

The Musical *pasticcio*

A Plea for a Readymade Ontology for the Musical Work

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1. Introduction

The task of the ontology of art is to understand which are the entities that populate the art world and how they are constituted and articulated, explaining their properties. Since art is a historical and social human practice which depends on the cultural specificity of people and social groups, the understanding of artistic entities and the properties thereof is supposed to account for the rootedness of the artistic practices within the historical, social and practical contexts in which they acquire their significance.

Some of the entities – or entities’ elements, parts, or properties – that populate the art world can be allegedly easily individuated and recognized, because they are instanced in (or conveyed by) material objects they can be physically and spatially identified with. A statue, for example, is a work of art whose existence seems to coincide with, or at least depend on, its material support, at least because once the material support is destroyed, the artwork is destroyed as well. However, the statue is not reducible to its material support, and is dependent on the specific treatment of that material as well as on interpretive and evaluative practices in virtue of which that statue acquires its specific cultural aesthetic signification and its aesthetic value.¹

New artistic entities emerge out of creative manipulation and arrangement of materials as well as new attributions of significance to items in human cultural practices. The birth of new artistic kinds may depend, in particular, on the appearance of new technologies capable of generating new media. Obvious cases have been photography, cinema and the Internet. All this suggests that artistic entities – works of art, artistic performances, and their properties – do not fluctuate in the ‘hyperuranion’ world of metaphysical objects. They are here among us, participating in the cultural developments and historical vicissitudes of humanity as well as, as many examples could show, in the often tragic events of human history. As they take part in the cultural history of humanity, art-

1 See LAMARQUE, 2010.

works' value and meaning, as well as at least many of their ontological qualities, emerge from practices, relationships and cultural events that occur in the changing contexts of human life.² This is the point of departure for the reflection on musical ontology that I am about to articulate in this article. The perspective from which I will address the topic is inspired by that artistic practice which is the thematic core of this book: the pasticcio.

2. Against musical Platonism

Nowadays, the idea of the dependence of the ontology of art on human practices is quite common.³ However, precisely in the field of musical ontology, many insist on supporting different positions, some of which are indefensible, in my opinion.⁴ In particular, supporters of the so-called musical Platonism believe that musical works are immutable entities, independent of space-temporal contexts and historical events.⁵ This view is the theoretical enemy against whom I aim to argue in this study.

Musical Platonists share with philosophers of other orientations and traditions the idea that the main problem of musical ontology is the relationship between the musical work and its performances. They believe that musical works, differently from performances, are not physical things or events and assume as indisputable that they are immutable, incorruptible, and unalterable. Moreover, they assume also that performances, interpretations, and renditions of a musical work do not alter or transform a musical work; they do not improve it or make it worse. Simply, they 'portray', convey, communicate, or manifest the musical work – and they can accomplish this in ways that can be more or less adequate, more or less right or wrong, more or less authentic or inauthentic. According to those assumptions, Platonists think that the solution to the problem (or 'pseudo-problem', as we could maybe already begin to call it) of the link between musical works and their performances can only be offered by metaphysics. In a nutshell, the solution to the problem should answer the question as to how the one (the musical work) can be multiplied in/by its performances without underlying transformations, thereby remaining the one and the same. Actually, once the mentioned assumptions are made, the solution to the alleged main problem of musical ontology is easily reached: it is the famous distinction between the unique 'type' and its multiple 'tokens'. The relationship that holds between the musical work and its performances or interpretations is the same that holds, for example, between the eternal Platonic idea of a chair (which is the object of thought) and all the physical chairs (which are grasped through perception).⁶ The idea

2 Cf. BERTRAM, 2014.

3 Cf. DAVIES, 2004.

4 See my BERTINETTO, 2016, pp. 12-46, and my BERTINETTO, 2013.

5 See paradigmatically DODD, 2007.

6 In Plato's thought a complication is offered precisely by art which, according to the *Republic* (Book X), famously constitutes a second level image of the real idea, i.e. the imitation of an imitation. The artistic rendition of Plato's triple ontological articulation (idea, phe-

of the chair is unique and immutable: its physical occurrences manifest it without any modifications.

Unfortunately, however, the problems for this theory also begin here. Its starting point (which actually is another tacit assumption of this view) is that at the end of the day musical works are like visual artworks, like paintings and statues. Lydia Goehr registered this assumption in the title of her book about the ideology of the *Werktreue*: *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.⁷ But the ideology is still alive, and widespread. It is displayed for instance in what composer and music director Peter Eötvös recently declared in the journal of the *Musik Fest Berlin* in reference to his rendition of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Inori*: "An interpretation should never be 'free' [...]. The way in which INORI is composed is fixed: it should be realized as it is notated – like a picture hung onto a wall."⁸

The ideological assumption that musical works are like images hanging on the wall, meaning that they are like paintings and sculptures that must simply be displayed, has theoretical consequences: in my view, unhappy ones. Paintings and statues are manifested without undergoing changes. They are located in museums or other spaces (e.g., private homes or churches) and it seems natural to believe that their exhibition does not affect their meaning or their aesthetic value, and above all does not affect their ontological status. Every time they appear to an observer these works remain the objects they are.

Actually, even this idea may not be as correct as it could obviously appear. In fact, exhibition contexts could impact on the meaning and the value of artworks and, consequently, also on their ontological status. The change of the spatio-temporal and social context of reference of an artwork could therefore also entail an ontological transformation, more or less in the same way in which it can be said that a person is no longer the same person if transported in a context different from the usual one (if you need a clear and up-to-date example, think of how hard it is for immigrants to maintain or rebuild a personal identity that is acceptable and satisfying to them and of the social consequences that these difficulties produce). Moreover, the same way people grow old, artworks too, as mundane objects, age and suffer the passage of time. Sometimes they are irretrievably destroyed or lost. In these cases, they may be possibly restored or replaced. But, having been restored (like an old person who gets a facelift) or replaced (like a double that takes the place of the alleged original), it seems difficult to maintain that the artwork has remained the same, without having undergone transformations.⁹

nomenon, artistic imitation) is displayed in the famous artwork by Joseph Kosuth *One and Three Chairs* (1965) which brings together a definition of chair (the idea), a real chair (the phenomenal reality), and a picture of a chair.

7 GOEHR, 1992.

8 "Eine Interpretation sollte eigentlich nie 'frei' sein [...]. Die Art wie INORI komponiert ist, steht fest: man muss es einfach so realisieren, wie es notiert ist – so wie ein Bild, das man an die Wand hängt." *Musik Fest Berlin*, 2018 edition, p. 21.

9 This raises the question of the authenticity of the work. On the topic cf. GIOMBINI, 2018.

However, let's grant, for the sake of the argument (and even though it is really hard to believe) that paintings and sculptures do not change in some significant way. Can we say the same about musical works? Are musical works simply *manifested* or *displayed* or *portrayed* in their performances in the way they really (and metaphysically) are, without undergoing changes? Have performances really no impact on musical works?

Nowadays there are actually musical works of which it can be said (in the same purely hypothetical way of paintings and sculptures) that they do not change as a consequence of the way they are displayed for aural perception. If we admit that a music album, in the form of an LP or a CD, is a musical work, and there are good reasons to believe that a Beatles album or a record by Miles Davis is such a musical work, a 'phonographic' musical work as it is now called by scholars,¹⁰ then it can also be said that the repeated instantiation of this work does not seem to modify its value and aesthetic meaning as well as its ontological status.

Of course, a phonographic musical work is more like a serial artwork than like a single piece, since it is available in several copies.¹¹ But the fact remains that its repeated playback does not modify its ontological uniqueness (even if, to put it with an oxymoron, it is a multiple uniqueness).¹²

However, even if we can concede that phonographic works are musical works in some ways similar to paintings and statues, the case of musical works for performance is completely different. Here the musical work, although notated in a score that provides instructions for its performance, is not identified by a material artifact. It would seem that it exists only when it is realized in performances that make it available to listeners. Thus, in order to maintain the analogy with pictures and sculptures, one should think of the hypothetical, bizarre situation in which sculptures and paintings existed only when perceived by their observers, having a sort of intermittent existence. Which seems quite odd.

To solve this strangeness, but without renouncing the analogy with artworks such as paintings and statues, Platonists have come up with the solution I mentioned earlier. The musical works for performance are unique and unchangeable metaphysical entities that are instantiated by physical realizations (the performances) that manifest them, while leaving them as they are, i.e. without impacting on their ontological fabric. Hence, in the end, the identity of Platonist's musical works is even more rigid than that of paintings or

10 ARBO, 2013.

11 In this sense it is not a 'simple allographic object' in Goodman's sense (cf. GOODMAN, 1968). It may be rather understood as a 'multiple autographic object' in Genette's sense (cf. GENETTE, 1994).

12 Nevertheless, like a statue or a painting, every single LP or CD ages due to use and thus scratches, dust and other factors can damage it. While damaging the physical copy, they do not spoil however the music recorded in it, which, usually, can be listened to again through other physical supports: for example, another copy of the same album. I thank Gesa zur Nieden for this interesting suggestion.

sculptures, which after all, and as already noticed, undergo the passage of time and can be completely destroyed by natural events and human actions.

The conceptual acrobatics that these philosophers have to accomplish to explain how a metaphysical entity can be realized without undergoing transformations through their physical manifestations in the sounds of performances are very sophisticated. Although I do not want to dwell on it here, I certainly can point out the two main problems of these philosophical attempts.

(1) On the one hand, the assumption that the musical work for performance is an immutable entity not transformed by its performances is what it is: a simple assumption, which finds its justification in musical practices in force in a certain cultural situation, that of a certain historical tradition established within the Western culture, or at least within some influential Western cultural environments, more or less between the end of the 18th and the first half of the 20th centuries. The principle that regulates (or, better, regulated) these practices is known as *Werktreue-Ideal*: ‘truthfulness to the musical work’ (considered as unchanging entity). Its ideological generation is complex and depends on well-known factors of various kinds such as, for example, the emergence of ideas of author and artistic genius, of a certain social organization of musical activities and an economic and legal regulation of musical practices. The problem is that, almost forgetting the historical origin of these phenomena and based on a musicological perspective strictly linked to this *Werktreue* ideology, the dominant current of the philosophy of music, of which Platonism is the strongest and most explicit expression, pretended to consider the ideological assumption of the immutability of the musical work as a kind of dogma, a metaphysical factum, an undeniable truth.¹³

(2) On the other hand, the solution to the main problem arising from such an assumption (the understanding of the relation between the musical work and its performances) has been to privilege metaphysics to aesthetics and artistic practices, on the base of the principle: ‘no evaluation without identification’.¹⁴ Now, differently from paintings and statues that are produced by their makers, Platonists maintain that, being types, musical works cannot be created by composers, but only discovered by them. This idea is oddly enough against the common intuition that musical works are the outcomes of human creativity and their artistic properties importantly depend on their context of production.¹⁵

13 See GOEHR, 1992; BERTINETTO, 2016

14 I discuss the issue at length in BERTINETTO, 2020.

15 See PREDELLI, 2001. In order to accommodate those considerations about the influence of historical contexts on the properties of the musical work, Jerrold Levinson (see for example LEVINSON, 2011) famously proposed a modification of Platonism, defending that musical works are ‘indicated’ types: types generated by the act of composition in a particular cultural context. This solution is, however, problematic, because if the type is unchangeable and eternal, how can it be created? I cannot enter the debate here (but see BERTINETTO, 2016a, pp. 12-46). However, as I will suggest, the idea (generally accepted by all the ontologies of art that trace artworks’ ontological identities back to artists’ intentions and/or

Thus, an important theoretical possibility has been ignored. It is a possibility already available at least *in nuce* in some classical texts of music phenomenology and today developed in much more refined ways in the studies of social ontology: the idea, in fact, that a musical work-for-performance is not a metaphysical entity, but, indeed, a *social object* (or, as I prefer, a *social process*), obviously produced by their makers, but whose status and identity depends precisely on changing social and cultural practices: practices of production and reproduction, recording, reception, evaluation, dissemination; interpretive, critical, philological practices, etc. In other words, this, as I think, plausible view sees musical works as works of art existing in virtue not only of the artist's performance, but also of evaluative and interpretive practices through which they are continuously (trans)formed. This practice-dependence implies that works of art, and, in particular, musical works, are identified through the contexts of socially normative practices of production and attribution of values and meanings, so that they are modifiable precisely by virtue of these identifications that are continuously changing. Consequently, therefore – and here I step beyond the standard social ontology of Searle and Ferraris as well as beyond Ingarden's phenomenology –,¹⁶ the social objects emerging from human practices are, as I anticipated, much more similar to processes than to objects. In this sense, they are, I venture (resorting to the similitude I have already suggested) a bit like persons: their identities develop through time.

3. The pasticcio's 'readymade' ontology

The discussion carried out so far should lay the foundations for articulating some thoughts concerning the ontology of the specific musical object, or rather of the specific musical practice, which is the thematic focus of this book: the pasticcio.

My (first) thesis is that Platonist ontology is particularly ineffective in accounting for this practice. In fact, this practice seems very resistant to the idea of the uniqueness of a repeatable musical work without transformations of identity. The pasticcio seems instead to be able to become a particularly paradigmatic case for the type of ontological solution that, as I think, is appropriate to propose for music as an artistic practice.

My own thesis is actually not my own thesis, but a re-elaboration of a proposal made more than 40 years ago by Joseph Margolis, who, as I think, actually takes up the idea from Hegel.¹⁷ The point is that works of art, including musical works, are objects, or better: processes, that are physically embodied and culturally emerging. In short, they are material things that acquire cultural meanings. As cultural, emerging objects of an

performances) that artists (like composers) create unchangeable entities 'out of the blue' is also misguided: in fact, artworks are generated putting together already available forms and materials; moreover, since artworks are cultural objects, their ontological identity changes historically (see BERTINETTO, 2019).

16 See SEARLE, 1995; FERRARIS, 2009; INGARDEN, 1986.

17 See MARGOLIS, 1974.

aesthetic kind, their value and significance depend, on the one hand, on the formal and material arrangement of their elements (sounds, colors, gestures, etc.) as well as on the aesthetic properties that in turn are dependent on this arrangement and, on the other hand, on cultural meaning and value attributions that are continuously going on and continuously reshape the meaning and values of the artworks, thereby impacting on their ontological identity.¹⁸

Omitting complications and technicalities I go straight to the point: Artworks are objects and processes that exist in the world and have a bodily existence;¹⁹ yet their identity also depends on practices of attribution of meaning and value: they are therefore cultural objects and processes.

What does the *pasticcio* have to do with all this? Or rather, what is the contribution of the *pasticcio* to the elaboration of a musical ontology that takes into account the idea of artworks as entities that are physically embodied and culturally emergent? In order to answer this question, we must dwell a bit on the notion of *pasticcio*. In a nutshell, we may say that in the musical practice of the *pasticcio*, already prepared musical materials are appropriated and used (or, if you prefer, abused) as building materials to generate other musical works.

The *Hutchinson Concise Dictionary of Music*²⁰ translates the word *pasticcio* as “pie” or “pasty” and defines it as “stage entertainment with music drawn from existing works by one or more composers and words written to fit the music. It was particularly popular in the 18th century”.

The definition provided by the *Oxford Dictionary of Music* is more articulated:

“*Pasticcio* (It.). Pie, pasty. (1) A dramatic entertainment with songs, ensembles, dances, and other items assembled from the works of several composers, thus giving the audience a medley of their favourite tunes. Popular in 18th cent., e.g. *Thomyris* (1707). (2) An opera in which each act is by a different composer, e.g. *Muzio Scevola* (1721) by Amadei, Bononcini, and Handel. (3) Instr. comp. containing different sections or items by different composers, e.g. Diabelli’s *Väterlandischer Künstlerverein* (1823–4), containing variations by 50 composers; the *Hexaméron* (1837), and *L’Éventail de Jeanne* (1927).”²¹

Moreover, the *pasticcio* is sometimes distinguished from the “pastiche”:

“*Pastiche* (Fr.). Imitation. Not the same as *pasticcio*, being a work deliberately written in the style of another period or manner, e.g. Prokofiev’s *Classical Symphony*,

18 I elaborate on this view in BERTINETTO, 2019.

19 The case of conceptual art can give rise to some problems, which, in my opinion, are not unsolvable and, anyway, are not relevant here.

20 JONES, 2014, p. 482.

21 KENNEDY/KENNEDY, 2013, p. 638.

Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. Although pastiche has a meaning as 'medley', it is invariably applied musically in the sense outlined above."²²

The definition of pasticcio provided by the venerable *Dictionary of Musical Terms*²³ is simpler: it identifies pasticcio and pastiche and defines the former in this way:

"Pasticcio (It.) Lit. a pie, or pasty. Pastiche (Fr.), Pastete (Ger.) An opera, cantata, or other work, the separate numbers of which are gleaned from the compositions of various authors, or from several disconnected works of one author. Pastiche (Fr.) [Pasticcio.]"

Moreover, it is symptomatic that in the entry "Opera" John Gay's *The Beggars' Opera*, is qualified as "a mere pasticcio of old tunes, popular for that reason, but valueless as a representative of English opera".²⁴

From these definitions we can get some interesting information.

1. A pasticcio, in a musical sense, is a collaborative musical work, the outcome of a kind of "distributed creativity", as Georgina Born would have it,²⁵ in virtue of which different existent pieces are put together, resulting in a new composition.
2. But, as resulting from the work of different composers, a pasticcio is less valuable than the musical work allegedly resulting from the work of one and the same composer.
3. The term "disconnected" is also telling. The pieces that are then put together in a "Pasticcio" are considered as disconnected. Which seems a bit of a banality. Before being connected how should those pieces be if not disconnected?

To sum up, a pasticcio is a composition resulting from disconnected pieces that composers have at their disposal for their creative works. These materials are appropriated for generating different or new compositions. They are, so to speak, extracted from an object, recombined together and re-contextualized within other constructions. Some musical works are symbolically disassembled and their pieces are used to give life to other musical works. And, I venture, it is for this reason that a pasticcio is not considered as a valuable artwork, but as a 'mere' pasticcio: the result of a recycling activity, rather than of authentic creativity. Pasticcios are not created *ex nihilo* after all.²⁶

22 IBID.

23 STAINER/BARRETT, 2009, p. 354.

24 IBID, p. 321.

25 BORN, 2005.

26 One may deny that the musical works the elements of which are taken and then recombined for producing new musical works (the pasticcios) are really transformed through this operation. The 'original' musical work, one may think, does not change at all, if some of its parts are reused as elements of other works. However, once a new (or different) mu-

However, precisely in this sense I think that – and this is my second thesis – the *pasticcio*, both the culinary and the musical one, is like the ‘readymade’ in avant-garde art.

In readymade art, everyday objects like bottle-holders, urinals, bicycle wheels and handlebars, but also famous works of art (you can think about Duchamp’s famous *Gioconda* with moustaches),²⁷ are appropriated, decontextualized and defunctionalized, assembled together and recycled as something else.²⁸

But the concept of the readymade also plays an important role in performing arts and in particular in different musical practices. In jazz, for example, pre-packaged materials (phrases, themes, and harmonic structures) are continuously reused to generate tunes and improvisations.²⁹ In the field of rock and pop music, the practice of ‘mash-up’, very accurately and intelligently studied by Frédéric Döhl also in relation to the juridical field,³⁰ is nothing but the application of the guiding principle of the readymade to the construction of new musical pieces. And even the *pasticcio* in the culinary sense may be understood as a kind of readymade. The leftovers of the dishes of the day before, but also the best ingredients the chef has at her disposal, are decontextualized and reassembled in order to create a new delicious dish.

Therefore, the creative approach of readymade practices is a performative criticism against the idea of a *creatio ex nihilo*. Readymades show that the new may derive from a reuse or a misuse of the old, from the reassembly of the *dissecta membra* of an old artifact into a new composition. In doing so, readymades practically and performatively articulate the critique of ontologies of art based on the ideas of the discovery of eternal entities as well as of the creation of immutable items, while exemplifying the emergence of artworks’ meaning and identity out of cultural practices. A careful examination of what happens in readymade art should make us understand that, in a sense, artworks are all generated as readymades, since they all are, in the end, the result of the assemblage of pre-existing (physical and cultural) materials, which is also the original meaning of the

sical work is produced by means of the re-combining of parts of previous compositions, listeners may interpret and evaluate the old compositions differently, for example because they now have discovered possible artistic developments of the musical ideas presented by the old compositions. Since evaluative interpretations impact on the cultural identity of its object, the fact that new musical works result from disassembling and differently and variously reassembling old musical works may strongly transform the ontological identity of the old works (I mean, this impact seems to be possibly stronger, intense and radical than the impact that every interpretation of musical works ordinarily has on the works’ ontological identity). This seems to contrast decidedly with the Platonist assumption of the immutability of the musical work.

27 L.H.O.O.Q., 1919.

28 See EVNINE, 2013, for a general philosophical account of the readymade’s aesthetics and ontology.

29 I discussed aspects of the issue in BERTINETTO, 2016a, pp. 221-262; BERTINETTO, 2016b; BERTINETTO, 2017a.

30 DÖHL, 2016.

word ‘com-position’: putting together already extant elements. Hence, the new issues from the old. Creativity is never *ex nihilo* and, implicitly or explicitly, is distributed, among items and agents of different kinds.

Moreover, works of art are not immutable. Their meaning, which impacts on their ontological-social identity, changes through the cultural interactions they are engaged in. Artworks, in this sense, live through continuous cultural mutations and appropriations and they are used and abused as readymade items for generating new cultural identities.³¹

There are countless examples, even beyond the practice of pasticcio properly speaking. Let’s take one from jazz. Brad Mehldau’s version of The Beatles’ song *Blackbird* (from the Album *The Beatles*, 1968)³² is at least the result of combining, if we so desire, The Beatles’ creative work and his own. Yet, the composition is actually a variation on the *Bourrée in E Minor* by Johann Sebastian Bach (BWV 996; BC L166), originally written for lute. So, Bach contributed to the production of *Blackbird*, in a way, which is not surprising given Mehldau’s well-known passion for Bach (cf. his 2018 album *After Bach*). Is this the reason, perhaps unconscious, of his introduction of that piece in his performing repertoire? Be as it may, the important point is rather that all music, and all art, may be conceived of as a kind of pasticcio made of readymade elements that artists use and abuse for generating something different.

If we want more examples, we are spoiled for choice. A very interesting case is this. New Orleans Jazz (hence: jazz), is imbued with Italian Opera. And it is also a big pasticcio, a very big medley in a way. For instance, in one of his renditions of Gershwin’s *Summertime* (from *Porgy and Bess*, 1935; *Blue Note* 78, June 1939) Sidney Bechet quotes the *Miserere* from Giuseppe Verdi’s *Trovatore*, announcing the hanging of Leonora’s lover. As jazz historian Francesco Martinelli has shown,³³ the quotation is an intentional *signifyin’* on Gershwin’s piece having socio-political significance³⁴ and impacting on the cultural identities of both artistic items involved in this operation: Gershwin’s and Verdi’s operas. One might wonder whether Bechet’s operation is a quotation or an interpolation. I think it is both things all together: it is indeed a sort of pasticcio. It is not a quotation as part of a solo that leaves the harmonic structure of the piece unaltered, but the insertion of a readymade part, which is an originally foreign body (Verdi’s aria), into another already extant item (the structure of the Gershwin piece), which changes the artistic-musical object, while producing another readymade. Therefore, also

31 HALLAM/INGOLD, 2007 rightly extends this idea to all cultural process. See my BERTINETTO, 2018.

32 BRAD MEHLDAU, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 1, 1997.

33 MARTINELLI, 2009.

34 In the literature about Afro-American culture the *signifyin’* is the practice of appropriation in virtue of which musicians ‘converse’ with an inherited musical material that is recaptured, in a mixed attitude of complicity and distancing, through reverential quotations or, conversely, by irreverent gestures of irony, parody, sarcasm, or open criticism (see MONSON, 1996).

in this case readymade artworks or artwork pieces are recycled for producing something else, which in this way is also brought back to new life.

So, the practice of ‘mere’ *pasticcio* is not an ontological rarity, but rather it would seem to offer the paradigmatic model for answering the ontological question about what the entities are which we encounter in our artistic practices, and how they are made. Works of art are not like Platonic ideas, but are rather physically embodied and culturally changing objects (and processes), whose identity is continually modifiable in relation to the ways in which they are used or abused and recycled as readymade materials for generating other cultural constructs.³⁵ To recapitulate: the *pasticcio* is a paradigmatic practice for musical and in general artistic creativity as a whole, since it shows that music (and, more generally speaking, art) is the result of a distributed creativity, not a mysterious creativity allegedly *ex nihilo*, and that artworks are cultural constructs that result from appropriating, de-structuring, re-combining, and re-functionalizing (or recycling) elements of other artworks.

4. Conclusion: possible objections and replies

Two possible objections could be raised towards the idea that I am suggesting.

- a) The first objection focuses on the derogatory evaluation or connotation of the *pasticcio*, somehow also implicit in the Italian meaning of the word. The pie or the pastry, just as a dish deriving from the combination of leftovers, can succeed or not. And if it fails it’s just a mess, a great culinary confusion, devoid of taste. *Pasticcio*, in Italian, means both: a *Pasticcio 1*, as a meal, can be a disaster, thereby becoming a *Pasticcio 2*, which means: a failure, a mess, a chaos. Both meanings may be conveyed by the musical notion of *pasticcio*. The combination of reused or abused readymade pieces to build something else may fail, and then it’s a mere mess, a mere *pasticcio*. Hence, one may object that the *pasticcio* cannot be paradigmatic for the ontology of art, since it seems odd that the result of such a minor and fallible form of creativity is paradigmatic of art.

However, the objection is not irresistible. The *pasticcio*, in the culinary sense, can be very good and tasty. So, if we want the analogy between music and culinary practices to be workable, let’s make it work all the way. On the one hand, the *pasticcio*, as a food, can be the result of the fine art of knowing how to creatively reuse the leftovers, combining them with each other and with new ingredients (the basic one being, as the name suggests, paste or dough), in order to prepare a delicious dish: culinary success is achieved, by means of acting within the constraints of the materials one has available and adapting the old to a new situation.³⁶ Yet, the main point is actually that the *pasticcio* is not (not

35 I have argued similarly about musical meaning in my BERTINETTO, 2017b.

36 See BERTINETTO, 2018.

always at least) a mere mess. The view (nowadays implicit in the connotation of the Italian word *pasticcio*) of pasticcio as mess is precisely the outcome of the contemptuous and wrong idea that genuine creativity is first-hand and that therefore the components of a work of art must be invented from scratch, created from nothing. Which is odd, to say the least. In fact, on the other hand, the culinary pasticcio is not just a 'mere' art of recycling. As is clear from the history of cooking and banquets, it is also a delicious dish not made of leftovers, but of first quality ingredients.³⁷ Thus, the practice of the musical pasticcio took its *raison d'être* from both the meanings of the notion: (a) on the one hand, it is a recycling practice, because composers (ab)used music already existing and coming from other contexts for producing other works; (b) on the other hand, it is an ingenious blend of different compositions and styles, a combination of the singers' bests, an exquisite choice of arias with which the singers could shine and fascinate the audience.³⁸ In this complex sense – (a) + (b), the pasticcio is really paradigmatic for the ontology of music (and, as I have already suggested, for art in general).

- b) The second objection is, at first sight, a little more difficult to reject. And it seems to undermine the basis of my discourse on the ontology of music. What I said about the

37 Cf. for example the recipes collected in the fundamental book of Antonio Latini, *Lo scalco alla moderna, overo L'arte di ben disporre li conviti, con le regole più scelte di scalcheria*, Napoli, Domenico Antonio Parrino e Michele Luigi Muzio, 1692-1694. I thank very much Berthold Over for pushing me on this point, providing me invaluable information at this regard. For a definition of pasticio, as a dish, see GUARNASCHELLI GOTTI, 2007, p. 1237: "È il nome tradizionale di varie preparazioni fatte con ingredienti diversi, di solito racchiusi in un involucri di pasta e poi cotto al forno: queste due caratteristiche dovrebbero essere gli elementi qualificanti di un pasticcio [...]. La parola 'pasticcio' deriva dal latino *pasticium*, una preparazione già presente nel *De re cuoquinaria* di Apicio. Nei ricettari dei secoli XIV e XV, il pasticcio compare in molte delle sue varietà, a base di carni, selvaggina, pesci, crostacei, frutta, con integrazioni di ingredienti adatti a quello di base, il tutto di solito incassato in pasta. Altri sviluppi e libere interpretazioni e invenzioni il pasticcio ebbe nei secoli successivi [...], mantenendo sempre un carattere di vivanda di prestigio, preparata per conviti principeschi e pranzi signorili [...]." – "It is the traditional name of various preparations made with different ingredients, usually enclosed in a wrapper of pasta and then baked: these two characteristics should be the qualifying elements of a pasty [...]. The word 'pasticcio' (pasty) comes from the Latin *pasticium*, a preparation already present in the *De re cuoquinaria* of Apicius. In the recipe books of the 14th and 15th centuries, the pasticcio appears in many of its varieties, based on meat, game, fish, crustaceans, fruit, with additions of ingredients suitable for the basic one, all usually embedded in pasta. The pasty had further developments and free interpretations and inventions in following centuries [...], always maintaining a character of prestige food, prepared for princely feasts and stately banquets".

38 I thank Berthold Over and Gianluca Stefani for their invaluable information regarding the practice of musical pasticcio.

typical assumption of Platonist ontologies, that is, the immutability of the musical work through its repetitions in the different performances, seems to be completely independent from the question of the appropriative combinatorial origin of the *pasticcio* and, as a consequence for someone, for the spurious, hybrid and bastard nature of the *pasticcio*, which therefore cannot be an artwork. The point in this case would be another. Not the immutability of the works through the performances, but precisely the originality of the great work of art, which is the pure result of the creative genius. A *pasticcio*, actually, once produced, can be performed as it is, without being transformed by its performances. Therefore, even wanting to argue that the practice of the *pasticcio* is paradigmatic of the distributive and appropriative creativity that, as I want to support, constitutes artistic creativity as a human practice, this does not invalidate the hard Platonist thesis of the immutability of the musical work through its performances. These are two independent questions, and wanting to mix them is another mess, an ontological mess that shows only the confusion of my bizarre and messy thoughts. To put it bluntly; the issue of the ‘immutability’ of the musical work must not be confused with the different issue of the ‘originality’ of the musical work. Being derivative and not original, as resulting from different readymade pieces, does not prevent the resulting work from being an immutable *pasticcio*, which is repeatable without loss of identity.

I cannot but admit that immutability and originality are two different issues. However, I challenge anyone to deny that they are not strictly related in the culture of the *Werktreue*. The *Werktreue*, the fidelity to an immutable text, implies also the fidelity to a creative genius to whom obedience and submission are due, because he (normally he, not she) is the author of that text and has authority on that text. It is precisely as an original product of a creative genius that the musical work is, or rather, must remain immutable. Thus, who makes a mess, pardon: who produces a *pasticcio* is thereby indeed modifying the original work, transforming what is supposed to have an immutable metaphysical consistency. S/he is committing a kind of sacrilege: whence also all the legal consequences related to copyright. Conversely, but actually in the very same way, a musical work’s performance that does not limit itself to portray the musical work, presenting it without alteration, but modifies it, is abusing the work, using it as a means and not as an end. The work becomes a component, a readymade piece, an ingredient or worse a leftover which the performer appropriates for a messy performance, for a mere performing *pasticcio*.

In this sense, understanding the paradigmatic character of the *pasticcio* as an artistic practice that highlights the emergence of the meaning and of the cultural identity of the musical work out of the collaboration of different productive activities, and also (an aspect I have not focused on explicitly here) out of the interpretative and evaluative activities of the listeners, which means: out of continuous transformations, thereby clarifying the distributive and collective character of artistic creativity, allows us to remove

– of course, without any conceptual repentance – the dogmatic assumption made by mainstream ontology of music: the unrepeatability of the work without loss of identity.³⁹

At this point, hearing these words, probably also the defenders of the pasticcio as high interesting creative practice will rebel and raise a third objection. If we no longer have the criterion of fidelity to the unchangeable work, how do we now know if a performance, even a performance of a pasticcio, is right or not? How may we evaluate music? Or, for that matter, how may we evaluate gastronomic art?

Well, I have to admit that this is definitely a big mess, but it's the human, very human and maybe all too human situation, we find ourselves in and we have to deal with. I certainly cannot offer a comprehensive answer here. So, I will conclude with a simple invitation to reflection. Whoever believes that once the criterion of fidelity to the work and its ontological bulwark, the principle of unrepeatability of the work, has been eliminated, we can no longer evaluate the success of a performance, should try to answer this question. How do we evaluate improvisations? Improvisers, *per definitionem*, improvise: they do not obey composers' instructions provided by scores: they are not true to musical works. But we certainly evaluate improvisations as successful or not. Thus, so my argument goes on, the fact that we can evaluate improvisations, although, in order to do this, we cannot rely on the criterion of perfect identity between the performance and the musical work, shows that the criterion of fidelity to the work is not necessary for evaluating musical performances. Luckily, therefore, the fact that improvised performances may not be faithful to musical works (although they of course follow aesthetic standards of some kind) is not a problem for our aesthetic experience and judgment of musical performances and of musical works. We can appreciate the success of the performance regardless of a supposed criterion of fidelity. Similarly, and this is my point regarding the pasticcio, we can appreciate the success of a musical work even if it results from the misappropriation of pieces of other works, being therefore unfaithful to the aura of originality claimed by the ideologues of the absolute *creatio ex nihilo* or of the discovery of Platonic metaphysical structures. *De facto*, as a practice of the readymade, the pasticcio can be understood as a practice of improvisation, in the sense that the materials artists (ab)use may be the ones they find available in their specific situations and/or in the sense that artists, while using the best ingredients at their disposal, invent their performances while making them, while performing. Moreover, in the musical theater the pasticcio has been indeed practiced as an improvisation in the ordinary and everyday sense of the word: pasticcios were quick and, sometimes, efficient, solutions to the problems of replacing failed musical works and of quickly solving technical or empirical problems (the absence of a concrete singer, for instance) by means of using existing materials and variously adapting them to a concrete (often unexpected) situation. It certainly is a case of making virtue of necessity: but is this not a key aspect of human creativity?

Finally, and with this remark I really conclude my 'messy' reflections on the pasticcio ontology, in an interesting way we can say that human beings in everyday life

39 See also above, n. 14.

improvise in their practices and in their evaluations, constantly calibrating the evaluation criteria of their actions and the results thereof with respect to the concrete specific situation of their performances.⁴⁰ The moral of this is that the *pasticcio* – as a practice of readymade and improvisational creativity – exemplifies that the ontology of music is at the service of musical aesthetics if, leaving the ‘hyperuranion’ world of immutable ideas, goes down into the creative mess of concrete human practices.

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