

The Seashore-Mursell Debate on the Psychology of Music Revisited¹

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The published writings of Carl Seashore (1919, [1938] 1967, and his 29 articles in the *Music Educators Journal* during the period 1936-1941) and James Mursell (1934, 1936, 1937, 1938a, 1938b, 1943, 1948) on the psychology of music and music education constituted a significant contribution to music education thought and practice in the mid-twentieth century. Mursell followed, reacted against, and responded to Seashore's work and, the similarities between them notwithstanding, their ideas diverged in important ways. Their differing views of the nature of musical experience provided bases for contrasting ideologies of music education.

My purpose in this chapter is to unpack aspects of each view of the psychology of music, examine their similarities and differences, and assess the degree to which they may be reconciled and the implications that follow for music education. In tackling this problem set, I focus on theoretical aspects of these psychologies of music, leaving aside important empirical questions relating to the nature of the data from which they drew, particularly those regarding the reliability and validity of these data (for the Seashore *Measures*, see Shuter-Dyson & Gabriel 1981) and the issues relating to music education practice. My intent is to concentrate on some general, conceptually interesting, and central issues rather than to conduct a comprehensive theoretical analysis of their ideas (see Fiske 1993, 159-159, 1996, 8). In particular, I suggest that regarding Mursell as a foil to Seashore shows that the theoretical types they represent contribute to our understanding and yet are flawed in one respect or another. Falling somewhere along a continuum between two opposite types, Mursell and Seashore differ in terms of the emphases in their writings. A careful reading of their work suggests some complexity, ambivalence,

contradictions, and inconsistencies in their views, all of which are indicative of ideas still incompletely worked out or conceptually fuzzy. This fuzziness is evident, for example, in their discussions of the nature of musical meaning and the role of emotion in musical experience. In order to avoid stereotyping and oversimplifying their ideas, I refer only to some of the broad tendencies I see in their writings. The advantage of this approach is in seeing the general lay of the land by sketching some principal heuristic landmarks and leaving aside a more detailed conceptual mapping to a later day.

My analysis is predicated on two assumptions. First, I employ a dialectic approach, in which two contrasting theoretical positions are compared and contrasted in a systematic way and where, rather than being melded in a bland mix, each will take center stage from time to time (Jorgensen 1997, 2001). Second, each position is construed as an ideal or theoretical type, in terms of profiles of characteristic symptoms that are systematically compared (Zentner 1979). This approach is not without its philosophical problems, including the risk of stereotypical and reductionistic interpretations of the positions of these authors. Nevertheless, it goes some way toward enabling a study of the ground between Seashore and Mursell, revealing the complexity of their ideas and the difficulty of reconciling their differing perspectives. Given that they each provide a basis for epistemological approaches to music, music education can be better illuminated through an analysis of their views of music psychology.

II

Seashore and Mursell agree on certain principles on which they may also be vulnerable. First, their psychologies are framed within the purview of the Western classical music tradition, and while they more or less admit music from other cultures including traditional musics

(Mursell to a greater extent than Seashore), they fail to see the problematic character of the universal principles or laws they seek when applied to other musics. This universalistic and ethnocentric approach is apparent in the following ways. Universalistic laws are proposed to govern musical psychology irrespective of particular musical culture. For example, Seashore ([1938] 1967, 376) searches for scientific laws undergirding musical experience, even going so far as to reduce aesthetics to the status of a scientific problem, and Mursell (1938b, 86, 124) invokes various psychological laws. Descriptions of such musical functions as composer, performer, and listener, and taxonomies of musical elements, for example, rhythm, melody, harmony, timbre, and so on, are described from a Western perspective and they draw their examples mainly from the Western classical tradition (Seashore [1938] 1967, Mursell 1938b). Examples of traditional musics from outside the Western classical tradition, for instance, the Negro spiritual, are described by both writers as “primitive music” (Seashore [1938] 1967, chap. 26, Mursell 1938b, 231-232). They do not confront the difficulty of musical practices that are culturally specific in regards to geographic, religious, ethnic, linguistic, age, gender, and other factors or the multiplicity of other perspectives that profoundly influence musical experience and meaning making. Although they recognize the impact of such factors as race, gender, and other environmental factors on musicality, they fail to account sufficiently for the social nature of musical meaning, the importance of musical context, and the partiality of their musical perspectives. Their search for universalistic laws is predicated on their assumption that the musics of the world share fundamental similarities that are generalizable to the whole of human experience. For Seashore, these universal laws derive from music’s tonal, dynamic, temporal, and qualitative elements (1938a, 4, 32, 76). For Mursell, they are evident in its melody, scale, tonality, harmony, and rhythm (1938b, chs. 3-5). This view has been discredited, at least partly,

by writers from ethnomusicology, anthropology, sociology, music education, and philosophy (Blacking 1976, Nettl 1983, Green 1988, Shepherd 1991, Sparshott 1994, Bowman 1994). There is now widespread agreement among students of world musics that musical practices differ in sometimes profound ways, meaning-making is fundamentally contextual, and the “laws” governing musical experience are elusive and inevitably partial in their application.

Both writers tend to associate musical experience with the arousal of emotion, although they propose, Mursell to a greater degree than Seashore, that emotion or feeling is also symbolized—whether represented or expressed—within music and thereby understood intellectually and imaginatively. Seashore ([1938] 1967) posits music’s capacity to arouse emotion (9), the link between feeling and musical expression (10), a distinction between musical cognition and affective responses to music (130), and the role of musical imagination in musical perception (chap. 14). He writes (Seashore 1938b, 28): “Music is a language of emotion. Through it the composer and the performer convey their own emotions to the listener. It is a message, a means of communication, which enables the performer and the listener to live for moments in the same tonal world of pleasure.” Likewise, Mursell (1938b, ch. 1) claims that music not only has a “potent” effect on the emotions, in the sense that it predisposes a person to particular affective responses, but it also suggests images of physical or bodily movement and it “embodies and conveys schemata of movement” that are recognized by the listener (41). As Mursell puts it, “the psychological function” of music is to “objectify, embody and convey emotional values by means of tonal-rhythmic design” (44). Music’s “specific and unique character consists in its power to capture and crystallize objectively the inward mood of its creator” (46). Their psychologies of music share elements with theories of music that propose that music serves to stimulate affective responses in the musician or listener. In positing that

emotional cues are encoded within the music and recognized or expressed by a musician or listener who need not necessarily experience those selfsame emotions, their systems also share elements in common with those theories that emphasize musical cognition. In this latter view, music serves not so much as a means of arousing emotion but as a symbol standing for, representing, signifying, or expressing felt life (see Kivy 1989, Fiske 1990).

From the perspective of our time, both of these views are problematic. Arousal theories take a simplistic and reductionistic view of feeling as emotion and insufficient account of the symbolic meanings inherent in music; one piece of music may evoke an affective and bodily response but another seems more cognitive in its interest. Cognitive theories have also been criticized as being too formalistic and taking insufficient account of occasions on which music arouses emotional and bodily responses (Kivy 1990). Given the benefit of subsequent research in the psychology of musical experience (e.g., Hodges 1996), it seems clear that both Seashore and Mursell are on the right track in wanting to account for both music's arousal of emotion and its intellectual interest as an expression of human feeling. Neither goes far enough, however, to sort out important philosophical issues involved in musical meaning-making or explain how and when musical arousal and musical cognition are operative or related.. They also attend insufficiently to music's symbolic function (e.g., Nattiez 1990, Tarasti 1994).

Seashore and Mursell's stance in respect to the efficacy of science and the importance of empirical data is characteristically modern. Their belief in the usefulness of testing and prediction as a basis for scientific refutation of hypotheses and induction as a source of theoretical constructs is founded on the notion that observing behaviors is prerequisite to coming to understand the nature of the psychology of music. While Seashore ([1938] 1967, 288, 376) underscores the importance of scientific investigation in the field of psychology of music,

Mursell (1938b) also takes an inductive approach to theory building based on scientific experiments and anecdotal empirical evidence. This view of musical experience stands or falls on the underlying assumptions of positivism. In order to compare behaviors at one time with those at another, one must assume comparatively long time scales such that, if observations are taken at t_1, t_2, \dots, t_n , there are no significant changes in conditions at or between t_1, t_2 , and t_n . Also, it must be assumed that causal determinants can be accurately predicted so that the relationships between variables (whether correlated or causative) can be specified ahead of the investigation. Further, rational means of investigation are presumed to be accurate and reliable and provide sufficient insight into the situation to assess it more or less accurately.

This scientific world view stands in contrast to phenomenological and philosophical insights that question the validity of its assumptions. Phenomenologists challenge the assumption of long duration of events by pointing to the short time scales in human social relations, claiming that one cannot necessarily or easily extrapolate from observations at t_1, t_2, \dots, t_n , such are the changes in social organizations from time to time. They also argue that determining causation in social events is an intractable problem and that the complexity of variables is so great as to render relations among them inherently problematic. Moreover, they suggest that intuition provides an alternative view of human experience and that some degree of bias is inherent to and endemic in all social situations.

Seashore seems more sanguine about music tests than Mursell who, by dint of his focus on questions at a higher level of generality than Seashore's preoccupation with acoustic and physiological phenomena, sees them as inherently difficult enterprises. Nevertheless, both men are ready to embrace scientific ideals of measurement and testing in coming to understand musical experience (see Seashore [1938] 1967, chs. 21, 22, Mursell 1937, 1938a, 1938b, ch. 9).

Issues surrounding the nature of musicality and its testing are central to their debate during the 1930s and 1940s. Although this positivist stance is not surprising given the era in which they lived, scientific investigations of music and education need to be complemented by other approaches such as philosophical analysis and descriptive research employing a range of procedures (Jorgensen 1979, 1990).

Both writers pay insufficient attention to definitional rigor and defense of their assertions regarding their taxonomies. Put psychologically, their work suffers from what Abeles & Chung (1996, 285) would term an “inconsistent use of terminology.” Both are content to develop pithy definitions without explaining or elaborating their meaning through examples and counterexamples or by drawing on the philosophical literature regarding musical experience to strengthen the conceptual bases of their theories. Although they were writing from the perspective of a field in its infancy, the fact remains that both psychologists are inclined—Seashore more than Mursell—to skip a careful theoretical analysis in the interest of moving on to a consideration of the empirical evidence.

Here, philosophers would have something to teach them about the importance of first clarifying their terminology and elucidating a solid theoretical framework on which their empirical research can be based and to which it can contribute. A philosopher approaching their writings is struck by the unsubstantiated assertions, problematic arguments, and unsystematic typologies that characterize their work. A shift from descriptive to normative language is sometimes apparent, classifications are often simply announced, and there are no explanations or defenses of the conceptual categories chosen (Davis 1997, Seashore [1938] 1967, 4, 90, 150, 286, 289, Mursell 1938b, 176-177, 218, 218-219, chaps. 2, 3). Among examples in Seashore’s work, one thinks of his trunks in the family tree of musicality or his typology of musicians, his

unsubstantiated distinctions regarding sense of time and the rules for efficient musical learning. Notable, also, is his uncritical acceptance of Stoddard and Wellman's (1936) view of musical intelligence, taxonomies of forms of musical guidance, and hierarchical levels of musicianship. In Mursell's writings, examples include his classification of the field of psychology of music into the psychology of tonal and rhythmic forms, the psychology of musical functions (listening, performing, composing), and the psychology of the musician. There are also his typologies of perceptual organization of sound, tonal foundations of music, musical rhythm, listeners, and attitudes toward tone.

Also striking, from our present perspective, is these writers' emphasis on mental constructs rather than a more holistic view of the body. In their analyses of musical perception, for example, they move from the physiology of the ear to cognitive processing of music, musical imagination, and musical meaning making. Both address aspects of human feeling and emotional response. Although they are at pains to suggest that musical experience is holistic and contextual, the focus of their psychologies is upon mental processes, perception, and the like, rather than on the whole person. This focus cues subsequent research in the psychology of music (Lipscomb & Hodges 1996). The epistemological status of "the body" is philosophically problematic. Feminist writers have drawn attention to the need for a more holistic view of being in music rather than the old Cartesian dualisms (mind/body, self/other, inside/outside, and so on) and hierarchical dichotomies that have predicated psychological research in music (e.g., see Grimshaw 1986, John Shepherd 1993, McClary 1991, Citron 1993, *Philosophy of Music Education Review* Fall 1994 issue, O'Loughlin 1997). Nevertheless, Seashore and Mursell move progressively towards more general themes, from physical properties of sound to types of musical experience (e.g., composition, performance, and listening) and emphasize the cognitive properties of each. For

example, Seashore ([1938] 1967) moves from properties of sound (pitch/frequency, loudness/intensity, duration/time, timbre/waveform, tone quality/sonance), the nature of musical imagination and emotion, music learning, and the specific physical qualities of various instruments, to consider musical talent and its measurement, and musical skills and their development. Likewise, Mursell (1938b) moves from tonal foundations for music and musical elements to more general matters of musical functions and the measurement and cultivation of musicality. Mursell is more interested in social-psychological aspects of music and contextual issues than is Seashore. They also differ markedly in regard to the weight they give each aspect, the systematic rigor, and the specific details and emphases in their treatises. Still, they adopt a similar rubric for the psychology of music in encompassing such aspects as the physical properties of sound, physiological properties of musical experience, how music functions, psychological perceptions, cognitive processing and affective responses to music, and the training and measurement of musical skills. They are agreed that the psychology of music presupposes and integrates more specific acoustic and physiological phenomena.

III

In highlighting some of the differences between Seashore and Mursell, I propose two theoretical types of approach to the study of musical experience. These types are construed as polar opposites in which a profile of characteristics is systematically drawn and becomes the basis for comparison. They are called Types A and B and are summarized in Table 1. I suggest, further, that Seashore's approach falls closer to Type A and Mursell's closer to Type B.

A Comparison of Types A and B

<u>Attribute</u>	<u>Type A</u>	<u>Type B</u>
Nature of musicality	simple construct	complex syndrome
Source of musicality	heredity	environment
Form of study	experimental	clinical
Focus of attention	cognition	emotion
Psychological view	atomistic	gestalt
Musical meaning	formal	contextual
Level of analysis	acoustic	psychological
Testing emphasis	reliability	validity

Treating Types A and B as polarities along a continuum, or what Vernon Howard (1982, ch. 1) calls a “weak syndrome” where one merges into the other and locating Seashore towards Type A and Mursell towards Type B, one sees that their viewpoints often differ in terms of emphasis. Neither is a “pure” example of the type to which it tends, and the weight of evidence tends toward one or the other polarity. Henry Zentner (1979) would refer to the ideas of Seashore and Mursell as “empirical types,” in the sense that they are drawn from the phenomenal world, positioned along a continuum between two ideal types, and viewed comparatively.

The assumed nature of musicality is an important distinguishing characteristic between the two types. In Type A, musicality is viewed as a simple construct discrete from other aptitudes and abilities, represented and indexed by a person’s aptitude for and ability in aural discrimination. In Type B, it is regarded as a complex syndrome in the sense that it represents and is indexed by a wide array of acoustical, physiological, psychological, and social-cultural factors.

For Seashore ([1938] 1967) there are four “trunks in the family tree of musicality”—tonal, dynamic, temporal, and qualitative—giving rise to four types of musicians (and presumably musicality) (p. 4), seven types of musical imagination—sensorimotor, sentimental, impulsive, reflective, motile, and balanced (p. 7), and four “levels” of musicianship—composer, conductor, virtuoso, and teacher (p. 287). Fiske, (1996, 2-4) suggests a more systematic reading of four basic variables of musical tones translated into four capacities for hearing all music, an “inner screen” of four complex sensory forms that are exclusively musical and, correspondingly, four types of listeners, the proviso being that each level is logically preceded by the last one. As Mursell ([1938] 1967, 22) notes, the *Seashore Measures of Musical Talent* are not intended to measure a unitary musical talent, even though this is how they have sometimes been interpreted and applied. Seashore’s *Measures* are designed only to test for “measures of specific talents in which a certain degree of capacity is essential to success in music, and in which a certain degree of incapacity is often the basis for failure in music” (p. 314). This test focuses on four types of musicality and reveals a limited scope that does not take account of all the other cells Seashore has identified. Given their acoustical emphasis, one can easily see how his *Measures* have been taken to indicate a unitary talent. While intelligence may “set limits for musical achievement” and “as is the intelligence of a man, so is his music,” nevertheless Seashore believes that there can be such a thing as a hypothetical musical intelligence quotient (MIQ) (pp. 8, 175-177). Although he posits a profile of auditory discrimination factors and takes into account other factors besides acoustical phenomena, his view of musicality seems simpler than Mursell’s, at least insofar as it is represented in his *Measures*.

For Mursell (1938b), musicality is a complex syndrome. He describes an array of five types of perceptual organization of sound (chap. 2), five types of tonal and rhythmic phenomena

of music (chaps. 3 and 4), and three types of musical function (part 2). Additionally there are various subtypes—for example, seven types of musical rhythmic patterns (chap. 5), four types of attitudes towards musical tone (pp. 218-219), and three types of listener (p. 218)—thereby greatly increasing the complexity of his notion of musicality. Moreover, Mursell's classification is construed more broadly than Seashore's in terms of acoustic, psychological, and social variables and is thus more defensibly multidimensional than Seashore's taxonomy. Like Seashore, however, Mursell speaks of an entity called "musicality" that is distinguishable from other characteristics, thus invoking a unitary view of musicality, at least construed in general terms.

Assumptions about the source of musicality are important considerations because they point to possible explanations concerning how musical perception and musical meaning arise. Type A locates the source of musicality in the subject's heredity, whereas Type B finds it in environmental and contextual factors. Seashore ([1938] 1967, ch. 25) situates musicality mainly in heredity, although he believes that musical skills can be trained. As Fiske (1996, ch. 1) correctly notes, Seashore puts himself in a bind regarding the old nature-nurture problem from which he does not successfully extricate himself. By contrast, Mursell (1938b, pp. 331-335) expresses some uncertainty regarding the role of heredity in musicality and proposes that environmental factors also play a significant role.

The way in which musical experience is studied affects the kinds of questions that can be asked and the results that are obtained. Type A is an experimental approach in which subjects are studied individually in a controlled environment, whereas Type B is a descriptive approach in which subjects are studied in an environment that resembles a natural situation insofar as possible. Seashore ([1938] 1967) utilizes a preponderance of experimental acoustical data (especially in chs. 17-20) while also relying, to some extent, on some naturalistic and descriptive data, for

example, the Eastman and Lincoln experiments (chs. 23-24). This approach is consonant with his views on science (ch. 3). Mursell likewise draws from a range of published evidence including descriptive and anecdotal data from clinical studies. Although he points to the need for tests that “reveal the processes of tonal and rhythmic integration upon which music depends operating in various directions and on various levels” (1938b, ch. 9, p. 318), he is critical of the validity and reliability of the *Seashore Measures of Musical Talent*. His objective is still a test sufficiently robust to be utilized in individual experimental situations (p. 319). Given his view of musicality, one would think that he would also plump for the development of tests, measures, or indices appropriate to descriptive and clinical studies—a point that he seems not to mine.

The focus of the psychologist’s attention to aspects of cognition or intellection in each case varies considerably. In a Type A approach, the nature of cognitive process in musical perception and experience is a central preoccupation; in a Type B approach, the nature of “feeling,” generally construed as emotion felt within the context of the musical experience, is the primary interest. The battery of the *Seashore Measures of Musical Talent* collects data on a variety of auditory discrimination tasks that, as Mursell (1938b, ch. 9) argues, are not valid or reliable indicators of musicality. For Mursell, musical cognition relies not only on “*perceptual*” rather than a “*sensory*” ability, on an “awareness of relatedness among tones” rather than “pitch discrimination” (p. 326), but, as Mursell’s emphasis on musical feeling implies, also on “a general emotional responsiveness to tone” (p. 324).

The researcher’s view of psychological processes is a primary consideration. One who adopts the Type A approach views mind as atomistic, composed of discrete elements that can be examined separately without detrimental effect, and believes that the mind focuses on the individual aspects themselves. A Type B researcher, by contrast, takes a gestalt approach and

invokes such laws as *Prägnanz*, or that “*psychological organization will always be as good as prevailing conditions permit.*” This researcher views mind and thinking holistically and relationally and believes that various aspects of mind play interrelated and interdependent roles in such a way that one cannot be separated from another. The mind is believed to focus on patterned relationships between aspects. Mursell’s view of musicality in his *Psychology of Music*, although it draws on sensory discrimination, is a holistic one involving the “entire personality” (p. 32), focusing on an awareness of the “relatedness among tones” (p. 326) and seeing melody as a “unified and continuous whole” (232). In addition to the Law of *Prägnanz* (p. 86), Mursell emphasizes other Gestalt principles such as “*Gestaltungzeit*, (i.e., the time needed for an integrating process to be performed)” (p. 79). On the other hand, Seashore ([1938] 1967) starts with a holistic premise of the person—the “total personality as functioning in a total situation” (p. 2) but moves on to emphasize the specific properties of physical sound, which is the “musician’s medium” (p. 13), as if mind should be treated atomistically and scientifically. He defends this approach with the following analogy: “‘Atomistic!’ some of my confreres will say. Now, atoms are not roses, resplendent in bloom, fragrance, and configuration—living roses! The esthete, whiffing and raving about the beauty of the rose, can ignore the atom, but the botanist cannot. It is to the botanist that we look for a true revelation of the origin, the growth, the nature, and the role of roses in the economy of nature. It is the botanist who can make verifiable and permanent distinctions among roses” (p. 11).

The researcher’s view of musical meaning informs the connections drawn between the subject and the musical event. In a Type A approach, musical meaning is believed to inhere within the music itself and is grasped by the subjects who perceive its formal or syntactic qualities. In a Type B approach, musical meaning is understood to be contextual, such that

musical events occur within a sociological and cultural framework or particular practice and can only be understood as that context of practice is grasped. For Seashore ([1938] 1967, 14), music occurs in a social context or situation, but although these “accessories” “contribute to the atmosphere and should be cultivated with care.., they are not the music.” It is important that the psychology of music “separate clearly the music in itself from its accessories.” For him, music is composed of the images of sounds themselves; it does not include the context in which those sounds are heard. This argument is classically essentialist—that everything of significance to music inheres within the sounds themselves and that a distinction ought to be made between musical sound and other elements of the musical event (not music). Mursell emphasizes the nonrepresentational nature of music and focuses on the aural experience of music (pp. 14, 18, 19), but he also concentrates on the impact of functions on musical experience, the “mental functions which enable humans to behave musically” (p. 320). In so doing, he suggests that context and function may be more inextricably related to musical sound and form than Seashore seems to think. Although both men distinguish musical form and function, sound and context, Mursell goes further than Seashore toward breaking down this dichotomy and seeing the musical event more holistically.

Integrative levels of analysis, or the levels of generality or causation at which the research is cast, also affect the sorts of questions addressed and the way in which they are tackled in each case (Taylor 1975). In Type A, the researcher regards musical experience from an acoustic perspective, believing that the physical properties of sound constitute the basis for musical experience. In this view, the researcher investigates acoustical properties of sound and grounds psychological experience in the physical elements of music. In Type B, musical experience is studied at a higher level of generality that includes the acoustic properties of sound but focuses

rather on psychological and social experiences of music. Seashore ([1938] 1967, 15) regards music as composed of physical, physiological, and psychological manifestations. Although he acknowledges that music can be made without a knowledge of all of these aspects, he maintains that the scientist must “deal with the series as a whole, the sound wave, the nerve impulse, and the experience of sound.” His focus is on the tonal, dynamic, temporal, and qualitative aspects of musical sound—an investigation that is directed primarily towards its acoustic properties as the foundation for musical experience (chs. 4-12). Mursell (1938b, 300) criticizes Seashore’s acoustical approach, claiming that musicality does not depend directly on sensory abilities (p. 323) and that relatedness of tones is of more consequence than discrimination of pitch or any other sound element (p. 326). He concurs with Seashore that music draws from acoustics but he thinks it is properly studied at a higher level of generality or causation. For him, psychological explanations of music are not primarily acoustical phenomena; the most important things in music are not in the sound wave or in the action of the inner ear, but in the mind (pp. 51-54). According to Mursell, perception of music is not a matter of auditory sensation but of auditory perception (p. 57).

Psychological testing in music is based on certain assumptions that differ between the two approaches. Type A assumes an underlying simple construct of musicality in which music can be studied scientifically as a discrete intelligence at a high level of specificity. As the construct can be delineated and operationalized relatively easily, matters concerning validity may be readily ascertained and the researcher is more preoccupied with issues of reliability or the replicability of the study. By contrast, Type B assumes that musicality is a complex array of psychological structures and processes. Given this complexity, the researcher is particularly concerned about issues of validity or questions about the nature of musicality and whether or not, or the degree to

which, a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Seashore ([1938] 1967, 289, 307-308, 313-314, 384) addresses issues of reliability and validity of the *Seashore Measures* but his evidence is more persuasive in regard to reliability than validity. Mursell (1938b, 289-299) criticizes the *Seashore Measures* on grounds of their lack of reliability and validity. He is especially concerned about the validity of the *Seashore Measures* because they do not measure what they claim to measure.

Although for the sake of conceptual clarity, I have depicted the profile of characteristic dimensions as independent, practically speaking, they are interdependent. It is not surprising to encounter links between the elements of an experimental, intellectually oriented, atomistic, musically formal or essentialist, acoustically oriented, simple-construct approach to musicality that emphasizes issues of heredity and reliability. Nor is it a stretch to propose a contrasting and likewise interconnected profile of descriptive or naturalistic, emotionally oriented, gestalt, musically contextual, psychologically oriented approaches that envisage musicality as a complex syndrome and focus on such matters as musical environment and validity.

IV

My difficulty with these approaches is that each is too narrow when taken alone. Some combination of these types, and more besides, seems to be warranted. It might be argued that both descriptive and experimental approaches yield important psychological data—descriptive because data relate more or less closely to practical musical situations, and experimental because of the opportunities to control important dimensions of the psychological experience that would not be possible in a descriptive situation.

Likewise, philosophical research on the relationship between cognition and emotion

supports the notion of cognitive emotions and emotional cognitions—emotions in the service of cognition, such as rational passions, and cognitions in the service of emotion, such as musical feeling (Scheffler 1991, Yob, 1997). Such a holistic approach is appealing because it breaks down old Cartesian distinctions between mind/body, emotion/cognition, and self/other, and invokes, instead, a more complex and unified view of personhood and humanity (e.g., Dewey 1916, Montessori 1967, Martin 1992).

Reconciling gestalt and atomistic approaches to musical experience is a tall order but worth attempting (see Gordon 1968, Shuter-Dyson & Gabriel 1981, Lipscomb 1996, 133-175). Each perspective has a contribution to make. Gestalt principles recognize the interrelatedness of people and things, and they point to the overall organization and cohesion of the musical event. Atomistic approaches to music provide useful insights into how particular things function, both within and aside from their context within the whole. Isolating particular variables, while problematic, enables the researcher to focus on specific qualities or attributes that may elude the investigator if studied along with a host of other variables.

Formal or essentialistic views of music have been criticized in recent philosophical literature, and yet, as Wayne Bowman (1993) and Forest Hansen (1994) have shown, they hold considerable promise for understanding the nature of music and musical experience. Likewise, contextual or “praxial” views of music illumine the social nature of the musical event and complicate simplistic interpretations of music viewed exclusively as formal construct (Blaukopf 1992, Citron 1993, Elliott 1995, McClary 1991, Shepherd, 1990). Despite the difficulties of reconciling these two sometimes conflicting philosophical positions, they each provide interesting and different perspectives on music and I am unwilling to jettison the one in the interests of salvaging the other.

Viewing music as an acoustical phenomenon has merit. Robin Maconie's (1990, ch. 18) illustration of the Palladian acoustic environment, ideally suited to the performance of late-sixteenth-century music and built using the ratios 1:2:4 is a fascinating application of acoustical theory. Nevertheless, music is not only an acoustic phenomenon but is apprehended and interpreted by human beings who share a social and cultural frame of reference. This would suggest that music should also be studied at different levels of generality from psychological and sociological perspectives. The notion of integrative levels of analysis is helpful in reconciling the acoustic and psychological emphases because one is nested within the other. To study psychology of music is also necessarily to study musical acoustics and logically, one ought not to preclude the other.

It follows that musicality needs to be studied as a complex syndrome as well as a simple construct. Viewed psychologically and sociologically, musical experience seems to break down into various conceptually discrete types—composer/performer/listener—more or less differentiated according to particular musical traditions. Ironically, music may be seen as a simple, if also broad, unified, somewhat nebulous construct. Robert Walker (1996) has argued (in a fashion contested by Keith Swanwick [1997]) that notions of music are inherently ethnocentric because there is no equivalent to the English word “music” in some traditions. About all that can be said regarding music in some cultures is that sounds and sights are combined in a holistic experience that serves any one of a variety of functions.

Psychological research seems to have established that both heredity and environment are important factors in musical experience and learning, and the nature of musicality seems to be a complex syndrome while also containing elements of a simple construct particularly when compared with other types of talent (Gardner 1993, Shuter-Dyson & Gabriel 1981). Indeed, a case

may be made for a dialectical relationship between these two types. This dialectical relationship is of a certain sort. I do not mean to imply that Types A and B are simply melded or synthesized in the Hegelian sense. The situation is likely to be much more complicated than this kind of synthesis. Rather, one or the other takes the stage at a particular moment in time with the other offering, as Iris Yob (1996) puts it, a sort of “course correction from the wings.”

I suspect that Seashore and Mursell may have disagreed with my conclusion. Neither seemed willing to allow the other view to stand unopposed and each tackled the other’s view as if distinctions between them were a matter of dichotomies rather than polarities, a case of having to choose between one or the other approach. This attitude is not surprising, especially if one notes the tendency of theoreticians upon first entering a field of study to distinguish things dichotomously. It falls to later writers to show that what were once taken to be independent variables turn out to be related in some way, possibly as weak syndromes. So the state-of-affairs turns out to be more complex than it was originally taken to be. The conversation between Seashore and Mursell prompts us to examine not only the contributions and detractions of their views but how such a reciprocity between their views might be effected. Still, it is important not to underestimate the difficulty of effecting this reciprocity, melding diverse viewpoints, or articulating the ground between these types.

A still wider set of contextual issues remains to be examined concerning the interpretation of Seashore’s work. My analytic work on the writings of Seashore and Mursell was conducted prior to Julia Eklund Koza’s (2007) exposure of Seashore’s connections with the American Eugenics Society (as a member of its advisory council), and her suggestion of possible racist motivations for his psychological theories and emphasis on the measurement of musicality. These findings may be particularly uncomfortable for music educators who have held Seashore in

esteem and regarded his work as scientific and unbiased, or who have not associated his efforts towards measurement and evaluation with racist agendas. Still, Koza raises important questions for music educators who seek humane approaches to their work. Her analysis highlights the imperative of rereading Seashore's (and Mursell's) work within the discourse of race—an undertaking that goes beyond the scope of the present project.

V

There are at least three important issues for music educators who have historically drawn upon the work of Seashore and Mursell. First, pursuing both types of research in musical experience suggests bringing the insights of experimental and descriptive, positivistic and phenomenological, empirical and theoretical, and pure and applied perspectives to bear on the study of music. In recent years, music educators have begun to take better account of descriptive research, strengthen their notions of theory building and philosophical research, and emphasize research as an important responsibility of music educators in the academy. Seashore and Mursell would support the serious study of music and musical experience, and I suspect that they would applaud the extent to which the field of music education has matured in the interim.

Second, Seashore and Mursell have provided a basis on which to explore a range of practical approaches to developing musicality and musical achievement. Their work reminds us of the continuing importance of ear training in musical study, of developing aural sensitivity and training students to be able to hear music, especially in a world where the musics all around them are devalued by the constant bombardment of sound in contemporary life. Beyond developing aural sensitivity is the important theme of contextualizing musical study, of relating music to ordinary life. Although Seashore emphasized the former, and Mursell the latter, I see both of

these objectives as important contributions to contemporary music education.

Third, the flaws evident in the ideas of Seashore and Mursell remind music educators of the importance of careful theoretical analysis and attention to philosophical conceptualization of variables under study. Researchers in music education need to develop better taxonomies and defend their assertions with greater rigor than has sometimes been the case (Jorgensen, 1993). With the benefit of hindsight, and given the state of the field today, they need not ground their empirical study on theories derived of reflection alone but such study can be couched within the framework of a wide literature going well beyond that in music education. A growing philosophical and theoretical literature in music education potentially benefits empirical researchers with theoretical insights on their work just as the philosophers can draw on a growing body of empirical research. This reciprocity can only benefit the music education profession.

In sum, given the similarities and differences between the work of Seashore and Mursell, in addition to the contributions as well as flaws in their work, I have proposed a dialectical approach to their writings that goes some way towards finding a reciprocity between their views, expanding on their respective visions and ultimately suggesting implications for music education research. Their work provides a fruitful if also problematic starting point in elucidating the nature of the musical experience and suggesting ways in which it may be cultivated in the future.

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