

# definitions of music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

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On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2014, the Rosenberg Museum sent off some e-mails to the music community asking for definitions of music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—to be used as a coda to the book **Rosenberg 3.0 - not violin music**. I expected half a dozen replies from a few out-of-work musos. It's not what happened. Below are the responses to this challenge, roughly in the order we received them (some definitions arrived too late for publication in the book, a couple of the definitions used pseudonyms). Not all replies chose to deal with the '21<sup>st</sup> century' part of the provocation—this may mean that the practice of music is inherently an unchanging activity, or that musicians have trouble dealing with the confrontations of our time, or that music in this century struggles to find a new story to tell. Enjoy the ride.

*Music is not what we think it is.*

Owen More

*Paraphrasing Ben Patterson's definition of art, music could be anything, but it is better if you can eat it. Music after Cage and Fluxus really could be anything and even edible. Nobody can define exactly its borders, nobody can say where non-musical (natural, biological, neural, memory) rhythm or refrain ends and music begins. Music could be just a found and marked rhythmic or melodic landscape, environment, process. But the borders and boxes are not important anymore. Authentic experience is what still weighs. So, music should not be boring or technocratic (which it often is); music needs to be convincing and persuasive. And the convincing and persuasive creative act is unthinkable without an authentic experience. Authentic experience is what music needs so acutely these days.*

Jozef Cseres

*Music is a system of communication that reduces all content to the expression of emotion.*

Louis M. Ferdinand

*The music of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is being defined, not by its creators, but by its consumers. It might also be described as a paradigm of 'placebophonics' in which the instrument is now reduced to click bait.*

Brian Dade

*The Last Abstract Art.*

Tabatha Purwell

*Music is now (and will be) what the human brain (and sense apparatus) makes of the noise made by any entity (human, biological or mechanical). The best music is that noise which makes its way to the brain via a route unmediated by considerations of money, celebrity, or taste.*

Nick Shimmin

*We are so out of tune and are in various states of hearing loss—Music is a hearing aid. Music is used to amplifying the self and the human groups we collect in. It's how we hear ourselves in the world. It's vanity publishing for our species. The culture that made no*

*distinction between themselves and the world, the Australian Indigenous peoples, had few instruments and no word for music in their languages. Their hearing was just fine.*

Jim Denley

*For music to take place a combination of the following is required: weather, lawyers, neighbours, talent, an idea, management, history, drugs, police, other musicians, an encouraging audience, no audience, an act of God.*

Mohamed EL-Sayed

*Music in the 21st Century is in a subprime crisis; it aspires to ownership, but borrows a lot more than it can pay back. As an investment (economic, cultural, personal) it has junk status, because it can never be a thing. It can only be a context for something. The loss of content in music is disguised by the fact that it was abstract to begin with. As pure context, music today is bankrupt and thus has a chance to free itself from the economy of aesthetics and the blackmail of affective signification once and for all.*

Erkki Veltheim

*When I was 14 years old, I decided I would be a musician. I soon figured out I didn't have any musical talents so I changed my idea about music. Music is whatever I am doing seriously. Some years later, I read words of an ancient Chinese music theorist; he said 'Music is a category existing among visibility, space, paintings, proximity, belongings of the Emperor, embalmed cockroaches, some other musics, carpets that don't float in the summer solstice, sirens, cut thumbs, Confucius' dreams, perviousness, sucking pigs, stray souls, et cetera, pink leeks, categories that don't have any lower categories, imaginary drums, insects, and eleven century served liquors.*

Shuji Uchida

*Music is time; without that it remains mute.*

Lawrence English

*The iPad emoticon of the Arts; music in the 21st century is presented as sound-bites in a seemingly infinite variety of compartmentalized and superficial marketing categories due to time and attention-span constraints.*

Winceyette Gussett-Truss

*I used to know what I liked but ever since I got a 'like' button, I'm not sure anymore.*

*Aging teenager over heard in the 'quiet' carriage of a train*

*Superstring theory says that the tiny wriggling spawn of the Pythagorean monochord that once lined the page of the musical cosmos are now absolutely everywhere, even though the microphonic means to amplify these tiny violins oscillating in n-dimensions remain in the design phase. Others say that not everyone in this musical cosmos is a second-brass citizen scattered rows behind the first chair.*

Douglas Khan

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Soundcloud

*The human spirit conveyed as sound, organized or not, and 'spite of all barnacled conventions of melody, harmony, rhythm, timeless and definition free.*

Ross Bolleter

*Musical energy can be derived from witnessing monkeys fuck at the zoo.*

Ian Hartley

*If all sound can be potentially interpreted and therefore used as music, then my definition of music in the 21st century is determined by what lies inside and outside my human body. All the complex histories absorbed as well as all the geographies that all the sounds have been heard in will define what that music will sound like.*

Veryan Weston

*The less the consumer knows about new music, the more they like it.*

tasteandhear.com

*If you are in it, then you don't really need to know. However, if you are not in it and you find the line of questioning somewhat disturbing, no doubt The Rosenberg Museum would be delighted to help you, for a small consideration.*

Noem Ort

*I define music as any combination of acoustic energy that attracts a physical response in its listener.*

Lucas Abella

*Sound exists in its own right but Music is a social construct. Members of any particular social group choose what defines music and suits their social construct—or not. Thus, the problem with definition. Music is nevertheless representative of its time and place and should not pretend that it exists outside that construct, i.e. in its own right as an absolute. It cannot!*

Colin Bright

*Music in the 21st century is an automated procedure for eliminating silence.*

Bob Ostertag

*Whether living 5000 BC or in the 21st Century, creating music deals with the same issue. Only your tools change, time doesn't. Performing on 2 stones plus a bunch of sticks and a bone flute, or composing for grand piano connected via the internet to 14 computers dispersed over planet Earth, you are faced with the same question: what is the paradox of the moment?*

Cor Fuhler

*Music in the 21st century: the music that you can hear today is not yet the real music.*

hans w. koch

*Music = the art of the present as such, though in some of its best cases with timeless significance.*

Ute Pinter

What is music? That's a big one. I'll start with singing, which is one version of a musical voice—yes, I am obsessed with voice. As I emerge from the abyss of depression (ohhh, redundancy blues) and feel life coming back (ahhh, ahhh, ahhh, Chinese herbs at night, night, night and qi gong in the mooornin'), there is an unexpected irruption from the depths of my lungs as they shake (rattle and roll) themselves out of the heavy grip of depression. And that irruption is song. From Gospel to TV ads from my childhood, it all seems to be waiting for the shower's steamy warm reverberations to burst forth, as they say. Which they do say, because that's what it feels like. A room, a body, motion, rhythm, memory, a performative, a moment, an atmosphere—that is what singing, and music, feel like to me today.

Norie Neumark

In my opinion, music in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is musicology. The systems put in place by the church in the 12<sup>th</sup> century are still revered, for some perverse reason, by everyone from the purveyors of so-called 'fine music' to the lowest of the common punks. All of them are still obsessed with nursery rhymes.

21<sup>st</sup> Century music is measured in kilobytes per second.

21<sup>st</sup> century music is getting smaller and smaller.

21<sup>st</sup> Century music is a tired exercise in obsolescence.

21<sup>st</sup> Century music is a lot like 20<sup>th</sup> century music.

The formula for 21<sup>st</sup> Century music is Amplitude = time over money.

Robin Fox

Václav Havel remarked, 'I am not interested in why man commits evil. I want to know why he does good'. New music mirrors contemporary culture; as such, its practitioners embrace this probing question to confront and remind society what the essence of our humanity is. New music encompasses all genres into its existence, and is defined by the people who practice it. It is the avant-garde, and its role is to push boundaries, creating a healthy state of flux that filters into wider society.

Gabriella Smart

After Cage's gesture of opening music to all noise, and the wholesale adoption of this by artists working in the experimental 'tradition', it seems almost more pertinent to ask 'what is not music?'. I have a feeling that what is not music is sound that can't be apprehended as sound-itself, that can't be reduced to its sounding or its listening. The negative of sound, perhaps what Christof Migone calls the 'unsound'. Everything else; music.

Joel Stern

21<sup>st</sup> Century music is like pornography; it's consumed in private, usually online, through ear buds or in front of a screen, exists in a digital form, treated like product, ghettoized by sophisticated software and fanatics. Parents complain about the musical taste of their adolescent children whilst they cling to memories of their adolescence by listening to music of the previous century. 21<sup>st</sup> century music is packaged; it contains imagery (often moving images), a sponsorship or commercial value, a written language that plays into subcultures and trends, and is usually separated from its creators. Music today is more colourful, diverse and accessible than it has ever been. Musical styles are without international borders, musicians are both more educated and less educated than they have ever been. Music producers are more celebrated than performers, composers sometimes live their entire professional lives within Universities and classical musicians are employed like civil servants.

Eugene Ughetti

*Any sonic activity one gives exact attention to, and that one chooses to listen to with the music centres of the brain activated, is music. Also, any kind of movement or visual stimulus that seems to echo the physical shapes of sonic activity can be called musical. But I still like John Cage's last definition of music: 'Sounds Heard'.*

Warren Burt

Warren Burt: 'Art is a moment of perception'.

Chris Mann: 'Does that mean it's Greek?'

*At a personal level, music is anything you wish perceive as music: right you are if you think so. For it to have any social meaning, as performance or listening, this perception must be shared by others!*

Richard Toop

*1. In this hyper-mediated, sound saturated era, live music performance continues to enrich our consciousness. Bring on the iconoclasts, the tunesmiths, the inventors and all those who sing to us from the foul rag and boneshop of the heart. Keep us guessing! 2. It's the 21st century and the pianoforte is still in the mix. It might have been kicked out of the parlour for a ritual burning; axed, sculpted into cocktail cabinets, or dragged from swamps and triaged into musical plinks and doo-doomps, but the great 'iron ship' of 19C music continues to have a permanent place in our music. Composers care to write solos for it; some designers are spending their lives improving it; hotels, hospitals and schools still want it. Yes, despite its equally tempered straitjacket, its being overweight, costly to tune and maintain, and a high-rise nuisance, the 'goanna' will still be sounding at the end of the century.*

Mike Atherton

*A composer only becomes a voice for eternity once they have transcended time, place, school and leave us with their own musical essence, however it was formed. 'Music should not be defined by an epoch or a particular generation, there are too many examples in history of fine music that does not fit any particular period, though music can and should be influenced by the times in which we live. Stylistically I am happy to consider anything as 21<sup>st</sup> Century as long as it is written in the last 15 years or the next 85 years as long as it is good, original and written from the heart and not just an intellectual exercise'.*

Richard Wenn

*The term 'music' is, like other concepts such as 'unicorn', 'soul', 'free will', and 'gourmet sandwich', a reification. That is to say, it is a concept that has no referent outside of human delusion and fantasy. Our use of the term says more about our narcissism as a species than it does about the cosmos. There is no music, but only sounds, emitted unceasingly from an infinite array of sources, forever. We merely contribute to the nightmare cacophony. We privilege our own sonic emissions—at least, the very best of our sonic emissions—as 'music' because we think we're important. Or, more to the point, we want others to think we're important. But, fellow musician, it is an essential part of the craft to persuade others that what we do is somehow more insightful, more beautiful, more profound, than, say, the hum of a locust swarm or the last Kylie record. Successful transfer of this delusion gains us respect, financial benefits, and, let's not deny it, love. And when it comes to that part of a musician's craft, I think magicians, conjurers, priests and gurus of all traditions have a great*

*deal to teach us about how we can persuade the public to pay, in various ways, for our sonic emissions.*

Andy Rantzen

*Hmm, definitions of music in the 21st century: speaking personally as a free improviser and not with any inherent 'musical determinative', I have to say it this way: the music I search and aspire too is music that is like an organism (amoeba like), that float between the musicians, that appears, as it were, in a phenomenological sense, between, in a dialogue with others . . . in happens as a reflexivity . . . a intersubjective interplay . . . this is what seems of most importance in the new of 21st Century musics. Musicians as sonic sculptures of the now.*

Richard Johnson

*Music, for me, is any sound that provokes a meaning or a feeling in a listener. This usually requires some organisation or interpretation of raw sound. Conventionally, this is undertaken by a composer with a score or by a musician or creature improvising. Or this organizational framework could be provided by the system that generated the sound like rocks in a stream or notches on a bull-roarer. But perhaps the purest and most beautiful music is made in the mind of the listener, finding their own patterns and feeling coincidences, creating order from chaos. Therefore, I would say music is—sound, made sense.*

John Jacobs

*Music includes streaming services, tablets, and concert reviews, but not recordings, compositions, or performances. The more common version of this definition is that bank bailouts, technological innovation, and information are adequate substitutes for cultural activity. The point is that people are hesitant to define music until something intuitively non-musical stakes a claim on it. Enough of the nihilistic games, we need a definition of music to avoid it becoming just another name circulating in the climate-changing econoverse. Here are some century-old ideas that I find quite convincing: Music is a product of human (and some other animal) thought. This product is partially autonomous, because it has unexpected consequences for itself and us. These consequences can include radical change, but this is very rare and very difficult.*

Matthew Lorenzon

*Life's a quiver with vibration! We stretch the definition of music with twenty-first century elastic, but it remains bound up in nature as well as culture. We explain how sound behaves and assign lyrical and contextual meanings to it, but music is so much more . . . I intuit the Muse in a resonant Bach mass and I intuit it in a lovelorn cicada groove. And life without this mysterious pulse would be pretty lacklustre . . . that's why I'm flagging the future of communication through human/non-human sound. The bottom line is that music is inseparable from environment and ultimately subject to humankind's willingness to care for the Earth.*

Robin Ryan

*Music is what we used to call the brute-force interventional manipulation of the whole neurochemistry of the person in the last century, including modifying mood, state-of-being, lust for life, epistemology, ontology, etc. This was back when the tools we had to accomplish this were very primitive, i.e. scraping a piece of cat-gut over a strangely shaped wooden box to generate air pressure signals that happen to align with arbitrary evolutionary control*

*interfaces that were at the time poorly understood. Today, we would of course use much more direct means through any number of technologies to go right to the nervous system, and ultimately in recent to years, actually bypassing the person as a unit to directly address the gene pool in its totality of possible variations as a statistical target in and of itself.*

John Berndt

*My dad had Alzheimer's. One of my nieces is autistic. Musicians aside, they're amongst the few people I know for whom the experience of music remained and remains essential. In our ambered culture, music is sugared by its preservation, offered as a gift to dwarfish gods as spectacles for speculators. ('Hit or miss' is the appropriate rhyming slang.) Time's arrow missed its mark. In this century, music is forgetting, and blooms where words fail.*

Ed McKeon

*It's far too early to answer this question—imagine if someone had asked for a definition of 20th century music in 1914. I suggest you ask again in 86 years' time.*

Martin Davidson

*A picture would do a better job of this, but:*

*With the rise in visibility of 'Sound Art', I hear a lot of people employ simple set theory as they expound that Music and Sound Art are two sets with an area overlap where things get muddled. For me it's been clear for years: Music is simply a specialized subset of the larger domain of Sound Art, which stretches from the concert stage to the gallery to the great outdoors. Sound Art is in-turn subsumed by Intentional Sound as practiced by all animals, from the highly developed skill of echolocation to the warning shout, 'heads up, stupid!' From there we move on to the Noisy World in general, and the extension of the frequency range beyond our hearing, to include earthquakes and ultrasound. Etc.*

Nic Collins

*An auditory experience engaged in for no functional reason.*

Damien Ricketson

*We live in a time were there is more music around us than ever before. And also more great music than ever before, because talented people have access to an incredible amount of tools to create music. Despite that, or because of that, the only way musicians can make a decent living in these days of digital data is by performing live on stage, like up to a hundred years ago when the only chance to 'listen' to music was by going to a concert . . . . Progress is great, isn't it?*

Frank Baldé

*I like music, but I don't understand the sound it makes.*

Brother Theodore

*One thing I know for sure about the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that I'm going to die in it and I wonder what will be my last experience of music, the hum of a drip machine, the gurgle of rushing fluids, the death rattle that previous generations have noticed—and commented on at length? Sometimes at the dentist, while dealing with the intense drilling, I concentrate my brain on a fast music to keep my spirits up. But on reaching the not so grand finale, this all assumes some level of neuron activity is still functioning. I keep in my head the sound and the image of a balloon slowly deflating to nothing, not so bad.*

Olga Lipinski

*Music: a set of historically situated social relations embodied as a set of relations between sound-oriented activity, material and form; both sets of relations reciprocally affect one another. Frequently played on stages and radios, less so on steamships and glaciers. Chiefly human.*

Adam Linson

*A source of energy, a vibrating element, a resonator, some air pressure, a medium, some mechanical oscillations, some reflection, absorption and reverberation, an eardrum, an inner ear, some nerve impulses, a little sorting, a brain.*

Arnold Dreyblatt

*Sounds made in such a way and context as to meet or defy the local/global expectations of 'music'.*

*The definition of 'music' is music.*

*The definition of music is 'music'.*

Evan Parker

*21st Century music is a prostitute used and abused by anyone and everyone. Plunked into any public arena at any time, the expectation is to deliver every promise imposed upon it. Music for this and music for that. Like an innocuous public utility supplying the masses with a life giving substance, music in the 21st Century can be consumed in parts, whole, with or without bubbles, from a plastic bottle or via a drip. It permeates, whether you care to listen or not, the supply will be left switched on indefinitely, it is endless, cheap, and free. The only sonic entity that can affect the states of music in the 21st century is noise, because the notion of context becomes void. Unlike music, noise consumes everything, it is prime. Noise exists beyond reason, architecture, logic or desire and it exists within music. 21st century music becomes noise. Our ears are a shallow orifice rarely closed off to the comfort of dissonance, which can be enjoyed even during unconscious states. Until the body changes music in the 21st Century will remain the same.*

Rod Cooper

*Music: to frame an acoustic event.*

Christopher Williams

*Music in the 21st century has that distinctive odour of death. It reeks of re-cycling and the mining of easily accessed sonic resources, as if we lived on a planet that can keep on giving.*

Jonathan Kriwaczek

*Music is the form of sounds in space.*

Ellen Fullman

*Clinical answer: Organized vibration—whether translated into sound or not—is music. Vibration can be created by living entities or not—however, the act of organizing vibration seems to be mostly a task for sentient creatures, although recent advances in the production of artificial life forms may challenge this assumption.*

*The heartfelt answer: !MUSIC! is the moment when an addict first experiences their drug of choice. Only instead of spending the rest of your days trying to experience that*

same high again, music keeps getting better. !MUSIC! is the key to everything and therefore it is very, very dangerous to the hive. Governments, corporations, and religious zealots of every stripe are tireless in their efforts to define and regulate music. Sound is ghettoized as noise, pigeonholed into paradigms of good and evil, expunged and exalted, embraced and banned, sucked of all life, masticated and regurgitated as divine. !MUSIC! would be remiss not to note the growing sonic resistance; the underground cabal of dedicated listeners and creators who know of !MUSIC!'s true nature. At any given moment, in any given location acoustic viruses are being released by this underground collective into the slumbering hive, boring into the ears and unconsciousness minds of pithed and lobotomized listeners everywhere, altering their institutionally programmed perceptions of music and curing all afflictions of necro-musicophilia—like a diamond tipped arrow shot directly into the forehead—and opening them up to !MUSIC! in all its myriad of forms. !MUSIC! is holy madness of the best kind.

Glenn Weyant

*Music is any (aural) perceptual field, which an individual uses as an occasion for performing the role of music perceiver. It is associated with a positive resonance within the individual.*

Alister Spence

*Music in the 21st century is an avoidance principle, you shut your eyes and drift along to whatever you are listening to, thinking warm comforting thoughts, kidding yourself that everything is OK; meanwhile, we've rendered one third of the world's species extinct in 40 years—and we're going there too.*

Fred van de Post

*Music is a living, breathing constantly morphing 'thing' that cannot (and could never) be pinned down or labeled stylistically or aesthetically whilst it is happening. The creation of art, which reflects on our culture and feeds back into our culture, is where it is at. It's vibrant, happening, exciting, big, vast, varied, and wonderful. For me, it's about being aurally stimulated, inspired, and somehow transported or transformed through this so called 'art' of ours.*

Claire Edwardes

*Music is like flying a kite—you cannot see power of the wind, only its resulting force, which can manifest itself in much beauty, a feeling of contentment, or some terror experience. Physically connected at one end, it is a conduit to the universe, to infinity.*

Yung Ying

*Music in the 21st century: This morning I am standing looking at about sixty bees busy at their work around a Philotheca Myoporoides (indigenous Australian bush with light pink buds that explode into a blaze of trumpet shaped white flowers). The smell, the sight, and the sound is intoxicating. Actually the sound could be a mid 20th century composition of György Ligeti with its shapes, clusters, and movement across the members of the orchestra. What gets me, is that bees are social beings, they know how to sound, how to dance, how to survive, but they are probably unaware that we are intent on destroying them, their way of life. I'm wondering if this music will still exist in the 22nd century?*

B.J. Babcock-Brown

*All the sounds I enjoy consciously and by choice, as opposed to the ones that I consume*

*unwillingly or without thinking. Over time my preferred music uptake has become like fine dining—not so much about the calories and nutrients but about the surprises, the unique combinations of textures and tastes and the way in which things are served. Like fine dining, music is best enjoyed in good company.*

Lieven Bertels

*Now, music simply means ‘curated sound’—the same way, I guess sculpture is, these days, ‘curated object’, etc., etc. Ok, so then what do we mean by ‘curated’? It means we suggest there is a claim to our (i.e. society’s) attention being made by the curator (here, the musician). To call something ‘music’, then, is to stake out a claim to significance that the musician is asserting should exist between the creator (composer) or framer (performer) and receiver (even when they are one and the same person). The rest, as Alex Ross might say, is noise.*

Peter Tregear

*Any interruption of silence that moves the heart or stimulates the mind.*

John Shand

*What I be?*

*What the music be?*

*Non-idiomatic Improvisation.*

*New models of how to be in this end of era time.*

*Can be.*

*Gingery utopia.*

Barre Phillips

*Musick is (possibly) the art of trying to influence the mind or emotional state of other creatures (or to create a pathway to an alternate reality) by structuring sounds OF ANY KIND in a particular way, and (possibly) in a particular environment. It is as nebulous as it is all-encompassing, running the gamut from a mathematical/scientific activity, to a heartfelt piece of self-expression, to occult ritual, to a cheap and cynical advertising campaign . . . and all points in between (and sometimes all together).*

Aaron M. Clarke

*Dans mon corps et mon esprit, la musique, les sons, l'improvisation et la voix ne font qu'un. Le fruit d'un étrange et long travail vocal, sonore, d'écoute, de jeu collectif, de rencontres, de lectures, de concerts et d'amitiés aussi indescriptible que profondément personnel. Un tunnel sans fin avant le miroir d'Alice. Pour moi-même, je pratique la musique en improvisant librement et totalement en mettant en jeu l'acquis de l'expérience et la recherche de l'inconnu. Avec une préférence pour le partage dans l'instant et la durée avec d'autres improvisateurs « compatibles » / « choisis ». Le langage du corps et la capacité de mémoire et d'invention immédiate et simultanée. La mémoire du corps assumée dans la gorge, les cordes vocales, la bouche, les lèvres, la respiration, le tympan . . . que sais-je(?). L'écoute mutuelle et une auto—écoute exigeante, la voix humaine réceptacle de l'émotion, de la réflexion et de la sensibilité et son extension sonore, timbrale et harmonique sont l'objet et le sujet réunis de ma démarche musicale non préméditée, instantanée. Et...*

Jean-michel van Schouwberg

*In the course of the 20th century, music has gone through a deconstructional process, which tonality, rhythm, musical material, and finally musical syntax itself fell victim to. The development resulted in a situation of unconditionality. Ever since, we postulate that in the realm of music, principally anything is possible. Apart from the physical limits of audibility and performability, music is no longer constricted by whatever external borders, whether regarding form, material, or meaning. Finally, anything that ever sounds can be referred to as 'music', whereby the music term itself is virtually eliminated. Nevertheless the word 'music' has not been extinguished from language, neither have we discontinued to decide between 'music' and other sonic phenomena, like 'spoken language' or 'environmental sound', at least in everyday life experience. 'Music or not music', that is the question probably being raised for as long as music exists. The question of what music is, and how it originates may never be totally clarified, but nevertheless needs to be evaluated for as long as music ever exists. The mystery itself is constitutive for musical perception. As soon as we solve the riddle, the music stops being music; in the same way as a magician whose tricks we see through will not only forfeit his fascination but altogether stop being a magician. If we would ever stop scrutinizing the music, it was like we would watch the magician perform, without even trying to see through his deceptive manoeuvres. (I know, the metaphor is not truly appropriate, since the artist, as opposed to the magician, is generally committed to enlightenment; this commitment is an integral component of the ethics of art).*

Nikolaus Gerszewski

*Music should be performed in every home . . . except next door.*

Rabbi Zilbershpitzanhimelfarbenfleishebien

*Seems I have lived and listened long enough by now to abandon the notion that there is something 'new' or particular to our time in music. I am anyway more often interested in how something I listen to relates to or hybridizes from another music/sound that could be from a completely different time or geography. Certainly the discovery of music, my excitement to hear something I have not heard before, for the first time . . . that experience is ongoing continually I am happy to report—and at least for me, the variety of that present tense experience is unending. One only needs to be curious. There are maybe new ways to listen and interact with music, different kinds of purposes for listening, or for music to serve a kind of function or place that one can go to. This might even be more important currently than the music itself. Certainly one thing that is always current for me is music that is shared in a space with other people. Live music and an audience that is engaged in listening to it, taking the time in their lives to live it as it happens. As well a shared listening experience, such as listening to something one wants someone else to hear. Perhaps that is the music of our time; the unique way music comes to each of us and buoys our spirit.*

Gerry Hemingway

*sound is living*

Tess de Quincey

*Music: pleasing vibes, in the ear of the beholder. Good? Bad? Music I like might be music you abhor—who am I, or anyone, to apply absolute standards? As a composition teacher, I was required to give student pieces marks out of 10. What would I give Beethoven's Ninth? Applaud the effort but take a mark off for untidy notation? One person's untidy notation is another person's work of art, just as someone's vulgarity is someone else's lyric. Your rubbish might be my treasure. To me, some music sounds better than it is, while other music is better*

than it sounds. It can inspire or bore. Or be used for base political and commercial ends. It can be a moving, even liberating, testament to the human spirit, providing solace and encouragement. Each individual's relationship with music is personal and unique, with no outside force able (yet) to interfere. Internal music. I've lately been re-reading Émile Zola's novel *Germinal* (L. W. Tancock, trans., Penguin 1954). Here's a quote (p. 156) about a chaffinch contest: 'The point of the contest was to decide which (bird) would repeat his particular song the most times in an hour . . . a hundred or so onlookers were breathless and silent in the midst of this infernal music of a hundred and eighty chaffinches all repeating the same song at different speeds'. Infernal music? I would love to listen to that! Music to my ears. Even better, perhaps: cage-free chaffinch song (even birdsong can carry a political message). I get as much pleasure from listening to the lyrebirds where I live as I do from listening to most human-composed music. In this day and age, music is all around us. It's simply a matter of opening one's ears.

Martin Wesley-Smith

Music was always determined by natural, social, economic, political, and cultural conditions, by technology and the sonic surroundings as well. What does it mean today? Global climatic changes and air-soil-water contamination, the fail of (neo)capitalism, politics of psychopaths, mad ideologies, pseudo-culture, masmedia simulacra and digital devices virtualising our lives, mutating the regime of our consciousness and the ways of human behaviour. But we are also still surrounded by bizarre, concrete sounds everywhere, so if we are able to reflect and transform all of these (social and sonic) phenomena into interesting musical shapes and meaningful utterance, there is no need to be afraid of the music future.

Julo Fujak

Music is a non-verbal-language unique to the human species and found among all people on the planet earth. It is made by various culturally agreed structurings of sound produced by any audible means and with any audible sound sources. These structurings have over time produced thousands of 'dialects', which are generally organized in clearly recognizable, repeatable and reproducible short tonal, rhythmic or random patterns. 'Man', so-called, is a unique musical animal. Human music is made universally with the intention to promote various forms of social, political and spiritual unity, and collective well-being. In short, music, as an art, is a common social activity made primarily for pleasure. Whether composed in written notations, acquired orally by imitation or by intuition, or made by kinds of spontaneously improvised actions, all musical practices are considered by both the makers and the listening participants to be a form of 'transport'. Indeed, poetic and psychophysical transport, enabling all to step outside the boundaries of measurable time and conventionally defined social spaces. In the best of cases, any given music may allow the makers and listeners to 'disappear' into the sounds being made—allowing them to momentarily become the sound itself. Music is hence the act of transformation of the human body into sound, and consequently of sound becoming corporally human.

Alvin Curran

Music is everything . . . everything you want it to be. It's nice and hard, nice and soft, just like Sorbent . . . toilet paper, and it goes the extra sheet.

Milton Mckee

Music is the arrangement of frequencies in space and time, transmitted between bodies to unleash things unsaid. Where language fails us, music takes us.

Jeff Khan

*Music is a mode of human perception, discursively mediated by culture. Music is a physical disturbance, requiring subjective interpolation through perceptual conventions. Music is a curse, suppressed by ocularcentrism. Music can get fucked.*

Sean Baxter

*For me, to be music, it needs to make sense. It can be some form of composition in sound, be it in real-time or by means of more prolonged elaboration and definition. It can be constructed, reflected, or just actively experienced. But in its realisation, its presentation or its communication, or in its reception, there needs to be an intelligence at work, making sense of it.*

John Davis

*Whatever it was, whenever you were thinking about what it was, we've moved on. Music is not that anymore.*

Johannes Rosenberg (1992)

*Silence is an absence of noise. Noise is an absence of silence. Music is a combination of silence and noise.*

Slawek Janicki

*Music is a social activity having to do with the organization of sound(s).*

Ernie Althoff

*Definition of music in the 21st century: An arrangement of sonic stimuli intended to induce an aesthetic response in the listener beyond that of mere awareness of unmediated or ambient sound. My rationale: Bearing in mind that the conceptual significance of John Cage's 4'33" (and Marcel Duchamp's Readymades), the definition of music has to be broad enough to encompass almost anything, but not quite anything. If any sound can be called music, then the category definition "music" becomes meaningless, as it does not distinguish one kind of sonic event from another. Musical awareness must therefore involve more than just sonic awareness, for example, the half-awareness of a ticking clock or the startled-awareness of the 6:00am alarm. Suppose a 5-year-old is slapping at a glass jar. Are they making noise or music? If a conservatorium graduate slaps at a glass jar, are they making noise or music? What if both of them are slapping the jar to shake the last of the honey out of it? What if a musician does this before an audience? ('Etude for Honey Jar by Winnie the Pooh') The distinction between music and sound is based on intentionality—the intentionality of the producer of the sound and the listener must be aligned. The listener's subjective evaluation is relevant ('My five-year old could do that!') but can be guided by the context in which the event takes place. The listener must either think or feel something in response to the sound that is more than merely an awareness of a sonic event.*

Chris Reid

*Anagram for Music in the twenty-first century:*

*Futurity with cynic's resentment.*

*Mystery-centric, with unfit tunes.*

*Minify structure—went synthetic.*

*Nutters free with nutty cynicism.*

*Why frenetic cuts, nutty Minister?*

Richard Grantham

*Music is a vital form of play in which sound is used to form a transitional bridge between inner reality and shared objective experience.*

Cornelius Dufallo

*I find it impossible to say something in general in a few sentences about music in the 21st century. I can only answer this question (at least in short) very personally—for me, music is subjective and highly personal at first. I look for the (multi-modal) undertow, to be able to fall into music, get lost in it. Trying to achieve this I use concepts like embodied technology, staging and visuals—but always only as means to create this pull. Despite the new media I try to incorporate, I consider my music as fairly old school.*

Alexander Schubert

*As for what constitutes music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I'm not sure that I'm up to making grand statements. The best I can come up with is that it has become a refuge for the most undesirable types apparently.*

Rainer Linz

*If someone put a gun to my head I'd say music isn't traffic or birdsong or John Cage falling downstairs. It isn't sound art or radio art or DJ Spooky. Laurie Andersen tells stories, Merzbow is loud, soundscapes are soundscapes and people with laptops, turntables, and sequencers dice with zombie spirits—all of which are perfectly valid things to do, but they're not music. If music is something created intentionally for other people in the context of a shared sign system, then 'accidental music' is oxymoronic; if it's not a human being making it, it's not music. If the human being is letting machines or dice or I-Ching stalks make the decisions, it's not music. It might sound nice, it might even be indistinguishable from another work in which a sentient person carefully crafted every sound, but it's not music. And if intention is necessary, it's not sufficient: Hoerspiel is Hoerspiel, sound sculpture is sound sculpture—and that's usefully different from kinetic art. Things have perfectly good identities so leave them alone. When we come right down to it, words are just things we use to refer to sense-data and mean whatever we can get away with using them to mean. But then, if someone put a gun to my head, I'd gibber like a chimp.*

Chris Cutler

*I was very taken with a quote attributed to Lord Byron, which I saw in Paris several years ago (at the Cité de la Musique, I think it was): 'Il y a de la musique en toutes choses si les hommes pouvaient l'entendre'. In other words, 'there's music in everything if people can only hear it'. I think that says it for me, really.*

Roz Cheney

*Once at about 13 my choir sang in Salisbury cathedral. That was the first time my body cavity resonated with an architectural space, the great gothic ceiling, and my ribs and lungs moved together both terrifying and exultant. Next, it was under the stars in the Kimberly with my kids, we were bashing quartz together and holding notes when the drone caught, and the night sky joined in, my son was alarmed, I was exultant again. Still, we can't be there every day. Or can we?*

Tony Bond

*illustrating another's ears with the colour of when the sky is yellow. hitting someone's chest with a sledgehammer of guilt and noise and letting go. pounding away on the drums until everyone's on their feet letting the love and free take over.*

Bree van Reyk

*Music is not universally definable, as it's not a natural kind but rather a conglomerate of many definable components, the boundaries of which are flexible. For me, music is a way of making time and interaction more magical by being present together in the eternal now through focused stylisation of language (which may be expressed through surrogate sound-makers). In the 21st century, it's more pluralistic and connected than ever.*

Robert Davidson

*music is what you think it is not what you think it is.*

Paul Steenhuisen

*As the CIA jammed water in my nostrils, Music made me tell all my secrets.*

Gregory Samsung

*My initial feeling is 'Music creates connectivity' then comes, 'Music is a way of culture mapping', then 'Music = play it'.*

Michael Sheridan

*Music is Momentary memory magic*

*Unnerving unrelenting unique uncompromising utterly*

*Ubiquitous*

*Sweet sounding seduction surreptitiously sinuous and*

*Sinosoidal*

*Ipnia inducing*

*Significant soulfood*

Ros Bandt

*'Music is liquid architecture'. Goethe said that.*

*'Music gets my walls wet'. I said that.*

Nat Bates

*Music has very ancient roots and has to do with time, measurement, and flow. I don't really buy into the organised sound idea (because all sound is organised and there's plenty of music in silence).*

Kate Moore

*Music in the 21st century—a dynamic engagement with two themes: 1. The necessity of surprise (the perceptual story); 2. The surprise of the necessary (the structural story). Both themes lead to crucial questions: a. How to rekindle curiosity and cradle it in a unified field of eccentric human intellect and passion? b. How to retain music's primal power to reorganize our perception of time, i.e. how to joyfully subvert narrative linearity and the repression of fantasy that such linearity promotes? (And all of the above during a century in which almost all narratives are being co-opted by a rampaging meta-capitalism.)*

David Moss

*music is: human-made, abstract (in that identification of the sound sources, even if possible, is not important), and sound that, as a listener, draws you in so that one's attention, interest, and enjoyment is satisfied purely by the sound itself without the need or desire for external reference(s). I've added 'human-made' because although many believe that bird, whale song . . . is indeed music, we actually have no idea, despite much speculation and theory, what it means to the creatures concerned.*

Peter Cusack

*The 21st Century composer is equipped with a mind-blowing array of possibilities, the organization of which into music and sound art is limited only by 1) the imagination; and 2) the ability to understand and cherish individuality (both their own, and of those around them).*

Melody Eötvös

*For me, music and sound is a continent to itself. This enormous continent must not be permitted to come to a standstill. So, uncompromising artists and composers, and inspiring musicians as well as open-minded listeners, are still needed. Their presence ensures the expansion of the continent of music and sound, adding to its vibrancy every day . . .*

Georg Weckwerth

*Music pours out of my fingers, out of my mouth, ties them to my mind's ears in absolute presentness, and then I feel better.*

Yolande Harris

*Music: Sonic structures of human, amphibian, cetacean, entomological, avian, geological, aqueous, gaseous, celestial, technological, or (insert other) origin. Organised by design, chance, or instinct. Represented in vibrational, theoretical, metaphysical, notational, or recorded form. Listeners experience it auditorily, as memory, through ocular means, conceptually, voluntarily, involuntarily, consciously, unconsciously, or (insert other). However, a listener is not required to complete the circuit. Music survives on its own. Where there is vibration or the concept of vibration, there is music.*

Brian Ritchie

*In these difficult days ahead, with the waters rapidly rising, forcing abandonment of our homes, leave behind the books and paintings, dancing shoes, all the electronics, cash reserves, fancy clothes, and attitudes, but please don't fail to bring along your musical instruments. It's what we will need.*

Ken Butler

*Definition of music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: I thought, and I thought, and I came up with nothing at all that I could put into words. And then I realised that my inability to define music in words is my definition of music.*

Lloyd Swanton

*As a kid in Cyprus I used to hang around outside the local village smithy hammering away on his anvil, and I thought that was music; on the way to high school in Nicosia I used to stop every morning and listen to the sound of the diesel generator rumbling, and I thought*

*that was music too; then I came to Australia and, after a period making section parts for trains in Carriageworks (that sounded like music), I started to play violin—the noise was terrible and that was probably not music; so then I moved onto making violins instead and left the music making to the musicians. I've made more than 600 violins, and I'm still doing it in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People who ultracrepidate should realize that we are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and accept that many stories brought us to this point.*

Harry Vatiliotis

*Music is an immaterial force, yet it has the power, should we care to listen, to overcome all the troubles of the world.*

Katherine Brisbane

*Music is, and always has been, an attempt to impart meaning on the essentially meaningless; to mold inherently amorphous raw materials into stuff of recognizable human value and utility. In its rudimentary form, sound appears to us as though scattered aimlessly over a vast, nebulous chasm, ruled by fickle chance, and void of any immediately decipherable ordering principles. Our impulse to bring calm to this wild cosmic tempest with the manmade tools of tonality is but a single example of our deep-seated need to tame the raging beast of nature, and a reflection of the crippling terror we feel on account of its merciless tyranny. Music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, or in any other, may thus be seen as falling into one of two categories: first, that which offers a defense against the cosmic void and, refusing to yield to its totalitarian rule, envelops itself in a self-preserving bubble within which it might elaborate vital myths of its own human worth; or, secondly, that which stares fearlessly into the beast's eyes and, allowing itself to fall into its dark and all-consuming embrace, willingly welcomes the infinite possibilities of its chaotic endlessness.*

Ilario Colli

*When it comes to music, birds got there first, beating us by millions of years. Nonetheless, songbirds' achievements find many looking the other way, towards the hackneyed narrative of human historical progress bolstered by a Eurocentric-focused musicology, and towards music as an institutional concept mediated by a powerful elite. Once we acknowledge that the institutional process in operation when defining music is, like art, usually not evaluative but classificatory (and thus covertly evaluative), we are forced to reconsider how to argue in birdsong's favour in any definition of music. A border is a warning from power. To define music is to commit a socio-political act and to invoke a cartographic metaphor, where words like claim, control, standoff, mediation, and separatist movement scramble to find their time and place. Even the most thoughtful characterization will offend by leaving something out or putting something in. Some musicians (like some wildlife) are edge-dwellers. They work on the fringe, the brink, and beyond, refusing to take boundaries at their fixed and unbreachable word, extravagantly wandering off paths and overstepping orderly lines. We must be prepared to chase music right out to where sound stops. Music is what we say it is, but the minute we attempt a demarcation or a unilateral proclamation, a trespasser shows up. What we each want from our music is unique. On the 'music' side of a person's border is what they choose to listen, sing, dance, meditate, exercise, and move to; purchase or download; go to sleep and wake up to; attend, perform, analyse, or plagiarize; tune in to and out with; grieve or celebrate with; and much more. I do all of those to and with my music, and much of my favourite music is birdsong. Nothing about music logically and incontrovertibly leaves birdsong out of its definition if our deliberation is evaluative and not merely classificatory.*

Hollis Taylor

*Some of the conceits of 21<sup>st</sup> century music: that music is beyond sound (i.e. the elegance of algorithmic code), that technology has offered tools so that we can transcend time zone to make music with new hybrid communities of live performers in different geographical locations, that music exists in various metaphoric incarnations of mixed hybridity, that the Kurzweilian perceptions involving enhanced chips inform new ways of becoming hybrid instruments ourselves . . . . Still, the elements of essential music making continue to invent, to create and redefine traditions, and to share with communities of folks the sharing commonalities of artistic intention and vibrational lifting and shifting.*

Mark Dresser

*music is a green aquarium*

Arturas Bumštein and Gailė Griciūtė

*As sound scholar Brandon LaBelle says, 'sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational'. Sound is politics embodied, an interpersonal exchange from me to you, an invisible transmission with very palpable affect. Music then, to me, is a way to capture and frame the complex energies between people within the social and environmental contexts that surround them.*

Julian Day

*Music is a sonic exploration of the world that sharpens the sensitivities—best experienced by imposing no bounds.*

Yuko Nakayama

*I think that we are living in a time where people are clamoring to break definitions, make definitions, redefine and stolidly hold onto past definitions. There's beauty in this freedom and abandon, but we are also searching for identity in a time where there is no cohesion. Perhaps music right now is a reflection of these kinds of human tendencies.*

Audrey Chen

*Music in the 21<sup>st</sup> century:*

*Tautology I I*

*the relation of assumption to the form of sound*

*the assumption of relation between sound and form*

*the relation of sound to the assumption of form*

*the form of relation and its sound assumption*

*the sounded relation of form and assumption*

*the form of sound and its assumed relations*

*the sounded assumptions in formal relations*

*the between form of sound in relation to assumption*

*the between sound of form in assuming relation*

*between sound, form, relating assumption*

*the assumption of form sounding relations*

Amanda Stewart

*Music is meaningful, entertaining, or acceptable noise.*

John Whiteoak

*It is often said that 'music is organised sound'. I prefer to think of music as something that emerges as the result of a particular kind of attention being applied to sound. So rather than being 'organised' sound, music is 'intentional' sound—this 'intent' can refer to intentional listening as well as intentional sound making.*

Peter Knight

*Nowadays it seems we are living in a privileged situation. Like never before. We can use any kind of technically accessible sounds to make music (any kind of tonal structures, including all possible tones 'between and beyond' the total chromatic scale, any kind of noises and electronic sounds, any kind of recorded sounds, including the music already written or done by others in all cultures). Like never before. We can make music by any possible, technically accessible way. Like never before. We can combine, re-combine, layer, re-layer everything. Like never before. Had Bach, Beethoven, Ives, Russolo, Varèse, or Cage lived, what would they say about all this, what would they do with all this? Would they enjoy it? Would they be happy with this? Would they say it is what they dreamed for? And are WE happy with this? Like never before? And don't we—at least sometimes—ask ourselves: but what is this all for?*

Daniel Matej

*Sorry it took me so long, but even after a week of tossing ideas around my head, I didn't come up with something more appropriate than the old saying that 'music is sound organized in time'. First, of course, the words 'sound' and 'time', which embrace so much more than those definitions that include words that come with so much cultural baggage like 'melody', 'rhythm', and 'timbre'. Then, the word 'organizing', that does not limit us to seeing people taking materials and organizing them on paper, in a computer, or live on stage. I also organize sounds—often involuntarily—in my head when I hear them in nature. As soon as I'm aware of it there is a beginning, the more I listen there is development, some repetitions become rhythms, and when I'm done, there is an end. Organizing sound in time, that is.*

Hans Tammen

*Music, like art, is a convention; an agreement made by different cultures differently at different times. If I were asked for a definition of music, that is, to come up with some invariants common across cultural and historical differences, they would have to be extremely abstract. I would say: music is a solely auditory construct in which sounds relate to each other in a coherent way. This coherence may be achieved by composers using a particular relational concept, by musicians using their instrumental or vocal skills and intuitions—or by listeners using their ears and imagination. Of late, these coherence-building strategies have become increasingly difficult to pick apart. But reliance purely on sound and coherent structure—whatever their actual natures—are in my view the two invariants of music.*

Kersten Glandine

*I don't think that music can be defined, really. In that sense I guess music's a bit like former US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's definition of pornography: I may be unable to define it, but I know it when I hear it. But then again, that doesn't really work either, because John Cage taught us that music can reach as far as silence. All I know is that music is that fertile ground between silence and the imagination creating an emotional web that connects all living things.*

Jeff Zeigler

*What is music? I can honestly say I have no idea at all.*

Scott Tinkler