

Music and Ethical Responsibility

Discussions surrounding music and ethical responsibility bring to mind arguments about legal ownership and purchase. Yet the many ways in which we experience music with others are usually overlooked. Musical experience and practice always involve relationships with other people, which can place limitations on how we listen to and act upon music. In *Music and Ethical Responsibility*, Jeff Warren challenges current approaches to music and ethics, building upon philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's theory that ethics emerges from our encounters with other people. Warren examines ethical responsibilities in musical experiences, including performing other people's music, noise, negotiating musical meaning and improvisation. Revealing the diverse roles that music plays in the experience of encountering others, Warren argues that musicians, researchers, and listeners should place ethical responsibility at the heart of musical practices.

JEFF R. WARREN is Tutor of Music and Humanities at Quest University in Squamish, British Columbia. He has a PhD from Royal Holloway, University of London. Before moving to Quest in 2013, he spent nine years at Trinity Western University, where he retains the title of Adjunct Professor of Music and Interdisciplinary Arts. His research areas include music and ethics, improvisation, soundscape, and phenomenology. He is also a jazz bassist and sound artist, and was commissioned to create a sound sculpture for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. His research project 'The Ethics of Timbre: Phenomenology, Spectralism, and two Lévinas's', is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. More can be found on his website at www.jeffrwarren.com.

Music and Ethical Responsibility

Jeff R. Warren





Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University’s mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107043947
© Jeff R. Warren 2014

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2014

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data
Warren, Jeff R., 1977– author.
Music and ethical responsibility / Jeff R. Warren.
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-107-04394-7 (hardback)
1. Music–Moral and ethical aspects 2. Music–Philosophy and aesthetics. I. Title.
ML3920.W29 2014
175–dc23
2013041794

ISBN 978-1-107-04394-7 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-107-04394-7 — Music and Ethical Responsibility
Jeff R. Warren
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For Melissa

Contents

List of figures page [viii]
Acknowledgements [ix]

Introduction [1]

1 Meaning and ethics in music [12]

2 Experiencing music [32]

3 Framing elements of musical experience [67]

4 Improvisation and ethical responsibility [89]

5 Musical improvisation as festival [121]

6 Music, proximity, ethics [135]

7 Ethical responsibility and other people’s music [165]

Conclusion: ethical responsibility in musical experience [184]

Bibliography [190]
Index [202]

Figures

- 1 East pediment of the Elgin Marbles, London, British Museum [53]
- 2 Seventeenth-century anamorphosis on the flat ceiling of the church of Sant’Ignazio, Rome, painted by Andrea Pozzo [81]
- 3 Chord changes for ‘The Blue Room’ [105]
- 4 A typical bass line for a I-vi-ii-V progression [105]
- 5 *The Enraged Musician* by William Hogarth [179]

Acknowledgements

Writing a book often feels like an isolating experience, but writing – like musical experience – always involves relationships with and responsibilities to others. In writing, I inherit things from others and hope to improve on them. I am indebted to the gifts of others. I cannot repay these gifts, but can only attempt to respond to what I have been given. The ideas presented in this book have developed over the past fifteen years as I have pursued the question of how musical experience relates to ethical responsibilities to others; in other words, what music has to do with loving your neighbour.

Many of the researchers that have influenced my thought are cited throughout the text, so I will not name them here. There are, however, several important influences in the development of my thought and this book that are not revealed by examining citations. I am grateful to more people than can be named here, and I apologise for any omissions. My thanks go to: Andrew Bowie and Nicholas Cook, for their comments, encouragement and ideas in the development of the dissertation phase of this book; Garry Hagberg and Anthony Gritten, for their helpful comments on refining the text for publication; J. P. E. Harper-Scott, for his comments on part of the text and encouragement to submit the manuscript; Linda Schwartz, for ongoing dialogue and encouragement in all sorts of areas; my students, for continually teaching me and helping me to refine my thinking; Jens Zimmermann and Geraldine Finn, for introducing me to ‘continental’ philosophy; former colleagues at Trinity Western University including David Squires and Claire Goodfellow, for helpful conversations; the many people I have made music with over the years, for experiences that have proved foundational to many of the ideas in this book; the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript, for helpful comments; Victoria Cooper and Fleur Jones at Cambridge University Press, for their excellent work in the production process; my parents, who encouraged me to pursue what I found interesting; Melissa, for her companionship, support and wider perspective; and

Ella and Ara, for their infectious joy for life and for teaching me the value of an effective lullaby.

An earlier version of Chapter 5 was published in *New Sound*, vol. 32, 2009, as ‘Improvising Music / Improvising Relationships: Musical Improvisation and Inter-relational Ethics’.