music over and over again.

Vigorous (♩ = 80)

Clarinet in B♭

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
electro synth

5

cl vln egtr syn

8

15

cl vln egtr syn

no vib.

18

25

cl vln egtr syn

repeat under spoken text

28

33

lect cl vln egtr syn

One of the notes in that melody may have caused a degree of irritation. The unexpected note choice is likely to have been surprising. This moment isn't really bad, it's more 'puzzling'. And although puzzling moments are often experienced negatively, they also have a positive potential since they attract our attention and interest. If the melody came back later in the piece, the puzzling deviation could be resolved and in turn give pleasure.

2

cl vln egtr syn

38

cl vln egtr syn

47

cl vln egtr syn

repeat under spoken text

lect

If a piece did not resolve a moment of deviance – if it simply continued without any further reference to that deviance - then we could make a strong argument that the piece was bad, since this transgressive note was meaningless beyond simply being a moment of deviance. The note would be so puzzling that we might even conclude that the performers had made a mistake.

55

cl vln egtr syn

$\frac{2}{3}$

61

vln

egtr

syn

distortion

ff

=

lect 69

cl

vln

egtr

syn

That example also had a moment of deviance. The deviant moment was much weirder. It was what we might call stylistic transgression.

2

75

lect

cl

egtr

distortion

ff

syn

So far we have considered the matter of bad music primarily from a psychological perspective. We've explored whether an understanding of our mental processes can provide an objective basis for our judgements. But, the factors that shape our mental processes are much broader than we have acknowledged. We'll now look at why a piece of music might produce different reactions and what role context plays in our judgements.

2

2

2

2

2

79

lect

cl

egtr

distortion

ff

syn

Imagine a continuation of the piece that attempted to reconcile this stylistic transgression. Attempting to make sense of that heavy metal confusion would indeed be an ambitious piece! If the piece pulled it off, that really would be something. But even if it did in some sense *pull it off*, there are still lots of people who wouldn't like it, no matter how good and successful it was. To explore this, let's consider 3 hypothetical individuals.

2

2

2

2

2

82

cl

Violin walk to microphone

vln

egtr

distortion

ff

syn

My hypothetical name is Julia. I quite liked the melody in that piece,

2

2

2

2

=

87

cl

vln

but for me, the inclusion of heavy metal might was an immediate turn off. I think heavy metal is too loud, too aggressive, and I associate it with satanic worship. I feel negatively about satanic worship.

egtr

syn

Violin return to position

distortion

ff

Synth walk to microphone

2

2

2

2

91

My hypothetical name is Roger. I have made a firm and exclusive commitment to Blues music. I believe Blues is the highest form of music because it is improvised, expressive, and deals with personal woes in a harsh world. The idea of an instrumental piece trying to reconcile two unrelated styles sounds bad to me. It has no lyrics and it sounds like an academic exercise. I think music should be concerned with the expression of feelings.

Most of Roger's friends are also blues enthusiasts and their love of blues music is an important source of social identity, pride and self-esteem. According to the Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel, in order to increase our self-image we enhance the status of the group to which we belong, and this also involves discriminating against people from other groups. The world is divided into "us" and "them" through a process of social, and in this case aesthetic, categorization. We all do it.

|
2
2
2
2
2
2
2
2

92 **cl** **vln** **egtr** **syn**

Clarinet walk to microphone

distortion

ff

Synth return to position

x3

My hypothetical name is Katherine. I don't like the idea of that piece because I believe in stylistic purity. I will concede that the whole idea of mixing styles was historically important during the hey-day of postmodernism, but ultimately it was a dead end, and, anyway, doing it now is just dated.

Heavy Metal Piece

D = 80
Clarinet return to position

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
flute

Drum machine

Musical score for measures 9 to 15. The score includes parts for cl (clarinet), vln (violin), egtr (electric guitar), and syn (synthesizer). The clarinet part consists of eighth-note patterns with dynamic *p*. The violin part features sustained notes with grace notes and dynamic *p*. The electric guitar part is primarily composed of sustained notes with dynamic *p*. The synthesizer part has a sustained note with dynamic *p* at measure 15.

Musical score for measures 16 to 22. The score includes parts for cl (clarinet), vln (violin), egtr (electric guitar), and syn (synthesizer). The clarinet part has a sustained note with dynamic *p* at measure 16, followed by eighth-note patterns with dynamic *p*. The violin part features sustained notes with grace notes and dynamic *p*. The electric guitar part is primarily composed of sustained notes with dynamic *p*. The synthesizer part has a sustained note with dynamic *p* at measure 15.

Musical score for measures 24 to 30. The score includes parts for cl (clarinet), vln (violin), egtr (electric guitar), and syn (synthesizer). The clarinet part consists of eighth-note patterns with dynamic *p*. The violin part features sustained notes with grace notes and dynamic *p*. The electric guitar part is primarily composed of sustained notes with dynamic *p*. The synthesizer part has a sustained note with dynamic *p* at measure 15.

Heavy Metal Piece

30

cl vln egtr syn

This section of the score shows the first four measures of a heavy metal piece. The woodwind (cl) has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The strings (vln) play sustained notes with grace notes. The electric guitar (egtr) and synthesizer (syn) provide harmonic support with sustained notes and chords. Measure 37 concludes with a dynamic instruction **mf**.

38

cl vln egtr syn

This section shows the next seven measures. The woodwind continues its rhythmic pattern. The strings play sustained notes with grace notes. The electric guitar and synthesizer maintain harmonic support. Measure 45 concludes with a dynamic instruction **p**.

44

cl vln egtr syn

This section shows the final seven measures of the piece. The woodwind has a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The strings play sustained notes with grace notes. The electric guitar and synthesizer provide harmonic support. Measure 51 concludes with a dynamic instruction **p**.

Heavy Metal Piece

31

51

cl vln egtr syn

distortion

ff

57

cl vln egtr syn

63

cl vln egtr syn

distortion

f

Performed by lecturer

low=kick, high=snare

dm

f

68

cl vln egtr syn dm

no vib.

73

cl vln egtr syn dm

78

cl vln egtr syn dm

Heavy Metal Piece

This musical score page contains three staves of musical notation for a 'Heavy Metal Piece'. The score is numbered 32 at the top left. The title 'Heavy Metal Piece' is centered at the top right. The first staff (measures 68-70) includes parts for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Electric Guitar (egtr), Synthesizer (syn), and Drum (dm). The second staff (measures 73-75) includes parts for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Electric Guitar (egtr), Synthesizer (syn), and Drum (dm). The third staff (measures 78-80) includes parts for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Electric Guitar (egtr), Synthesizer (syn), and Drum (dm). Measure 68 starts with a dynamic of **f** and includes a 'no vib.' instruction. Measures 73 and 78 begin with a dynamic of **f**. Measures 70 and 75 end with a dynamic of **ff**. Measures 70 and 75 also feature a '7' with a line through it, indicating a 7th note or measure. Measures 78 and 80 end with a dynamic of **f**. Measures 70 and 75 also feature a '7' with a line through it, indicating a 7th note or measure. Measures 78 and 80 end with a dynamic of **f**.

82

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

87

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

92

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

97

cl vln egtr syn dm

Driving

f

15

=

102

cl vln egtr syn dm

107

vln (string bend)

egtr

syn

dm

113

vln

egtr

syn

dm

117

vln

egtr

syn

Heavy Metal Piece

36

121

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

=

125

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

=

129

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

Heavy Metal Piece

37

133

egtr

ff

syn

ff

=



137

cl

p ff

vln

p ff

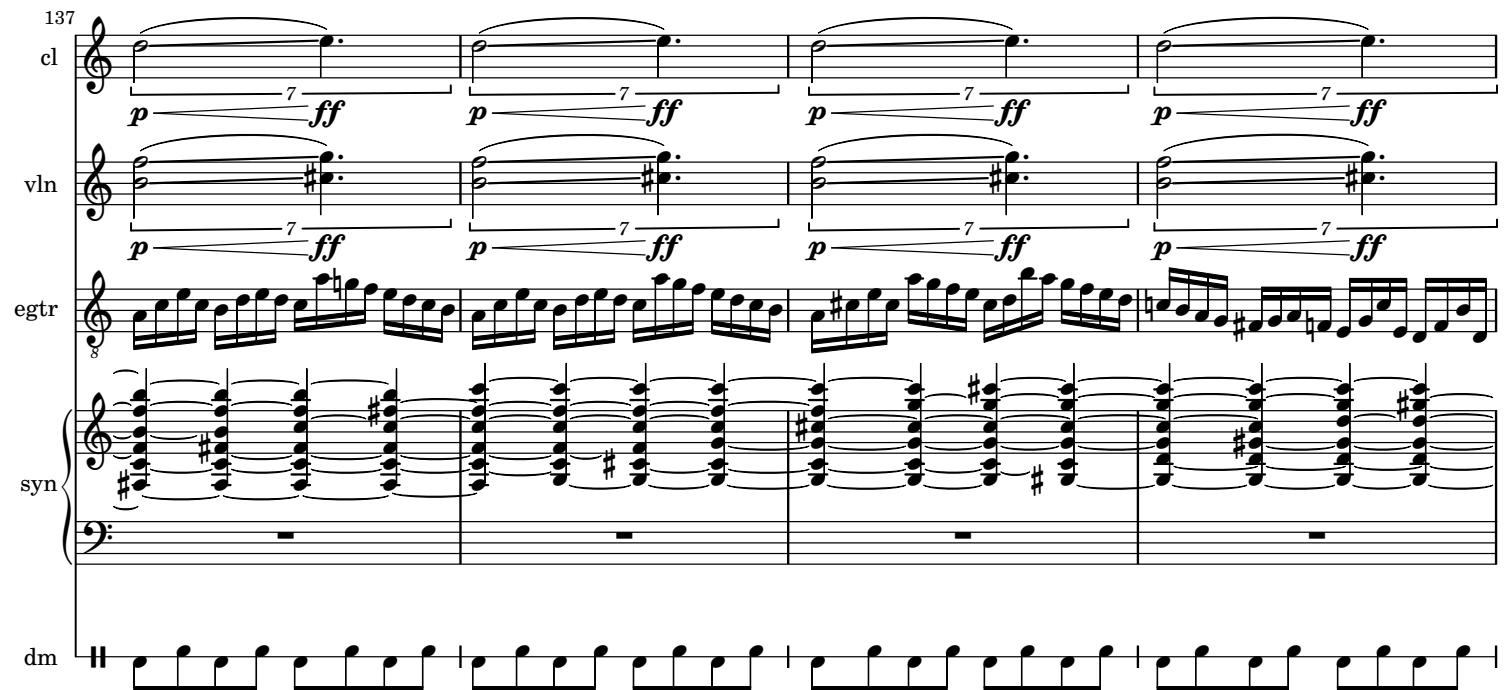
egtr

p ff

syn

p ff

dm



141

cl

p ff

vln

p ff

egtr

p ff

syn

p ff

dm



144

cl
vln
egtr
syn
dm

=

147

cl
vln
egtr
syn
dm

Heavy Metal Piece

39

150

cl vln egtr syn dm

153

cl vln egtr syn dm

156

cl vln egtr syn dm

Heavy Metal Piece

40

161



cl
vln
egtr
syn
dm

=

167

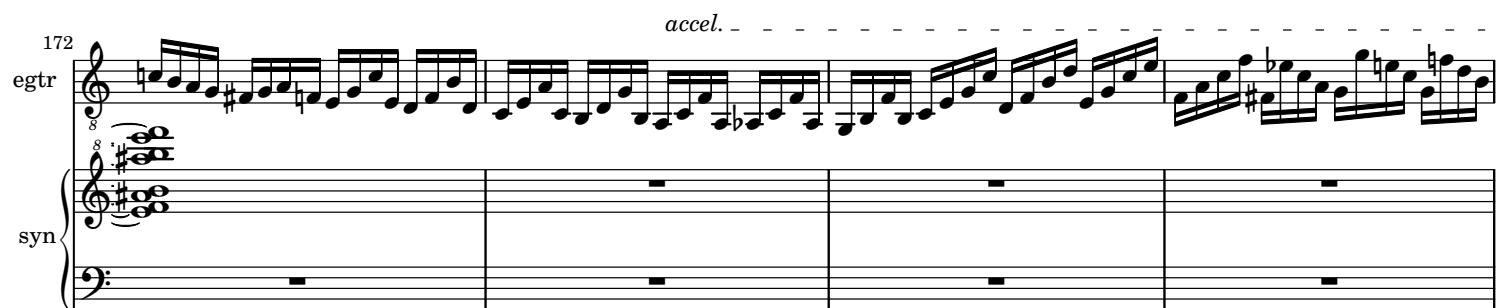


cl
vln
egtr
syn
dm

=

172

accel. - - - - -



egtr
syn

Heavy Metal Piece

41

176

cl vln egtr syn dm

(accel.) $\text{d} = 160$

f

f

f

f

181

cl vln egtr syn dm

f

f

f

f

186

cl vln egtr syn dm

no vib.

f

f

ff

191

cl vln egtr syn dm

=

196

cl vln egtr syn dm

=

Heavy Metal Piece

43

201

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

206

d = 120

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

(string bend)

212

cl

vln

egtr

syn

distortion off

mf

mf

The Exposure Effect is a theory that tries to explain why we may positively revise our opinion of a musical piece. David Huron argues that exposure alone does not provide the full explanation. He argues that we like music when it gives us pleasure, and that being able to predict what will happen next gives us pleasure. When we are unable to predict what will happen next in a musical piece we don't experience pleasure and in turn we don't like the piece. But, if we hear that piece a number of times, we can learn to predict what will happen next, which gives us pleasure and in turn leads us to change our opinion.

ABCDE Piece No. 1

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
electro synth

$\text{♩} = 116$

cl

vln

egtr

syn

$\text{♩} = 116$

8

cl
 p ppp pp mf p ppp

vln
 p ppp pp mf p ppp

egtr
 p ppp pp mf p ppp

syn
 p ppp pp mf p ppp



12

cl *pp* *mf* *f* *p* *ff*

vln *pp* *mf* *p* *ff*

egtr *pp* *mf* *f* *p* *ff*

syn *pp* *mf* *f* *p* *ff*

16

cl vln egtr syn

mf p ppp p ppp pp

ppp pp pp pp pp pp

pp pp pp pp pp pp

pp pp pp pp pp pp

pp pp pp pp pp pp

=

20

cl vln egtr syn

p ff mf p ppp f

24

cl vln egtr syn

27

cl vln egtr syn

30

cl vln egtr syn



37

cl
vln
egtr
syn

40

cl
vln
egtr
syn

44

cl
vln
egtr
syn

ABCDE Piece No. 2

Lecturer

To back up his argument, Huron proposed a experiment that you have just heard, which consisted of five short sound-events. A

Clarinet in B_b

Violin

Electric guitar
simple bright clean sound

Synth
electro synth

$\text{♩} = 116$

$\frac{2}{4}$ | **B** | $\frac{2}{4}$ | **C** | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

lect

cl

vln

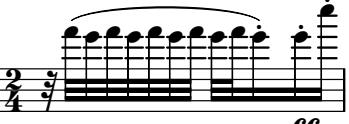
egtr

syn

$\frac{3}{4}$ | **D** | $\frac{2}{4}$ | **E** | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ |  | $\frac{2}{4}$

Those elements were randomly ordered with two stipulations. The first was that 'A'

lect 6

2

cl vln egtr syn

occurred far more frequently then the other sound-events. The second stipulation was that every time 'D' appeared It was followed by 'E'

It was followed by 'E'

=

lect 8

2

cl vln egtr syn

So the order of the sound-events was random, aside from this one condition that when D appeared it always led to E.

lect 11 Huron's argument is that if the degree of exposure was the most important factor in listener pleasure, then sound-event 'A'

2

would have given you the most pleasure, as that was the element you were most exposed to. You heard A

vln

egtr

syn

2

=

lect 12

nineteen times, whereas none of the others appeared more than eight times. But, Huron suggests that you are likely to have not received the most pleasure from A,

2

lect ¹⁴ but rather from 'E', |  |

cl |  |

vln |  |

egtr |  |

syn |  |

2: |  |

as that was the only element that you could learn to anticipate. You could learn to successfully predict that after each time you heard D, that 'E' would come next.

cl |  |

vln |  |

egtr |  |

syn |  |

lect ¹⁶ |  |

cl |  |

vln |  |

egtr |  |

syn |  |

And the point is that this ability to successfully predict produces pleasure. It's a great experiment, but surely other factors are also at play. Perhaps you liked element 'C' the best, |  |

because you thought C |  |

cl |  |

vln |  |

egtr |  |

syn |  |

lect¹⁸ 2

cl *pp* vln *pp* egtr *pp* syn *pp*

sounded cool, or because something in it reminded you of the special song you share with your partner.

2

cl vln egtr syn

lect²² 2

(♩ = 116)

cl vln egtr syn

So, we are now repeating the experiment again, with A, B, C, D and E each now represented by a single pitch. The same rules apply: A is appearing the most often; you can hear it played by the violin.

Poco staccato *mf* Poco staccato *mf* Poco staccato *mf* Poco staccato *mf*

B_♭=electro, C=viola (or other contrasting sounds)

30 lect And whenever D appears on the synthesiser, it is followed by E played by the guitar.

cl vln egtr

syn

40

cl vln egtr

syn

50

cl vln egtr

syn

60

cl vln egtr

syn

ABCDE Piece No. 2

56

cl vln egtr syn

80

cl vln egtr syn

91

cl vln egtr syn

101

cl vln egtr syn

detached

mp

flute

mp

lect 111

3

In this final part, we are now returning to the opening music to create a rounded form.

cl

vln

egtr

syn

Sostenuto

f

Sostenuto

f

Sostenuto

f

*Lecturer pauses whilst the **Finale** begins (drum machine starts and then instruments enter) and then continues with the following text at around measure 8.* *

In his Practical Guide to Music Composition, Professor Alan Belkin suggests that a rounded form can convincingly conclude a piece through providing the listener with a sense of stability, relaxation, and closure. This textbook view of composition taps into the values of proportion, harmony and symmetry from the classical philosophers that we considered earlier. In creating a symmetrical relationship with the opening, I'm hoping to create a sense of tension between good and bad practice, as although the rounded form here might be good practice, the music is still bad!

Pause

But, in the end, can we say that this music, or any music, is bad? That's the question we posed at the start and from everything we've considered in this lecture it seems we must conclude that evaluating music is a subjective act. And yet, David Huron argues musical pieces can be objectively bad. Taking the example of the music you are listening to now, Huron might argue: this music is objectively bad. Yes, you have come to like it, but that is simply because of the pleasure you are now experiencing in being able to successfully predicting what comes next. That doesn't mean it is good. You are confused. This is a classic case of what psychologists call 'misattribution'. What's going on here, is that you are attributing the pleasure you are now experiencing to the music, when really the award for the pleasure should go to the mental circuit that has formed in your brain that has enable you to make the successful predictions.

Finale

repeat under spoken text
stop a few repeats after the words
“...to make the successful predictions.”

lect 33

cl

vln

egtr

syn

dm

OFF

That's a pretty amazing thought and it's also troubling. For how can we tell the difference between the pleasure we experience from a good piece from the misattributed pleasure we experience from a bad piece?

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

Musical score for orchestra and electric guitar, page 41. The score includes parts for Clarinet (cl), Violin (vln), Electric Guitar (egtr), and Synthesizer (syn). The electric guitar part features a 'distortion' effect with a sixteenth-note pattern.