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MUSICAL IMAGINATIONS

MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES ON CREATIVITY, PERFORMANCE, AND PERCEPTION

> EDITED BY DAVID HARGREAVES DOROTHY MIELL RAYMOND MACDONALD

Musical Imaginations Multidisciplinary perspectives on creativity, performance, and perception

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Composers' creative process: The role of life-events, emotion and reason

Vladimir J. Konečni

9.1 Introduction

This chapter presents reflections about an important and much-discussed aspect of art-music composers' creative process, namely, the role---if any---that emotions, and specifically acute emotional states induced by life-events, play in that process. By the proviso 'if any', I mean to suggest that in writing the chapter, I have adopted a sceptical attitude toward what I regard as the currently prevalent position in the study of, and talk about, music (but not only music)--- 'emotivism', which I define as the propensity for excessive insertion of emotion and 'feeling' into both lay and scientific theories of mental life, motives, needs, and daily behaviour, in matters artistic (perhaps especially music; cf. Bottum, 2000; Konečni, 2009) and non-artistic.¹ Whether emotion as a facet of the creative process should be considered all-important or negligible depends in part on one's reading of the empirical evidence concerning the relationship between music and emotion (and especially concerning the applicability of that evidence to composers' work), but also on one's worldview regarding emotivism. The latter point is especially pertinent in the present contextwith regard to the presence, use of, and responses to music (cf. Konečni, 2009; North & Hargreaves, 2008). In contrast to the emotivist attitude, I shall argue for the paramount importance of contemplation, analytical and technical skills, problem-solving, and planning-in short, reason-as the key features of art-music composers' (including contemporary ones) daily work, especially when developing large-scale pieces (but not limited to those). I will also propose that when emotions are experienced by composers in response to others' and their own music of very high quality (including the piece on which they are working at the time), these are likely to be the states of being moved and aesthetic awe (Konečni, 2005b, 2008a, b)-which are very rare and have different phenomenological characteristics and evolutionary origin than the emotions with which psychologists and biologists are usually concerned (cf. Grewe et al., 2007; Zentner et al., 2008).

By 'creative process', I am referring to all phases of the work in which art-music composers engage as they develop a score—in other words, their habitual day-to-day 'toil'. The chapter shall explicitly not address creativity, which can be defined as a long-term personality trait, ability, or disposition that is measurable by various tests (in general, and in various art media and other domains). I shall also not write about performance, even though performance may include (even in art music, and prominently so in the 18th century) improvisation—and it is defensible to regard improvisation as a special case of the process of composing.

¹ My use of the term 'emotivism' is not related to the 'emotivist'-'cognitivist' dichotomy that has been described in the philosophy of music, notably by Kivy (1980, 1989, 1990). 'Emotivism'-mostly vacuous and well-nigh universal in contemporary life—is used here in a much broader and less technical sense.

Whereas creativity can be measured—with variable success, depending on the criterion and domain of prediction-the creative process is often justifiably seen as enveloped by mystery and privacy. This is especially true for the work of very successful art-music composers-and this chapter is limited to such, by definition rather singular, individuals. One can bring many dozens of talented conservatoire students of composition and even practicing second-echelon composers into the music-psychological laboratory, assign them the task of composing a piece (only very brief ones are, in fact, feasible), and obtain a record, including verbal commentary, of their behaviour and music output. The results might be interesting and publishable, but one would not be much closer to the subtleties of the creative process of the rare composing geniuses-even with the research realistically limited to the activities of composers not encumbered by brain-scanners, that is, to the externally observable behavioural and documentary manifestations of the creative process. Much more than the often insurmountable difficulties of recruitment of the desired topechelon research participants is in question here: There is the crucial problem of the researcher's very presence.² When the creative process is closely observed, measured, and recorded, there is-in most art media, but perhaps especially in music and literature-an interference with the authenticity of the process, which in turn affects both the essential nature and the quality of the resulting work (Konečni, 1991).³ In other words, an analogy to the 'Heisenberg principle' may be operative and therefore one might often be better off using 'unobtrusive measures' (Webb et al., 1966).

In the case of music composition, the use of 'unobtrusive measures' refers primarily to musicological, historiometric, and music-psychological work on sketches, studies made for didactic purposes (e.g. J.S. Bach's *Clavierbuchlein* that led to Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*), and successive versions of scores—and the analysis of their relation to composers' diaries, autobiographies, interviews, and letters to relatives, friends, patrons, and publishers. In this task, one must keep in mind that some of these documents may contain deliberately misleading elements and therefore do not qualify as 'non-reactive' research sources.

9.2 Phases of the creative process

In comparison to some very elaborate models that have been proposed (a large number has been described, for example, by Arieti, 1976), what follows is a straightforward, but, for the present purpose, a sufficiently detailed account. The creative process can be usefully divided into two

P.I. Chaikovsky wrote the following in letters in 1878 and 1877: 'During the actual time of creative activity, complete quiet is absolutely necessary to the artist' (Morgenstern, 1956: p. 254; Fisk, 1997: p. 157); 'When I am composing an opera . . . I must not see a soul during certain hours . . . and know that no one can see or hear me; I have a habit, when composing, of singing very loud, and the thought that someone could hear me disturbs me very much' (Fisk, 1997: p. 156). To the extent that insight is one of the key aspects of the creative process, relevant experimental research in non-auditory modalities has indirectly confirmed the necessity of Chaikovsky's composing habits. Results for electroencephalographic topography show that during verbal problem-solving leading to insight, there is a decrease in occipital activity that is consistent with a decrease in externally directed visual attention (Kounios et al., 2006). And the psychological work on 'verbal overshadowing' (Schooler & Engstler-Schooler, 1990) shows how, in problem-solving, one's verbal description of a present nonverbal stimulus diminishes the probability of insight.

³ There is at least one well-documented exception to this generalization, but in the domain of painting—as any connoisseur of Picasso would testify after watching the 75-min film *Le Mystère Picasso* (1956), directed by H.-G. Clouzot, with cinematography by Claude Renoir. In this film (declared a national treasure by the French government in 1984), Picasso, at 75, created some 20 black-and-white sketches and color paintings in real-time, with his visual output filmed throughout. major phases, the preparatory and the executive (Konečni, 1991). For a thoroughly schooled mature composer, the *preparatory phase* (cf. Wallas, 1926) consists of reviewing one's past work, an intense study of new (conceptual and technical) developments and other composers' accomplishments, and an active, multifaceted search for small- and large-scale musical and structural ideas. (A commission that the composer has received may give an additional impetus and direction to the search.) At some point the decision is made to begin concrete work on a specific piece.⁴ Such a decision may be regarded as the beginning of the *executive phase* of the creative process; the decision may or may not be directly prompted by *inspiration*, which may take dramatically different forms in terms of suddenness of onset, sheer scale, musical purpose, the amount of detail, and therefore the amount of work that is necessary to flesh it out.

There is a voluminous anecdotal literature on inspiration in music and other arts. One of the most articulate accounts was provided by the writer V.V. Nabokov (1973), but his description is likely to be valid for composers also: 'A prefatory glow, not unlike some benign variety of the aura before an epileptic attack, is something the artist learns to perceive early in life . . . The beauty of it is that, while completely intelligible[,]... it has neither source nor object. It expands, glows, and subsides . . . [but] a window has opened . . . A few days elapse. (Wallas's, 1926, 'incubation' phase.) The next stage . . . is something ardently anticipated-and no longer anonymous' p. 309). From this account of inspiration, and many others, two points seem clear: 1) 'the right background' and preparation are necessary-current emotions are rarely mentioned; and 2) inspiration is only the beginning of the executive phase. Moreover, instances of inspiration are relatively broad and somewhat vague, and should therefore not be regarded as solutions to specific problems (be they musical, mathematical, or poetic) that have been previously posed: that role is played by insight (Wallas's, 1926, moment of 'illumination'), with a long tradition as philosophers' eureka and psychologists' aha!, but, more recently, intensively studied by cognitive neuroscientists. One can think of inspiration as influencing the broader parameters of a work regardless of its size), which, however, leaves a host of specific musical questions unanswered, and many of these require, or profit from, insight.

Prior to insight, having been fully immersed in a problem, a composer may, like other creative problem-solvers, experience a 'mental block'—and the mathematician Poincaré (1908), as part of his notable statement about the creative process, suggested that one should, upon reaching an impasse, relax or distract oneself by a walk or short trip: insight is not the result of incremental steps toward a solution, but requires a transformative act that is best accomplished by 'de-focus' and relaxation (cf. Bindeman, 1998; Ghiselin, 1952).⁵ In the past decade, cognitive neuroscientists have, in a series of related studies (e.g. Jung-Beeman et al., 2004; Kounios et al., 2006, 2008; Miller & Cohen, 2001; Sandkühler & Bhattacharya, 2008; Sheth, et al., 2009; see also footnote 2, this chapter), discovered some of the neural correlates of events leading to, and just after, the moment

⁴ It is noteworthy that among the traditional attempts to account for creativity by a single factor (which abound in that field), there is a recent one (Sternberg, 2002) that explicitly considers 'the decision to be creative' as the key attribute of creativity—even though it seems self-evident that the decision in question itself requires a multi-factor explanation (Konečni, 2005a).

⁵ Work on the problem often continues 'in the background': 'Sometimes I observe with curiosity that an uninterrupted [musical] activity—independent of the subject of the conversation I may be carrying on continues its course in that department of my brain which is devoted to music' (Chaikovsky in an 1878 letter, cited by Morgenstern, 1956: p. 255; see also A. Mahler, 1946/1969: pp. 46–7). Chaikovsky also mentions that his musical ideas, when they emerge, do so concretely, fully orchestrated: 'The musical thought never appears otherwise than in a suitable external form . . . I invent the musical idea and the orchestration simultaneously' (Morgenstern, 1956: p. 257). of insight. The initial focus involves the prefrontal cortex, which also tries to decide which other areas need to be engaged in order to solve the problem, including parts of the right hemisphere (which, as it happens, is the insight route, as opposed to the methodical-incremental one). Once an impasse is reached, relaxation and letting the mind wander are helpful (as Poincaré suggested), presumably so that the more remote right-hemisphere associations can be sought. Up to 8 sec beforehand, insight can be predicted by the degree of steadiness of EEG (electroencephalogram) alpha rhythm (indicative of relaxation), in comparison to controls. During the second before insight, however, the anterior superior temporal gyrus (in the right hemisphere) becomes very active; some 300 millisec before a research participant gives the answer, the EEG registers a spike of gamma waves. (Note that the insight process is essentially emotion-free.)

Once the executive phase is underway on a given musical piece, there are bound to be multiple instances of both broad inspiration and specific insight (except perhaps for the shortest pieces); these can be examined by musicologists and music historians, but it is likely that the variability in frequency of these important creative and problem-solving events across both composers and works would prevent sound generalizations from being drawn.

9.3 The relationship between life-events and composers' work

Before turning to the question of whether or not it is reasonable to think that the executive phase of composers' creative process, and their decisions regarding the structure and contents of a piece, are influenced by their current emotional state, it is of interest to examine the evidence for the relationship between life-events and composers' output (A in Figure 9.1). To the extent



Fig. 9.1 Life-events, composer's emotions, and creative output. *Note*. 'Life-events' refers mostly to adverse, but also to some joyous events ('beginning of a reciprocated love affair', 'marriage'; Simonton, 1977; p. 796). Double solid lines (B) indicate that the relationship is self-evident. Single solid line (A) indicates that a relationship has been established on one measure (i.e. melodic originality: Simonton, 1980, 1987), though not on five other measures (see text regarding Simonton, 1977, 1987). Dashed lines indicate either a made but unsubstantiated theoretical claim (C: Simonton, 1980; p. 216; 2001, pp. 218–19) or hypothesized instances of reverse causation: e.g. high productivity may lead to neglect of family thus causing additional stress (A'); stressful life-events and acute emotions often amplify each other (B'; cf. the Prototypical Emotion-Episode Model, Konečni, 2008b); and C', high productivity may lead to a greater frequency of success, failure, and corresponding emotions (Simonton's five other measures cannot be readily related to composers' acute emotions).

that: 1) such evidence is solid and 2) at least some life-events can be safely assumed to have a major effect on acute emotions (B in Figure 9.1), the role of current emotion as a *mediator* of the effects of life-events on compositional output (B and C jointly in Figure 9.1) would become somewhat more plausible—in contrast to the vagueness of the appeals to composers' emotional states, which some musicologists and critics routinely indulge in when describing art music. (Some excesses in that vein are described by Kivy, 1980: pp. 13–14.)

In examining the relationship of composers' life-events and creative-output measures, the 'historiometric' work of Simonton (1998) is notable; he defines it as 'a multiple-case, quantitative, and hypothesis-testing approach' (p. 103). For present purposes, the most relevant aspect of Simonton's work is the relationship between major life-events and output. When studying this relationship for 10 composers-found on Farnsworth's list (1969, appendix A, p. 228), which includes Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, Brahms, Handel, Debussy, Schubert, Wagner, and Chopin (in the order of 'eminence')-Simonton (1977), despite a sophisticated quantitative analysis, did not find a significant relationship between the 10 composers' 'biographical stress' and either their total productivity or, perhaps more significantly, their thematic productivity (using data from the Barlow & Morgenstern dictionaries of instrumental and vocal themes). The broadly inclusive biographical stress index (with multicollinearity statistically controlled) was based on numerous weighted factors, among which (weights in parentheses) were: lawsuits (30), beginning and/or end of a reciprocated love affair (30), marriage (50), death of a close family member (63), detention in jail or exile (63), divorce (73), and death of spouse (100). In contrast, 'physical illness' had the expected significant relationship with both productivity measures. Simonton (1977) summarizes as follows: 'Creative productivity appears remarkably immune from a wide range of external forces. Such impersonal social factors as warfare and civil turmoil have no noticeable impact, nor do . . . tribulations of private life '(p. 802, italics added); in short, A in Figure 9.1 is nil. As just one example, Bach composed some of his most respected and beloved compositions, the Sonatas and Partitas for solo violin (BWV 1001-1006) and the Six Suites for unaccompanied cello (BWV 1007-1012) between 1717 and 1723, with much of the work done after 1720, the year in which his first wife, Maria Barbara, suddenly passed away, in Bach's absence.

In a later study (Simonton, 1980), the basic data were all 5046 themes composed by the same 10 pre-eminent musicians (as in Simonton, 1977)—and controlling, for example, for Mozart accounting for 17% of the themes. It was found, among other things, that the melodic originality of the themes was greater during periods of 'biographic stress' (using data from Simonton, 1977, for the stress index). Finally, in a subsequent study (Simonton, 1987) that focused on Beethoven alone (105 pieces, 593 themes), the finding of greater melodic originality during times of life stress was replicated (A in Figure 9.1).

It is important to remember that Simonton's work examined correlations among conceptually distal 'macro'-variables and that there was no attempt to study proximal causes of psychological nature that might be involved in the generation of composers' acute emotions due to life-events, let alone any alleged effects of emotions thus induced on important musical creative decisions. As to the findings, there was no relationship between life-events and either the total or thematic productivity; there was, however, a positive correlation between the adversity of life-events and melodic originality.

The melodic originality of themes is a reasonable indicator of musical output, but it is only one of several possible candidates and should by no means be equated with compositional greatness in music. Composers as different as Mahler, Bernstein, Boulez, and many others have insisted, for example, that *development* is paramount. Moreover, as Simonton himself (1980: p. 211) has written, a 'simplified' operationalization of melodic originality was used, notably omitting rhythm. In addition, a minuscule amount of the explained variance in melodic originality was accounted

by 'biographical stress' (Simonton, 1980: pp. 214–15; 1987, p. 99; 2001, p. 219). In short, this is a weak effect. And finally, in the Beethoven study (Simonton, 1987: table 2, p. 99), there was no relationship between 'biographical stress' and three other measures of output: melodic variation, metric originality, and metric variation (A in Figure 9.1 was nil).

In summary, at least in terms of the reviewed research, one can conclude that there is at present a very limited amount of solid evidence for the relationship between life-events and creative musical output.

9.4 Composers' emotions and their music

There is no doubt that many of the life-events comprising Simonton's 'biographical stress' index—all of them involving other human beings, including the composers' closest intimates—were able to cause emotions (B in Figure 9.1) that are important from an evolutionary standpoint, such as anger, fear, sadness, and joy (e.g. marriage was included in the index: Simonton, 1977: p. 796). In contemporary experimental psychology, emotions are generally defined as highly pronounced, subjectively identifiable and reportable, transient, *acute* states (as opposed to personality dispositions or low-intensity, long-lasting states like moods; e.g. Konečni, 2010; Parkinson et al., 1996). Longer duration and frequent reappearance of a particular emotion can be comfortably handled by reiterative models with a feedback loop linking the episode-initiating event, the interpretation/appraisal stage(s), the physiological, facial, and postural components, and the behavioural and mental consequences of the subjective emotional state (e.g. the Prototypical Emotion-Episode Model, or PEEM; see Konečni, 2008b, 2010; B' in Figure 9.1 alludes to the mentioned feedback). Even treatments (e.g. cognitive/emotional-modification) of a chronic emotional malfunction, such as clinical depression, can be pursued on the basis of the reiterative component of PEEM.

However, the question is: given the view of emotion espoused above-which, I would maintain, is more reasonable than any alternative, especially when one is dealing with the effects of life-events and not, for example, with the effects of music itself—is it truly plausible, for composers, listeners, and researchers to think of emotion as having an influence on important compositional decisions (C in Figure 9.1)? My answer is negative, in part because the following points should be kept in mind: 1) at issue are not vague moods or other ambiguous quasi-emotional states; 2) one must think of far-reaching decisions a composer must make, some of which will apply to largescale works that take many months if not years to complete-during which new life-events will take place and the composer will experience emotional episodes on a daily basis, hundreds of them altogether, and of different kinds, in the course of working on a single composition; 3) myriad complex technical decisions will be involved that require careful study and a 'sober', analytical approach; 4) even very short works are likely to undergo revisions, at least some of which may remove the effects, if any, of some acute emotional state that was experienced previously while composing the piece; 5) many composers keep sketchbooks and use these ideas when working on a score, but even if such sketches are closer in time and sentiment to an acute emotional state, they are likely later to be revised, combined with others, and thus lose whatever acute emotional identity they originally had.

In the view of Gabrielsson and Lindström (2001: p. 223), '[w]hile it is a popular conception . . . that composers express their present feelings in their compositions, a more plausible view is that [they] try to use various structural factors in order to achieve certain intended expressions, different in different works, with little or no direct connection to their present feelings.' The 'popular conception' referred to above—the emotivist concept of a musical piece as the composer's vehicle for self-expression—can be traced to the views of C.Ph.E. Bach (in an essay written in 1775), which were quoted and cogently criticized by Langer (1957: pp. 214–15). After showing how

Bach's view had been uncritically accepted by many musicians ('Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, to mention only the great', p. 215), philosophers, average music-lovers, and 'even our leading [music] psychologists [like] Carl Seashore' (p. 216)—Langer argued persuasively for the alternative view that music 'expresses primarily the composer's *knowledge of human feeling*' (p. 221, italics in the original) and that a composer 'knows the forms of emotion and can handle them, "compose" them' (p. 222). Before Langer, Schenker expressed a complementary view: 'One must not seek in [C.Ph.E.] Bach's word "passions" [*Leidenschaften*] what certain aestheticians of the doctrine of affections bring to it . . . [Bach] means by it simply the consequences of a change in diminution: *pure musical effects*' (cited in Cook & Dibben, 2001: p. 47; italics added).

Indeed, many composers have insisted, in various ways, that music should be only about itself, most famously Stravinsky (1936) who incurred many music lovers', critics', and teachers' wrath by writing that 'music is, by its very nature, essentially powerless to express anything at all' (p. 53)-although, if they read on, they would have perhaps been impressed by Stravinsky stating that '[t]he phenomenon of music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order in things . . . the coordination between man and time' (p. 54).⁶ Boulez, also perceived as overly 'cerebral' by the emotivists, often echoed such opinions (see pp. 419-22 in Fisk, 1997). And consider Hans Werner Henze's statement, in a 1975 programme note on Mahler's Second Symphony, that in Mahler (and Berg), '[F]or the first time in musical history, music is interrogating itself about the reasons for its existence and about its nature' (Fisk, 1997; pp. 448-49). Henze's view of Mahler's music as self-critical and primarily analysing itself-and see Alma Mahler's analogous description (1946/1969: pp. 213-14) of the intent of Mahler's 'programme' of the Second Symphony that he prepared for the performance in Dresden on 20 December 1901-can be usefully contrasted with that of Schönberg, who, in 1904, wrote as follows to Mahler about his Fifth Symphony: 'I saw your very soul, naked, stark naked. It was revealed to me as a stretch of wild and secret country, with eerie chasms and abysses neighbored by sunlit, smiling meadows'. What is interesting is that the staunch emotivist in Schönberg (at least at the age of 30, long before developing the 'cold' 12-tone technique) refuses to be swayed by contrary 'evidence', for he continues the letter thus: 'What does it matter that what I was told afterward of your "program" did not seem to correspond altogether with what I had felt?' (Fisk, 1997: p. 245). A reader relying solely on Schönberg's account would be unlikely to surmise that Mahler, in fact, used and rationally combined numerous sketches for the Fifth Symphony and worked on the 'fair copy' for many months (A. Mahler, 1946/1969: pp. 42, 48).

How a composer's music is generally perceived is indeed a poor predictor of their views on composition as self-expression; for example, the alleged emotivist Chaikovsky thoughtfully wrote in a letter in 1878: 'Those who imagine that a creative artist can—through the medium of his art—express his feelings at the moment when he is *moved*, make the greatest mistake. Emotions—sad or joyful—can only be expressed *retrospectively*... a work composed in the happiest surroundings may be touched with dark and gloomy colors' (Morgenstern, 1956: p. 254; original italics). In other words, the score contains only the memories of past emotions; and even the current

⁶ An example of a begrudging, emotivist view of Stravinsky is provided by the music critic Alex Ross (2000: p. 86): 'Of the great composers, Stravinsky may have possessed the finest, subtlest mind. But in certain ways his intellect was a limitation, and he left the public with an image of the classical composer as a cerebral rather than a sensuous being.' Some 20th-century composers (just one example is Copland), even when defending the music of their time from accusations of being without expressions of 'feeling' (see, e.g. Fisk, 1997: p. 343), feel the obligation to stress that contemporary music, while not Romantic, is not without sentiment.

life circumstances do not affect the emotional tone of the piece.⁷ Also, the reliance on old sketches ensures there is substantial distance between any past, however acutely felt, emotion and the score: 'A little notebook with over two hundred different renderings of the dominant theme in the finale [of *Ninth Symphony*] shows how persistently Beethoven pursued his search and *how entirely musical his guiding motive was*' (Debussy, in 1921, from *Monsieur Croche, The Dilettante Hater*, quoted in Fisk, 1997: p. 201; italics added). Moreover, even for an idea to get into a sketchbook required, in the case of Langer's alleged emotivist Beethoven, a lot of mulling over: 'I carry my thoughts about with me for a long time, often for a very long time, before writing them down' (Beethoven in an 1822 or 1823 letter, quoted in Fisk, 1997: p. 56).⁸ Finally, the score itself often takes a long time to complete and 'it would be wrong to suppose that the musician remains absorbed in the contemplation . . . [of some emotion] during the whole course of composition of a long work' (Albert Roussel in a letter in 1928, quoted by Norman and Lubell Shrifte, 1946: p. 331). All this is understandable logistically and psychologically; it certainly does not support the view that current emotional states have an effect on the music being composed.

In fact, when some composers sincerely claim that their music expresses their 'emotions' (including 'innermost'), they are likely not to be referring to the current, acute emotions, but their memories and knowledge of them, thus using the term imprecisely—or as Stravinsky (1936: p. 54) would say, by 'force of [linguistic] habit'—as shorthand for their whole human and musical person, and their entire (presumably humanist, and perhaps emotivist) worldview (cf. Konečni et al., 2008). Such a reading is made even more plausible when one considers that some of the self-expressing composers (notably C.Ph.E. Bach) felt that *the only way* to 'move people' (Bach's words; see Langer, 1957: p. 214; Konečni, 1986b: p. 13) was by expressing their own emotions in their compositions, and that therefore it would be rather odd for a composer to assume that the listener would be moved by music that reflected, say, the composer's quarrel with his creditor or spouse.

In the philosophy of music, the idea that music sounds 'expressive' to listeners because composers express their personal current emotions in the process of composing is labelled 'expression theory' and it has received numerous criticisms (e.g. Goldman, 1995; Kivy, 1980; Tormey, 1971). Davies (2001: p. 32) has summarized one of the core problems as follows: 'we experience music's expressiveness not as a residue of feelings discharged in the compositional process but as resident in its nature'. There must be some hard-core emotivist listeners who would refuse to be counted in the philosophers' nonchalant 'we' and insist that in listening to music their goal is to commune with the soul of the composer, à la young Schönberg; others may be less adamant, but also likely to suffer from the forces of emotivist linguistic habits in musical matters. As Roussel put it in 1928: In 'a symphonic work . . . the composer is concerned only with the interplay of soundcombinations . . . It is possible that such music may suggest to certain hearers feelings that the

⁷ Such is the pervasiveness of emotivism, that this dissociation is sometimes difficult even for composers' intimates to accept. For instance, Alma Mahler (1946/1969: p. 70) 'found [it] incomprehensible' that Mahler 'added three more to the two *Kindertotenlieder* already composed' while he, at that time in 1904, fully enjoyed their two children: 'What I cannot understand is bewailing the deaths of children, who were in the best of health and spirits, hardly an hour after having kissed and fondled them. I exclaimed at the time: "For heaven's sake, don't tempt Providence!" 'Alma Schindler Mahler has had academic detractors (the so-called 'Alma Problem'), but not regarding this matter.

⁸ There are many articles and a number of books devoted solely to Beethoven's sketches, most of them based on the research by Gustav Nottebohm (1865/1880/1979); see also Lockwood (1992) and Mies (1929).

composer himself did not experience in the least, but this is one of the inevitable consequences of the undefined character of the musical language' (Norman & Lubell Shrifte, 1946: pp. 330–1).⁹

It is interesting to note some subtleties in the possibility of the composer's emotion finding its way into the score, with one of the most famous circumstances in the history of music (and emotion) as the background. Kivy (1980, p. 15) writes: 'It seems fairly clear . . . that parts of Mozart's *Requiem* (K. 626) express the composer's terror of death, and are not merely expressive of terror.' Note that in Kivy's usage, 'not merely expressive of' means 'not in reference to an emotion (here 'terror of death') in the abstract'; for Kivy means more—that specifically the 'Dies irae' (p. 15) expresses Mozart's own terror of death. And if it does, the composer must have inserted the terror into the score himself, by conscious intention or unconsciously; Kivy does not specify—and neither does Simonton when stating his own self-expression views (1980: p. 216).

The claim is dubious and an example of emotivist (in the sense the term is used in this chapter, not Kivy's) self-expression being read into Mozart's Requiem because of a biographical coincidenceand by Kivy, the unlikeliest of the philosophers of music to do it. First, there is the obvious question of the extent of Franz Xaver Süssmayr's contribution to the Requiem (cf. Cormican, 1991; Konečni, 1997).¹⁰ Second, the best documentary evidence suggests that Mozart passed away quite suddenly and so would not have been aware of anything medically serious impending at the time of composing Dies irae (Cormican, 1991: pp.174-7). Third, there is the admittedly somewhat moot question of the 'Dies irae' proper, with a duration of only 1 min 52 sec (for a poem that has at least 17 musically exploitable stanzas), being too short for either 'expressing' or being 'expressive of the terror of death. Fourth, and most significantly, the 'Dies irae' is supposed to sound terror-inducing: It brings up the Day of Judgment. So, on firm a priori grounds one needs to favour an 'expressive of terror', as opposed to an 'expresses Mozart's terror' interpretation. After all, the Second Vatican Council removed the 'Dies irae' from missa ordinarium precisely because it 'overemphasizes fear and despair' (Archbishop Annibale Bugnini, 1990: p. 773). And fifth, one could legitimately claim that listeners perceive Mozart's 'Dies irae' as sounding not terror-inducing but 'triumphant' or 'victorious', just as the successive bass, tenor, alto, and soprano parts in the subsequent 'Tuba mirum' sound respectively 'calm and dignified', 'beseeching, plaintive', 'anxious', and 'tender'---rather than fear-inducing (due to the trumpet announcing the Day of Judgment).¹¹

- ¹⁰ On the basis of exceptionally careful archival research, Cormican (1991: pp. 272–6; 280) has concluded that five of the six parts of Mozart's *Requiem's* 'Sequentia', including the 'Dies irae', were composed 'mainly' by Mozart, with 'additions' by F.X. Süssmayr; 'Lacrimosa' was 'mainly attributable to Mozart' (p. 275).
- ¹¹ Beethoven's letters (e.g. to Karl Amenda in 1801, Norman & Lubell Shrifte, 1946, p. 82-83) describe a broad range of emotions, including anger at deafness and fate. Volumes have been written that read emotions caused by deafness into different works; Kivy's (1989: p. 156) mention of 'the angry contortions of the *Grosse fuge*' is quite typical. However, one needs to consider technical, as opposed to emotional, issues

⁹ As to the possibility of listeners' own emotions being induced by instrumental music (*without the necessity of mediating involvement of* non*musical factors*), that is another and even more complex story (cf. Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008; Kivy, 1980, 1989; Konečni, 2003, 2008a, 2008b; Konečni, et al., 2008). As Hindemith wisely wrote in 1952: 'Real feelings need a certain interval of time to develop, reach their climax, and fade again; reactions to music, however, may change as fast as musical phrases do. Thus these reactions may, within a few instants, skip . . . without causing any discomfort to the mind experiencing them, as would be the case with a rapid succession of real feelings. In fact, if it happened with real feelings, we could be sure that it could be only in the event of slight insanity. The reactions music evokes are not feelings; they are the images, the memories of feelings' (Fisk, 1997: p. 314). This is perceptive and sound common sense—a feature that is, I would suggest, missing in some music-emotion experimental designs in the psychology of music, in which numerous different 'emotions' are said to be 'induced' in the same research participant by numerous brief music excerpts—all in a matter of minutes.

The conclusion in section 9.3 was that convincing evidence is lacking of a strong association between life-events and creative musical output (A in Figure 9.1). That statement should be viewed in conjunction with the conclusion from the material that has been presented in this section, to the effect that there is no unambiguous evidence for the popular notion—held by some composers, critics, and music lovers—that composers' current, acute emotions influence major compositional decisions (C in Figure 9.1).

In section 9.3, I also expressed some reservations about the construction of the melodicoriginality measure and the weakness of the relationship between 'biographical stress' and melodic originality (Simonton, 1980, 1987). I would especially take issue with Simonton's-I believe unwarranted-strongly-worded claim (1980: p. 216) that 'we nonetheless have strong evidence that music expresses emotional states being experienced by the composer'—a claim made purely on the basis of the finding that composers who scored higher on the stress index composed melodies 'over the same period [which tended to] employ more chromatic notes and more dissonant or extreme intervals between consecutive notes' (Simonton's definition of 'melodic originality'). After all, Simonton himself (2001: p. 218) wrote that neither of the studies was 'specifically dedicated to scrutinizing the relation between music and emotion'. And, in this vein, it would be interesting to know why the obtained correlation was predicted to begin with, when the research on coping with stress would predict the opposite of novelty-seeking. More importantly, there are several families of plausible alternative explanations that do not involve composers' acute emotions while creating music-one of which is that changed life circumstances may be an optimal time to explore new musical paths. At the time of 'biographical stress' one may be especially prone to seek the approbation and respect of colleagues and critics, and this usually requires innovation-and an increase in various forms of chromaticism was an important novelty feature from before J.S. Bach and Haydn, for example, in Frescobaldi's Fiori musicali (1635), known to Bach (Ledbetter, 2002: p. 86).

In summary, Simonton's valuable work notwithstanding, my sceptical position on the relationship between life-events and creative output—and especially on the mediation of that relationship by composers' acute, current emotions—can remain in place.

9.5 Contemplation, technical skills, problem-solving, planning

It is to be expected that the technical (as opposed to romanticized) music literature would generally be immune to excessive emotivism, but one is nevertheless repeatedly struck by various authors' insistence—literally regardless of which well-known composer is their subject—on these musicians' thorough preparation, extensive study, and hard work on revisions of scores. As Carl Nielsen wrote, 'it is music that of all the arts requires the strictest discipline . . . the most exacting study there must be' (Fisk, 1997: pp. 214–15). In addition, in serious biographies, one often finds that authors of compositions perceived as 'cerebral' (e.g. Webern) were often quite emotional men, but little evidence that their private lives entered their compositions (e.g. Bailey, 1998: p. 79; Moldenhauer & Moldenhauer, 1979: pp. 340, 492–4; Polnauer, 1959/1967: p. 21).

A few examples of the paramount importance of *reason* in composition should suffice. Many authors (e.g. Geck, 2000/2006; Williams, 2004) comment on Bach's devotion to preparation, self-improvement, and study—for instance, of the Italian and French idioms for application in free organ works (not based on chorales) and solo violin pieces mentioned earlier—as well as

and the tendencies of innovation in conceptualization and technique that would have been operative with advancing years in any case; nor have all the necessary facts relative to Beethoven's *acute* emotions obtaining a place in the various *final scores—without considerable revision*—been established.

extensive contemplation, for instance, of the ways to advance music 'in the divine service' (Konečni, 1986a: p. 20).¹² Regarding Mozart's continuous striving for improvement, Kozbelt (2005, study 2) has documented that both the quality of Mozart's pieces judged as masterpieces and the proportion of masterpiece-level pieces per year grew over time, even during Mozart's maturity, with improvement occurring mostly in large-scale compositions; and this, one should note, despite the growing number of adverse life-events and tribulations. Beethoven's hard work, innumerable sketches (see footnote 8, this chapter), and multiple detailed revisions are legendary-with regard to the evolution of his mastery in the domain of the sonata as much as in any other. The 32 piano sonatas pushed the limits of the piano and are one long treatise on its developing technology. Careful study proceeds to this day of the thought and attention to detail that Beethoven displayed in the successive revisions of the Sonata for violoncello and pianoforte (Op. 69; Lockwood, 1992) and his 10 violin sonatas (Lockwood & Kroll, 2005), of which the last, in G-Major (Op. 96) was completed in 1812 but not published until 1816, due in large part to the process of revision. Schubert's letters testify to his careful cuts and revisions (e.g. see an 1828 letter in Weiss, 1967: pp. 211-12). Niecks (1902: pp. 113-14) documents the slow evolution, from 1828 to 1833, of Chopin's Trio for piano, violin, and violoncello (Op. 8) and generally Chopin's-that Romantic par excellence-continuous hard work from a young age. Protopopov (1990), on the other hand, analyses Chopin's studious approach to some classical forms (sonata-form, ternary form with trio, variations, and rondo) and ingenious modification to suit his unique creative agenda. Shostakovich strongly felt that a composer had to think, study, and 'write constantly ... If you can't write a major work, write minor trifles. If you can't write at all, orchestrate something' (Fisk, 1997: p. 362). And he attributed the same habits to Chaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Stravinsky. Finally, with regard to a contemporary composer with pronounced religious inclinations, Arvo Pärt, there is ample evidence of formal compositional behaviour, unemotional planning, and intellect. Pärt's notes (1998) regarding his Kanon Pokajanen are telling; it is worth remembering in the context of this formal canon that Langer (1957: p. 216) pointed to the following contradiction: composers' emotional self-expression should be hindered by musical form and yet forms have continued to be used and developed.

Emotivists would, of course, not entirely deny the importance of planning and reason, but the question is one of balance and emphasis. Simonton (1980, 1987, 2001), for example, emphasizes melodic originality, which is not unreasonable. What seems unwarranted is his conjecture that composers' current, acute and transient, emotions (caused by 'biographical stress') are chiefly responsible for the increase in chromaticism (C in Figure 9.1), thus ignoring the constraints inherent in his methodology with regard to causal inference, as well as several plausible alternative explanations (especially great composers' planned search for innovation)—in short, Simonton minimized the significance of reason. In the process, he ignored his own (negative) results, that is, no effect of 'biographical stress' on either total productivity or thematic productivity (Simonton, 1977).

9.6 Conclusions: emotivism and reason in art-music composition

With regard to contemporary composers, I have had the opportunity to discuss privately the issue of emotion in composition with about 20 mature, 'full-time', non-academic composers in Estonia,

¹² This is not to say that Bach has escaped Romantic effusions entirely; rather, they are usually in the descriptions of Bach's music, rather than of the alleged effects of his emotions on it (see Konečni, 1986a: p. 20, regarding Blume, 1950). There are occasional attempts of the latter kind, though, such as the hypothesis that the (13'30") *Ciaccona* within the *Partita for solo violin No. 2* (BWV 1004) was composed as a requiem for Bach's wife Maria Barbara, even though the work is likely to have been completed before she passed away in 1720 (and there are other reasons for doubting this idea).

France, Germany, the Netherlands, Russia, Serbia, and the United States, some of them very well known, and with quite different musical affinities. The gist of these people's opinions that I heard over the years has largely contributed to how this chapter was framed and it can be described as follows: my informal research participants have experienced many private tribulations; they realize that they live in an emotivist world in which the words 'emotion' and 'feeling' are carelessly tossed into every discussion; they admit to over-using emotivist terms themselves in order to talk about their work in lay terms, but almost exclusively when dealing with non-musicians; and above all, that composing is a painstaking and drawn-out process—one in which there is little or no place for their current, transient emotions. And, as a broad generalization: positive emotional events generally energize composing work, whereas negative ones commonly lead to a withdrawal from composing.

But emotivist exaggeration, as I see it, is not present only in assertions that composers' acute emotions influence major aspects of their creative output, but also elsewhere in the musicemotion domain, notably in the notion (see footnote 9, this chapter), so convincingly criticized by Kivy (1980, 1989), that instrumental music may by itself cause the occurrence, in listeners, of biologically important, fundamental emotions (which Kivy unfortunately calls 'garden variety'): Compare the views on this issue espoused by Juslin and Västfjäll (2008) to Konečni's (2008a, b). Often it seems that music' effects are perceived by some music psychologists and many members of the general public as having the inevitability of gravity. 'Music and emotion' is an odd scientific field with regard to causation, for the word *and* to many practitioners apparently means *causes*. (And there indeed seems to be a lot of articles that begin with something like 'even the birds know that music causes emotions'.) Part of emotivism's origin is in Romanticism, of which the least desirable aspects have been put to use in Hollywood products and music industry's tearjerkers. The broader context is the contemporary anti-narrative and anti-intellectual social relativism (e.g. Bottum, 2000; Konečni, 2009), coupled with a pervasive insistence on 'emotional sensitivity'.

But of course music produces very important reactions in art-music listeners, be they ordinary music lovers or composers. My contention is that unlike life-events (especially those involving intimates), music is very unlikely to induce fundamental emotions in listeners (cf. Grewe et al., 2007; Kivy, 1989; p. 217; Konečni et al., 2008), but it most certainly can *move* them (cf. Grewe et al., 2007; Kivy, 1989; p. 229; Konečni, 2005b, 2008b; Zentner et al., 2008). In composers, this may happen when listening to others' music or their own, including at certain moments *while* composing.¹³ But one would not consider the state of being moved—even induced by one's own just-written music—as *originally causal* in making important creative decisions in composition. This issue is not a part of the main thrust of the chapter, but it is closely related to it; for this reason, some concluding comments seem in order.

C.Ph.E. Bach used the term 'moved' when speaking of both himself and the public (Langer, 1957: pp. 214–15) and so has the 'cognitivist' Kivy to describe his own reaction to Beethoven's Grosse fuge (1989: p. 156) and String Quartet in C#-Minor Op. 131 (1989: p. 230), and the Ave Maria by Josquin (des Prez, or Josken van de Velde; Kivy, 1990: p. 158). Kivy's reasons for being moved are on the surface uncomplicated—beauty of the music and performers' skill—but each, of course, contains numerous ingredients (Kivy, 1989: pp. 231–32; 1990: pp. 159–60). An attempt has recently been made—in 'aesthetic trinity theory' (ATT, Konečni, 2005)—to place the state of being moved formally into a broader aesthetic hierarchically-structured framework together with,

¹³ The crying-while-writing phenomenon is anecdotally known among poets, writers, and musicians, and I have personally heard about it from some of my composer-informants and have had intimations of it in other domains and personal situations.

as the most common component, the transient, but phenomenologically interesting physiological response of *thrills* (or *chills*; Konečni et al., 2007) and the rarest, *aesthetic awe* (defined as the prototypical response to independently defined *sublime* stimuli in music and other art forms). ATT deals with reactions that are comparatively rare and have different phenomenological attributes and evolutionary origin than the emotions with which psychologists and biologists are usually concerned.

With regard to the central theme of the chapter, however, the final observation would be this: To the view that treats the creative process as an emotivist enterprise, one ought to contrast the aesthetic position that great music, like all great art, exists at a *necessary distance from its creator* and that therefore a calm, analytical mastery is crucial.

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