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978-0-521-43598-7 - The Fine Art of Repetition: Essays in the Philosophy of Music

Peter Kivy

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## The fine art of repetition

Peter Kivy is the author of many books on the philosophy of art and, in particular, the aesthetics of music. This collection of essays spans a period of some thirty years and focuses on a richly diverse set of issues: the biological origin of music, the role of music in the liberal education, the nature of the musical work and its performance, the aesthetics of opera, the emotions of music, and the very nature of music itself. Some of these subjects are viewed as part of the history of ideas, others as current problems in the philosophy of art.

A particular feature of the volume is that Kivy avoids the use of musical notation so that no technical knowledge at all is required to appreciate his work. Thus, the essays will prove enjoyable and insightful not just to professionals in the philosophy of art and musicologists, or to musicians themselves, but also to any motivated general reader with a deep interest in music.

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# The fine art of repetition

*Essays in the philosophy of music*

PETER KIVY

RUTGERS: THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY



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For Arthur Danto:  
Who taught my generation how to  
make philosophy of art

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“. . . they say it is possible to select the best laws,  
as though even the selection did not demand intel-  
ligence and as though right judgement were not  
the greatest thing, as in matters of music.”

Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* (trans. W. D. Ross)

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## Preface

The essays collected in this volume, written over a period of thirty years, and parceled out among a variety of journals and books, are addressed to an audience of philosophers, musicians, scholars in other disciplines, and whatever part of a general readership that might be interested in topics at the same time both musical and philosophical. It is not likely that any member of any one of these groups would have had access to more than a few of the places where these essays have appeared. I am delighted, therefore, that they are now together in one place, so as to be available to a larger audience than heretofore.

The earliest essay in this collection was published in 1959, the most recent is published here for the first time. It cannot be expected that essays written over so long a period of time will be entirely consistent with one another, or with my other writings on musical aesthetics, either in questions of philosophy or in points of historical interpretation. I know I have changed my mind on various issues since 1959, and I hope I have learned a few things as well. Nevertheless, rereading my essays, in the preparation of this volume, I have concluded that even at the outset I had, if not a core of fixed beliefs, at least some basic intuitions regarding what music is, and how one should talk about it.

Thus, in spite of the long period of time over which these essays were written, I think of them as an integrated body of work, and of a piece, as well, with the series of books on the philosophy of music I have published since 1980. And I am



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glad that now, with the publication of these essays in a single volume, my work on the philosophy of music to date can be viewed and (I hope) discussed in its entirety.

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