



# Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology

*By Julian Dodd*

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## **Works of Music: An Essay in Ontology** By Julian Dodd

In this original and iconoclastic book, Julian Dodd argues for what he terms the simple view of the ontological nature of works of pure, instrumental music. This account is the conjunction of two theses: the type/token theory and sonicism. The type/token theory addresses the question of which ontological category musical works fall under, and its answer is that such works are types whose tokens are sound-sequence-events. Sonicism, meanwhile, addresses the question of how works of music are individuated, and it tells us that works of music are identical just in case they sound exactly alike. Both conjuncts of the simple view are highly controversial, and Dodd defends them vigorously and with ingenuity. Even though the simple view is favoured by very few writers in the philosophy of music, Dodd maintains that it is the default position given our ordinary intuitions about musical works, that it can answer the sorts of objections that have led other philosophers to dismiss it, and that it is, on reflection, the most promising ontology of music on offer. Specifically, Dodd argues that the type/token theory offers the best explanation of the repeatability of works of music: the fact that such works admit of multiple occurrence. Furthermore, he goes on to claim that the theory's most striking consequence - namely, that musical works are eternal existents and, hence, that composers discover rather than create their works - is minimally disruptive of our intuitions concerning the nature of composition and our appreciation of works of music. When it comes to sonicism, Dodd argues both that this way of individuating works of music is *prima facie* correct, and that the putative counter-examples it faces - most notably, those propounded by Jerrold Levinson - can be harmlessly explained away. In the ontology of music, simplicity rules.

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### Review

"There is no question that *Works of Music* is required reading for anyone concerned with the current state of the ontology of art; it also deserves a more general readership among metaphysicians. Few will deny that Dodd has produced a cohesive and ingeniously-defended account of a certain class of entities."--*Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

### About the Author

Julian Dodd is at University of Manchester.

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