

Defending Musical Perdurantism*

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1. Introduction

Many theories take musical works to be abstract objects: for example, kinds or types.¹ Theories that take certain entities to be abstract objects typically face awkward questions. For example, if those entities are abstract objects, which can't enter into causal relations, then how can we refer to them or know anything about them?² Things are no different with theories that take musical works to be abstract objects. If musical works are abstract objects, which can't enter into causal relations, then how can we refer to musical works or know anything about them? Worse, how can any of our musical experiences be experiences *of* musical works? Perhaps there are satisfactory answers to these awkward questions.³ But it would be nice to be able to sidestep the questions altogether. One way to do that would be to take musical works to be concrete objects.

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¹ See, for example, Wolsterstorff 1980; Levinson 1980, 1990a; Kivy 1983, 1987; Currie 1989; Dodd 2000, 2002, 2004.

² In the case of mathematical objects, see, for example, Benacerraf 1973.

³ Such answers might begin by arguing that we can causally interact with musical works even if they are abstract objects. See Caplan and Matheson 2004: 115-122.

In this paper, we defend a theory according to which musical works are concrete objects. In particular, the theory that we defend takes musical works to be fusions of performances. This theory is one on which musical works endure, so we call it *Perdurantism about Musical Works*. In Section 2, we present Perdurantism about Musical Works. In Sections 3-5, we defend Perdurantism about Musical Works from a series of objections, the first two of which are raised by Julian Dodd in a recent paper (Dodd 2004) and the last of which is suggested by some comments of his in an earlier paper (Dodd 2000).

2. Perdurantism about Musical Works

Musical works *persist*: that is, they exist at more than one time. For example, Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* existed in 1984, and the *Fantasia* exists now, so the *Fantasia* persists. According to Perdurantism about Musical Works, musical works persist by *perduring*: that is, by having different temporal parts at every time at which they exist. A temporal part of a musical work x at a time t is something that exists only at t , that is a part of x at t , and that overlaps at t everything that is a part of x at t .⁴ For example, the *Fantasia* has a temporal part in 1984, and the *Fantasia* has a distinct temporal part now. According to one version of Perdurantism about Musical Works, both of these temporal parts are performances of the *Fantasia*.⁵ These performances are related,

⁴ x overlaps y at t if and only if there is a z such that (i) z is a part of x at t and (ii) z is a part of y at t . For a more careful definition of a temporal part, see Sider 2001: 55-62.

⁵ See Alward 2004. A different version of Perdurantism about Musical Works, according to which copies of the score and recordings might also be parts of a musical work, is mentioned in Caplan and Matheson 2004: 133.

via the appropriate continuity relation for musical works, to other performances of the *Fantasia*.

Although Perdurantism about Musical Works is not a standard view about how musical works persist, it is analogous to a fairly standard view about how persons persist.⁶ According to what we can call *Perdurantism about Persons*, persons persist by perduring. For example, Keanu has a temporal part in 1984, and Keanu has a distinct temporal part now. Both of these temporal parts are *person stages*: that is, momentary, person-like objects. These person stages are related, via the appropriate continuity relation for persons, to other Keanu stages.

3. The Objection from Perception

Suppose that Uma listened to a performance of the *Fantasia* yesterday. According to Perdurantism about Musical Works, Uma heard a proper temporal part of the *Fantasia*, which is not all of it. But one might think that, when Uma listened to a performance of the *Fantasia* yesterday, she heard all of it. Dodd (2004: 353) raises this objection:

if a performance is a temporal part of a work, it follows that it is impossible for an audience at such a performance to hear the work in its entirety. Any given performance of the *Fantasia* is but a temporal part of the work, and to have heard the whole piece would have required an audience member to have audited all of its constituent temporal parts.

⁶ See, for example, Lewis 1976b, Heller 1990.

Let's call this *The Objection from Perception*.

In reply to *The Objection from Perception*, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can bite the bullet and say that Uma did not hear all of the *Fantasia* yesterday. We might say "Uma heard all of the *Fantasia* yesterday," but strictly speaking that's false; what is true is "Uma heard all of a performance of the *Fantasia* yesterday." Had Uma walked out halfway through the performance, she wouldn't have heard all of a performance of the *Fantasia* yesterday. Rather, she would have heard a proper part of a performance of the *Fantasia* yesterday. When we say "Uma heard all of the *Fantasia* yesterday," that's the sort of scenario that we intend to exclude. What distinguishes a proper part of a performance of the *Fantasia* from an entire performance of the *Fantasia* is that only the latter is related via the continuity relation for musical works to other performances of the *Fantasia*. It would be nice to know which relation, exactly, the continuity relation for musical works is. (We imagine that it will have something to do with structural similarity or causal connections.) But a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that that question need not be settled before one adopts the view—just as a Perdurantist about Persons can say that the question of which relation, exactly, the continuity relation for persons is (does it have to do with spatiotemporal continuity, psychological continuity, or both?) need not be settled before one adopts the view.

Alternatively, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that, in virtue of hearing one of its temporal parts, Uma did hear all of the *Fantasia* yesterday. To motivate her claim that Uma heard all of the *Fantasia* in virtue of hearing one

of its temporal parts, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can appeal to Dodd's discussion of his view. On Dodd's (2000, 2002, 2004) view, the *Fantasia* is an abstract type, and the performance that Uma heard is a concrete token of that type. Dodd's view faces a version of The Objection from Perception: when Uma listened to the performance of the *Fantasia* yesterday, she heard a performance (a token), which is distinct from the *Fantasia* itself (the type). Dodd (2004: 353-354) responds to The Objection from Perception by relying on an analogy with what W.V.O. Quine (1968: 194) calls "deferred ostension." In cases of deferred ostension, an occurrence of a demonstrative refers to one object in virtue of being associated with a demonstration that demonstrates another object. For example, if you point at a copy of W.V.O. Quine's *Word and Object* and say "That book was published in 1960," the occurrence of the demonstrative 'that book' refers to *Word and Object* (the type) in virtue of being associated with a demonstration—namely, your pointing gesture—that demonstrates a copy of *Word and Object* (a token). Similarly, in cases of what we can call *deferred perception*, one perceives one object in virtue of perceiving another object. For example, one might perceive the *Fantasia* (the type) in virtue of perceiving a performance of it (a token). A Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that, if in cases of deferred perception one can hear a type in virtue of hearing one of its tokens, then in cases of deferred perception one can also hear a whole in virtue of hearing one of its parts.

But perhaps appealing to deferred perception allows Dodd to reply to The Objection from Perception without allowing a Perdurantist about Musical Works

to reply to that objection.⁷ For perhaps deferred perception is subject to the following principle.

The Presence Principle

One can perceive all of an entity x at a time t in virtue of perceiving an appropriately related entity y at t only if x is “wholly present” at t .

According to Perdurantism about Musical Works, the *Fantasia* is not wholly present at every time at which it exists, since not all of its temporal parts are located at the same time. So, if it were true, The Presence Principle would prevent a Perdurantist about Musical Works from saying that Uma heard all of the *Fantasia* in virtue of hearing one of its temporal parts. But, if types are wholly present at every time at which they exist, then, according to Dodd’s view, the *Fantasia* is wholly present at every time at which it exists. So, if it were true, The Presence Principle would not prevent Dodd from saying that Uma heard all of the *Fantasia* in virtue of hearing one of its tokens.

But The Presence Principle has not been independently argued for, and it is not clear why a Perdurantist about Musical Works must accept it. More generally, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that she is no worse off here than a Perdurantist about Persons is. Perdurantism about Persons faces a version of The Objection from Perception: when Uma looked at Keanu yesterday, Uma saw a proper temporal part of Keanu, which is not all of him. In reply to

⁷ Thanks to an anonymous referee here.

The Objection from Perception, a Perdurantist about Persons can bite the bullet and say that Uma did not see all of the Keanu yesterday. (We might say “Uma saw all of Keanu yesterday,” but strictly speaking that’s false; what is true is “Uma saw all of a proper temporal part of Keanu yesterday.”) Alternatively, a Perdurantist about Persons can deny The Presence Principle and say that Uma saw all of Keanu in virtue of seeing one of his temporal parts. If either of these replies is available to a Perdurantist about Persons, then a Perdurantist about Musical Works can also reply to The Objection from Perception.

4. The Objection from Spatially Scattered Temporal Parts

Suppose that two performances of the *Fantasia* occur simultaneously in 1984 in distinct spatial locations. Both performances are parts of the *Fantasia*'s temporal part in 1984 (since the *Fantasia*'s temporal part in 1984 overlaps everything that is a part of the *Fantasia* in 1984, and both performances are parts of the *Fantasia* in 1984). So the *Fantasia*'s temporal part in 1984 is spatially scattered: one part of it—one performance—is in one place, and another part of it—the other performance—is in another place. But one might think that a performance of a musical work is always a temporal part of that work, never something that is merely a proper part of a spatially scattered temporal part of that work. Let’s call this *The Objection from Spatially Scattered Temporal Parts*.

In reply to The Objection from Spatially Scattered Temporal Parts, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can bite the bullet and say that, although in normal cases performances are temporal parts, in exceptional cases performances

are merely proper parts of spatially scattered temporal parts. But, the objection might continue, a Perdurantist about Musical Works who says that has to explain why spatially scattered performances are parts of the *Fantasia's* temporal part in 1984. Dodd (2004: 354) raises this worry:

we have been given no explanation of the nature of the temporal part that is supposedly composed of, say, a performance in London and another in Sydney. To be sure, a jacket located in London and a pair of trousers found in Sydney may be parts of a scattered object—namely my suit—but it is unclear why (leaving aside purely pragmatic motives) we should count two spatially discontinuous performances as parts of the same thing in [an] analogous way.

In reply, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that both performances are parts of the *Fantasia* in 1984, because both are related to other performances of the *Fantasia* via the continuity relation for musical works; and, by definition, the *Fantasia's* temporal part in 1984 overlaps everything that is a part of the *Fantasia* in 1984. (Again, although one might want to know more about which relation, exactly, the continuity relation for musical works is, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that that question need not be settled before one adopts the view.)

But, the objection might continue, the notion of a temporal part of a musical work is parasitic on the notion of a musical work, so it makes no sense to say that the temporal part of a work is sometimes an entity of one kind (a performance), sometimes an entity of another kind (a fusion of spatially scattered performances).⁸ In reply, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that, even

⁸ Thanks to an anonymous referee here.

if the notion of a musical-work stage is parasitic on the notion of a musical work, the notion of a temporal part of a musical work is not. The notion of a temporal part of a musical work comes mainly from mereology: the temporal part of a musical work x at a time t is something that exists only at t , that is a part of x at t , and that overlaps at t everything that is a part of x at t . By contrast, the notion of a musical-work stage might be parasitic on the notion of a musical work: a musical-work stage is a momentary, musical-work-like entity. So, even if it makes no sense to say that musical-work stages are sometimes entities of one kind, sometimes entities of another, it doesn't follow that it makes no sense to say that the temporal parts of a musical work are sometimes entities of one kind, sometimes entities of another. And a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that, although the temporal parts of a musical work are not always of the same kind (sometimes they are performances, sometimes they are fusions of spatially scattered performances), musical-work stages are always of the same kind (they are always performances).

The distinction between stages and temporal parts that the Perdurantist about Musical Works relies on here is not *ad hoc*. Suppose that Keanu enters into a time-travel machine today and travels back to 1984. Younger Keanu—who is nowhere near a time-travel machine—and older Keanu—who is standing beside a time-travel machine—are both person stages: they are both momentary, person-like objects. But neither is a temporal part of Keanu. Rather, each is a proper spatial part of a temporal part of Keanu. (They're both parts of Keanu, because they're related to Keanu's stages at other times via the continuity

relation for persons; and, by definition, Keanu's temporal part in 1984 overlaps everything that is a part of Keanu in 1984.) At other times, Keanu's stages are temporal parts; but, in 1984, Keanu's stages are proper parts of his spatially scattered temporal part.⁹ Admittedly, time-travel cases are far-fetched. But, as long as they are conceivable, there is independent reason to distinguish stages and temporal parts, which is what the Perdurantist about Musical Works needs.

5. The Objection from Modal Constancy

According to Perdurantism about Musical Works, the *Fantasia* is a fusion of all of its performances. But one might think that fusions are *modally constant*: no fusion could have had different, or more, or fewer parts than it actually does. If so, then the *Fantasia* could not have had different, or more, or fewer performances than it actually does. But one might think that the *Fantasia* could have had different, or more, or fewer performances than it actually does. Dodd (2000: 424-425) raises this problem for the view that musical works are sets (rather than fusions) of performances:

Sets, unlike types, are *constructed* out of their instances, from which it follows that a set has its members (or lack of them) essentially; and it is this which tells against the set-theoretical approach to the ontology of musical works. For while a set of sound-sequence-occurrences has its occurrences essentially, *In This House, On This Morning* does not: the piece could have had a fewer or greater number of occurrences than it has in fact had. (emphasis in original)

⁹ See Sider 2001: 101. See also Lewis 1976a.

If the reason that sets of performances are modally constant is that they are constructed out of performances, and if fusions of performances are also constructed out of performances, then fusions of performances will also be modally constant. Let's call this *The Objection from Modal Constancy*.

In reply to *The Objection from Modal Constancy*, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can adopt a counterpart-theoretic account of *de re* modality, according to which what modal properties a musical work has depends on what nonmodal properties its counterparts have in other possible worlds.¹⁰ There are many counterpart relations, and which counterpart relation is relevant depends on the conversational context.¹¹ In a conversational context in which we use 'the *Fantasia*', one counterpart relation—namely, a musical-work counterpart relation—will be relevant; whereas, in a conversational context in which we use 'a fusion of performances', another counterpart relation—namely, a fusion counterpart relation—will be relevant, even if the *Fantasia* is identical with a fusion of performances. On this view, it is true that the *Fantasia* could have had different, or more, or fewer performances than it actually does, because in some other possible world a musical-work counterpart of the *Fantasia* has different, or more, or fewer performances than the *Fantasia* actually does. On this view, it is also true that a fusion of performances could not have had different, or more, or fewer performances as parts than it actually does, because in no possible world

¹⁰ See, for example, Lewis 1968.

¹¹ See, for example, Lewis 1971, 1986b: 254-263.

does a fusion counterpart of the fusion of performances have different, or more, or fewer performances as parts.¹²

To some, reliance on a counterpart-theoretic account of *de re* modality is an insuperable cost. But a Perdurantist about Musical Works need not rely on a counterpart-theoretic account of *de re* modality. Instead, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can adopt what we can call *Hyper-Perdurantism about Musical Works*, according to which musical works are fusions of performances in this world and their counterparts in other possible worlds, and what modal properties a musical work has depends on what nonmodal properties its parts in other possible worlds have. Think of a musical work's parts in other possible worlds as its *modal parts*. Just as Perdurantists about Musical Works say that a musical work has a distinct temporal part at every time at which it exists, Hyper-Perdurantists about Musical Works say that a musical work has a distinct modal part at every world at which it exists. On this view, the *Fantasia* could have had different, or more, or fewer performances than it actually does, because in some other possible world a modal part of the *Fantasia* has different, or more, or fewer performances than the *Fantasia's* modal part in the actual world does.

Those who think that reliance on a counterpart-theoretic account of *de re* modality is an insuperable cost are unlikely to be persuaded of the merits of Hyper-Perdurantism about Musical Works. But, fortunately, a Perdurantist about Musical Works need not adopt Hyper-Perdurantism about Musical Works

¹² See Caplan and Matheson 2004: 133.

either. Instead, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can reject the claim that fusions are modally constant. In classical mereology, something x is a fusion if and only if there are some ys such that x is a fusion of the ys ; and x is a fusion of the ys if and only if each of the ys is a part of x and every part of x overlaps one of the ys .¹³ Everything is a fusion.¹⁴ For example, you are a fusion of some subatomic particles, since each of those particles is a part of you and every part of you overlaps one of them. But not everything is modally constant. For example, you aren't modally constant, since you could have different, or more, or fewer subatomic particles as parts than you actually do. So not every fusion is modally constant.¹⁵

If we like, we can distinguish thick and thin fusions. *Thin fusions* are the fusions of classical mereology. To be a thin fusion of some parts doesn't require much: some object x is a thin fusion of the ys just in case each of the ys is a part of x and every part of x overlaps one of the ys . *Thick fusions*, by contrast, are not the fusions of classical mereology. To be a thick fusion of some parts requires something more: some object x is a thick fusion of the ys only if x is, in some

¹³ See, for example, Lewis 1991: 72-74.

¹⁴ For every x , x is a part of x . (Parthood is reflexive.) And, for every x , every part of x overlaps x . (Suppose that y is a part of x . In that case, y is a part of x and—by reflexivity— y is a part of y . So there is a z —namely, y —such that z is a part of x and z is a part of y . So y overlaps x .) So every x is such that there are some ys —namely, x itself—such that each of the ys is a part of x and every part of x overlaps each of the ys . (‘Some ys are ϕ ’ is usually taken to be true even if there is exactly one y , provided that it has the property that ϕ picks out.) So every x is a fusion.

¹⁵ Caplan and Bright (forthcoming) make the mistake of taking fusions to be modally constant, and Caplan and Matheson (2004: 133) repeat the mistake. Thanks to John Hawthorne and Kris McDaniel for discussion on this point. We hope that one of us will say more about this elsewhere.

sense, “individuated by” the *ys*.¹⁶ A Perdurantist about Musical Works can grant that a thick fusion of some parts could not have had different, or more, or fewer parts. But, she can say, she is not claiming that a musical work is a thick fusion of performances, so she is not committed to the claim that a musical work could not have had different, or more, or fewer performances than it actually does.

More generally, a Perdurantist about Musical Works can say that she is no worse off here than a Perdurantist about Persons is. Perdurantism about Persons faces a version of The Objection from Modal Constancy. According to Perdurantism about Persons, Keanu is a fusion of all of his temporal parts. If fusions are modally constant, then Keanu could not have had different, or more, or fewer temporal parts than he actually does. Assuming that temporal parts are *modally inductile* and *modally incompressible*—to use Peter van Inwagen’s (1990: 253) phrases—and hence could not have had longer or shorter durations than they actually do, it follows that Keanu could not have existed for a longer or shorter period than he actually does.¹⁷ In reply to The Objection from Modal Constancy, a Perdurantist about Persons can adopt a counterpart-theoretic account of *de re* modality and say that Keanu could have existed for a longer or shorter period than he actually does, because in some other possible world a counterpart of Keanu exists for a longer or shorter period than Keanu actually does.¹⁸ Alternatively, a Perdurantist about Persons can adopt what we can call

¹⁶ Sider (2004: 676-677) draws a parallel distinction between “loaded” and “unloaded” senses of ‘fusion’ and argues that fusions (in the unloaded sense) are not modally constant.

¹⁷ See, for example, Wiggins 1980: 168.

¹⁸ See, for example, Lewis 1971, Noonan 2001: 130-132, Caplan and Bright (forthcoming).

Hyper-Perdurantism about Persons and say that Keanu could have existed for a longer or shorter period than he actually does, because in some other possible world a modal part of Keanu exists for a longer or shorter period than the modal part of Keanu in the actual world does.¹⁹ Or a Perdurantist about Persons can reject the claim that fusions are modally constant. So, even if he is a fusion of temporal parts, Keanu could have had different, or more, or fewer temporal parts than he actually does and hence could have existed for a longer or shorter period than he actually does. If one of these replies is available to a Perdurantist about Persons, then a Perdurantist about Musical Works can also reply to The Objection from Modal Constancy.

¹⁹ See, for example, Weatherson 2003.

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