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Important note: This is a final draft and differs from the definitive version, which is published in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 32 (1992): 254-257. I have been assured by the University of Auckland's research office that if they have made this publicly available then it does not violate the publisher's copyright rules.

“Mozart’s Requiem? A Reply to Levinson”

Jerrold Levinson argues that two composers independently determining the same sound-structure (i.e. writing the same notes for the same instruments in their scores) compose different works. Their works would have different properties. For example, the one might be out of character where the other was not; the one might be influential whereas the other is ignored; and so on. He appeals to Leibniz’s law - where there is a difference in properties there is a difference in things - and concludes that musical works are sound-structures with performance-means which are indexed to a particular time, a particular place and a particular composer.

Peter Kivy has queried this argument. He claims that Leibniz’s law fails to distinguish between accidental and essential properties. X and Y might differ in their accidental properties and yet be identical. Levinson’s appeal to differences in the properties of the works produced by the two composers does not prove that the two composers write two works as opposed to a single work.

Levinson has replied to this argument. He claims that Kivy misunderstands Leibniz’s law. The law does not apply across possible worlds, but, in this world, a difference in properties (at one and the
same time) reveals a difference in things. If the composers’ works have different properties (at any given time), then they cannot be the same work.

This reply turns a disagreement about the ontic character of musical works into a disagreement about the proper interpretation of Leibniz’s law, yet I find it hard to believe that that is all which lies behind the dispute about musical ontology, so I find the reply strange. That is, I doubt that the disagreement between Kivy and Levinson about the ontic character of musical works arises only because each has some prior commitment to a particular interpretation of Leibniz’s law. In this note it is my aim to resuscitate Kivy’s objection in a way which does not offend against Levinson’s interpretation of Leibniz. Accept, then, that Levinson is correct in holding that a difference in properties (at one and the same time) entails a difference in things. Does this prove that the two composers write different works?

My copy of Anna Karenina has properties which yours lacks - mine is grubbier, perhaps. From this it follows that our copies are not identical, and indeed they are not. Nevertheless, in this case the things which differ in their identities are copies of a single artwork; different individual books might instance a single novel. In the case envisaged by Levinson, two instances of a score are produced. The one is not copied from the other, so there is not (as there is in the case of the copies of Anna Karenina) a direct causal thread tying both instances of the work to a single artist. The issue at stake between Kivy and Levinson concerns this discrepancy between the cases. Can a given work be created only once? Are the things which differ in their properties two scores, each of which specifies the same musical work; or are the things which differ musical works? Levinson obviously
believes that the latter is the case, but Kivy has his doubts. That
dispute is not one which can be settled by appeal to any interpretation
of Leibniz’s law.

Levinson’s original argument does not rest solely on the appeal
to Leibniz’s law. He suggests that the two works differ not only in
their properties, but that the respects in which they differ are
aesthetically/artistically important ones. Obviously he believes that
this is relevant to determining the identity of the works in question. If
they differ to such an extent that they cannot be experienced,
appreciated and understood in the same sort of way when approached
as musical works, then we should be disinclined to regard the
compositions as a single work. I believe that Levinson is correct in this
observation. Under what circumstances is this the case?

Suppose a contemporary composer of popular music buys a
harpsichord and, delighted by its quaint tone, writes down a little piece
in a style which she takes to be suited to the instrument. Unbeknown
to her, the piece is note-for-note identical with one of J.S.Bach’s Two-
Part Inventions. Do we have another work, or do we have another
instance of the (score of the) same work? It seems to me that there
will be good reason to consider the works to be different. The one is
written in an archaic style, the other is not; the one is a pedagogical
study and the other is not; the one is to be appreciated in the context
of the tradition of contrapuntal writing which reaches its culmination in
the early eighteenth century, the other is not. I believe that Levinson
is correct in thinking that any major difference in the *times* of
composition is likely to give rise to a difference in
artistically/aesthetically relevant properties of a kind and degree which
will mark a difference in works. The same is true, I think, where a difference in place corresponds to a difference in musical cultures.

But now suppose that, working independently, the young Mozart penned a work note-for-note identical with one written at the same time by J.C. Bach, a composer he then admired and emulated. It is not at all obvious to me that the differences between the works - the one being a juvenile piece and the other the work of a mature composer; the one at best a hint of the heights to which its composer would aspire and the other the composer's best possible effort; and so forth - are such as to suggest that we have here two works rather than two instances of the score of a single work. So far as the properties which are relevant to the appreciation and understanding of the work as a musical piece are concerned, the pieces may be identical. Of course the work-as-composed-by-Mozart differs from the work-as-composed-by-Bach, since the one fits into a different corpus of works from the other. But such differences result in a difference of works only if one accepts that the identity of the work is indexed to the identity of its composer, and it is that assumption which Kivy and I are tempted to reject. I would suggest that what counts toward musical identity is a link to a particular musical culture and style (a link shared by Mozart and J. C. Bach in their acts of composition), and that the importance we attach to a causal link from the work to the composer derives both from its guaranteeing just such a connection and its identifying whose work (or, in this case, whose version of the work) is being performed.

That we might think this way is suggested by the following: Inventors might independently invent the same device. That is one reason why they seek patents. Two people might have invented the typewriter at much the same time. The one invention, let us suppose,
is recognised and taken into use, the other is cast aside and rusts in
the attic; the one invention is a youthful work, the other not; and so
on. Although there are many differences in properties, it is by no
means obvious that we should insist that only the one person invented
the typewriter and that the other invention was not a typewriter. The
typewriter-as-invented-by-X has some properties which differ from
those of the typewriter-as-invented-by-Y, but such differences need
not count against the claim that X and Y each invented the one thing,
the typewriter. By contrast, if a Chinese person in the twelfth century
built something which looks for all the world like a standard, manual,
English-language typewriter, down to the shape of the characters on
the keys, it would not be odd to deny that that person had invented
the typewriter. One would want to know how it was understood and
regarded by the inventor and his cultural contemporaries, what it was
used for, and so on, before one could be sure just what it was.

There is an obvious reason for our reluctance to take too
seriously the idea that a musical work might be composed more than
once, but it is a practical and not a conceptual one. Musical works
usually are of a complexity which makes independent duplication
unlikely in reality, but musical scores are easily copied and outright
plagiarism can have its rewards. Count Franz Walsegg zu Stuppach
commissioned a *Requiem* from Mozart, intending to pass it off in his
castle’s chapel as his own work. If he had done so then, when the
work became known as Mozart’s, who would have believed the Count
had he claimed independently to have composed a work which was
“just the same”?

The case of Mozart’s *Requiem* does point, however, to the
difficulty with which Kivy hopes to plague Levinson. The work was
completed by Franz Süßmayr.\textsuperscript{iv} That is, a single work had, in this case, more than one composer. Though the work fits differently into the \textit{oeuvres} of its various composers, its singularity as a work never has been questioned. Scholars have debated for more than one hundred and fifty years about how much of the work is original to Mozart. The seriousness and difficulty of that debate suggests that it is possible, in the philosopher’s sense, that the following had occurred: Mozart, feeling a little better and regretting the time lost to illness, rushes the completion of the commission. Süßmayr, feeling more inspired than he ever is to do again and aiming to imitate the style of his teacher, independently writes a piece which is note-for-note the same as Mozart’s. In such an unlikely event I am inclined to agree with Kivy - one \textit{Requiem}, two composers.

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iii In ‘What a Musical Work Is, Again’ in Music, Art and Metaphysics, pp. 215-263; see especially pp.221-223.

iv This is a crude simplification - see H. C. Robbins Landon’s 1791: Mozart’s Last Year, (Thames & Hudson: London, 1989, 2d ed), ch 11. Süßmayr was the main copyist because his handwriting was most like Mozart’s, but F.J. Freystädtler and, more especially, Joseph Eybler were involved in realising the orchestrated version of Mozart’s 99 sheet particella of the Requiem.