

**DIFFERENT EYES, EARS, AND BODIES: PIANIST NOBUYUKI TSUJII AND
THE EDUCATION OF THE SENSORIUM THROUGH MUSICAL PERFORMANCE**

by

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Abstract

My dissertation explores the educative possibilities and limits of musical performance as a medium through which musicians and audiences reimagine sensory, affective, bodily, and cognitive experiences of music. The dissertation's focal point is a 2013 recital at the University of British Columbia by pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii, as part of *Beyond the Screen: disAbility and the Arts*, a series that raised questions about the reception of musicians with disabilities, the inclusion of disabled bodies in music pedagogy, and the meritocratic ethos that underpins competitive practices in music, education, and society.

The polemical reception of Tsujii's shared gold medal with Haochen Zhang at the 2009 *Van Cliburn International Piano Competition* in Fort Worth, Texas serves as the larger context for the present study. Speculation as to the role that Tsujii's blindness played in his favorable evaluation by the competition jury (Ivry, 2009) was countered by denial of any such influence (Kaplinsky, quoted in Wise, 2009), throwing into sharp relief a profound discomfort among musicians, critics and the general public with the disabled body in music. Tsujii himself declared shortly after the competition that he would like to be received as "simply a pianist" (Oda, 2009, para. 6) and has continued to resist the category of "blind pianist" (Ikenberg, 2014b, para. 8).

Interviews with Tsujii and a purposive sample of eleven individual audience members following his 2013 UBC recital, combined with textual analysis of newspapers, magazines, and films documenting the pianist's career since 2009 locate Tsujii's reception in an educative gap between performer and audience, akin to that between teacher and student, a philosophical stance which emphasizes education as an interaction between the one who teaches and the one who learns (Biesta, 2004, p. 13). Showing how different levels of familiarity with the conventions of

musical performance lead performers, critics, and audiences to interact with Tsujii as *pianist* and *blind pianist* in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways, this dissertation contributes to scholarship on the aesthetic and pedagogical significance of "person-first" versus "disability-first" language, the educative capacities of musical performance, and on the place of disabled bodies in music pedagogy.

Preface

This dissertation is based on original, independent research carried out by the author Stefan Sunandan Honisch. The interviews discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 were covered by University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board Certificate H13-01785.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc., to give them pleasure. *That the latter have something to teach them*; that never occurs to them.

—Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*¹

The best music, the best writing, music or writing that endures over time, alters its tempo to re-engage the eyes and ears. It occasionally says 'Stop. Pay attention. Stop and listen. Stop and see. Stop and think. Stop and hear. Stop and feel.'

—Stein, *The public intellectual and the democratic conversation*

There is always more. There is always possibility. And this is where the space opens for the pursuit of freedom. Much the same can be said about experiences with art objects—not only literary texts, but music, painting, dance. They have the capacity, when authentically attended to, to enable the person to hear and to see what they would not ordinarily hear and see, to offer visions of consonance and dissonance that are unfamiliar and indeed abnormal, to disclose the incomplete profiles of the world. As importantly, in this context, they have the capacity to defamiliarize experience: to begin with the overly familiar and transfigure it into something different enough to make those who are awakened hear and see.

—Greene, *The dialectic of freedom*

1.1 Background to the Research Problem

Over the course of my undergraduate and Master's studies in Piano Performance and Composition, I came to the realization that if Western art music pedagogy is to span the whole gamut of human experience, including the experience of disability, then the teaching and learning of music needs to involve more than the transmission and absorption of discipline-specific knowledge and competencies. In particular, Western art music has often emphasized the sights and sounds of music, a function of both the privileged status of visually representing musical sound by means of a complex system of notation (composition) and aurally bringing this

¹ Emphasis in original.

notation to life for audiences (through musical performance). Bodies with different ways of perceiving the world and experiencing music have been obliged either to fall in line with the normalized sensorial and bodily hierarchy of Western art music as far as possible, or to accept that this musical tradition is not for them (Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011). And yet, I wondered: is there not a gap, a space of resistance from which an alternative conception of Western art music and of its pedagogy might emerge? What role might performers with disabilities play in such an intervention?

Education, as I subsequently came to learn, is "a dimension of culture that maintains dominant practices while also offering spaces for their critique and reimagination" (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1). While I enjoyed the creative opportunities that my studies in music afforded, I found myself—a musician with congenital physical disabilities—questioning basic assumptions about the normative body, guided by seeing eyes, hearing ears, and propelled by able limbs, which lie at the core of university music pedagogy (Straus, 2011, pp. 150–151). Having absorbed some of the "dominant practices" of the pedagogy of Western art music performance, I wanted to inhabit the spaces that this pedagogy might offer for reimagining what it has meant, and what it might mean to make music, and—digging deeper still—what it means to experience music through the senses and through the body. This desire to understand music as an embodied encounter between self and other led me to pursue doctoral studies focusing on the interlocking questions of how musicians with disabilities present themselves, and how they are received by audiences in the mainstream cultural tradition of Western art music. Approaching these questions from scholarly perspectives developed in Education, Music, and Disability Studies, my research winds along a continuum of educational practices, from the teaching studio to the concert hall, and myriad spaces along the way.

Students in the principal sub-fields of music studies, namely composition, performance, music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology, learn how to *look* at musical notation, *hear* musical sound, move *to* music and be moved *by* music according to a set of discipline-specific norms. Sensory and bodily hierarchies thus define the "dominant practices" of Western art music, and position this musical tradition within complex relationships of autonomy and worldliness, relationships themselves beholden to the sights, sounds, and movements of history, society, and culture (Blacking, 1998; Nettl, 2005; Said, 1991; Small, 1998). However, an emerging subfield within music scholarship, namely Disability Studies in Music, has both extended older critiques of these normalizing pedagogical systems, as well as opened up new spaces for critical intervention (Howe, 2010; Lerner & Straus, 2006; Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011). As a consequence, it has become possible to re-imagine musical experience, and to rethink the teaching and learning of music so that the differences that different eyes, ears, and bodies make² can be understood as sites of "pedagogic possibility," offering richly ambiguous continuities and discontinuities between "disability and person, human and body" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 84).

Expanding the range of musical experiences available for consideration in the classroom, teaching studio, and concert hall—the larger aim of this dissertation—admittedly is no simple task. The place to begin, as I shall explain more fully in Chapter 3, is by securing a place for musicians with disabilities in contemporary education scholarship. This preparatory work, in turn, necessitates asking how performances by musicians with disabilities might foster *un-*

² This passage alludes to Rod Michalko's (2002) book *The Difference That Disability Makes* and, in particular, to the following passage: "Blindness, deafness, and paraplegia are still unfortunate conditions that some of us have to suffer and are not (yet?) worthwhile and legitimate alternatives. They are not alternative ways of sensing the world and moving through it. *Thus, disability becomes a difference that should be prevented, not 'lived-in'*" (p. 103; emphasis added).

teaching and *un-learning* (Gosden, 2001) so that musical performance can be studied not merely as a socio-cultural and aesthetic practice of educative possibilities (Gershon, 2010), but also of limits, depending in either case on the multiple contexts in which music is made and received. The complexity of the work that lies ahead requires that we step back momentarily from our immediate concerns in order to understand how Western art music pedagogy fits within formal education more generally. Teaching and learning are not to be understood as distinct, separable activities, but rather as practices that occur in a "gap" between the one who educates and the other who learns. The gap between teacher and student consists not of an empty space, but rather of a convergence point or emerging relationship: "In order to understand the precise nature of the educational relationship, we should take the idea that education consists of the interaction between the teacher and the learner...in its most literal sense" (Biesta, 2004, p. 12).

Extending this insight to our present topic, namely the educative dimensions of musical performance, we start from the premise that there is, likewise, a "gap" separating performer and audience, a gap which is productive rather than constrictive. It is because of this gap, rather than in spite of it, that musical performance has the potential to become an educative practice. This consideration is given short shrift in recent discussions of music and public intellectualism, broadly defined, which lean heavily on the idea that musicians somehow teach audiences through music, while neglecting the relational dimension of the musical encounter itself; in other words, without attending to the interaction of performer and audience (Gershon, 2010). If musical performance is to compel greater attention among teachers, students, performers and audiences, as a form of public intellectualism (Gershon, 2010), then it is imperative first to acknowledge the presence of this relational gap, and to explore how the non-verbal communicative medium of

musical performance can foster an education through the relationship between what musicians do, and what audiences do.

My dissertation explores the educative possibilities and limits of musical performance as a medium through which to reimagine sensory, affective, bodily, and cognitive experiences of music. The dissertation's focal point is pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii's 2013 recital at the University of British Columbia as part of *Beyond the Screen: disAbility and the Arts*, a series of events which raised questions about the reception of musicians with disabilities, and about the inclusion of disabled bodies in music pedagogy more broadly.

Chapter 2 reviews the extant scholarship on how the educative capacities of music have been understood by philosophers, educators, and musicians, and discusses both the contested role of musicians as public intellectuals, and the broader relationships between music and public intellectualism articulated by musicians and scholars in public statements (Barenboim & Said, 2002; Fulcher, 1999 & 2005; Gershon, 2010). The literature review foregrounds a question that unites these diverse perspectives, and that has given rise to much disagreement: what does it take for a given musical experience to achieve a transformation in understanding on the part of both musicians and audiences? I will pinpoint tensions among the various theoretical and methodological commitments reflected in the literature that grapples with this question. Focusing especially on the theoretical work on musicians as public intellectuals in recent education scholarship, I explain the conceptual and methodological problems that arise because various forms of musical activity (composition, performance, reception, journalistic criticism, and scholarly analysis), are not clearly distinguished from each other (Gershon, 2010; Sandlin, Burdick, & Schulz, 2011). As a consequence, rather than offering clear analysis of how these different forms of participating in, and experiencing music (whether as composer, performer,

audience member, critic or scholar) can be educative, and delineating what sorts of transformation in understanding might be possible in each of these different spheres of musical activity, scholarship on musicians as public intellectuals reifies "music," creating the misleading impression that music as objectified sound has educative possibilities independent of the multiple practices through which music acquires meaning when filtered through human experience (Gershon, 2010 & 2011). Closely related is the tendency to conflate an experience of music unmediated by linguistic description, explanation, or analysis, for example, the activities of performing or listening to music, with the educative role of commentary about music. As later chapters will show, the pragmatist philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce enables the present study to tease apart how different relationships between language and music have widely varying consequences for understanding the musically educative, on the one hand, and the linguistically educative concerning music on the other hand. In the final chapter, I will argue that future education scholarship on the role of musicians as public intellectuals can benefit from taking note of Peirce's conceptual separation of different parts of experience along a continuum ranging from unmediated qualities of feeling (Firstness), to physical, bodily responses (Secondness), and to cognitive, linguistically based analysis (Thirdness), and by incorporating this framework into their analyses of what music, as a communicative medium, can and cannot teach, and what musicians, who communicate through both music and language, can and cannot teach. For Peirce, the "unity among our sensations" produced by a musical experience in which a performer or listener does not subject that experience to linguistic analysis is not to be confused with an experience that acquires its meaning through analysis mediated by language, and that gains in precision more through conscious thought than through affective and bodily responses (Peirce, 1991, p. 168). Later chapters return to this distinction in order to show how the educative

possibilities and limits of musical performance must be understood in relation to the varying role that language plays in the interpretive work of performers and musicians. At the same time, however, Peirce's approach gives Cartesian dualism a wide berth, avoiding an untenable separation of sensory, affective, bodily responses to, and cognitive reflection about a given musical experience (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010). This feature of Peirce's pragmatism has enabled me both to delve into the complexities of the core questions of the present study, as well as to discuss, in the final chapter, the work that remains for future exploration of the resonant spaces in between education, disability and music as sites of practice, and contested arenas of scholarship.

William Pinar (2010), for example, supports the idea that "almost any form of music can teach," offering as an example commentary *about* music for a radio broadcast, in which music figures as a diversion from other (stressful) activity. Aside from the conflation of the educative function of *music* and the educative role of *commentary* on music, Pinar's example is hard to characterize as illustrative of teaching and learning because there is no analysis of the circumstances in which such an interaction occurs. To continue with Pinar's (2010) example, how can a driver focused on navigating traffic gain anything other than momentary diversion from hearing a radio announcer relating information about a particular composer, piece of music, or style (p. xvii)? This is not to deny that a form of learning might occur in this case, but rather to insist on contextual factors being taken into account in defining how a distracted driver can learn from what the broadcaster teaches. Another more difficult question arises, namely, how this sort of interaction can create a space for both sustaining and rethinking the unexamined assumptions and dominant values that shape a given interaction, and in this case, an interaction which is significantly mediated by the technological apparatus of radio broadcasting.

Furthermore, there is a failure in recent education scholarship to differentiate between musical traditions, and among musicians whose musical practices, and modes of writing and talking about music reflect the core assumptions of sometimes incompatible traditions, manifest among other ways, in the difference between locating music within rituals and ceremonies, as opposed to separating the distanced contemplation of music as an aesthetic end in itself from quotidian concerns (Dahlhaus, 1989; Small, 1998). The generous-sounding, but untenable embrace of "all music" and "all musicians" (Gershon, 2010, p. 628) under the ensign of public intellectualism papers over difficult questions about the educative limitations of public intellectualism through music, and about the educative role of musicians (Gershon, 2010; see also, Burdick, Sandlin, & O'Malley, 2013; Sandlin, Burdick, & Schulz, 2011; Anderson, 2006; Guillory 2005). On the other hand, discussions of the role of musicians as public intellectuals in the domain of music studies (primarily musicology and ethnomusicology), are insufficiently attentive to the sorts of education theoretical issues that feature prominently in work on the role of musicians as public intellectuals in education scholarship (Fulcher, 1999; Nettl, 2005). Foremost among the latter, and of particular relevance to the present study, is the conceptual distinction between performing music in public (i.e., for an audience), and actually constituting a public through musical performance (Feinberg, 1993/1998; Love, 2004). This distinction will be pursued in Chapter 3, in developing the philosophical framework for the present study. An initial sense of how performance in public does not necessarily *constitute a public* can be gained by considering Walter Feinberg's (1993/1998) analysis of the two processes. In his remonstrance against cultural conservatism. Feinberg explains that to constitute a public is to raise fundamental questions about the very definition of what a public is, to ask who is included, who is excluded, and why. These questions inaugurate a "struggle to give meaning to past and present events, *and*

in the self-conscious and mutual awareness that a common self-definition is at stake" (p. 164; emphasis added). As subsequent chapters will show, this distinction between *merely happening-in-public* and *actively-constituting-a-public* by raising questions about the relationship between the able-bodied self and the disabled other creates a range of theoretical and methodological challenges to the present study. Chapter 3 accounts for the methodology I developed, explaining how the dissertation's overall research design and methods of analysis were developed with the aim of making room for possible ambiguities and tensions between the performer's role, and that of the audience.

In trying to locate musical performance and reception on the topography of music *qua* public intellectualism, it is ultimately necessary to ask whether a given musical performance is merely a public event, or whether it actively constitutes a public, not only during the actual performance, but also in subsequent reflection on the experience of that performance. For the moment, however, we must return to more immediate concerns, namely defining the scope of the research problem and setting forth the principal questions that guide inquiry. At the center of the perspective adopted in this dissertation, then, is the belief that musical performance *qua* public intellectualism does not come into being as a result of the performer simply making music and the audience receiving this music in a manner dictated by the performer's stated wishes. Nor can musical performance be understood as a site of public intellectualism merely by picking out the historical, social, cultural, and behavioral rules and conventions governing performance and reception (Cumming, 2000). Instead, we must search for educative possibilities and limits in the relational "gap" between performance and reception, and in between the meanings that are more or less codified, more or less individual, more or less shared among musicians, their audiences, and individual audience members. In order to develop a viable account of how and what musical

performance teaches, the question of what it means to experience music both for performer and audience must be understood as perpetually in movement, as a world of meaning created in the non-verbal communicative interaction between performer and audience.

To be sure, the work of a musician does not always take place in public. In the solitude of the practice room, in preparation for public performance, musicians turn inward, yet these moments of deep introspection are necessarily accompanied by a turning outwards; thinking of, being inspired by, and contemplating the many worlds outside the self. However, here again, as Naomi Cumming (2000) has shown, in her elaboration of a musical semiotics inspired by the pragmatist philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce (on which more in subsequent chapters), there is no precise demarcation between the performing self and the receiving other, between introspective thought and the public communication of thought. Walter Gershon's (2010) representation of musicians as "public intellectuals" who teach their audiences how to make sense of the relationship between self and world through music, goes rather too far in this direction, claiming that making music is always a "public act," (p. 628), always for an audience, a claim which I question in subsequent chapters. Having discussed the repertoire of lived experience that brought me to my dissertation topic, and having connected these moments of introspection, at least provisionally, to the relevant scholarship in Education, Disability Studies in Education, and Disability Studies in Music, I turn to the delineation of the topic itself. The next two sections of the present chapter explain the origin of the present research, delimit the scope of the dissertation and set forth the principal questions I ask in relation to the study's larger context.

1.2 Setting the Stage: Nobuyuki Tsujii and Haochen Zhang's Shared Gold Medal at the 2009 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition

In the summer of 2009, the Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii and the sighted Chinese pianist Haochen Zhang—the emphasis on sightedness in my phraseology is crucial to the framing of the study—tied for gold medal at the *Thirteenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition* in Fort Worth, Texas. The polemical reception of the competition results that year took as its main point of reference the fact that Tsujii is blind (Cantrell, 2009; Ivry, 2009; Oda, 2009; Spigelman, 2009; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009; Yoshihara, 2009). Tsujii's two-paragraph biographical summary in the competition program book begins with the qualifying phrase "*Blind since birth...*" (p. 108; emphasis added). Biographical summaries for Tsujii's concerts in the months and years following the 2009 competition seized upon the triumphalist possibilities of this passage, suggesting that Tsujii's success in music competitions since childhood serves as validation of his stated belief in the transcendence of music. This way of representing Tsujii's career conceals the assumptions and contradictions through which Tsujii is marked as a blind pianist rather than as "simply a pianist" (Oda, 2009), while validating a belief held not only by Tsujii himself, but also by his fellow musicians, and audiences, in music's power to transcend prejudice and to silence discrimination. The plausibility of this discourse is accomplished through a sleight of prose which implies a straightforward relationship of cause and effect: "Blind since birth, Nobu [his preferred nickname] believes that there are no barriers in the field of music. *His philosophy was first affirmed at the age of 7 when he was named first-prize winner at the All-Japan Blind Students Music Competition*" (IMG Artists, 2012, para. 6; emphasis added). Audiences encountering Tsujii for the first time, and having read this statement and variations thereof in program notes, press releases, and media texts, are presented with a

representation of what it means to be a *blind pianist*, the historical and cultural contingency of which are obscured. In drawing a straightforward line from Tsujii's stated belief in the transcendence and universality of music to the validation of this belief upon his childhood success in the competitive arena —*his philosophy was first affirmed*—acknowledgement of the rules and conventions which legitimize representations of Tsujii as a pianist who succeeds *despite* his blindness has been replaced by the language of common sense. If a pianist with a disability believes that music presents no obstacles, and successfully competes against both disabled and non-disabled musicians, then surely (so the logic runs), that belief withstands severe test, and need not be subjected to further scrutiny. As Alex Lubet (2004) explains, with particular reference to the world of Western art music,

Complex politics permit, even encourage, soloists and conductors with disabilities while rank-and-file musicians with disabilities remain so rare. It has long been possible for members of marginalized classes to reach the top of competitive fields...while oppressed people of more typical abilities struggle for equality of employment and other basic rights. Fields requiring exceptional talent are less—or differently—discriminatory, at least partly because successful members of these groups serve established interests by appearing to provide evidence that hard work, ability, individual incentive and perseverance, rather than institutional reform, are all that are required to succeed. (Supercris: Do exceptions prove the rule? para. 2)

Tsujii's public declaration, in a *Time Magazine* article from shortly after the Cliburn competition, that he wishes to be thought of as “simply a pianist” rather than as a blind pianist (as cited in Oda, 2009, para. 6) points to a recurring feature in the reception of performers with

disabilities: a sharp dichotomy between "invisibility" on the one hand, and "hyper-visibility and instant categorization" on the other, which invariably attends their public performances (Kuppers, 2001, p. 26). One might, therefore, initially read Tsujii's statement as a protest against his "invisibility" as a *pianist* amongst his sighted colleagues, and as an outright rejection of his "hyper-visibility and instant categorization" as a *blind pianist*. I revisit this interpretation in Chapters 5 and 6, presenting a sustained discussion of how Tsujii's disapproval of the label blind pianist has been taken up and resisted by audience members in their reception of his performances.

One might very well claim that it is difficult, if not impossible, for *any* performer to be received as "simply" a performer, as a virtual musical being, a "sonic self" floating free of the materiality of the off-stage body, and impervious to the social and cultural interpretations which both enable and constrain the body in performance (Cumming, 2000, p. 23). It follows from this claim that musicians with disabilities are unexceptional relative to their non-disabled colleagues in asking their audiences to differentiate between their onstage personas and off-stage selves, and to focus on their music-making (Glennie, n.d. [a] & [b]; Quasthoff, 2008).

Within Western art music, in particular, and in society more generally, bodies with disabilities are given a host of meanings along a continuum from the imaginary to the real through a social repertoire that complicates distinctions between invisible and visible disability (Roman, 2009a & b), and "audible" and "inaudible" disability (Howe, forth-coming; Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011). As an analytical category, however, disability is a relative newcomer to scholarly discourse on the body, and so our contemplation of what it might mean to be *simply a pianist* and what it means to navigate the category of *blind pianist* must unfold within an expanding, yet uncertain space, mindful all the while of the relative unfamiliarity of the disabled

body in performance (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). In other words, discussions of the body in performance necessarily grapple with tensions between the self that the performer desires to project, and the performer's personal and bodily attributes perceived by audiences, and folded into their reception of a given performance (Cumming, 2000; Howe, 2010; Koppers, 2001 & 2013; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005; Straus, 2011). Furthermore, performers with disabilities often have to contend with audiences' expectation that the performance is about more than an aesthetic experience. In the case of musical performance, specifically, musicians performing with "visible disabilities" frequently encounter audiences who "come not only to hear the music but also to stare at the disabled body" (Straus, 2011, p. 126). To the traditional privilege accorded to sight and sound, noted earlier in relation to the aesthetic and pedagogical practices of Western art music, is added an additional level of emphasis: seeing and hearing the body in performance, thereby assigning "the disabled performer a dual task: to perform music and to perform disability" (Straus, 2011, p. 126). Musicians with visible disabilities remain bound to the category of "people with disabilities," a category which renders their performances dependent on the qualifications that their bodily differences are assumed to impose.

Understanding the interaction between performers with disabilities and their audiences, and coming to grips with the question of how the distinction between *blind pianist* and *simply a pianist* is actively taken up and resisted by both Tsujii and his audiences, differs in degree rather than in kind from the general theoretical and methodological concerns that attend the study of performance art by people with disabilities (Sandahl, 1999; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005; Koppers, 2001 & 2013). However, because of the late entry of disability as bodily difference into the scholarly imagination, and because of the relative absence of dominant cultural traditions such as Western art music in recent scholarship on disability and performance, and in twentieth

century social, cultural, and educational theory more generally (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005; see also Gershon, 2010; Symes, 2006), the anchor points for this study are not readily discernible.

1.3 Beyond the Screen: dis/Ability and the Arts

In March 2013, some four years after his Van Cliburn competition victory, and having meanwhile built a reputation as an emerging pianist on the international concert circuit, Tsujii visited the University of British Columbia (henceforth UBC). During his brief stay in Vancouver, Tsujii participated in a question-and-answer session, and presented a solo recital at the UBC School of Music. These two events featuring Tsujii were the focal point of a series entitled *Beyond the Screen: disAbility and the Arts*, (henceforth the *Beyond the Screen* series) which was put together and co-sponsored by St. John's College, a graduate residential college at UBC, the UBC School of Music, and UBC Access and Diversity. The series was developed specifically in response to the critical and popular reception of Tsujii's gold medal at the 2009 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition and the controversy I noted at the outset.

Having read about Tsujii's success, and having been deeply moved by one performance of his, in particular, at the 2009 Van Cliburn Competition³, I approached several people at UBC with the idea of bringing Tsujii to the university for a recital. The *Beyond the Screen* series developed out of this initial germ through a series of formal meetings and informal conversations over several months thereafter. My claims as to the purpose of the series are based on my personal involvement in the planning of Tsujii's visit, as well as my participation in various

³ Tsujii's final-round performance of Frederic Chopin's Piano Concerto in E minor, with James Conlon and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. This performance, in particular, became a focal point during several interviews, since two participants expressed admiration for Tsujii's sensitive interpretation of this music. The performance in its entirety is available on YouTube.

committees and my attendance at all of the events in the series, including Tsujii's recital. I was also the moderator for the question and answer session with Tsujii on March 8.

The larger aim of the *Beyond the Screen* series was to push those present, including professors, graduate students, as well as a wider public beyond UBC, to engage in a cross-disciplinary conversation about the stereotypes and prejudices with which disabled people have to contend when they are received in mainstream educational, cultural and artistic contexts (St. John's College, 2013). Furthermore, this series opened up a space in which students and faculty could—but did not necessarily—reflect on the possibilities and limits of education, broadly construed to encompass both formal and non-formal teaching and learning, in confronting discrimination on the basis of disability. The *Beyond the Screen* series was more in the nature of informal education, there being no specified curriculum or criteria for participation, yet the public announcements of and accompanying materials for the series pointed self-reflexively at the university as a space in which the barriers between disciplines, lived experience, and culture can be dismantled in the pursuit of answers to difficult questions. The guiding questions inscribed on the poster for the series give some idea of its open-ended approach to thinking about ability, disability, culture and education:

- *How do prejudices about disabled musicians affect their reception and chances for success?*
- *How can we re-imagine the teaching of music in ways that account for different approaches to learning and performance?*
- *What are the responsibilities of the university?* (St. John's College, 2013)?

These questions are prefaced by an explanation that orchestras and other ensembles typically conceal the auditioning musicians behind a screen from the judges in order to ensure

impartiality, in particular "to prevent discrimination on the basis of gender, race or disability" (St. John's College, 2013).

In her 2011 book *The Question of Access: Disability, Space, Meaning*, Tanya Titchkosky reflects on the ambiguous position of disability in the academic imagination, explaining that the scholarly imagination renders bodily difference as neither fully present, nor, yet, entirely absent. The precarious movements of the disabled body within the academy have deep historical roots. The tension between disability's presence and absence is a consequence of what Titchkosky refers to as "the cultural education of the sensorium," the contingent ways in which both able-bodied and disabled people have been taught to think and not think about bodily difference, through, for example, insisting upon a separation between self and body (p. 82; see also Titchkosky, 2012). With the theoretical mooring of "the cultural education of the sensorium" as both its point of departure and return, this dissertation explores the idea that seemingly common-sense distinctions between *blind pianist* and *pianist* bear the imprint of a particular "cultural education of the sensorium" which defines blindness normatively and reductively as nothing *more* than the inability to see. As a result of this manifestation of a sensorial pedagogy, the possibility of blindness as a way to "perceive differently" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82) has been kept invisible, inaudible, and intangible (see also Garland-Thomson, 2005). Concomitantly, the fundamental question of what it means to experience music through the senses and through the body has become entangled in "the dense weave of historical experience that organizes perception and the relations among the senses" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82).

Titchkosky's account of the "cultural education of the sensorium" as it pertains to disability frames the landscape of this dissertation, and, in particular, the four questions which inhabit the center of the study as a whole:

1. How are the educative possibilities and limitations of Nobuyuki Tsujii's recital at the University of British Columbia School of Music on March 10th, 2013, defined by Tsujii and by individual audience members?
2. How do these audience members receive Tsujii in relation to the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist*? Conversely, how does the pianist respond to his UBC audience?
3. What are the historical, social, cultural, and behavioral conventions, tacit and otherwise, through which Tsujii's performances are received in contradictory ways as those of *simply a pianist* and of a *blind pianist*? In what ways did the reception of Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital suggest a way out of this dichotomous framing?
4. And, returning to the first question, albeit from a more expansive position, how do the rules and conventions of music pedagogy shape the possibilities and limitations of an education of the sensorium constituted through performances by musicians with disabilities?

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to consider previous statements by other blind pianists who publicly disavow the descriptor *blind* and instead claim the status of *pianist*. Complicating this situation further, there are documented instances of journalists, music critics and musicians who also insist upon the separation of blindness and pianism (Morrison, 1987; Saccani, 2010). In other words, Tsujii's statements to the press, in which he attempts to disarticulate his blindness from his pianism, are part of a shared discourse, indirectly shared among blind pianists striving to be heard as musicians in a mainstream tradition, and in a communicative medium (musical performance) which has traditionally privileged the supremely able body, a body able to see, hear, and move in specific ways (Straus, 2011; see also Labet, 2004; Howe, 2010). As we shall see, it is not only pianists *who happen to be blind* insisting on

the separation of blindness from pianism, but also sighted fellow musicians, music critics, and members of the general public.

It is impossible to make any general claim based on such a small number of individual statements. When considered in relation to ongoing scholarly discussions about the pitfalls of "person first language" and the countervailing force exerted by "disability-first" language (Michalko, 2002; Titchkosky, 2011 & 2012), however, these statements suggest the need for a study which scrapes away the layers of common sense that normative and counter-normative approaches to disability and the self have accumulated. Such a study promises to help us understand how the seemingly contrary gestures of disavowing and claiming disability depend on the circumstances in which people with and without disabilities encounter and receive each other (Linton, 1998; Shakespeare, 1994).

The conductor Rico Saccani (2010) recalls working with the Hungarian pianist Tamas Erdi and his desire "to teach him [Erdi] to think of himself as a pianist who happens to be blind rather than [as] a 'blind pianist.' *There's a huge difference*" (p. 337; emphasis added). Just what the "huge difference" is, however, remains unspecified, glossed over by an apparently shared understanding between musician (author) and public (reader). It is worth mentioning that Erdi also entered the 2009 Cliburn competition but did not make it to the final round (So, 2011, par. 2). While it remains for Chapter 4 to scrutinize such claims, it is worth mentioning this way of thinking here, as part of the pedagogical context to Tsujii's recital at UBC.

1.4 Overview of Methodological Design

This dissertation takes the form of a reception study based on semiotic analysis of Tsujii's reception in the media since 2009—the backdrop for his visit to UBC—and of a series of

interviews with Tsujii and with a purposive sample of audience members who attended Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital. My analysis unravels the congruities and tensions between Tsujii's own repeated attempts to separate his blindness from his music-making, and how audiences respond to this dimension of his public performances. My conversations with Tsujii and eleven individual audience members reveal the capacity (possibilities and limits) of performances by musicians with disabilities to teach performer and audience not only to question dichotomous representations of disability and selfhood, but also, and more fundamentally, to question common-sense beliefs about the importance of sight and sound in musical experience. In the act of asking such questions, performer and audience come to understand not only themselves but also their relationship to each other in new ways. This reception study contributes to long-standing debates about disability and selfhood, and offers a challenge to recent scholarship on musical performance as a forum for public intellectualism, calling for greater acknowledgement of how different eyes, different ears and different bodies, and their interactions in the context of musical performance shape the possibilities and limitations of musical performance as an educative practice. If, following Ludwig Wittgenstein's aphoristic complaint in *Culture and Value*, we embrace the possibility that musicians have "something to teach," then what might a pianist such as Tsujii teach his audiences through musical performance? To begin understanding the implications of this question for scholarship in Education, Disability Studies in Education, and Disability Studies in Music, explored at length in Chapter 6, it is necessary to identify how the educative role of musicians has been construed in other times, and other places.

That musicians, in particular, have something to teach people, has, of course, occurred to a great many people, in a great many different social, cultural and historical contexts (DeNora, 2000; Eyerman & McCormick, 2006; Nettl, 2005). Gershon (2010), for example, calls for

contemporary educational research to take music and musicians seriously in analyzing the critical interventions of public intellectuals, instead of relegating music, in particular, and the arts, more generally, to the margins of serious intellectual inquiry (pp. 630–631). It is worth mentioning, in passing, that although Gershon does not situate his argument within the history of Western philosophy, his claim as summarized above bears strong resemblance to the passage from Wittgenstein which I have included as an epigraph to the present chapter. In response to Gershon's exhortation, as well as to the general idea that musicians can teach through music—an idea itself based on the assumption that music can be educative rather than merely entertaining—questions about what musicians with disabilities have to teach their audiences, and about how they might teach through the non-verbal medium of musical performance provide anchor points for this dissertation.

Recent analyses of disability as a mode of bodily performance have shown that stage appearances by disabled artists, musicians, actors, and so forth, are typically relegated to the realm of the spectacular: dominant cultural meanings projected by spectators on to the disabled body of the performer, reflect a deep anxiety about disability in performance, and *upstage whatever other meanings the performer wants to express or communicate* (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 4; emphasis added; see also, Howe, 2010; Koppers, 2001; Lerner, 2006; Straus, 2011). Responding to Wittgenstein's cue while at the same time softening its tenor in order to avoid coarse generalization, one might therefore complain that musicians with disabilities are too often typecast in roles which diminish the potential significance of what they can teach us about the meaning of music as a sensory and embodied experience. For present purposes, I have narrowed these stereotypical roles to two: in the first role, musicians with disabilities function as repositories for pervasive social and cultural anxieties about the loss of corporeal integrity which

imagined, actual, or possible disability is commonly understood to represent (Howe, 2010; Kuppers, 2001; Lerner, 2006; Straus, 2011); in the second role, musicians with disabilities who perform in ways that are deemed meritorious by their non-disabled colleagues, give audiences the satisfaction of legitimizing narratives of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity, as in the IMG publicity statement for Nobuyuki Tsujii discussed earlier in this chapter (see also, Straus, 2011). *That these musicians might have something else to teach; that possibility is only infrequently entertained.*

Musical performance, including both the making of music by the performer and its reception by an audience "involves the materiality, the culture, and the politics of the human body" (Leppert, 2004, p. 20). As a result, the way audience experience a given performance "is especially to be understood as the result of mediations between ear and eye functioning within a 'sonoric landscape' wherein music occurs as both a sound and a sight" (p. 20). Implicit in this theoretical account of musical experience is the idea that seeing with *the* eye and hearing with *the* ear both help to define what music is for its participants, and that these sensory activities require no further explanation; that visual and aural perception are intelligible to a large enough population that they can be abstracted from the actual lived experience of seeing with *a particular* eye and hearing with *a particular* ear. Leppert's definition of musical performance as an embodied practice therefore falls flat, when considered from the perspective of Disability Studies, in which the commonality of bodily experience is the subject of continual questioning (Michalko, 2002; Straus, 2011; Titchkosky, 2011 & 2012). Gershon's (2010) ambitious claims on the educational significance of music are likewise weakened by a failure to take into account how normative accounts of musical experience assume a corporeal *lingua franca*, by which I mean an undifferentiated bodily experience, and are therefore implicated in the "cultural

education of the sensorium" through which disability is rendered simultaneously absent from and present in the institutions of society, culture and education (Titchkosky, 2011). As a further consequence of this sensorial pedagogy, bodily differences are not thought of as ways to encounter the world differently, but rather as simply manifestations of the ability to experience the world more or less well, or hardly at all (Titchkosky, 2012).

In searching for musical experiences that exceed the limits of *the seeing eye* and *the hearing ear*, in trying to inhabit a space outside ourselves, an exteriority which George Herbert Mead (1934) describes as "the attitude of the other" (p. 194), we—performers and audiences—come to understand ourselves, and our relationship to each other in ways that put pressure on accounts of selfhood based on normative distinctions between ability and disability. Such an exploration might initially seem better suited (because more directly relevant) to disciplines such as Music, or Music Education. The pages that follow, however, are guided by a core belief: namely, that confronting normative accounts of musical experience, and, more specifically, searching for the educative dimensions of musical performance, are tasks that align strongly with contemporary educational scholarship on the role that culture and the arts play in teaching and learning. As Angela McRobbie (1985/2006) explains, drawing on the work of Stuart Hall: "Culture is a broad site of learning, and perhaps we learn best and are more open to new ideas when the barriers between the discipline and the academy and the experiences of everyday life are broken down" (p. 525). Musical performance can be understood as part of this "broad site" of cultural learning, and Tsujii's UBC recital can therefore be located within such practices of cultural learning. The reception of his UBC recital constitutes the focal point for exploring what we who inhabit the university, and we who enter the concert hall, might learn in the space

between the "extreme occasion" (Said, 1991) of a musical performance, and the "experiences of everyday life" (McRobbie, 1985/2006, p. 525).

It will be helpful at this juncture to situate Tsujii's shared gold medal at the 2009 Van Cliburn competition and his 2013 recital at UBC within the larger histories of blindness in international piano competitions, and within musical performance and reception more specifically. While sustained research into these histories must await the future, positioning Tsujii's Cliburn shared gold medal, and his subsequent emergence on the international concert circuit within this broader landscape allows us to begin understanding the larger issues at stake in his discomfiture with being identified as a *blind pianist*, and his desire to be regarded as *simply a pianist*. At the same time, paying attention to the larger historical landscapes will deepen the analysis of Chapters 4 and 5, which explicate Tsujii's reception not only within the circumscribed time and space of a solo recital, but also over the four year span between this recital (2013) and his Cliburn prize (2009). These chapters pull to the surface a system of rules, remembered and forgotten, tacit and overt, as a result of which the distinction between blind and sighted pianists seems, by turns, natural, necessary, puzzling, and trivial, to Tsujii, and to the eleven UBC audience members whom I interviewed. Mapping the study in this way throws into relief the unexplored intersections between Tsujii's efforts to negotiate "invisibility," "hyper-visibility," and "instant-categorization," the dimensions of cultural meaning that envelop the disabled body (Kuppers, 2001). Delineated thus, the study also intervenes in recurring debates about person-first language—I map Tsujii's distinction between *blind pianist* and *pianist who happens to be blind* onto the distinction contested within Disability Studies between *disabled person* and *person with a disability*—about the relationship between self and other, and the educative possibilities and limitations of music, broadly defined to encompass performance and reception

(Gershon, 2010). The next section adumbrates the history of disability (specifically blindness) in international piano competitions, and in musical performance more broadly, thereby emphasizing the complexities in understanding what it might mean, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, for Tsujii to resist being defined as a *blind pianist*.

1.5 Blindness and the International Piano Competition: A Survey

Over the course of the twentieth century, participants in the developing arena of the public (and often highly publicized) international music competition included a number of disabled musicians, among them several blind pianists who achieved distinction nationally and internationally (Alink, 1990, p. 31; see also Prosnak, 1970). Although the scope of this dissertation does not allow for more than a brief acknowledgement of the history of disability in international music competitions—starting with Imre Ungár's 1932 second prize in the Frederic Chopin Competition, in Poland, continuing throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, and rising dramatically to the surface of the public consciousness in the opening moments of the twenty-first—it is nonetheless helpful to point backwards in time, thereby gaining a larger perspective on what is at stake in the present study. It is also worth mentioning that blind pianists have been a marked presence in Western art music performance since the eighteenth century, perhaps the most well-known example from that period being Maria Theresia Paradis (Pendle, 1987). In Chapter 3, I take up the concept of markedness, as a central concept in the semiotic tradition that informs my own analytical approach. Here I use the phrase "marked presence" in a broader sense, to denote a singular community of musicians within Western art music performance, whose presence has not often been acknowledged, and is therefore, as it were, remarkable.

The following notices which date from the late nineteenth century, illustrate the wide-ranging historical, cultural, and educational issues at stake in the seemingly straightforward distinction between *pianists* versus *blind pianists*. Both notices refer to the pianist, organist and composer Alfred Hollins, whose career spanned the last decades of the nineteenth, and the first decades of the twentieth century. The first excerpt is from a review of a concert featuring Hollins alongside two sighted musicians. The primacy of vision over hearing in the norms dictating on-stage comportment of musicians is here rendered with particular sharpness. The unidentified reviewer compares Hollins' musicianship with that of his two sighted colleagues, writing that Hollins' pianism was characterized "not only [by] *a technical accuracy which would have deserved praise in a player possessed of sight* [but also by] a breadth of style and an appreciation of the composer's meaning *which showed him to be not unworthy of his colleagues*" (*The Athenaeum*, 1886, p. 529; emphasis added). The second excerpt, from several years later, likewise anonymous, devotes a single unceremonious sentence to Hollins, noting that the musician gave a "*surprisingly accurate*" performance of Beethoven's C minor concerto (1891, p. 709; emphasis added).⁴

What is at issue here is something more than damning with faint phrase (the grudging tone of "not unworthy," and the condescension of "surprisingly accurate"). If what matters in musical performance is interpretive skill, then, assuming those qualities are demonstrated by a given pianist, why is comparison with a sighted musician necessary? As we shall find out in subsequent chapters, despite the very different social, cultural, and historical circumstances of

⁴ A review of the same concert in the July 1st issue of *The Musical Times* is more or less identical: "The executant was the blind pianist, Mr. Alfred Hollins, who gave what may fairly be described as a surprisingly accurate performance" (p. 412).

Nobuyuki Tsujii's career, there are sometimes astonishing similarities between his reception and that of Hollins, demonstrating the enduring power of vision to define what it means to be a *pianist*.

Although competitive music-making has existed in many forms throughout the history of Western art music (Alink, 1990; Ghadban, 2009; McCormick, 2008), and, indeed, has been part of other musical traditions throughout the world as far back as sixth century Greece (Latham and Spencer, n.d., para. 1) the origins of latter-day Western art music competitions are to be found in the nineteenth century (Eatock, 2006, p. 265). In the first decades of the twentieth century, international music competitions played an increasingly important part in launching the careers of young musicians, including instrumentalists, singers, conductors and composers.

For a musician to win top prize at an international competition remains an important achievement, leading to various career-building opportunities, and sometimes—despite Taruskin's (2009) gloomy assessment of the effect of competitions on the development of individuality—to artistic growth as well (pp. 6–7; see also Alink, 1990; Brooke, 2001; Cline, 1985; Eatock, 2006; McCormick, 2008; Rosen, 2002). It should be noted that Taruskin's critique of music competitions reflects a commonly held sentiment among performers, scholars and music critics, and the parenthetical recommendations for further reading on this topic are by no means exhaustive of the commentary on this topic. The pianist and scholar Charles Rosen (2002), for example, voices a specific criticism of the educational practices favored by music schools as a result of the career-launching influence of international competitions, arguing that the ways in which they train young pianists to perform, stand in the way of a “direct and experimental approach” to learning the piano-repertoire (p. 94). For Rosen, this emphasis on direct experience of playing the piano is of primary educational importance, regardless of

whether or not a student ultimately pursues a career in music: “the more music one can actually recreate for oneself, even informally, the richer one’s experience of the art becomes” (p. 95).

The ongoing controversy over how beneficial or detrimental competitions are in the training of pianists is beyond the scope of this dissertation (Cline, 1985; McCormick, 2008). However, it is important to take note of the skepticism that music competitions face in general, in order to understand that the controversy over Tsujii’s gold medal at the 2009 Van Cliburn competition involves more than polarized opinions about whether he deserved this mark of distinction and about whether or not the jury awarded Tsujii a gold medal as a “compassionate gesture” (Johnson, 2009, para. 5). Competition results, in particular the merits or failings of individual competitors, are invariably the subject of intense debate among musicians (including competitors and judges), critics, and the general public (Horowitz, 1990; Prosnak, 1970). At the 2009 Van Cliburn competition, the presence of disability in an arena which both assumes normative sensory perception and ability, and exalts virtuosic displays of sensory, physical, and mental ability certainly added unfamiliar dimensions to long-standing consternation about the educative, ethical and artistic dimensions of international piano competitions. However the bitter dispute over Tsujii's gold medal, at times devolving into *ad hominem* statements (as the next section of this chapter shows) must be understood in relation to the larger and more fundamental debate about the validity of competitive music making itself.

Let us recall a central theoretical insight in recent scholarship on disability and performance, an insight which harmonizes with a recurring theme in the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5. By restricting bodily difference to positions of "invisibility," "hypervisibility," and "instant categorization," a given performance environment subordinates artistic expression, aesthetic contemplation, and, ultimately, the communicative interaction between performer and

audience to a dichotomy which confines disability either to the foreground or to the background of the performance encounter (Roman, 2009a & b; Kuppers, as cited in Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 4).

In exploring the reception of Tsujii's UBC recital, my larger purpose was to understand the extent to which his representation in the media as a *blind pianist*, and his repeated efforts to disarticulate his blindness from his pianism (Oda, 2009; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009) shifted focus away from what he wished to communicate as *simply a pianist*. Phrased differently, to what extent did the subset of his UBC audience I interviewed take for granted that the "disabled body is *naturally* about disability?" (Kuppers, 2001, p. 26; emphasis in original).

1.6 Media Reception of the 2009 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition

"What was the jury thinking?" spluttered Benjamin Ivry (2009) all over the pages of *The Wall Street Journal*, arguing that both Nobuyuki Tsujii and Haochen Zhang were undeserving of their gold medals at the 2009 Van Cliburn Competition. Ivry was particularly incensed by Tsujii's performances at the competition, describing Tsujii as a "student-level Japanese performer plainly out of his depth in the most demanding repertoire" (para. 2). Going further, Ivry complained that many articles have focused on the fact that Tsujii

was born blind and learns music by ear. But only results count, and his June 6 performance of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto with the mediocre Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, led with steely resolve by James Conlon, was a disaster. *Soloists who cannot see a conductor's cues should not be playing concertos in public, out of simple respect for the composers involved.* (para. 3, emphasis added)

It is a matter of historical record that blind pianists have been performing in public with orchestras since at least the late 19th century, and have, in some cases, achieved widespread acclaim (Burcescu, 2008; Hollins, 1936; Prosnak, 1970). Consider, briefly, the following description by the Romanian conductor Sergiu Commissiona, of his experiences performing in public with the French pianist Bernard d'Ascoli: there was, for Commissiona, "a concentrated feeling of oneness of pianist, conductor and orchestra—an uncanny sensual relationship considering Bernard's blindness" (as cited in Burcescu, 2008, p. 238). Although the conductor asserts a common bond between himself, d'Ascoli, and the other musicians, the question of exactly why this sensation of deep unity between the musicians should be simultaneously uncanny, and why the pianist's blindness must be offered as a quick explanation, throws the contradictory positioning of blind pianists into sharp relief.

Let us examine more carefully Ivry's assertion that blind pianists should not collaborate with orchestras out of "simple respect for the composer." A few moments of research produce the names not only of Imre Ungár, mentioned earlier as the first blind pianist to achieve major success at an international piano competition (Prosnak, 1970), and Bernard d'Ascoli, but also, reaching further back to the nineteenth century, the blind pianist, composer and organist Alfred Hollins, whose reception, as I also explained earlier in reference to two brief examples, offers a compelling example of the disabling attitudes that render blind musicians as subordinate and in need of validation from their sighted colleagues. Hollins' own memoirs illustrate the extent to which he himself subscribed to these ways of thinking (Hollins, 1936). The point to emphasize here in examining the validity of Ivry's demand is that all of the musicians cited above, as well as a number of others appeared with orchestras *playing concertos in public*.

Moving onwards, let us leave aside the verifiable fact that the “disaster” which so offended Ivry consisted of less than a minute of slightly out-of-synch playing and that such “disasters” happen to sighted pianists, and cannot be attributed to disability in such a tidy fashion. Let us also disregard Ivry’s assumption that the mishap was Tsujii’s fault (the merit or lack thereof in this claim cannot be settled here). In short, let us, for the moment, ignore the myriad sources by means of which we might refute Ivry’s laundry list of Tsujii’s supposed failings as a musician. This particular example of critical reaction to public performances by disabled musicians illustrates a profound contradiction in the position that disability occupies in such a context, at once assumed to be central to critical response, while at the same time relegated to the status of being irrelevant, since, after all, *only results count*.

It is instructive to note the reiteration of a similar trope in the following comments by Robert Battey in a 2010 blog posting for the *Washington Post* entitled “Blind Cliburn winner makes notable, much-hyped DC debut.” In order to facilitate comparison of the unexamined assumptions that derail the responses of both Ivry and Battey, I quote Battey at some length. After criticizing what he considers to be the lack of expressive depth in Tsujii’s playing, Battey speculates that

Sadly, most of this is probably tied to his disability. Tsujii learns music not through Braille (which is available), but by listening to custom-made recordings of the notes for each hand, played slowly, by his teacher. This means he does not absorb bar lines, time signatures, note values, complex phrasing indications and the variety of accents carefully set out by the composer. In order to judge distances around the keyboard, he has to keep his torso absolutely still, which prevents him from moving in any natural way, feeling the underlying pulse. Lastly, the most amazing feature of his technique is how he handles

large leaps. When there's time, he takes an instant to check his position, which adds an extra manoeuvre to what should be a free, organic ballet of the hands. All of these issues add up to music-making that never sounds completely comfortable or sure of what it's about. Still, he is a remarkable, inspiring person. (para. 5)

Some media responses to Tsujii's participation in and success at the 2009 Van Cliburn competition entirely renounced critical distance and thoughtful analysis (Ivry's article is but one example), instead falling back upon a rhetoric of dehumanization in which people with disabilities cannot communicate purposefully with the non-disabled, as equals, that is, as complete, fully present humans. Furthermore, these media accounts illustrate the degree to which assumptions about proper bodily comportment figure in sustaining the notion that certain ways of communicating are markers of incomplete or absent selfhood. Consider, for example, Michael Johnson's (2009) observations in a vituperation entitled "Odd couple share Cliburn gold":

From my Bordeaux study, I watched a webcast of one of his rehearsals for a Chopin Piano Concerto [the Chopin E minor concerto; the full length video is available on YouTube]. His keyboard touch was uncertain but the conductor seemed to be giving him the benefit of the doubt. As his translator relayed the conductor's suggestions to him, his head rolled about on his shoulders and he said nothing. (Johnson, 2009, para. 10)

Johnson takes it for granted that the movements of Tsujii's head and his silence signify nothing more than a lack of social grace, and an inability to interact effectively (in other words, verbally) for the purposes of making music. Absent from Johnson's description is the possibility that Tsujii was in fact listening attentively, and that he was responding to, and interacting with, in other words *being attentive to* the conductor (James Conlon) on his own terms. Tsujii might be

demonstrating a way of interacting with another person (Wendell, 1996) with which Johnson is simply not familiar. Instead of imagining that possibility, however, Johnson straight away rejects the legitimacy of Tsujii's interaction with the conductor, assuming that the relative absence of speech (on the part of the pianist), signified a complete absence of thought. For Johnson, Tsujii is wholly other, the boundary between self and other is firmly demarcated by ability and disability. There is, consequently, no room for a sophisticated analysis in Johnson's account, of what a non-disabled person might learn from how Tsujii makes music, or about how he communicates.

In sharp contrast, the conductor Ron Spigelman (2009) has suggested that the shared victory of Tsujii and Zhang at the 2009 edition of the Van Cliburn competition shattered two pervasive myths regarding disability and age respectively (at nineteen years old Zhang was the youngest competitor that year, and the youngest gold-medalist in the Cliburn competition's history). For Spigelman, the notion that the life experiences of competitors are immaterial, that all that matters is *the music itself* is mistaken. Specifically in relation to Tsujii, Spigelman asks how one can simply treat his blindness as irrelevant. While it remains for this dissertation to critically engage Spigelman's position in relation to the larger reception of the 2009 Cliburn competition results, and Tsujii's subsequent emerge on the international concert circuit, his insistence that music is ultimately about human experience in all its multiplicity, and not simply about *the music itself*, is nonetheless useful as a starting point (part 1, para. 1).

1.7 Scope of Dissertation: Restatement of Research Topic and Central Questions

At this point, it will be helpful to identify the larger concerns which hover in the background of the specific questions of this dissertation, in order to define its scope with greater precision, and to locate the research topic within the principal currents of scholarship in

Education and Disability Studies, including the subfields of Disability Studies in Music, and Disability Studies in Education:

How does musical performance mediate the distinction between being *simply a musician* and being a *musician with a disability*?

How is this distinction negotiated through encounters between musicians with disabilities and their audiences in the context of an actual musical performance?

How do other distinctions, especially that between the role of *performer* and *audience* and the distance between these roles established by the performer's virtuosity (Said, 1991) complicate the reception of musicians with disabilities?

The potential to become locked on the horns of a binary between the sights and sounds of musical performance must be acknowledged (Tsay, 2013; see also, Leppert, 1991; Straus, 2011). In order to avoid this pitfall, it is important to remain open from the beginning to the possibility that performances by musicians with sensory disabilities go further than simply shifting emphasis from seeing to hearing. In other words, it is possible for their performances to do more than destabilize long-standing beliefs in the importance of “compensatory listening” as a strategy through which blind people “reinvent” a vision-dominated world which so often has accorded them marginal status (Kuusisto, 2006, p. xi, as cited in Straus, 2011, p. 170; see also Straus, 2011, pp. 170–174). What might happen, what “pedagogic possibilities” (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82) might come into being if we think about musical performance in terms of its capacity to teach performer and audience to experience music outside the dichotomies that separate thinking

from feeling, seeing from hearing, ability from disability, and, in so doing, to embrace not just blindness, but disability, more generally, as a way to "perceive differently" (p. 82; see also, Gershon, 2010, p. 630)? As Chapter 2 explains, taking apart such divisions has been an important project within ethnomusicological and educational scholarship on the role of musical experience, including performance and reception (Gershon, 2010; Small, 1998).

Discovering the educative possibilities of performances by musicians with disabilities requires an approach that starts from, and continually refers to the lived experiences of making and receiving music, and it is this principle that has guided my study of the reception of Tsujii's recital at UBC. Conversations with Tsujii and individual audience members focused on how they experienced this recital and how their prior understanding of disability was both sustained and challenged during the recital itself, and upon reflection in the months thereafter. As Chapter 3 discusses, media texts including newspaper and magazine articles, and audiovisual sources documenting Tsujii's reception since the 2009 Cliburn competition situate my interviews within the relevant sociocultural and historical contexts.

This reception study offers unfamiliar answers to familiar questions about the educative function of music, broadly construed, in reconfiguring the relationship between self and other through participation in a non-verbal communicative medium. Performances by musicians with disabilities are widely assumed to be different from those of their able-bodied counterparts, an assumption that is a recurring feature in both media reception of, and the scholarly literature on disabled performers (Howe, 2010; Lerner, 2006; Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011). By asking how the non-verbal medium of musical performance mediates, and potentially remakes the relationship between performer and audience, this dissertation calls into question the fundamental assumption that performances by disabled musicians are necessarily different because of the performer's

disability, that the disabled body of the musician is *naturally* about disability. Fundamental to this way of framing the research problem is a belief that disability is not an individual problem, but rather a social process (Oliver, 1993; see also, Barnes & Oliver, 2012; Mitchell & Snyder, 2000; Straus, 2011). Musical performances, in general, and Tsujii's recital, in particular, are each "extreme" occasions (Said, 1991), at once distant from, even as they are unimaginable without, the powerful social, cultural, and political dynamics that shape how performers and audiences receive each other through music.

As subsequent chapters demonstrate, the analysis of musical performance and reception offers significant difficulties and opportunities in scholarly research in general, and educational research in particular (in which latter context music has occupied a marginal status).

Ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1995) describes one such difficulty that musical experience creates for scholarly research, by virtue of the elusiveness, and allusiveness of music's non-verbal, and non-conceptual meanings: "The meaning of musical signs is ambiguous; culture bound, rather than objectively self-evident: people are inclined to perceive and interpret them with reference to their experiences of different cultural systems, as well as according to variations in individual personality" (as cited in Lines, 2003, p. 3).

If, as Michael Bonnett (2009) has argued, "the basic posture of education should be one of openness to different ways of being human" and if, therefore, education should be "experimental" and "experiential" (p. 362), then it follows that an analysis of the educative possibilities of performances by musicians with disabilities needs to situate these performances as sites of productive discomfort. The anxiety that is demonstrated in questions about how disabled musicians overcome the limitations that disability is often assumed to place upon the performing body (Straus, 2011; see also Sandahl & Auslander, 2005) should, on this view, be the

starting point for ongoing reflection on what gives rise to such anxiety in the first place. The educative dimensions of musical performance should ideally guide both performer and audience beyond dichotomous ways of understanding human experience, encapsulated, for example, in the discourse of *simply a pianist rather than a blind pianist*, and towards the cultivation of “openness to different ways of being human” (Bonnett, 2009, p. 362) continually asking along the way: why it is that disability has so often been understood to signify the absence of complete selfhood, to represent a way of *being-not-fully-human*?

When considered in abstract terms, it would seem that the end result of this struggle to unmake normative prescriptions for being human in the world, must necessarily involve rejecting conceptions of disability as a dismal collection of “limits without possibility,” in which blindness is nothing other than the inability to see (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82), thinking instead about different eyes, different ears and different bodies as spaces of “pedagogic possibility,” the educative power of which inheres in ambiguity rather than certainty about what is self and what is other (p. 84).

And yet, as we have noted at the beginning, there is always a gap: a difference between what the performer knows and wants to cultivate in the audience, and what the audience knows, wants to learn, and ends up learning (Biesta, 2004; Gershon, 2010). In trying to understand the educative possibilities and limitations of Tsujii’s UBC recital as understood by individual members of his UBC audience, we must transpose the productive gap in which education “takes place” (Biesta, 2004, p. 13) from the classroom to the concert hall. Our concern will be with the difference between what the performer knows and experiences—in this case that he is *a pianist who happens also to be blind*, a sentiment which he hopes his audience will share—and what audiences actually know and experience—in this case that Tsujii is neither *simply a pianist* nor

simply a blind pianist. Rather than proceeding by means of the communicative model implicit in Gershon's (2010) account of musicians as public intellectuals, who present "ideas and ideals" through the non-verbal medium of music, which their audiences then "interpret" (Gershon does not specify how), we shall chart a more difficult course, asking what forms of education take place non-verbally, in the gap, the silences, the absences, in a word, the *differences* between Tsujii and his audience, and in the relationship between the activities of performing and listening. This is the task that lies ahead in subsequent chapters. In asking such questions, and breaking open the categories of the *sighted* self and the *blind* other, the study draws out the larger implications for educational scholarship on music as a forum for engaged public intellectualism. Foremost among the relevant considerations for educational research, I will argue, is whether or not musicians and audiences learn to question the normative codes of ability and disability, blindness and sightedness, and the conventions of sensory experience which structure musical performance and reception. Even in the absence of systematic description and analysis of musical experiences by performers and audiences, such experiences are nonetheless mediated by rules and conventions that shape, however unconsciously, how music is perceived through the senses, through the body, and through cognition (Straus, 2006 & 2011). Through such critical reflection on what it means to experience music through the senses and through the body (Gershon, 2010), musical performance and reception can claim a space within current and future debates about musicians as public intellectuals.

Chapter 2: Review of the Scholarly Literature

Black and Third world people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity (Lorde, 1980/1997, p. 374).

What is happening is that non-disabled people are getting rid of their fear about their mortality, their fear about the loss of labour power and other elements in narcissism...disabled people are the dustbin for that disavowal. (Hevey, 1991, p. 34)

2.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter discusses the scholarly literature that informs the dissertation as a whole, and is divided into three main parts. The first part reviews the research problem and guiding questions presented in Chapter 1. The second part discusses recent scholarship in Education which my study takes as its main frame of reference, focusing in particular on theoretical and philosophical literature on public intellectualism and relational pedagogy (Biesta, 2004; Bingham & Sidorkin, 2001; Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004; Burdick, Sandlin, & O'Malley, 2011; Sandlin, Schulz, & Burdick, 2010). I situate Nobuyuki Tsujii's UBC recital—an instance of musical performance and reception shaped by anxiety about disability in music—at the juncture of these two theoretical pathways in education scholarship. The third and final part of this chapter surveys the field of Disability Studies (Abberley, 1987; Finkelstein, 1980; Davis, 1997 & 2013; Michalko, 2002; Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Roman, 2009a & b; Shakespeare, 1994; Titchkosky, 2008, 2011, & 2012). Debates among Disability Studies scholars about the signification of "person-first" versus "disability-first" language schemes, and about the representation of disability in mainstream and disability culture are the twin pillars of the present study. Humanistic and social-scientific traditions within Disability Studies structure the philosophical framework, methodological design, and methods of analysis set forth in Chapter 3.

I conclude this chapter by taking up relevant literature in three burgeoning sub-fields: Disability Studies in Education (Baglieri, & Shapiro, A, 2012; Gabel, 2005; Gabel & Danforth, 2006), Disability Studies in Music (Lerner & Straus, 2006; Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011), and Disability and Performance Studies (Henderson & Oistrander, 2012; Koppers, 2001 & 2013; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). Each of these sub-fields offers critiques of normative accounts of selfhood, theorizes the relationship between disability and selfhood, and grapples with the educative role of cultural practices, including music, in upholding and reimagining the place of disability within and in relation to the self. The dichotomy between *pianist* and *blind pianist* which exerts force upon Tsujii's public performances, and their reception by audiences around the world (Cantrell, 2009; Ivry, 2009; Oda, 2009; Schlachter, 2009; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009) points to the relevance for the present study of contested scholarly representations of disability and selfhood in each of these sub-fields.

Despite a common ancestor, Disability Studies in Education, Disability Studies in Music, and Disability and Performance Studies have developed mostly in parallel rather than intersecting fashion when it comes to analyzing the relationship between culture, disability politics, and the reception of performers with disabilities. In concluding this chapter, I take note of the resulting points of congruity and of tension, and situate my dissertation's research questions as set forth in Chapter 1 within their cross-currents. The final part of this chapter also adumbrates the theoretical framework, methodological design and methods of analysis detailed in Chapter 3, explaining how these dimensions of my study forge connections between—even as they raise questions about—the scholarly traditions and debates reviewed in the present chapter. Before examining the relevant scholarly literature, however, it will be helpful to revisit the central research questions set forth in the first chapter.

2.2 Pianism and Blindness: What Happens To Be in the Vexed Relationship Between Disability and Selfhood?

My dissertation explores the reception of performers with disabilities in Western art music, and inquires into the possibilities and limits of musical performance as an educative medium through which to reimagine sensory, affective, bodily, and cognitive experiences of music. The study takes as its focal point a recital by pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii at the School of Music, University of British Columbia and is based on semiotic analysis of interviews I conducted with the pianist and eleven individual audience members who attended his recital (henceforth UBC audience). I situate my analysis of these interviews within the broader landscape of Tsujii's reception in the media since his shared gold medal at the 2009 *Van Cliburn International Piano Competition*.

The larger aim of my conversations with Tsujii and members of his UBC audience was to find answers to four main questions: first, how are the educative possibilities and limitations of this recital defined by Tsujii and by individual audience members? Second, how do these audience members receive Tsujii in relation to the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist*? Conversely, how does the pianist respond to his UBC audience? Third, what are the historical, social, cultural, and behavioral conventions, tacit and otherwise, through which Tsujii's performances are received in contradictory ways as those of *simply a pianist* and of a *blind pianist*? In what ways did the reception of Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital suggest a way out of this dichotomous framing? And finally, how do the rules and conventions of music pedagogy shape the possibilities and limitations of an education of the sensorium constituted through performances by musicians with disabilities?

2.3 Locating Musicians with Disabilities as Public Intellectuals in the Relational Gap Between Musical Performance and Reception

The mainstream tradition of Western art music, of which Nobuyuki Tsujii is an exponent, is largely absent from contemporary social, cultural, and educational theory, and, by extension, from recent education scholarship, having been dismissed as Eurocentric, elitist, and ultimately irrelevant to the present-day educational concerns of teachers, and to the lived experience and interests of students (Abraham, 2007; Gershon, 2010; Symes, 2006). However, my goal for both the present chapter, and for the dissertation as a whole, is not to present an *apologia* for Western art music (Lubet, 2004 & 2010). Instead, I wish to draw attention to the absence of Western art music in contemporary educational research, and its social and cultural-theoretical tributaries as a circumstance which complicates the work of the present study. I noted at the outset that the place of music within public intellectualism, and more specifically, the role of musicians as public intellectuals, provide the principal anchor points for this dissertation (Gershon, 2010). In order to explore Tsujii's UBC recital as an instance of the musician as public intellectual, and to trace the emergence of this public intellectual role through the relational practices of musical performance and reception, it is necessary to account for Tsujii's own understanding of his educational role as a performer, a topic which I consider in greater detail in Chapter 4. To the extent that Tsujii defines his role as one of fostering an appreciation for Western art music in his audiences, analyzing the educative dimensions of his UBC recital from the disciplinary vantage point of a domain of scholarship (Education) whose relationship to this musical tradition is sometimes antagonistic (Abraham, 2007), presents a formidable set of theoretical and methodological challenges.

Despite the lack of firm disciplinary footing, this dissertation nevertheless joins recent educational conversations about the relationship between music and public intellectualism. Questions about what sorts of musicians count as public intellectuals provide a foundation for considering how Tsujii's statements about his disability, and his music-making, as well as his actual music making, carve out a complex, ambiguous role for Tsujii as a public intellectual (Anderson, 2006; Anijar, 2001; Fulcher, 1999 & 2005; Gershon, 2010; Guillory, 2005; Hill, 2009; Treager, 2007). The research questions set forth in Chapter 1 start from the premise that analysis of the educative possibilities and limitations of performances by musicians with disabilities needs to take both performer and audience into account, instead of focusing on *either* performance *or* reception. In this regard, my approach differs from those taken in many previous analyses of public intellectualism through music, approaches which give priority to audience reception. Of the studies referenced above, two, (the latter is a monograph based on the former), focus on musical composition, and on the role of composers as public intellectuals (Fulcher, 1999 & 2005). Thematic and methodological differences aside, however, the theoretical questions these scholars raise are germane to the present study. Principal among these matters are the pitfalls of a dichotomous approach. The dichotomies which disability produces, as I have noted in Chapter 1, sideline the dynamic, contingent qualities of relationships between musicians with disabilities (whether composers, performers, or scholars) and the audiences (whether fellow musicians, journalists, or the general public) whom their work addresses. Too narrow a focus on what happens *either* onstage *or* offstage in the representation of bodily difference would serve only to uphold these binaries.

Recent philosophical inquiries into the meaning of relational pedagogy define education as an interaction between teacher and student rather than as a discrete set of activities falling on

either side of the distinction between teaching and learning (Biesta, 2004). This approach to classroom education helps us to understand how musical performance and reception, conceived as interaction, might be educative in the concert hall on my own interest in the relational textures of musical performance and reception. In reviewing the literature that has shaped my dissertation, it is therefore necessary to show how this area of educational research on pedagogy, together with theoretical discussions of musical forms of public intellectualism, have guided my thinking and subsequent analysis of the educative possibilities and limitations of Tsujii's UBC recital. As the pages of this dissertation unfold, I demonstrate that Tsujii's recital can be richly understood as an instance of public intellectualism through music, the limits and possibilities of which emerge in the situated and relational performance and reception practices of Tsujii and his UBC audience. Walter Gershon's (2010) assertions that all musicians are public intellectuals by virtue of their activities, and that all music has the capacity to educate regardless of the specific circumstances in which it is received, or of the musician's educative intentions (p. 628) are overstated. Gershon does not provide adequate support from the secondary sources to which he appeals in advancing these claims. His essay nevertheless opens up a productive space because of the question it raises—and fails to answer— about how a musician can teach audiences without linguistic communication (verbal instruction; p. 633), and I therefore give his essay a prominent position in the present chapter. It is that question which, perhaps more than any other, unifies the research problem set forth in Chapter 1.

A discussion of the "educative possibilities" of musical performance by Charles Hersch (1998) focuses specifically on democratic education through musical performance, and, furthermore, on improvised idioms (free jazz) rather than on Western art music (p. 93). Despite this apparent thematic distance from my own concerns, however, the questions he asks about

musical performance align in several respects with my own, and his concern with music's place in civil rights struggles also signals a thematic relationship to the present study. For Hersch, musical performance provides a way into the "thoughts and feelings of political activists" in the nineteen sixties. Crucially, Hersch also asks what the limitations are for music "as a source of democratic political education" during the period of time he examines (p. 93).

Building on Hersch's approach, while acknowledging its difference from my own purposes, I locate *the educative* in musical performance within the relational gap between musician (performer) and audience, a gesture which draws a parallel between performer-audience interactions in the concert hall, and teacher-student interactions in the classroom (Biesta, 2004). In Chapter 1, I noted that recent discussions of musicians as public intellectuals who teach audiences by means of a non-verbal, affective, and multi-sensory curriculum inscribed into musical sound (Gershon, 2010), have not adequately considered the presence of such a gap between musician and audience. As a result, theoretical accounts of music as a forum for public intellectualism place an emphasis on the educative possibilities of musical experiences without attending to the possible limits of a relational pedagogy between musician and audience. Simply put, while musical performance may teach, it can also fail to teach, and while musicians may perform a public intellectual role, they may also fail to do so. Going further, still, my dissertation incorporates questions asked by scholars outside the field of education, in order to expand the analytical scope for music within myriad spaces of public intellectualism. Foremost among these are the possible ways in which musicians with disabilities, in particular, might bring about "unlearning" (Gosden, 2001, p. 166). By "unlearning" I refer to the questioning of what too often is simply accepted at first sight, at first hearing, as the tangible evidence of a (non-disabled)

sensorium (Roman, 2009; see also, Titchkosky, 2011 & 2012). I return to this matter in the third chapter, in the context of establishing this dissertation's methodological framework.

A passage from a 2014 doctoral dissertation by Rumi Tobinai provides a foothold from which to argue for the importance of context in linking performer-audience interactions to those between teacher and student, while acknowledging moments in which the analogy breaks down. I have selected this particular excerpt for inclusion here because it describes a classroom interaction in which Nobuyuki Tsujii's self-representation (summarized in the first section of this chapter) was discussed by a group of Japanese students (Tobinai, 2014), and because it lacks precisely the sort of contextual information for which the present study argues. Here is the relevant passage quoted at some length; the broader context for this excerpt is a series of lesson plans which involved students building vocabulary and sentence skills in both Japanese and English, and doing so while working collaboratively in teams:

Students were given questions for discussion in each section, and they talked about them in pairs... In addition, in Japanese they discussed in groups *why Nobuyuki Tsujii described himself as one [sic] pianist who happens to be blind*. (Tobinai, 2014, p. 41; emphasis added).

The absence in Tobinai's vignette of any subsequent analysis of what these students understood Tsujii's "pianist-first" usage to mean, forecloses the possibility of establishing any sure connections to the findings of the present study. Yet, at the same time, this analytical silence highlights the importance of taking multiple perspectives into account when considering what "person-first" and "disability-first" language mean for an actual musician (Tsujii) interacting with an actual audience in a concrete instance of performance and reception (Tsujii's UBC recital). A table on p. 23 summarizing the categories used for that lesson plan adds little in the

way of contextual information. The table itself has four categories: **Content**, **Cognition**, **Communication**, and **Community**. The first three categories are accompanied by a series of broad thematic codes purportedly relating to Tsujii's career, including **talent**, **effort** and **life** (p. 23).

Tobinai (2014) does not explain why Tsujii figured in their class discussion other than in reference to the textbook used for the course.⁵ Reading through Tobinai's brief references to Tsujii, the following questions come to mind, although, to be sure, they fall outside the stated purview of Tobinai's own research: Had the students attended a recital by Tsujii, or had they heard about his shared gold medal at the 2009 Cliburn competition, both of which are plausible circumstances given Tsujii's celebrity in Japan (Oda, 2009; Yoshihara, 2009)? Also, what, if any, conclusions did these particular students reach as to why Tsujii foregrounds his identity as a pianist, positioning his blindness as incidental or irrelevant to his music-making? Such issues of context are not mere details, but are, instead, vital parts of my own analysis, a methodological principle for which I shall argue in Chapter 3, and which I attempt to realize in the analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 5. The task in those chapters will be to pull away the curtain of obviousness, the shroud of common sense covering blindness, which hides the different meanings that Tsujii's performances *as a pianist who happens to be blind*, and the reception practices of his audiences in relation to the vocabulary of *pianist* and *blind pianist* acquire in different types of performance settings. The contexts which must be taken into account in this regard are those of the schools, universities, and concert halls in which Tsujii performs during a given concert season (a topic which I broached during my interviews with Tsujii). Tsujii's first

⁵ The textbook in question is published by Crown Sanseido (p.18). Sanseido Publishing Co. is "a large Japanese publisher that publishes the *New Crown English Series* textbooks" (Fouser, 2007, p. 199).

appearance alongside sighted pianists in the international competitive arena (the 2005 Frederic Chopin competition in Warsaw), presents us with still another interpretive context that shapes the reception of disability in musical performance, that of the international competitive arena. For reasons of scope, I cannot pursue this dimension at length, but some general observations about what analysis of this context entails will nevertheless be useful.

The participation of blind pianists in international competitions since 1932 (a history which I sketched in Chapter 1) opens up new perspectives on questions about what it means to be a *pianist*, a *blind pianist*, and a *pianist who happens also to be blind*. Sustained exploration of these questions would need to grapple not only with the shifting meanings of blindness over time (history) and across space (geography), but also with how blind pianists navigate the institutional norms of the competitive arena, a very different environment from that of the concert circuit (Cline, 1985; Horowitz, 1990; McCormick, 2008; Schonberg, 1987; Taruskin, 2009). Such work awaits future studies. Meanwhile, much work awaits the present study.

The Education scholarship which informs this dissertation can be sub-divided into two main areas. The first space is populated by theoretical work that considers pedagogy as a practice central not only to formal education in schools and universities, but also to a great many cultural, political, and social spaces in which knowledge is continually made and remade. Going further, this scholarship questions the very hierarchies which validate certain forms of knowledge to the exclusion of others (Luke, 1996; Sandlin, Schulz, & Burdick, 2010; Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011). I will focus on a problematic vagueness concerning music in this literature, as a result of which different forms of musical experience, composing, performing, listening, and analyzing are not clearly distinguished from each other. Rather than clear analysis of how these different forms of experiencing music (as composer, performer, audience member, and scholar)

can and cannot be educative, there are broad references to "music," as well as to an assemblage of different musical traditions and musicians, each with very different guiding assumptions, and histories (Abraham, 2007; Gershon, 2010).

Without adequate attention to the diverse histories of these traditions and to their complex roles within and outside of formal educational practices, it is impossible to understand the interplay between history, culture, and sociality, as these pertain to musical experiences, and their educative possibilities and limits (Gershon, 2010; see also, Sandlin, Burdick, & Schulz, 2011; Anderson, 2006; Guillory 2005). Discussions of the role of musicians as public intellectuals in the domain of music studies, on the other hand, are less attentive to the education-theoretical issues of particular relevance to scholarship on public intellectualism in Education (Fulcher, 1999 & 2005). Foremost among the latter is the conceptual distinction between performing music in public (i.e., for an audience), and actually constituting a public through musical performance (a distinction which will be pursued in Chapter 3). Absent this differentiation, for example, Jane Fulcher (2005) treats education through music as synonymous with a "national public pedagogy" constituted through a mixture of musical performances and lectures (p. 95). Not only does this synonymy fail to take note of the different meanings attached to pedagogy and education within education scholarship, but also, like Gershon's (2010) essay, creates the impression that linguistic mediation of musical experience (as in lectures) and a more immediate musical experience (as in performances) do not raise fundamentally different and possibly contradictory questions about their educative dimensions. A shared problem in these diverse approaches to music and public intellectualism is the lack of acknowledgement that a

given musical experience, for example, a live performance, can in some cases leave its participants without any clear sense of personal or collective transformation (Goble, 2010).⁶

The second region, more strongly philosophical in its orientation, considers pedagogy as a dynamic and continuous relationship formed in the gap between teacher and student rather than as the end product of two discrete activities, namely teaching and learning. What is more, this pedagogical relationship is sustained by an ethic of reciprocity, rather than by the uni-directional transmission of knowledge from teacher to student (Biesta, 2004; Noddings, 2004). My dissertation's philosophical framework, set forth in Chapter 3, draws on both theories of public intellectualism in Education, and on philosophical accounts of relational pedagogy in order to explore the extent to which Tsujii's recital constituted a public, rather than merely took place in public (Feinberg, 1993/1998).

Within the wider domain of Education scholarship, Ian Davies, (2002) discusses musical practices in sufficiently broad terms to allow the large claims that he makes on behalf of music to be taken up, and questioned. Davies (2002) makes a passing reference to the "educational function" of music" but the brevity of his invocation of music's "educational function" causes problems. His definition of *the educational* in music is rendered in such broad terms as to make it impossible to differentiate between a merely entertaining or pleasurable experience, and an experience in which some sort of teaching and learning, distinctly separate from mere emotional

⁶ J. Scott Goble's (2010) book *What's so important about music education?* draws on the classical pragmatism of Charles Saunders Peirce (on which more in Chapter 3) to develop a persuasive account of the meaning of particular forms of musical practice within circumscribed musical contexts, going beyond asserting that musical experience *can* be educative in some sense, that music can facilitate individual and collective transformation. Instead, Goble demonstrates the ways in which such transformation *does* happen, and the sorts of conditions in which education through music takes place. By defining what counts as change, growth, and awareness brought about by participation in music, Goble's approach leaves room to think about the dissolution of music's educative capacities when such conditions do not obtain. In this regard, Goble's analysis offers a stark contrast to that provided by Gershon (a difference heightened no doubt by the difference in medium: monograph versus book chapter).

response or amusement are involved. This dissertation aims to avoid the sort of conflation of affect and cognition in musical experience which mars the following excerpt:

Musicians and musicologists need to undertake work that has a clear conceptual base and which relies on cognitive mastery. However, *there is also an educational function in simply listening to music... [or] playing in a way that is inspiring or simply fun.* (Davies, 2002, p. 21; emphasis added)

Without providing an analysis of what they take music's "educational function" to be, these commentators simply call upon teachers working in the schools to include music in the curriculum, but without doing so only in the pursuit of "cognitive aims." Presumably, by "cognitive aims" they mean learning in the more familiar sense of understanding concepts, and acquiring discipline-specific knowledge and competencies, but this is left unspecified and unqualified (p. 22).

In marked contrast, Walter Gershon (2010) tackles—head first, as it were—the distinction between entertainment and education, and criticizes the frequent relegation of this non-verbal communicative medium to the former domain. Gershon's approach is more helpful than that of the scholars cited above for theorizing educative possibilities in musical experience (of which performance and reception are components). As I explain more fully in Chapter 3 however, Gershon's analysis does not account for the educative limitations of music, that is, those values, ideals, and beliefs which musical experience cannot teach, which cannot be reimagined through music, or those instances in which musicians and audiences are merely amused or emotionally moved, rather than transformed by, hence educated through music. Reaching for guidance from outside education scholarship, I turn to the musicologist Richard Taruskin (1995), who makes a distinction (the reader will doubtless recognize his allusion to the

Horatian imperative for poetry) between the aims of musical scholarship (to instruct) and musical performance (to delight). These threads of experience (instruction and delight) can interlace in various ways, but a reckoning with what makes them distinct is imperative, if those moments in which they converge are to be properly understood. In Taruskin's pithy formulation: "Instruction can be delightful. Delight can be instructive. But instruction can require actions that are not always conducive to delight, and delight can 'merely' divert" (p. 30). Applying Taruskin's observation to the present argument, Tsujii's UBC recital, and his performances on the world's stages embody the capacity to delight, but in order for that capacity for delight to be properly understood as instructive, analysis would need to show how a given performance brings about, or fails to bring about, changes in understanding, and transformations in musical experience, for both pianist, and audience. Preparing for this formidable analytical challenge requires that we gain some sense of the contested place of music within education, the background to recent work on music within the terrain of public intellectualism scholarship. It will be helpful to reach back, once again, into history, beginning this time much farther back, in antiquity.

Plato regarded certain musical patterns (sequences of notes called modes) and certain musical instruments as antithetical to the formation of the society that he envisioned (Anderson & Mathiesen, n.d. attitude to musical instruments, para. 1). Exploring the educative possibilities and limitations of performances by musicians with disabilities unfolds against this historical understanding, not only because of the questions the philosophers of ancient Greece raised about the place of music in society, but also because of the ways in which the human body was idealized in their philosophies. Plato's ideas about what is educationally valuable about music, namely a pedagogy of music designed to inculcate morality, virtue, and instill an appreciation for normative standards of aesthetic beauty were shaped by his linkage of moral traits to the body.

Disability Studies scholars have been quick to seize upon this linkage between morality and corporeality as a central focus in their critiques of Western philosophy. Historical and philosophical approaches within Disability Studies have implicated Platonic and Aristotelian thought, specifically their shared emphasis on rational inquiry, in the relegation of intellectual disability, in particular, to the status of sub-human existence (Parmenter, 2001, pp. 269–270; see also, Carlson, 2010; Gracer, 2007; Overboe, 1999; Pfeiffer, 2002). Music was understood by Plato to exert a strong influence over the body, in particular over how the body may embody virtue and reason. Certain musical instruments, genres of music, and certain features of musical experience, particularly those which involve feelings of pleasure and sensuous absorption were to be shunned because of their capacity to lead musicians and audiences in the direction of sentimentality, emotionalism, moral weakness, and intellectual laziness (Stamou, 2002, pp. 5–6).

Aristotle's views on music, like those of Plato, continue to shape contemporary debates about how to place music within a general education (Stamou, 2002, pp.8–9). The influence of Aristotle's treatment of musical performance, and of music competitions, in particular, is discernible in educational theories of music as a site of public intellectualism, and in the still contested position of music relative to the spheres of entertainment and education (Gershon, 2010; Nettl, 2005). In order to understand the larger philosophical issues at stake in this recent scholarship, let us consider what Aristotle had to say about both musical performance and competition. In the eighth book of his *Politics* Aristotle writes:

We reject professional education in instruments, then, (and by professional education I mean the kind that aims at competition). For the performer does not take part in this kind of education for the sake of his own virtue but to give his audience pleasure, and a boorish pleasure at that. (VIII: 6 1341b8–12)

More generally, however, Aristotle believed, albeit warily, that musical experience exerts a formative influence on a person at the deepest level: "music possesses the power of producing an effect on the character of the soul" (VIII: 5 1340B 10–12). Platonic and Aristotelian thought inform the institutional practices and educational work of the Van Cliburn Competition in sometimes contradictory ways, as Chapter 4 will show in greater detail. Although musicians associated with the competition have frequently invoked these philosophers' views on music (Conlon, n.d.; Cliburn, in Rosen, 1993), paradoxes emerge in the use of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies of music to support the intellectual aims of an international music competition. Exemplifying these tensions, in particular, are an interview with the competition's namesake Van Cliburn, for Peter Rosen's documentary film about the 1993 competition, as well as a series of short televised features entitled *Encore! with James Conlon* in which conductor James Conlon invokes Plato and Aristotle in support of performance pedagogy, and, more specifically, for his analysis of the technical and interpretive aspects of musical performance (videos of these short episodes are available on the Internet through the Van Cliburn Foundation's YouTube channel).

In Episode 2, for example, James Conlon tells the audience that Plato conceived of form as an ideal abstraction, and that, for Plato, all sensible objects in the material world, being attempts to copy this ideal form, are inferior. This feature of Platonic thought is then put to work in exploring the ways in which composers, performers, and audiences idealize music, and compare actual instances of music making (musical works, performances, and reception), to an idealized musical experience. As a consequence of this absorption of Platonic thought, performances are ascribed a lesser status to compositions, regarded as impermanent and inferior copies of a transcendent mental conception of the music itself. Composition, although privileged

relative to performance, is itself an inferior copy of the ineffable realm of a composer's inspiration (see also, Taruskin, 1995).

The video also refers to Aristotle's concern with rational investigation in philosophical inquiry and, once again Conlon uses Aristotle's discussion of philosophy and reason to explain the intellectual work that takes place when composers, performers, and (idealized) audiences participate in their respective forms of musical experience. In these videos we have a public intellectual practice in which musicians explain to the audience what they do when they think about and make music, invoking the central figures in Western philosophy to situate their musical activity on a larger intellectual topography. Footage of Conlon rehearsing with several competitors preparing for that year's competition illustrates how these philosophical ideas are put into (musical) practice.

The influence of Platonic, Aristotelian, and subsequently, Cartesian philosophy and more generally, the privileged status of the mind over the body in various philosophical traditions is tangible in the scholarly study of Western art music. As a result of mental contemplation of music being accorded higher value than physical engagement with music, a constellation of educational practices separate abstract contemplation of music's formal properties deemed by scholars to be instructive, from the embodied, situated engagement with music that audiences (and a great many performers) find delightful. As Susan McClary (1990) explains,

our music theories and notational systems do everything possible to mask those dimensions of music that are related to physical human experience and focus instead on the orderly, the rational, the cerebral. The fact that the majority of listeners engage with music for more immediate purposes is frowned upon by our institutions. (p. 14; see also, Shepherd, 1991; Taruskin, 1995)

Disability Studies in Music chips away at the mind-body dichotomy, and to seek a more inclusive pedagogical system that takes different modes of embodiment into account (Lerner & Straus, 2006; Straus, 2006, 2008, & 2011), an intervention which I discuss in the fourth part of this chapter. For the moment, however, it is necessary to emphasize that disembodied ways of contemplating musical experience have long held sway over music scholarship:

There is a clear tendency in [...] Western culture to regard art music as a kind of mental, 'abstract' type of human creative activity. *Even in the field of musical performance, which apparently is intrinsically related to one's technical, or physical, abilities, the values most often referred to are spirituality, creativity, or intellectuality.* In the mind-body relation, the latter is generally thought of as a mere adjunct to the 'higher' realm of the former. (Navickaité-Martinelli, 2008, p. 412; emphasis added)

Ethnomusicologist Christopher Small (1999) advances a similar critique, and traces the primacy of musical objects—principally notated musical compositions that are held to be the most permanent, and therefore the most epistemologically reliable for scholarly analysis—to the philosophers of antiquity. Small argues that the origins of the high status accorded to musical composition in Western art music scholarship are to be found in the Aristotelian notion of "poesis, the creation of forms" (Dahlhaus, 1982; as quoted in Small, 1999, p. 11). Although the fraught relationship that contemporary music scholarship has to philosophical perspectives on music throughout history is not germane to the present study, attending to the central issues at stake in this relationship serves to demonstrate the sorts of complexity involved in arguing in favor of music as a forum for engaged public intellectualism. Like the philosophers and musicologists who populate Small's (1999) critique, Gershon's work on music as public

intellectualism, and musicians as public intellectuals, while not preoccupied with notated music, nonetheless operates with only brief acknowledgements of "the real world where people actually perform and listen to music" (Small, 1999, p. 11).

A unifying thread in recent theoretical work on musicians as public intellectuals, and on another strand of educational research, namely critical pedagogy, is that the relationship between self and other is constructed in significant ways in and through cultural practices outside the walls of formal education (Fulcher, 1999 & 2005; Gershon, 2010; Giroux, 2004 & 2010; Luke, 1996; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007; Sandlin, Burdick, & Schulz, 2010 Shepherd, 1991a). However, the frequent discussion of culture in the broadest terms in this literature perpetuates an untenable binary between "popular" and "high" culture (with Western art music invariably relegated to the latter; see Abraham, 2007; Gershon, 2010; Symes, 2006). The binary leads to popular idioms being associated with educative possibilities, and high culture shunted aside as antithetical to the cause of remaking dominant values. For reasons I elaborate in Chapter 4, Tsujii's reception at UBC and around the world highlights the pitfalls of construing the relationship between mainstream and popular cultural idioms as a series of straightforward oppositions. Obstacles to this dualistic way of framing culture lie along the edges of lived experience, and it is to these we now turn.

In "Reconsidering the Notions of Voice and Experience in Critical Pedagogy" Anneliese Kramer-Dahl (1996) explains that the assumption that "experience" is a "transparent window on reality" creates a host of problems, foremost among which is disregard of the limits imposed on what counts as experience in given historical, social, cultural, and geographical contexts. Kramer-Dahl's observation that well-intentioned concerns with "minority experience" (the present study is concerned with lived experiences of disability) can delegitimize the experiences

of those (for present purposes, non-disabled people) perceived as belonging to "the dominant groups" (pp. 252–254). Tsujii's separation of his blindness from his pianistic self is, at first glance, at odds with the sociopolitical assertions of disability as a "minority experience" within Disability Studies (Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Oliver, 1990; Oliver & Barnes, 2012). These assertions, in turn, have led to widespread rejection of "person-first" language by disability activists (Michalko, 2002; Oliver, 1990; Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Titchkosky, 2008, 2011, & 2012). However, to veer too sharply in this direction, guided by a laudable impulse to respect "minority experience" is to risk silencing the perspectives not only of Tsujii's audiences who claim to support him in this gesture (McAlister, n.d.; Nicholas, 2012), but also of Tsujii himself. Sustaining a simplistic and inaccurate binary between minority and dominant culture, between disability culture's *disability-artists* and Western art music's *musicians with disabilities*, would fail in the critical task of understanding the layers beneath the seemingly common sense distinctions that separate blind from sighted pianists, within the person-first/disability-first representational system. Furthermore, this binary account of culture would substitute bland generalization for a fine-grained understanding of context-specific struggles over meaning: in this case, the question of what it means for Tsujii and his audiences to encounter each other in performance, and to negotiate the meanings attached to blind and sighted pianism in potentially *and actually* educative ways.

Carmen Luke's (1996) critique of the "normalisation of experience" in popular and mass culture (p. 171) is directed at the stultifying effects of advertising and therefore bears little obvious contextual similarity to the performance and reception of Western art music. However, Tsujii has an international profile as a pianist and, furthermore, the Cliburn competition which helped to establish his international presence has tremendous marketing power (Horowitz, 1990;

Rosen, 2009). It would therefore be misleading to claim that Luke's critique of the "normalisation of experience" through the impact of mass marketing on cultural practices cannot be deployed in the present context.

The normalization of musical experience, as I explain further in the third part of this chapter, is central to Western art music pedagogy, including in the training of performers (Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011). There is, to be sure, no standardization of the kind described by Luke (1996) in her critique of globalization (p. 171), since Western art music's normalization of experience is fundamentally a product of the bodily movements and sensory abilities necessary to see, hear, and perform music according to the documented practices of different historical periods within this tradition (MacLennan, 2015). Chapter 3's discussion of Tsujii's UBC recital as a possible instance of non-verbal public intellectualism through musical performance can nonetheless be refined by considering how musical performance has been commodified in fulfillment of the international piano competition's central aim: to find and support pianists capable of sustaining the rigors of an international career (Alink, 1990; Horowitz, 1990; Schonberg, 1987). In this regard, it is helpful to note that the mass production of competitive musical performance has been an object of ever growing complaints that successive generations of pianists tend to sound far too similar to each other (Eatock, 2006; Horowitz, 1990; Schonberg, 1987; Taruskin, 2009).

On a deeper level, however, the expectation that musical experience unfolds before our eyes and reaches our ears in broadly similar ways reveals some of the assumptions about ability and disability saturating the dominant culture, and trickling into the spaces in which music is made, played, and felt (Straus, 2006 & 2011). As the third part of this chapter details, what is important to consider is how assertions of self, representations of the other, and struggles over the position of the able/disabled body must all be taken into account in questioning the

normalization of musical performance and reception, as a result of which the distinction between *pianist* and *blind pianist* seems to be nothing more than common sense. Let us therefore explore more closely how the self, the other, and the body, have been approached in recent education scholarship.

The relationship between self and other and the meaning of selfhood have also emerged as important themes in recent scholarship on relational pedagogy, and on public intellectualism, the two strands relevant to this dissertation (Biesta, 2004; Bonnett, 2009; Gershon, 2010; Luke, 1996; Sandlin et al, 2010). This demands, among other things, that we undertake an "exploration into the experience of the learning self" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 12). Scholars in the field of critical pedagogy have also entered the debate about the educative role of music in society, often with a focus on music in formal school programs (McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). However, as with Gershon's (2010) essay, there is overt disdain for Western art music. Colin Symes' (2006) observation that this cultural tradition has been largely ignored in mid-twentieth century social theory, because of its supposedly self-evident elitism (p. 310) remains true of more recent scholarship.

Consider, for example, the point of view expressed by Frank Abrahams (2007) who castigates music teachers for "the dismal state of music education in many schools." For Abrahams, these educational programs embrace a "Eurocentric nineteenth century aesthetic [i.e., Western art music] that is hardly relevant or interesting" to students (as cited in McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007, p. 224; see also, Regelski, 2004). Abraham sands the edges off this claim, acknowledging that in situations where a Western canonical tradition forms the basis of school music-education programs, this "diet" might be of greater or lesser relevance to students depending on the background experiences they bring into the classroom (p. 224). However,

Abrahams' representation of Western music education programs trying to revive a nineteenth century aesthetic is inaccurate. Abraham would be on firmer terrain if he linked music education curricula to the eighteenth century (Goehr, 1994; Kingsbury, 1988; Lubet, 2010; Rosen 1970/1998). His reference to "Eurocentrism" further distorts the history of Western art music and makes a generalization based on thin evidence, to bolster his diagnosis of what is wrong with school music programs.

The relationship between Western art music and other musical traditions of the world is much more complicated than either Abrahams or, for that matter, Gershon (2010) would have us believe. Furthermore, the role of Western art music in society throughout history is equally complex (Barenboim & Said, 2002; Said, 1991 & 1994). The absence of any engagement by these scholars with the critical traditions in music studies sometimes identified by the rubric "New Musicology," a corpus of literature which scrutinizes Western art music's sometimes ambiguous, sometimes overt, but always complex links with colonialism, nationalism, sexism and ableism only weakens the case against Western art music made within critical pedagogy scholarship (McClary, 2002; Kerman, 1985; Kramer, 2003; Solie, 1993; Taruskin, 1995). I return to this matter, albeit briefly, in the next and final part of this chapter, in discussing the relevant literature from Disability Studies in Music. This burgeoning subfield has critically engaged with, and can indeed be considered part of, the "new" musicological approaches, thereby offering a useful counterpoint to discussions of Western art music in education scholarship.

2.4 Person-First or Disability-First? Representational Schemes and the Education of the Sensorium

The epigraph for this chapter marks a complex thematic connection not only to this chapter but to the dissertation as a whole. Lorde's (1984) critique of the entitlement that leads privileged groups to expect that gendered and racialized humans will educate them, does not specifically mention disability. However, both her work as a public intellectual and her own lived experience of breast cancer, including her refusal to wear a prosthesis after undergoing a mastectomy, attest to her concern with bodily difference in all its forms, and with the sociocultural, sociopolitical, and historical meanings attached to corporeality (Threatt Kulii, 2001 pp. 260–261). We may therefore readily extend Lorde's (1984) insight to the analysis of disability, a mode of being which, like gender, and race, is a "culturally fabricated narrative of the body" (Garland Thomson, 2004, pp. 77). More recently, the emergence of Disability Studies (Davis, 1997; Linton, 1998; Mitchell & Snyder, 2000), has led scholars to work within and across the disciplines in excavating human experiences buried underneath the imposing monuments of history, culture, politics, and education. Musical performance and reception extend into all four domains (Leppert & McClary, 1989), and this final section discusses how Disability Studies has critically examined scholarly and pedagogical practices within Western art music that have failed to make room for bodily difference. Along the way, we shall also consider the contributions offered by scholars in the subfields of Disability Studies in Education, Disability Studies in Music, and Disability and Performance Studies.

Taking our cue from Lorde (1984), then, we may observe that people with disabilities are often assigned the role of teachers *as to our humanity*. A fundamental question arises in this regard: why is it necessary to teach that disability does not diminish humanity? Bodily

differences are given meaning in historically and culturally contingent ways through "the cultural education of the sensorium," a theoretical construct which, as I explained in Chapter 1, refers to the emergence of disability as observable, audible, and tangible within contexts that privilege and exalt the able body (Titchkosky, 2011, pp. 82–83). Tsujii's performances and their reception are structured by the sensorial hierarchies of the musical tradition that the pianist espouses. In other words, the distinction between *blind pianist* and *pianist who happens also to be blind* is not his alone to make. Rather, we must understand how his modes of self-representation on one side of this distinction are negotiated amid the tensions between "person-first" and "disability-first" language, regardless of whether or not these dichotomous systems of representation are directly acknowledged by the pianist and his audience in a given performance setting. In the absence of such acknowledgement, the task of analysis is to draw into the foreground those conventions and habitual modes of thinking which take selfhood for granted as selfhood without disability, and, consequently, imagine selfhood *with* disability as a qualified and limited way of being in the world (Michalko, 2002; Overboe, 1999; Titchkosky, 2012).

The multitude of bodily differences swept together under the rubric of disability is taken to signify a series of individual failures: "imperfection, failure to control the body, and everyone's vulnerability to weakness, pain, and death" (Wendell, 1996, p. 60). As an expression of the values of this larger representational system, the pedagogy of musical performance teaches musicians to exercise tremendous control over their bodies in the pursuit of technical and artistic excellence. The result of this pedagogy has been that disability cannot be taken into account as an integral and inseparable dimension of musical experience.

Implicit in Tsujii's identity claim and its reproduction by audiences (Chapter 1 discussed a blog post as an illustrative example in this regard) is an etiquette which calls upon performer

and audience to imagine disability, as nearly as possible, to be an invisible, inaudible, and intangible object that just *happens to be* somewhere, somehow, in those familiar places where people make and receive music and each other—the practice room, the teaching studio, the competition arena, and the concert hall. Disability Studies analyses makes it possible to re-imagine this normative pedagogy, so that disability can be "sensed" as a way of being in the world that enables people to experience and therefore give meaning to music in distinct ways (Straus, 2011, p. 157). Recalling our guiding definition of education as a space for both the reproduction and critique of dominant practices (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1), the juxtaposition of Tsujii's performances with the normalizing pedagogy of Western art music (Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011), throws into sharp relief dimly sensible possibilities in the relational practices of music performance and reception.

Wendell (1996) points to the asymmetry between the privileged normative *self* occupied by the able-bodied and the marginalized position of non-normative *other* occupied by disabled bodies (p. 61). Thinking back to the epigraph of this chapter we may posit that musicians with disabilities face the expectation of teaching fellow musicians and audiences that they are, after all, musicians, a point argued in a 2009 article by Itsuko Tsujii (the pianist's mother), who explains that he must validate his claim to be "not a blind pianist" through his performances and the approval they garner from sighted audiences (p. 53). In the absence of a history of disability tuned to the lived experiences of disabled people, such educative work presents considerable challenges: "Just as women and black people have discovered that they must write their own

histories, so too with disabled people. Only then will we have an adequate framework in which to locate our present discussions” (Oliver, 1990, pp. 12-13).⁷

Ongoing disagreements about whether to use "person-first" or "disability-first" language, the representational scheme which circumscribes Tsujii's identity claims, are shaped by the slowly unfolding history of disability within the human rights struggles of the latter half of the twentieth century (Swain, French, & Cameron, 2003; Gabel & Connor, 2013). The complexities of this history inform more recent scholarship on the simultaneous presence and absence of bodily difference as a legible domain of experience. Disability signifies what Titchkosky (2011) calls "imagined" objects (p. 54). For Titchkosky, disability is not simply out in the world, waiting to be seen, heard, or felt but is, instead, "made present as an interpretive act" (p. 54). It is therefore necessary to understand the specific contexts and circumstances in which disability becomes tangible through interpretation.

A Disability Studies approach teaches us that, contrary to his declared wishes, Tsujii is not "simply a pianist" and, contrary to many of his audiences' perception, not (simply) a "blind pianist." Titchkosky's (2011) assertion that disability "resides between people" (p. 54) is a reminder that disability is not an individual problem, but, instead, a relational, intersubjective experience. Activism and scholarship—never far apart in Disability Studies—must proceed accordingly. Instances of "person-first language" in Tsujii's statements to the media and in my interviews with him (discussed in Chapter 4), are, ultimately, not to be romanticized as

⁷ In *The New Politics of Disablement* Colin Barnes and Michael Oliver (2012) explain that the updated edition retains the original usage of "disabled people" rather than "people with disabilities" for the reasons explained in the original version, and from which I have quoted (pp. 5–6). I have referenced the original version, since it is here that a detailed explanation is offered for this terminological distinction. A later section of this chapter returns to this discussion of linguistic representations of disability.

individual acts of resistance, but rather as part of a complex social, cultural, and aesthetic fabric (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 22).

David Hevey (1991) and Tom Shakespeare (1994) have both analyzed the disavowal that the claiming of a normative identity requires. The formation of the self in relation to the other is thrown off course by bodily difference in the form of disabilities of various kinds, and Shakespeare (1994) characterizes normalizing strategies as those which involve "denial" and "denigration" of bodily difference (pp. 297–298). In a similar vein, Hevey (1991) uses a vivid metaphor to describe what often occurs when disabled and non-disabled people encounter each other. Disabled people are made to function as a "dustbin for...disavowal" (Hevey, as quoted in Shakespeare, 1994 p. 298), which is to say, as a repository for the anxieties that an able-bodied society has towards bodily difference.⁸

The tectonic shift away from person-first language in Disability Studies expresses a pervasive sentiment that the grammar and rhetorical strategies associated with person-first avowals participate in the normalization of bodies: "person-first language erases alternatives, such as seeing disability as a relation between person and environment, as an identity category, as constituted by assumptions about normalcy...." (Dryden, 2013, *The Concept, the idea, and truth*, para. 8).⁹

⁸ Shakespeare (1994) incorrectly cites Hevey. The passage in full reads as follows: "All art is about emotional catharsis, but what emotion is being catharted? What is happening is that non-disabled people are getting rid of their fear about their mortality, their fear about the loss of labour power and other elements in narcissism. The point I am making is that disabled people are the dustbin for that disavowal." There is no pagination for this source (there is no page 34 as Shakespeare's citation misleadingly suggests). This passage is actually from the transcript of a question and answer session following Hevey's talk: <http://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/files/library/Lees-arts-and-culture.pdf>

⁹ The larger context of Dryden's analysis of person-first language is a discussion of Hegelian philosophy informed by Disability Studies perspectives.

As these examples indicate, Disability Studies scholarship is replete with arguments against a conception of self that positions disability as an individual problem (Michalko, 2002; Overboe, 1999; Titchkosky, 2011 & 2012): "Locating disability 'with a person' reifies its embodiment and flies in the very face of the social model that person-first language is purported to espouse" (DePoy & Gilson, 2010, p. 39; emphasis added). However, public statements by musicians with disabilities active in the performance of Western art music often appear to insist upon precisely the kind of separation between their disabilities and their performing selves which Disability Studies approaches counteract (Glennie, n.d.; Quasthoff, 2008; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009). In the present study, it is therefore necessary to analyze the particular tensions between how performers in Western art music make sense of their disabilities in relation to their music-making, on the one hand, and, on the other, how disability and selfhood have been construed by artists, musicians, poets, and so forth, who have claimed disability identity as central to artistic practice (Sutherland, 1989).

The distinction between "artist with a disability" and "disability artist" identified earlier as central to disability culture, is rendered in stark terms when mapped onto the binary between dominant and counter-cultural practices which I discussed earlier in education scholarship, and which Disability Studies perpetuates (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Sutherland, 1989). This separation is accorded greater emphasis within disability culture than in the more theoretical realms of Disability Studies proper, and the various existing scholarly disciplines in which Disability Studies has been taken up (specifically, Education and Music). Tsujii's own way of positioning himself within Western art music is close to, but not identical with, the formulation "artist with a disability" posited within disability arts (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Oliver, 1990; Oliver & Barnes, 2012). I qualify the assertion thus because when we consider Tsujii's participation in Western art

music (provisionally accepted as a mainstream tradition) alongside the seemingly distant political interventions of disability culture, we gain some measure of clarity as to what is at stake in the struggle over where to place disability in relation to the performer's onstage persona.

At a time when disability arts was still regarded as marginally relevant to political intervention, Allan Sutherland (1989) advocated for disability-arts and disability-first language in vigorous fashion, arguing that the experience of disability binds together art and politics, and that the latter are central to the educative possibilities of disability culture:

I don't think that disability arts would have been possible without disability politics coming first. It's what makes a disability artist different from an artist with a disability.

We don't see our disabilities as obstacles that we have to overcome before we try to make our way in the non-disabled cultural world. Our politics teach us that we are oppressed, not inferior. *And as we wouldn't be us without our disabilities, we have the right to celebrate being disabled.* (p. 2; emphasis added)

Within this landscape of disability culture and politics, in which theoretical perspectives have deep roots in the history of rights-based movements, "person-first language" is held to ignore the mystery that disability ushers into the expanses of human experience: "A sense of humanity abstractly and arbitrarily dividing certainty from ambiguity makes disability as dangerous as is the illusion of a normal human being, and such images seem to naturalize this artificial division between certainty and ambiguity" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 58).

In order to situate the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 in a way that properly acknowledges these complexities, I would like briefly to discuss three problems with the critiques of person-first language advanced by Disability Studies scholars and disability culture activists. First, the gesture of replacing "person-first" with "disability-first" language does not

necessarily constitute an acknowledgement of "the ambiguity that intersects disability and person, human and body" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 84). One might argue that "disability-first language" simply carries with it a different set of assumptions, namely that, in order to critique disabling structural and attitudinal practices in society, it is necessary to insist upon disability as fundamental to a distinct identity, an identity that itself relies on an unexamined dichotomy between political and apolitical intervention. On this view, a musician such as Nobuyuki Tsujii, who identifies first as a musician, and treats disability as marginal attenuates the political force of disability within a given cultural milieu. Framing the distinction in this way— as one that depends on the supposedly fundamental differences between participating in mainstream traditions as opposed to actively resisting the mainstream through counter-cultural practices— papers over the multiple contexts in which Tsujii's separation of disability and music registers as a declaration of his right to define himself on his own terms. Chapters 4 and 5 will pursue the question of whether his 2013 UBC recital constituted one such possible instance.

Another problem is that the "person-first"/"disability-first" dichotomy itself depends on a further set of binaries that I have already discussed: between mainstream and marginal culture, and between elite and popular idioms. Advocates for disability culture criticize artists and musicians with disabilities for failing to acknowledge the richness of living with a disability. Yet these commentators do not argue convincingly that it is conceptually necessary to separate *artists with disabilities* from *disability artists*, often helping themselves to a grab-bag of seemingly random historical examples, ranging from John Milton to Ludwig van Beethoven to explain what disability-art is not (Sutherland, 1997, & 2005, pp. 79–84; see also Barnes, 2008). Systematic comparisons of relevant time periods and geographic spaces which give historical and cultural meaning to the purported distinction are missing from the work of these commentators.

The very notion of *the educative* elaborated in this chapter opens up a contested space, since, as we have seen, education both upholds and makes room for critical analysis of normative practices (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1). For this reason, Disability Studies scholars have occasionally misrepresented education's complex relationship to the body, by overemphasizing the constrictive power of institutional norms, without giving due consideration to the moments of resistance that specific contexts make it possible both to imagine and to act upon. The following claim, for example, tells only part of the story when it comes to situated practices of teaching and learning in the formal education system: "Like all social institutions, education is committed to some notion of the 'normal' and expresses this commitment in its desire to 'normalize' students" (Michalko, 2008, p. 410; see also Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). This institutional desire for normalization is part of a much larger, and contradictory set of practices, as the broad range of scholarship on public intellectualism, and relational pedagogy (to take our main examples from the previous section of this chapter) makes clear. Chapter 4 shows that Tsujii's own ways of navigating both his general education and his training as a pianist have been guided by, even as they remain resistant to, the normative impulses of formal teaching and learning (Gabel & Danforth, 2006; Michalko, 2008; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005).

As with Allan Sutherland's (1989) analysis of disability arts and culture discussed earlier, at a time and in a place where Disability Studies had not gained its present traction in academia, Michael Oliver (1990) advanced a vigorous critique of person-first language, venturing beyond disability culture and politics. In his essay, Oliver explains the larger implications for mainstream accounts of selfhood that an understanding of disability as lived experience carries:

This liberal and humanist view [of selfhood] flies in the face of *reality as it is experienced by disabled people themselves* who argue that far from being an appendage,

disability is an essential part of the self. In this view it is nonsensical to talk about the person and the disability separately and consequently *disabled people are demanding acceptance as they are, as disabled people*. (pp. 15–16; emphasis added)

Oliver exaggerates the strength of this position, however, while simultaneously undermining his larger point with a vague reference to "reality as it is experienced by disabled people themselves." The immediate and obvious questions are: *which disabled people?* And, *in what contexts?* To take the aspect of Oliver's example relevant to the present study, is it "nonsensical" to argue that Tsujii is also "demanding acceptance," but that he is doing so in a way that cannot be adequately understood within the "people-first" versus "disability-first" linguistic dichotomy?

Titchkosky's (2011) account of the "cultural education of the sensorium" (p. 82) can be more richly understood by turning back, once again, to an earlier period in the history of disability, a time when "the absence of the disabled subject [was] evident in a review of standard curricula in history, in psychology, in women's studies, in literature, in philosophy, anthropology" among other disciplines (Linton, 1998, p. 526). There is, in other words, yet another gap resulting from the relative absence of disability as a significant dimension of human experience. The emphasis which Disability Studies scholars place on the convergence of multiple embodied experiences in relation to cultural practices (Barnes & Mercer, 2003; Ingstad & Whyte, 1995; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005) thus offers a helpful location from which to address this silence in the scholarly literature, the work of Chapters 4 and 5.

The primacy of ability and its role in refracting selfhood through the ability-disability dichotomy are the prerequisites for "successful inclusion" in a context that assumes, even

demands, the performance of ability, what Campbell (2009a) refers to as "*compulsory ableness*" (p. 25; emphasis in original). The demands of *compulsory ableness* are negotiated through a balancing act of sorts and, in this sense, Tsujii's controversial demonstration of *compulsory ableness* in the 2009 Van Cliburn Competition is never far away from his performances and reception on the international concert circuit. It is worth noting that this circumstance presents a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, Tsujii realizes that he is perpetually and disconcertingly framed as *the blind pianist*. However, just as often, concert notices and reviews mark him with the distinction of being a gold medalist at a prestigious international piano competition, a context in which *compulsory ableness* is perhaps even more highly exalted than in the "extreme occasion" (Said, 1991) of public musical performance.

I have noted that many internationally renowned performers with disabilities insist that their musicianship is not significantly shaped by their disabilities (Glennie, n.d.; Oda, 2009; Quasthoff, 2008; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009). I have drawn on the work of several Disability Studies scholars and disability culture activists to explain how these performers locate themselves in ways that run counter to the prevailing winds of disability scholarship and activism. However, scholarly support for the separation of disability and the self is nonetheless available. It is to discussion of this perspective that we now turn, with the aim of understanding the tensions in the scholarly domain between a selfhood that embraces and a selfhood that disavows disability.

The philosopher Linda Purdy (1996) argues for precisely such a separation and, moreover, supports her argument by pointing to a lack of basic agreement among disability scholars and activists about the extent to which disability is essential for, or external to, the self. Purdy explains that, in her own life, the question has been settled, and that disability is not at the center of her own definition of selfhood. "My disability is not me," Purdy declares and,

consequently, "it should be possible mentally to separate my existences from the existence of my disability" (p. 68). Rejecting Purdy's mode of thinking, however, Campbell (2009a), whose notion of *compulsory ableness* I invoked earlier, insists that it is not possible to separate the self and the body in this fashion. Appealing to the "dynamics of identity formation," Campbell (2009a) explains that the lived experience of bodily impairment, as distinct from inequitable material circumstances which disable people with bodily impairments often face, "*can and does* effect the formation of self—in other words 'disability *is* me,' but that 'me' does not need to be imbued with a negative sense of self-ness " (p. 27; see also, Corker & French, 1999; Davis, 2002; Garland-Thomson, 1997).

The emergence of a distinct "disability culture" and "disability arts" in the final decades of the twentieth century, then, reflects a political impulse which is itself a site of contestation among people with disabilities/disabled people. Through vigorous debates about bodily difference and the self, people with disabilities could align themselves with, set themselves up in opposition to, or search for other ways of presenting themselves in a "mainstream society" from which they were excluded. Disability arts was originally supposed to teach its audiences how to rethink disability anew and, in this regard, the educative impulses of disability culture are not far removed from the educative possibilities and limitations of Tsujii's recital: "Disability arts...stresses the role of the arts in developing cultural (and by inference political) identity...exposing the disabling imagery and processes of society" (Barnes, 2003, p. 8). Implicit in this way of defining disability arts is an understanding of bodily difference as performance, a theoretical space into which we now move.

Introducing a collection of essays that bring together Disability and Performance Studies, Carrie Sandahl and Phillip Auslander (2005) explain that critical analysis of disability as a mode

of performance depends on a fundamental rethinking of the body, moving away from defining bodies in reference to stable attributes and symptoms (a process which organizes human experience along the ability/disability binary), to more dynamic analyses of what bodies do. Disability, conceived in "performative terms" must then be explored as "something one *does* rather than something one *is*" (p. 10; emphasis in original). The authors state that "because of their unique cultural and somatic experiences, disabled bodies relate to and define space differently than [sic] normative bodies" (p. 9; see also, Koppers, 2001 & 2013). The disabled body, on this view, is a communicative medium perpetually *in performance* (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). Ability is likewise an artifice, a performance, rather than simply an inherent, natural, and obviously desirable bodily trait. As Anita Silvers (1998) explains, in a different context:

We usually suppose that, because listening, seeing, walking, intelligence, and other such performances are central to our daily lives, the sheer exercise of the faculties that support them must gratify us. Based on this assumption, a case is often made that sight, hearing, mobility, and complex cognition are good in themselves and, consequently, their loss constitutes a deprivation of intrinsically valuable experiences. (p. 89)

However, just as there are disagreements in Disability Studies over the separation versus the inseparability of disability and the self, so too, in Western art music, there is conflict among performers as to whether or not disability and music-making are fundamentally separate parts of the self. The violinist Itzhak Perlman, in particular, has found himself in an ambiguous position. Initially, Perlman, like Tsujii, the percussionist Evelyn Glennie (n.d.), and the bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff tried to separate disability from a purely musical identity. However, as

Perlman himself explains, although the foregrounding of his disability by critics initially angered him when he was still establishing himself on the concert circuit, there came a point when he wanted to "identify...not only as a violinist but as one who has a disability" (as cited in Straus, 2011, p. 144; see also McLellan, 1981, D1).

From a Disability Studies perspective, Perlman's changed perspective still maintains a "person-first" representational scheme that is antithetical to the socio-political analysis of disability. However, it bears emphasizing that, within the culture of Western art music, Perlman's more recent way of thinking about disability as a part of his musical self, offers a vigorous challenge to a pedagogical system which has typically favoured an all-or-nothing approach to the disabled body (Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011). At the same time, however, Perlman's shift in thinking calls into question, however indirectly, the conceptual power of the distinction between *artist-with-a-disability* and *disability-artist* favoured in disability culture and activism (Sutherland, 1997 & 2005).

Tsujii's preference for stepping outside the frame imposed by the phrase "blind pianist" is discussed by his mother Itsuko, who explains that "the issue of how other people look at [her son]" remains a big question for the pianist and his family following his rise to international prominence after the 2009 Cliburn competition ([Itsuko]Tsujii, 2009). She writes that her son adamantly refuses the descriptor "blind," the wider implication being that the work of unmaking his representation as a "blind pianist" is, at least for the moment, incomplete, dependent upon a unidirectional transformation of understanding: "*Nobuyuki needs to continue proving this to others*" (p. 53, emphasis added). From her perspective, a perspective that informs educational practices of many different kinds, it is the disabled person who must seek validation and confirmation from non-disabled people, and who must work to be seen as *not different*. This in

itself, however, is a difference which relegates disabled people to the status of *other* and cements the position of disability within individual bodies, rather than as part of the great *self* of collective human experience and interaction (Straus, 2011, pp. 180–181).

The relationship between disabled and non-disabled people in the passage excerpted above, and the normative understanding of disability in which it participates are problematic when considered in relation to critical analyses of what "people-first" language does to disability. As James Overboe (1999) has written, "disabled people who achieve 'people first status' are not achieving full normative status but are only legitimizing an able-bodied resemblance through their desire for normality" (p. 24). As an antidote, Overboe prescribes a way of understanding lived experience that acknowledges the richness of disabled sensibility and embodiment. Central to the efficacy of Overboe's antidote is a critique of using disability to qualify, rather than to claim, personhood, (pp. 24–25). While Overboe's advocacy for embracing a disabled embodiment is compelling, his reduction of person-first language to a weak and ultimately deceptive mode of inclusion does not make adequate room for the complex interactions which person-first language prefigures in actual encounters between able-bodied and disabled people, a theoretical and methodological shortcoming which I pursue in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 and 5 will show how when faced with the task of working through the different implications of being a *pianist* and a *blind pianist*, in concrete performance situations, rather than solely in the abstract, both Nobuyuki Tsujii and individual UBC audience members struggled with the question of how person-first and disability-first representational systems circumscribe interpretive possibilities for musical performance and reception.

The interventions staged by Disability Studies scholars referenced in this section constitute the principal starting point for taking disability seriously as a way of being human in

the world. Empirical study of actual encounters between embodied selves, disabled and otherwise may, however, find it no easy matter to brush aside the pre-existing beliefs that people (disabled and otherwise) hold, and which are further reinforced by institutional, social, and cultural norms that compel demonstrations of able-bodiedness (Campbell, 2009a). The performance of ability is not easily dislodged as a necessary condition for participating in institutional, social, and cultural practices.

In other words, the points of disagreement along the continuum of views on selfhood in relation to the body must serve as the starting point for inquiry, rather than as parenthetical inconveniences injurious to an untroubled commitment to one side or other in the debate. These points of disagreement emerge more fully in later chapters exploring how audience members at Tsujii's UBC recital struggled in various ways to make sense of disability and selfhood in reflecting on their experiences of his performance. More immediately, in Chapter 3, the congruities and tensions between the reimagination of disability and selfhood, and the translation of imagination into practice, guide the elaboration of this dissertation's philosophical framework, methodological design, and methods of analysis. The countervailing forces against which Tsujii struggles can be understood to reflect pervasive and frequently unquestioned way of making sense of disability in negative terms, as a condition that reverses normal human progress (Rogers & Swadener, 2001, p. 5).

What dimensions of musical experience remain silent *in* or are silenced *by* the criticisms that Disability Studies scholars level at dominant cultural forms (Barnes & Mercer, 2003)? Disability Studies has, thus far, necessarily focused attention on how the embodied experiences of people with disabilities, their experiences of the quotidian and the aesthetically rarified have been silenced. As a result of these critical analyses, the marginal status of disability is being

reconsidered: “we have accumulated a significant body of knowledge, with a different standpoint (or standpoints) from those without disabilities ...that knowledge which has been ignored and repressed in non-disabled culture should be further developed and articulated” (Wendell, 1996, p. 73). The daunting question of how this still relatively unknown corpus of knowledge can be brought into conversation with the privileged knowledge of non-disabled experts on disability can receive no final answer in this dissertation. Yet, the path ahead for the present study curves along this border between the known and the unfamiliar.

I conclude this chapter by revisiting the discussion in Chapter 1 of how Tsujii's statements to the media are often used to support dominant narratives of disability. The preceding discussion of the literature helps us to interpret these statements in new ways. One statement, in particular appears on Tsujii's official website, and is also included in his biographical summary in the program book for the 2009 Cliburn Competition: "There are no barriers in the field of music" (p. 108). From a Disability Studies perspective, it might be argued that the frequent reproduction of Tsujii's statement in advertisements for his performances reflects a process by which mainstream society and culture rationalizes a status quo that is anything but inclusive of disabled people (Lubet, 2004 & 2010). However, when Tsujii makes claims that appear to uphold familiar ideas of the universality and transcendence of music, as discussed in Chapter 1, is he merely participating in repressing the knowledge of people with disabilities, acquired through lived experiences of exclusion (Lubet, 2004; 2009; 2010)? This experiential knowledge might be characterized as involving the now familiar realization that music is not quite the transcendent force that it has been made out to be. Going further, is Tsujii's statement simply another rehearsal of the notion that life with a disability needs to be infused with optimism, that— to pick up and dust off the old cliché—the only disability is a bad attitude,

a bad attitude manifest in arguments that there *are* barriers in music? These larger questions crystallize in David Mitchell & Sharon Snyder's (2000) critique of the blithe assumption that disability is interpretable, and relatedly, of "*the undergirding authorization to interpret that disability invites*" (p. 59; emphasis in original).

In Chapter 3, I explain how the philosophical and methodological dimensions of the present study inhabit a complicated space in this regard. On the one hand, answering my central research questions obliges me to authorize myself as researcher, and to invite others (Tsuji and individual UBC audience members) to interpret Tsuji's blindness. On the other hand, however, it is our very authority to interpret disability (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000) that the interview participants and I came to question in several unanticipated ways, as Chapters 4 and 5 will show.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Music's effects upon performers and listeners can be devastating, physically brutal, mysterious, erotic, moving, boring, pleasing, enervating, or uncomfortable, generally embarrassing, subjective...(Abbate, 2004, p. 514)

All too easily squeezed out from our thinking lies a world of performance that encompasses professional musicians, amateurs, and listeners alike, and that combines the pleasures of social interaction, embodied practice, sensory gratification, and private fantasy. (Cook, 2013, p. 413)

3.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, I review the core research questions presented in Chapter 1. I show how these questions point to the need for a method of inquiry capable of discovering what Nobuyuki Tsujii's distinction between *pianist who happens to be blind* and *blind pianist* means both for the performer himself and for his audiences in the setting of an actual musical performance.

Second, I set forth the philosophical framework which organizes the central research questions. I identify the pragmatism espoused by Charles Sanders Peirce as foundational to the methodological design of the study as a whole, and explain how Peirce's pragmatism guides interpretation of the experiences of performing and listening comprising visual, aural, kinesthetic, musical and linguistic signs. Signs, defined in Peirce's elaboration of pragmatism, are meaningful units interpreted by an abstract and theoretically infinite community of sign interpreters along a continuum of qualities of feeling, assertions of reality, and rule-governed systems of meaning. These signifying units encompass dimensions of musical experience of concern to my study, as well as a great many more besides (Cumming, 2000; Daniel, 1984;

Goble, 2005, 2009, & 2010; Peirce, 1868, 1982, 1903/1997 & 1931; Turino, 1999 & 2014).¹⁰

Pragmatism locates meaning along a continuum of these experiential categories, providing a philosophical framework for drawing out the multiple meanings that *pianist* and *blind pianist* acquire in specific instances of musical performance and reception.

Third, I lay out the methodological design of the reception study as a whole. I discuss the empirical materials, comprising two main sources, upon which I focus my analysis. The first set of sources is a series of in-depth interviews I conducted with pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii, and with a purposive sample of ten audience members who attended Tsujii's recital on March 10th, 2013, at the UBC School of Music. The second collection of sources includes magazine and newspaper articles and television documentaries, and provides a broader context for Tsujii's reception at UBC. These textual materials document the pianist's reception by music critics, journalists, filmmakers, fellow musicians, and the general public in the four-year period spanning Tsujii's shared gold medal at the Cliburn competition, his subsequent emergence on the international concert circuit, and his 2013 visit to UBC. As later chapters will show, the *pianist/ blind pianist* dichotomy has figured prominently in Tsujii's reception, intersecting at various points with larger debates about musical practices in formal educational contexts, as well as in culture and society more broadly.

¹⁰ Following accepted citation practice in Peirce scholarship, I refer where possible to the most comprehensive publication of Peirce's work: *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, in six volumes published between 1935 and 1958. Another widely used source is *The Essential Peirce*, both volumes of which were published in 1992 and 1998, and I use excerpts from these volumes as well. Finally, I employ the accepted abbreviation system: *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* is shortened to CP, followed by volume and paragraph number (these last two are separated by a dot). Citations of *Essential Peirce* use the abbreviation EP, followed by volume and page number (these last two also separated by a dot (see also, Jappy, 2013, pp. xv–xvi; Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Malachowski, 2013; Sullivan & Solove, 2013, p. 348).

Fourth, and finally, I discuss the methods which I used to analyze the interviews and the media texts enumerated above. I explain how my approach to semiotic analysis takes up and, where necessary, modifies Peirce's taxonomy of signs, and the different interpretive processes to which these signs give rise, in reference to affect, causality, and convention. My own approach differs most strongly from that of Peirce in the matter of abstraction versus lived experience. For Peirce, individual or concrete instances of sign-usage by actual communities of inquiry (for example, philosophers and scientists, the communities with which he was primarily, but not exclusively concerned) matter less than a comprehensive and normative account of the necessary conditions in which different categories of signs *would be*—as distinct from *really are*—meaningful, in *conceivable*—as distinct from *actual*—situations (Peirce, 1931 & 1903/1997). In contrast, my own approach is concerned less with normative accounts of how signs should produce meaning in ideal circumstances, than with how signs are interpreted within a community of inquiry itself brought into existence in musical performance and reception (Cumming, 2000). It will be helpful before proceeding further, briefly to review the specific set of questions that guide this study. This recapitulation sets up the later discussion of why Peirce's approach to signification is uniquely suited to my study, a topic which occupies the second section of this chapter.

3.2 Recapitulation of Central Questions

The thematic background of the dissertation is the role of musicians with disabilities as public intellectuals. Public intellectualism has figured prominently in recent education scholarship (Sandlin, Schulz, & Burdick, 2010), and within this vibrant space, the educative role of musicians occupies a small but productive corner (Gershon, 2010; Pinar, 2010; Said, 1991,

2001, & 2008). Against this background, I contemplate the reception of musicians with disabilities, gesturing towards a series of general questions from which I develop a more narrowly focused research problem which can be formulated thus: what educative possibilities and limitations emerge in the performances of musicians with disabilities? Through this non-verbal communicative medium, how might performers and audiences learn to question normative definitions of musical experience? In so doing, how might participants in musical performance fashion the relationship between self and other, moving past the dichotomous representational systems of “person” first and “disability-first” language?

Sustained comparison of the reception of blind pianists in jazz and popular idioms (Lubet, 2010; Rowden, 2009; Shim 2007; Straus, 2011), and in Western art music is beyond the scope of this study. However, we may nevertheless consider an example which demonstrates how difficult it is to make generalizations about the self-representation of blind pianists in relation to how others respond to them. The jazz pianist Lennie Tristano reportedly used to issue a challenge to anyone who antagonized him: “Just turn the lights out and we’ll be even” (Shim, 2007, p. 200). Eunmi Shim (2007) interprets this as Tristano’s reluctance to “acknowledge blindness as a handicap” (p. 200). The bluntness of Tristano’s challenge is in stark contrast to Tsujii’s more subdued modes of self-representation which I discussed in Chapter 1. However, it is worth noting the familiarity of the underlying problem which my dissertation addresses: what makes blind pianists *different* from sighted pianists is not that they cannot see, but rather that they have to work to *not be* seen and heard as different. If, as Titchkosky (2011) has argued, disability signifies an “absent object,” then, I argue, the norm of able-bodied pianism is likewise the “absent object” signified by sighted pianists (p. 54).

As set forth in Chapter 1, the core questions of this dissertation are as follows:

1. How are the educative possibilities and limitations of Nobuyuki Tsujii's recital on March 10th, 2013, defined by Tsujii and by select audience members?
2. How do these audience members receive Tsujii in relation to the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist*? Conversely, how did Tsujii receive his audience?
3. What are the conventions, tacit and otherwise, through which Tsujii's performances are received as those of *simply a pianist* and of a *blind pianist*? In what ways did Tsujii's UBC recital participate in and resist this dichotomous framing?
4. To what extent do the interlocking activities of musical performance and reception in the context of Tsujii's UBC recital constitute a relational pedagogy (Biesta, 2004, p. 13), defined as an education that "takes place" in the gap between the one who teaches (musician) and the one who learns (audience)?

As noted in Chapter 1, Tsujii's shared gold medal at the 2009 Cliburn competition gave rise to extensive discussion in the media and among the general public as to how he learns music, and how he collaborates with other musicians in the absence of visual interaction (Cantrell, 2009; Chung & Inada, 2009; Hewett, 2013; Nick, 2013; Oda, 2009; Schlachter, 2009). Newspaper and magazine articles about Tsujii from 2009 to 2013 show that the passage of time has not dulled widespread fascination on the part of critics and audiences with blindness in music, a point to which we will return shortly. My own interviews with Tsujii and individual UBC audience members, also discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, were shaped by what can best be described as an ambivalent relationship to this sense of curiosity about blindness, even as our exploration of questions about how a *blind pianist* functions brought forth the realization that such curiosity is not necessarily self-evident or natural (Tsujii, as quoted in Hewett, 2013).

I position my research questions in relation to two public statements by Tsujii discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the first of which is attributed to the pianist by his mother in an article she wrote for a Japanese magazine, while the second comes from an interview with Tsujii for a piece in *TIME Magazine*. Both articles were published in 2009, several months after Tsujii's shared gold medal at the 2009 Cliburn Competition. The first example suggests that the pianist is unequivocal about his musical identity: "I am not a 'blind pianist.' I am a pianist who happens also to be blind" [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009, p. 53). The second example informs the reader that Tsujii resists being framed as a "blind pianist" and, instead, wants to be received as "simply a pianist" (Oda, 2009, para. 6). As explained in both Chapters 1 and 2, Tsujii's statements in the media and in my interviews with him bear the imprint of Western art music's normalizing pedagogy (Straus, 2011). In this tradition, musical performance provides a space in which musicians with disabilities are expected to perform both music and disability because of a pervasive social and cultural anxiety towards the visibly disabled body (Howe, 2010; Lerner, 2006; Roman, 2009). This anxiety often modulates into a kind of fascination: the ability of an audience to see and hear a disabled performer on stage makes bodily difference sensible in certain *spectacular* ways, and not in others, for example, as a different, yet equally rich way to experience music (Roman, 2009; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005; Straus, 2011; Titchkosky, 2012).

Two more recent statements by Tsujii, contemporaneous with the research and writing of the present study, show that Tsujii's struggles to define himself as a pianist have been a persistent source of tension in his critical and popular reception since his shared gold medal at the Cliburn competition (Ikenberg, 2014a & b; Nick, 2013). The first of these more recent statements comes from around the time I did a follow-up interview with Tsujii (during his visit to Mobile, Alabama):

I believe blindness has nothing to do with artistic quality.... As people don't call Beethoven a 'deaf composer,' *I wish people would call me a 'pianist' instead of 'a blind pianist,' and try to enjoy the music I play.* That said, if handicapped people and their family [sic] feel encouraged or touched by my piano playing, it would be a great honor for me, too. (Tsuji, as quoted in Ikenberg, 2014, para. 9; emphasis added)¹¹

The term "handicapped" used by Tsuji's translator in the excerpt quoted above, has been the subject of much critical analysis in Disability Studies (Baglieri & Shapiro, 2012; Kriegel, 1991; Michalko & Titchkosky, 2001). Leonard Kriegel (1991), for example, rejects both the terms *handicapped* and *disabled*, preferring instead, to (re)claim his presence as a *cripple* and to align himself with others who believe in the critical and politicized intervention that a *crippled* identity enacts. For Kriegel, the latter designation permits the acknowledgement of emotional dimensions, specifically feelings of "rage" and "pride" as tightly bound up with what it means to be disabled for oneself, and for others (p. 61). Here, Kriegel gestures obliquely to an affirming call within the disability rights movement—*proud, angry, and strong*—itself a reference to a song by Johnny Crescendo bearing this title (Swain & French, 2000, p. 569).

However, even among Disability Studies scholars and activists there has been no agreement on questions of language, a tension thrown into sharp relief by the following observation: "You can give a horse a handicap and it can still win the race. But you know what they do to disabled horses, don't you?... *Actually the only label I will accept without qualification is 'person'*" (Zimmerman, 1985/1990, p. 37; emphasis added). The concluding declaration which

¹¹ The translator for this interview with Tamara Ikenberg was Nick Asano, Tsuji's manager in Japan, who also assisted as the translator for my own follow up interview with Tsuji.

I have emphasized in the passage quoted above aligns closely with Tsujii's own assertions of his presence as a *pianist*, a designation that he, too, would appear to accept without qualification. This is in marked contrast to his hesitancy with respect to systems of representation that identify him as a *blind pianist*.

Another statement by Tsujii from the previous year indicates that the imposing figure of Ludwig van Beethoven—Western art music's iconic musician with a disability—plays an important, yet contradictory role in Tsujii's life as a pianist. On one hand, there is the familiar language of overcoming disability encapsulated in the qualification “despite,” in reference to another's disability (Beethoven's deafness). On another hand, there is the seemingly contradictory notion that disability is not an obstacle, and going further, not even relevant to the ability to compose, perform, and to enjoy what composers write, and what performers play. On still another hand, there is an identification, a reaching out across the centuries to another musician with a disability: “Despite his hearing impairment, Beethoven composed numerous memorable pieces of great music. As someone who is visually handicapped, I empathize with and greatly admire Beethoven” (Tsujii as cited in Nick, 2013, para. 13; emphasis added).

Chapter 1 explained that the “cultural education of the sensorium” (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82) teaches us how to make sense of the disabled body in historically and culturally contingent ways. Within the tradition of Western art music performance, this “cultural education of the sensorium” leads audiences to expect visibly disabled musicians to showcase the corporeal symptoms that render them *different*, as I have already noted (Straus, 2011, p. 126; see also, Howe, 2010; Lerner, 2006). Against the backdrop of such expectations, Tsujii's resistance to being framed as a *blind pianist* constitutes a gesture of defiance against the norms of Western art music performance.

The role of the media in shaping the reception of musicians with disabilities is also of concern to the present study. An illustrative example comes from a *Wall Street Journal* article from December 1st 2014. The article reviews the common threads that bind together the ways performers with disabilities in Western art music have sought to represent themselves. What is noteworthy, here, is the air of self-criticism that circulates through this article, a reckoning with the role of the media in problematic representations of musicians with disabilities (Ramey, 2014).

Corrine Ramey (2014) explains that musicians with disabilities fault the media for representing them in stereotypical, reductive terms (para. 17). Among the musicians quoted in the article is Evelyn Glennie, whose assessment of the media's role in her early career resembles Tsujii's complaints about being typecast both by audiences and the media as *the blind pianist* (Oda, 2009, para. 6). The rules of Western art music performance and reception dictate that musicians must be good enough to be judged as *simply* musicians: "*I was simply a musician, and I wanted the [media] articles to be about music*" (Glennie, as quoted in Ramey, 2014, para. 18; emphasis added). Implicit in Glennie's statement is that she wanted her reception in the media to be not about music *and* her disability, but only about music and *not* about disability. On this view, to be received as a musician *with a disability*, or a *disabled* musician, is to be relegated to the margins of lesser musicianship, having failed sufficiently to transcend bodily limitations.

Within the counter-cultural tradition of disability arts examined in Chapter 2, the disability-activist Allan Sutherland (1997) separates "artist with a disability" from "disability artist" along the line marked by Glennie, arguing that a "disability-artist" unlike an "artist with a disability" treats the lived experience of disability as suitable subject matter for creative expression. It is in this embrace of the experience of disability, that the political dimensions of

disability-arts emerge (Sutherland, 1997, p. 159). As the extant Disability Studies in Music scholarship demonstrates, however, the history of Western art music offers compelling examples of musicians with disabilities taking their lived experiences of disability as sources of musical inspiration, or as foundational to their music-making, (Howe, 2010; Straus, 2011). While it would be too much to suggest that these practices constitute a form of disability-arts *avant la lettre*, these counter-examples suggest that the distinction Sutherland makes needs to be rethought. Simultaneously, the assumption on the part of musicians with disabilities such as Glennie and Tsujii that it is necessary, or even possible in the first place, to focus on music-making rather than disability can be scrutinized by taking into account the politicized critiques of disability arts and culture activists.

It is only in the last two hundred years or so that Western art music performance has become a truly public event (Cook, 2001; Dahlhaus, 1989; Goehr, 1989 & 2004; Leppert & McClary, 1987; Leppert, 2004; Said, 1991 & 2008; Taruskin, 1995). The rules governing proper behavior for both performers and audiences have necessarily changed, although despite these shifts, there are continuities the past origins of which have largely passed into the realm of common sense and accepted practice (Johnson, 1995). Concerning audience comportment, in particular, a broad taxonomy accounts for how the concert-going public has "listened over time" including categories of experience such as "sounds, images, ideas, emotions, vague feelings, and so forth" (Johnson, 1995, p. 2). In the final section of the present chapter, I show how the methods of semiotic analysis I use for the interviews, and for the media reception sources, locate the signs invoked by Tsujii and his audience in relation to these general experiential categories during my conversations with them. This sets the stage for Chapters 4 and 5, in which I show how each of these categories, as well as other musical experiences not so easily located among

those proposed by Johnson, figured prominently in the responses of Tsujii and individual audience members.

In the next section I set forth the theoretical framework for exploring the reception of Tsujii's 2013 recital at UBC in relation to the norms and conventions of musical performance and reception and for understanding how these historically rooted conventions define the range of sonic, visual, affective, and vague experiences (Johnson, 1995, p. 2) attached to the categories of *pianist and blind pianist* (Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011). Public performances constitute highly organized, even ritualistic sociocultural encounters (Cook, 2001; Davidson, 2001; DeNora, 2000; McCormick, 2008; Small, 1998 & 1999): "performers and audience need to be able to 'share' in the musical code," inhabiting a common universe for understanding the constituent parts of the performance ritual, and its associated rules of etiquette (Davidson, 2001, p. 237). This shared framework of understanding also includes the aesthetic, stylistic, and interpretive features of the music being performed. What a given performance "means" for musicians and audience emerges through the combined, that is, relational activities of performance and reception (p. 237; see also, Cumming, 2000; McCormick, 2008). This shared understanding constitutes a musical code (Davidson, 2001, p. 237), a system of rules and conventions that shape a given musical experience, and delimit the range of possible meanings of that experience, while raising questions about how and what music, as a non-verbal communicative medium, signifies, to whom, and in what context (Gershon, 2010).

Interviewing both Tsujii and members of his UBC audience yielded multiple interpretations of what it means to be a *pianist* and a *blind pianist*, and how these categories produce particular kinds of signs, referring to objects of sight, sound, movement, and affect (Johnson, 1995; see also, Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Turino, 1999 & 2014). By situating

their multiple interpretations of Tsujii's recital in relation to these participants' accounts of the lived experiences of ability and disability, my approach permits historically and culturally contingent ideas about disability to be compared against what each interview participant has to say about their own understanding and experiences not only of ability and disability, blindness and sightedness, but also of making and listening to music. Our conversations about these experiences take into account the different levels of experience with music each of the participants has, ranging from full-time music studies to infrequent engagement with music, and in one case, an acknowledgement of no interest in music at all, but a strong interest in educational issues pertaining to disability.

Understood within a pragmatist framework, the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist* are dynamic rather than static categories, and constitute performer-audience relationships in different, sometimes contradictory ways depending on the historical, cultural, and geographical context in which these categories are situated. Several interview participants noted as much in my conversations with them, and I will discuss this aspect in a sustained fashion in Chapters 4 and 5.

Neil Lerner (2006) explains that a prerequisite to claiming the (unqualified) status of “pianist” is the ability to play with two hands: “*With only one functioning hand, someone who wishes to play the piano becomes not a pianist but a one-handed pianist*” (p. 75; emphasis added). The theoretical implications of Lerner’s observation can be adapted to present concerns since, as we have seen in Chapter 1, sightedness functions as the yardstick against which blind pianists are judged. In similar fashion, Tsujii’s blindness becomes a framing device in his critical reception because of the bodily norms stipulating sightedness as the unmarked ability which

allows *someone who wishes to play the piano* (borrowing Lerner's formulation) to be seen and heard as *simply a pianist* (recalling Tsujii's statement).

A brief example shows the complex issues that this dissertation's philosophical framework must encompass in order to draw out the complexities obscured by the straightforward language Tsujii uses. Reviewing Peter Rosen's documentary of Tsujii's Carnegie Hall debut, Jeremy Nicholas (2012) argues that the pianist's blindness must be bracketed out from the experience of watching and listening to his performances. Drawing on a familiar analogy between performers and athletes (Cumming, 2000), albeit in the unfamiliar context of the Paralympics, Nicholas (2012) claims that "an apparent drawback," namely Tsujii's blindness, "has not affected his ability in his chosen field. In fact, his blindness should not—and does not—come into the equation: *he is simply a stunningly gifted pianist*" (para. 1; emphasis added). Let us consider how a pragmatist framework can help us to make sense of the rich variety of responses to Tsujii as a *pianist* and as a *blind pianist* of which Nicholas' response is but one instance.

3.3 Situating Nobuyuki Tsujii's Reception in the Semiotic Streams of Music, Disability, and Education

Chapter 2 drew attention to a central topic in education: the formation of the self, and the relationship between self and other (Bonnett, 2009; Luke, 2009; Sandlin, Burdick, & Schulz, 2010). A shared concern in the education scholarship discussed in that chapter has to do with the dynamism inherent in this view of education: "educational theory is necessarily concerned with what it means to become human, 'becoming' implying a process of growth and change" (Peters & Stables, 2012, p. vii). Asking questions about the educative possibilities and limitations of such performances therefore means finding out not only how dominant norms are challenged and

sustained through musical performance (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1), but also how musicians and audiences “become human” (Peters & Stables, 2012, p. vii) in their interactions with each other *as* performers and audience members and in their memories of these interactions following a performance.

The framework that organizes my study is both philosophical and theoretical. The philosophical parts of this framework are based on the pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce's various articulations of pragmatism span several decades of his career and are drawn into unity by a recurring motif; the meaning of ideas, concepts, words and phrases are products of semiosis, or the action of signs. These signs, in turn, are meaningful within a particular community of inquiry. For Peirce, what we believe is inseparable from how we are prepared to act in the world (Colapietro, 1989 & 1997; Merrell, 1995, 1997, 2007, & 2010; Peirce, 1931, 1982, 1868, 1903/1997). This insight has been productively employed in the analysis of how beliefs about music guide the activities of performers and audiences (Cumming, 1996, 1997, 1999, & 2000; Goble, 2010; Turino, 1999 & 2014).

Peirce's approach is that of a logician in the sense that he is not considered with actual instances of sign-use by real individuals, but rather with the presentation of a normative framework for defining and differentiating not only the various possible types of signs, but also, the relationship of these signs to their objects, and their participation in theoretically infinite signifying processes. For Peirce, the ongoing refinement and translation of the original sign occurs through the mediating role of the interpretant (Peirce's neologism for the effect of the original sign on a hypothetical interpreter; see Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010) rather than through real-world interaction and negotiation of a sign's meaning by actual sign interpreters. However, even though Peirce himself rejects psychologism, refusing to tether meaning to the sign-

interpretation brought about by individual, subjective experiences of the world, various aspects of his detailed formal doctrine of semiosis have been taken up in research directed at understanding how signs are actually used by "concretely situated subjects" (Colapietro, 1989, p. 34). In other words, there has been interest among scholars in a range of disciplines, in how signs are inscribed with meaning within actual social and cultural environments, including communities of musical practice (Cumming, 2000; Turino, 1993, 1999, 2008, & 2014). I take my cue from these latter approaches, while retaining certain of the main features of Peirce's own formal systems.

The complexities of the representational and counter-representational systems that frame Tsujii's performances and their reception by audiences around the world do not fall neatly within either "disability-first" or "person-first" language, the binary alternatives provided in much Disability Studies scholarship (Michalko, 2002; Muredda, 2012; Titchkosky, 2008, 2011, & 2012). Furthermore, these theoretical approaches have not made room for non-verbal or non-linguistic meaning in constructing the relationship between disability and self. A central task of the present study will therefore be to explore the role of musical (that is, non-verbal and non-linguistic) signification in the navigation of the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy. This expanded view of the construction of meaning acknowledges Gershon's (2010) observation that musicians who talk about music are often accorded higher intellectual and therefore educative status than musicians who simply make music, a hierarchy which Gershon attributes to "the privileging of the written word over musical experience" (p. 633). It is worth mentioning, briefly at this point, a consideration that will be taken up in subsequent chapters: Tsujii fits more clearly into the latter category, as a pianist who often emphasizes his preference to simply make music, rather than to talk about music (Hewett, 2013).

An important part of Peirce's approach to semiosis for this dissertation locates non-codified meanings as important dimensions of human experience. The categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist*, in other words, are intelligible not only as a result of rules and conventions, but also in terms of what they mean affectively and kinesthetically. The affective and kinesthetic dimensions of the meanings attached to *pianist* and *blind pianist* by Tsujii and his audiences cannot always be understood in reference to organized systems of emotional and bodily signs.

With pragmatism as his foundation, Peirce develops his taxonomy of sign types within a phenomenology that attempts to account for three fundamental, or "universal" types of experience: feeling, actuality, and convention. Peirce identifies these three categories respectively as "Firstness," "Secondness," and "Thirdness." Three simple examples of each phenomenological category will suffice for the present, and later chapters will offer examples drawn from my interviews with Tsujii and his UBC audience, to show how their navigation of the *blind pianist/pianist* dichotomy is shaped by a complex interplay of affective, physical, and rule-governed signs. In keeping with Peirce's approach, the illustrative examples presented below are deliberately vague, in order to foreground the extent to which Peirce's approach to signs and sign-interpretation aims to encompass all possible dimensions of human experience.

For the present, then, "Firstness" may be understood as a sensation experienced as an unanalyzed, uninterpreted feeling of something, whether that something be an emotion, a visual, audible, or other sensory stimulus. A central aspect of "Firstness" is that it need not refer to anything real: feelings or sensory stimuli are experienced solely in relation to themselves.

"Secondness" is defined through its physicality, and the experience of "Secondness" is built upon a necessary, physical, or embodied, hence *actual* relation. Any reaction between one thing and another in which the first thing moves, or changes in some way as a result of the

reaction exemplifies "Secondness." "Firstness" and "Secondness" are both pre-semiotic, in the sense that they do not depend for their meaning on the activity of interpretation. However, these phenomenological categories are dimensions of experience that nonetheless bear a continuous relationship to sign-interpretation, because sign-interpretation necessarily involves movement from a general sense of something (or quality of feeling), to an awareness of its physical embodiment, and finally, to its translation—via the interpretant, essentially a more specific sign—into the realm of "Thirdness."

Peirce's last phenomenological category brings us into the realm of semiotics proper. In "Thirdness," the first two phenomenological categories produce signs through the interaction between feelings or perceptions, physical or actual manifestations, and the translation or interpretation of these experiences into signs that become understood as components of rule-governed systems. Proceeding in a fashion that treats affect, body, and cognition as a continuum, Peirce inveighs against the mind-body dualism of Descartes, and against the separation between disembodied thinking and embodied feeling that has shaped Western philosophy since the time of Plato and Aristotle. His phenomenological categories reflect his belief in the interconnectedness of mental and physical phenomena and experiences (Peirce, 1893; see also, Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2005, 2009, &2010).

Chapter 2 discussed the formative role of pragmatism in Disability Studies, and the ways in which pragmatism has guided both philosophical and sociological approaches to questions about disability (Albrecht, 2002). However, Titchkosky (2003) criticizes pragmatism for perpetuating the sorts of assumptions about disability as an individual problem rather than social process which Disability Studies aims to dismantle. Titchkosky suggests that a "pragmatic point of view" conceives of disability solely as an object of remediation, staging its interventions by

"working within the confines of what already exists between an environment and its people" (p. 122). Pragmatist accounts of disability therefore uphold the exclusion of people with disabilities through neglect of how they actually relate to their surroundings (Titchkosky, 2003, p. 123). However, Titchkosky's analysis of pragmatism is weakened by a lack of grounding in the myriad theoretical and philosophical traditions associated with pragmatism and, more specifically, by a failure to acknowledge the intellectual debt which Disability Studies owes to the three philosophers most often identified with the founding moments of pragmatism: Peirce, John Dewey, and William James (Menand, 2002; Nicholson, 2013). This debt has, however, been acknowledged by other Disability Studies scholars (Albrecht, 2002; Danforth, 2001). The accuracy of Titchkosky's critique of pragmatism is hard to assess, because of its lack of engagement with the work of the thinkers most closely associated with its historical emergence in the late nineteenth century: in addition to Peirce, John Dewey, and William James (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Menand, 2002). More problematically for present purposes, however, is that Titchkosky's assessment of the disabling consequences of a pragmatist stance is inconsistent with Disability Studies scholarship that considers how the "classical pragmatism" of Peirce, Dewey and James can be brought productively to bear in analyzing the disabling of senses, bodies, and minds within context-dependent sociocultural practices (Albrecht, 2002).

According to Titchkosky (2003), "there is no doubt" that pragmatists regard people with disabilities as fundamentally different from the non-disabled, rationalizing their inequitable access to built environments as a "natural gap" between unintentional and intentional forms of exclusion from those environments (p. 123). However, the writings of Peirce, classical pragmatism's founder, provide much reason to doubt that pragmatism operates in the way Titchkosky describes. Peirce's (1893) philosophical doctrine of synechism, which in turn guides

his account of pragmatism, clarifies the shortcomings of Titchkosky's dismissal of pragmatism. According to Peirce's doctrine of synechism, the continuity between different forms of sensory experience is a binding thread between self and other, as a consequence of which the distinction between ability and disability evaporates, as Peirce himself shows (1893; see also, Haack, 2005). I draw out the implications of Peirce's synechism for the analysis of my interviews with Tsujii and individual UBC audience members, and of Tsujii's media reception in the final section of this chapter.

To be sure, with the migration of pragmatist philosophy across the disciplines, there is currently no single way of doing pragmatic research, as numerous scholars have pointed out (Biesta & Burbules, 2003; Cumming, 2000; Nicholson, 2013), and so it will not do to reject Titchkosky's account of pragmatism as straightforwardly wrong. Indeed, it is perhaps better to argue that the principal flaw in her construal of pragmatism is that it is insufficiently supported by examples from a wider range of pragmatist thought. For present purposes, it will be helpful to remember that instead of offering a "recipe for educational research and educational researchers," a pragmatist approach to research is concerned with questioning received wisdom, with "*un*-thinking certain false dichotomies, certain assumptions, certain traditional practices and ways of doing things," thereby steering our thinking into new regions (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 114).

Bearing all of this in mind, how do we then make sense of Tsujii's claim that he is a "pianist who happens also to be blind" [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009, p. 53), and that he wants to be received as "simply a pianist rather than a blind pianist" (Oda, 2009, para. 6)? Tsujii's statements reveal two assumptions on his part: that his blindness should be separate from his pianistic identity; and, second, that there is a persistent tendency among audiences to define his pianism

according to whatever (mis)conceptions they have of the meaning and consequences of blindness.

3.4 Towards a Pragmatic Methodological Design: In-depth Interviews and Textual Analysis of Media Reception

In order to explore these questions more closely, I narrow the scope of this study to a solo recital by Nobuyuki Tsujii at UBC on March 10, 2013 and its reception by a purposive sample of eleven audience members, including two trained pianists and one amateur pianist among the majority who locate their relationship to music in more or less distant ways. Tsujii's recital at UBC afforded the opportunity to engage directly with the topic of blindness as it pertains to musical performance and reception, and to do so in a way that would take account of both the performer's experiences and those of the audience. This heavily circumscribed context had two main benefits: first, it allowed me to find out how blindness and sightedness are negotiated by a pianist and his audience within the context of a single event, thereby avoiding comparison of possibly unrelated experiences (for example Tsujii's thoughts on participating in the 2009 Cliburn competition, versus an audience member's recollection of a subsequent recital by Tsujii, other appearance by this pianist, or of performances by other blind pianists). Second, it allowed for an emphasis on depth rather than breadth of inquiry. I wanted to understand how the meanings of *pianist* and *blind pianist* negotiated by performer and audience through their respective activities (performance and reception) are shaped in multiple ways, sometimes tacit, sometimes directly acknowledged, by tropes of blindness that have long since entered ordinary language. It has not been a goal of this study to provide generalizations based on a representative sample of musicians with disabilities and audiences.

In addition to Tsujii himself, the purposive sample of interview participants included audience members, four of whom are professors, and six of whom were graduate students at the time I interviewed them. I identified three main selection criteria for the purposive sample of audience members. First, I wanted to interview audience members who attended either the question and answer session on March 8th, the recital on March 10th, or both. Second, the purposive sample was designed to include audience members with a range of backgrounds in higher education, spanning the humanities and social sciences. The third criterion was that audience members interviewed for the present study have various levels of musical knowledge. Ultimately, I interviewed both trained musicians (pianists), as well as audience members who identified themselves as non-musicians.

There are a number of methodological questions about the wider contribution that a study so narrowly focused can make to pressing scholarly debates. Principal among these questions is the necessary shift away from generalizability and towards in-depth purposive sampling of interview participants (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002; Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2014). As I explain in the last chapter, the choice to use purposive sampling for this reception study imposes certain limits on its findings. The methodological limits of this dissertation arise in finding answers to my research questions that are not readily generalizable to other instances of the reception of blind pianists, and also of musicians with disabilities within Western art music more broadly (Glennie, n.d., Lerner & Straus, 2006; Lubet, 2004; Quasthoff, 2008; Straus, 2006 & 2011). Responding to these concerns, my approach is to emphasize the richness of detail, and complexity of experiences that purposive sampling of interview participants can provide (Flick, 2009; Patton, 2002). Going further, the design of the present study as a whole is based on the pragmatist definition of methodology as “situated inquiry” (Given, 2008, p. 160), in which

the results of inquiry can never yield final truth, but, at best, can refine prior knowledge, proceeding incrementally towards greater, but never absolute certainty regarding a particular set of phenomena. As Naomi Cumming (2000) explains, pragmatism has become part of everyday language, in the process acquiring meanings that are substantially different from that envisioned by Peirce. As an example, Cumming (2000) notes that pragmatism is often used to refer to "a businesslike concern to identify what 'works' and to implement it for profit" (p. 15). In its original working out by Peirce in his numerous writings and lectures, pragmatism is not merely a fancy word for "best practices" but rather a method of inquiry aimed at clarifying our ideas and beliefs about the world and its phenomena, not merely in actual circumstances, but in "conceivable" situations (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2011; Peirce, 1861/1982; 1903/1997; 1940; 1955). For present purposes, characterizing this dissertation's methodological framework as pragmatist establishes the basic principle that the central aim of my interviews with Tsujii, and eleven members of his UBC audience, as well as my examination of his reception in the media, was to find out what the distinction between *pianist* and *blind pianist* and variations thereof, is understood to mean in practice, and how their definitions evolve as interview participants are urged to think about both the continuities and differences between *pianist* and *blind pianist*.

Research on audience reception has often neglected the performer's role in the negotiation of musical meaning (Dobson & Pitts, 2011; Pitts, 2005a & b). Conversely, research on musical performance has been insufficiently attentive to the perspectives of audience members, focusing instead on issues more clearly relevant to the technical and interpretive dimensions of making music. This gap reflects a larger problem in Western art music scholarship, in which the diverse forms of musical engagement of the general public often need to be affirmed as useful objects of analysis (Cook, 1990; DeNora, 2000; Dobson & Pitts, 2011; Pitts, 2005a & b). Such has been the

case in scholarship on Western art music but this critique applies less well to popular music, in which the greater prominence of cultural studies and sociological approaches has accorded audience reception a central position in analysis (Shepherd, 1991).

Recent scholarship at the juncture between Disability Studies and Performance Studies offers few entry points for considering the alignments and tensions between how performers with disabilities define themselves and their work, and how audiences actually respond. There is likewise a dearth of scholarly inquiry on the interaction between audience and performer in the arena of disability arts and culture, and, more narrowly, the extent to which disability arts influences attitudes toward disabled people (Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004, p. 2). Of course, the present study is not primarily concerned with the counter-cultural practices of disability arts, but instead with the mainstream tradition of Western art music. (The distinctions between popular, counter, and mainstream culture, and a sustained analysis of how Tsujii's UBC recital muddied these waters are topics which will receive more sustained treatment in Chapters 4 and 5). Methodologically, however, these distinctions are important for understanding how the present study is framed because of the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 which encompasses the perspectives of both performer and audience.

The point worth emphasizing is that there is a lack of empirical research on how performers with disabilities and their audiences respond to each other, and a consequent lack of empirical support for discussions about the educative dimensions of such performances (Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004; Barnes, Shakespeare, & Mercer, 1999), and for theoretical claims as to the role of performers as public intellectuals (Gershon, 2010).¹² The methodology of

¹² Jane F. Fulcher (1999 & 2005) concentrates on the role of composers within debates about public intellectualism, and, furthermore, in a context that is somewhat distant from present concerns.

the present study was designed to make room for perspectives from both sides of the stage, as it were, on the assumption that Tsujii cannot define himself, nor can his audiences receive him, independent of the pressures exerted by available systems of representing disability in Western art music's "cultural education of the sensorium"(Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82).

It would be mistaken to suggest that there is a single way in which performers with disabilities in the Western art music tradition wish to be received. The interviews and media reception materials discussed in this study do not contain with them the promise of generalization, kernels of insight that can help us to understand all or even most conceivable instances of musicians with disabilities and their audiences navigating the distinction between *disabled musician* and *musician with a disability*, and more specifically, between *pianist, blind pianist* and *pianist who happens to be blind*. There are pronounced similarities between Tsujii's public statements about how he wants to be received, and comparable iterations by other musicians more or less connected to this same tradition (Glennie, n.d.). However, as Music and Disability Studies scholarship has shown, renowned musicians with disabilities such as the violinist Itzhak Perlman and the bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff, initially uneasy at the beginnings of their careers with the foregrounding of their disabilities (Straus, 2011; see also, McLellan, 1981), have subsequently carried out disability advocacy to greater and lesser degrees, drawing attention to discriminatory practices visited upon people with disabilities. As a result, these musicians have come to position themselves in a rather more ambiguous position. Perlman, in particular, has come to embrace a disability identity of sorts in recent years, differing in this regard from another prominent musician in this tradition, Evelyn Glennie (n.d. [a] & [b]), whose resistance to Deaf culture and, relatedly, her acceptance of cochlear implants as a viable

approach to treating deafness, place her at odds with the sociopolitical critiques of Disability Studies in Music (Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011).

Semiotic studies of music have been slow to gain traction, because of the priority of linguistic over musical meaning in the academic study of music (a line of critique advanced separately in scholarship on public intellectualism through music, and, separately, on music and disability, as I noted in Chapter 2; see Gershon, 2010; Straus, 2011). Peirce's pragmatism offers a way to bridge the gap between music and language, and to understand how the musical meanings of Tsujii's recital, as actually experienced by both the pianist and his audience, constitute an autonomous realm of signification, which is then translated into a different level of signification, namely the verbal language that Tsujii, and individual UBC audience members used to reflect on their experiences of the recital (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Turino, 1999, & 2014). These two levels of meaning must be taken jointly into account, rather than separated artificially, in our attempt to understand what it means for Tsujii to represent himself as a *pianist* (in language and music), and for him to be received (again, in language and music) within the representational scheme demarcated by the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist*. Naomi Cumming (2000) has offered a helpful explanation of the methodological power of pragmatism in studying performance and reception. What is particularly striking is Cumming's attentiveness to the sensorium (although she does not use this actual term) and her examination of how sense modalities participate in the semiotic construction of meaning:

Instead of seeking to fix the essential nature of some idea through an analysis of language alone, *privileging visual perception . . . over other modes of perception and reasoning . . . a pragmatic approach seeks to locate uses of language within a given set of practices* [in

this case musical performance and reception] *which determine the meaning of the terms used.* (Cumming, 2000, p. 15; emphases added)

For present purposes, the "essential nature of some idea" refers to the beliefs, assumptions, prejudices, and common sense attached to the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist*. Against this larger background shaped by historical, social, and cultural processes, my research teases out the meanings Tsujii and his audiences collectively attach to the pianist's public statements defining himself as a pianist who *happens also to be blind*, and declaring that he wants to be received as *simply a pianist*. These beliefs, in turn, bear the imprint of long-standing tropes about blindness and musical experience, and about the figure of "the blind musician" (Barasch, 2001; Straus, 2011). However, as noted in preceding chapters, these tropes do not exercise absolute power over Tsujii's performances, and his reception. Keeping the central definition of education as a cultural space in which dominant values are contested (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1), I will consider how these long-standing notions about the meaning of blindness were both sustained and called into question in my interviews with Tsujii and his UBC audience.

The "given set of practices" relevant to this semiotic study are those associated with musical performance and reception, the aesthetic and cultural framework for defining what it means to be a *pianist* and a *blind pianist*. Joseph Straus (2011) explains that the role that bodily differences play in shaping musical experience has received scant attention in the music studies literature. The present study takes as a central premise that this absence, in addition to its more obvious implications for scholarship in music and disability is likewise a pressing concern for educational scholarship. I make this claim for two reasons: first, because of the increasing

presence of music as the object of critical scrutiny in education scholarship on pedagogy, and on the role of musicians as public intellectuals and second, because of the burgeoning interest in disability among education scholars (Gabel, 2001 & 2009; Gabel & Connor, 2013; Gabel & Danforth, 2006; Michalko, 2008).

I was in the audience for Tsuji's recital, a circumstance which allows me to reflect on how my presence at this recital, as well as my own background as a pianist with a disability which I summarized in Chapter 1, shapes the way this dissertation unfolds. Having understood disability from the stage, from the perspective of a performer, I wanted to find out what disability might mean off-stage, for the audience. Tsujii's distinction between being received as a *pianist* rather than a *blind pianist* provided the impetus for studying the performance and reception of disability and ability as interlocking phenomena. I therefore decided to interview both Tsujii himself, as well as a sample of audience members.

I conducted a total of twenty interviews comprising initial and follow up interviews with Tsujii, and with a purposive sample of the audience who attended the recital. I chose a purposive rather than a representative sample because I wanted to find out how the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy presented in abstract terms in Tsujii's critical reception shapes the actual concrete experiences of the pianist and his audience in relating to each other in the concert hall. Going further, I wanted to understand how questions about blindness and sightedness figure in shaping their musical experiences, including both performance and reception, both in their memories of an actual recital, and through continued reflection on how this recital might lead them to reimagine what it means to experience music. Initially, I selected a sample of audience members based on the specific goal of understanding how professors and graduate students involved in

planning the *Beyond the Screen* series at UBC might connect Tsujii's recital to their lives as teachers, students, and scholars (emerging and established) in their respective fields.

At this early stage in designing the present study, I had the sense that approaching my research questions in this way might lead to singular perspectives on the educative function of musical performance. As it happened, however, I learned through our initial interviews that the constituent members of this purposive sample had not all participated to the same degree in either the planning of the series, or in the various events in the series. However, the initial interviews with these audience members led me in directions that I had not necessarily considered, and which I wanted to pursue. Despite this detour from my original aims in interviewing a purposive sample of audience members, their responses to my questions nonetheless gave me much to work with in finding answers to my core questions. I had initially hoped to conduct two interviews each (comprising initial and follow-up conversations) with six audience members, and two with Tsujii himself. Ultimately, I conducted an initial set of interviews with six audience members between November 30th, 2013 and February 3rd, 2014 and follow-up interviews with five of these initial participants between February 24th 2013 and March 17th, 2014. The sixth audience member indicated that she would be unable to participate in follow up interviews because of her busy schedule, and because she was moving to a different city. All but one of these interviews were done face-to-face. During the stage of initial interviewing, one of the residents was at his home overseas, but during our follow up interview he was able to talk in person with me. I interviewed Tsujii via Skype; both times he was on tour in the USA; first, in New York City, then in Mobile, Alabama. The first interview with Tsujii was on January 27th, 2014, and the second on April 11th, 2014.

I analyzed the interview responses by looking beneath literal meanings and trying to find tacit and formally codified rules dictating how musicians and audiences are expected to see, hear, and feel musical performances, and to discover the congruities and tensions between the codes attached to performances by blind and sighted pianists. More particularly, I sought points of alignment and divergence between what Tsujii defines as his central aim as a pianist, namely cultivating an appreciation for the great works of the piano repertoire in his audiences), and how audiences actually respond to his performances.

3.5 Nobuyuki Tsujii as Blind Pianist, Pianist and Real Pianist

In the final section of this chapter, I would like to return to the theoretical claim that musicians teach their audiences by collapsing the boundaries between cognition and sensory experience, thereby channeling "thought through the senses" (Gershon, 2010, p. 636). This claim becomes especially urgent when considered in relation to the dichotomous representation of able-bodied and disabled musicians, and, by extension, blind and sighted pianists. Situating this claim within the pragmatist framework set forth in the previous section, Peirce's declaration that all thought occurs by means of visual, audible, or kinaesthetic signs, relationships of cause and effect between sign and object, or by means of codified systems of signs, that is, social and cultural conventions, provides an additional meeting place for pragmatist philosophy and educational theory. Peircean pragmatism, in other words provides a way to understand Gershon's (2010) claim as both a theoretical and a methodological entry point into understanding the reception of Tsujii's UBC recital.

Analyses of Peirce's exhaustive taxonomy of sign types, and of the various relationships that unfold through the action of signs (semiosis) abound in the scholarly literature of several

disciplines. In what follows, my intent is not to add to this literature, but instead to explain the three foundational aspects of Peirce's comprehensive philosophy that are relevant to the analytical procedures of this study: pragmatism, semiosis, and synechism (Cumming, 2000; Haack, 2005; Lanigan, 2014; Peirce, 1903/1997 & 1931; Potter, 1996; Turino, 1999 & 2014). In adapting Peirce's own definitions of pragmatism, synechism, and semiosis, I am necessarily glossing over the complex evolution of these intertwined aspects of Peirce's philosophy in his own work.

As noted in the previous section, Peirce conceives of pragmatism as a method of inquiry aimed at clarifying the meaning of concepts articulated in language. Such inquiry cannot happen independently of the meanings generated by signs because the myriad dimensions of lived experience which Peirce defines in the broadest terms to include all forms of sentient life beyond humans are invested with meaning by a hypothetical interpretive community. Peirce defines community broadly as a multiplicity of inquirers united by a shared interest in understanding a given aspect of experience and finds that this community need not inhabit a common time and setting. In some ways, Peirce's semiosis is distinct from the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure, who theorizes signification as a two-part relationship between signs and objects (signifier and signified) that is essentially arbitrary (Lemert, 2006; see also, Cumming, 2000 & n.d.). For Peirce, the meanings produced by signs cannot be reduced to anything less than a three part relationship between a sign that carries meaning, the object to which these meanings refer, and the sign generated by those meanings, for which Peirce invented the term interpretant (Peirce, 1955, p. 282). The action of signs extends infinitely into the future, which means that accepting pragmatism, synechism, and semiosis as an interlocking philosophical system entails that the meanings conveyed through signs are unstable and fluid, capable of evolving in meaning with

each interpretation. Knowledge, consequently, can never be fixed or permanent, but is, instead, fallible: “fallibilism is the doctrine that our knowledge is never absolute but always swims, as it were, in a continuum of uncertainty and of indeterminacy. Now the doctrine of continuity [synechism] is that *all things* so swim in continua” (CP, 1.171).¹³

My analysis of interviews with Tsujii and a small sample of his UBC audience was concerned with the emotional, bodily, and learned forms of response to music that shaped the recital as a musical experience. Peirce’s phenomenological categories, upon which he bases his extensive sign typologies, sketched in the second section of this chapter, proved to be an ideal starting place for thinking about these various dimensions of meaning, and about how they might be described by the interview participants. By *emotional, bodily and learned forms of response to music*, I mean the continuities and differences between “sense, physical reaction, and ‘more developed signs in the mind’ which Peirce’s taxonomical approach to phenomenology and semiosis embraces (Turino, 2008, p. 12). As a sign, the relational self which is central to Peirce’s conceptualization originates in the phenomenological category of Firstness, but expands and develops into a Thirdness, where the self becomes part of a system of signs. Tsujii’s performances and audience reception of his performances evoke certain qualities of feeling, a sense of immediate perception of the emotions felt to be conjured up musically, which leads Tsujii and his audience to feel themselves as individual beings in some qualitative sense: this is the realm of Firstness. Continuing along the semiotic chain, the pianist and audience act upon each other, producing moments of resistance: this is the realm of Secondness. Our temporary resting point along this continuum brings the action of these qualitative, and causal signs (in their

¹³ See footnote 1 for a summary of the conventions for citing Peirce’s writings.

Firstness and Secondness), into the realm of Thirdness. The relevant examples of Thirdness for present purposes are the recollections of Tsujii's UBC recital by the pianist and his audience in our conversations during the months following Tsujii's recital, and which I analyze in Chapters 4 and 5 (Odin, 1996, p. 144). When signs enter the realm of Thirdness, they enter into systems of signs roughly analogous to what de Saussure defines as codes, which for Peirce are the habits of thought and action to which the action of signs ultimately leads (Cumming, n.d.; Goble, 2009 & 2010).

Having identified the phenomenological categories in which signs emerge it will be helpful to consider how Peirce categorizes different types of signs. Peirce's writings on the action of signs present a complex of tripartite schemes of signification, in which a community of inquirers understands a given sign to refer to its object in virtue of certain features, and selects those features of the object which render the sign as a sign of that particular object. This sign, and its relationship to its object, produce modes of response which acquire over time the status of habits, or regular patterns of action. Inquiry into a given aspect of experience happens when something occurs to throw the habituated modes of response off course. The end purpose of pragmatic inquiry is to determine if a new mode of response is needed in order to accommodate the unexpected experience that compelled inquiry in the first place (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010). The process through which the sign and object are linked in this way generates a further sign, a more refined sign, also determined by the object of the initial sign. The sign itself is a "first" (belonging to the phenomenological category of Firstness); the object is a "second" (the phenomenological category of Secondness denotes the encounter between two entities, namely sign and object); the interpretant is a "third." The phenomenological category of Thirdness denotes a realm of being in which the action of signs, that is, the semiotic chain of sign-object-

interpretant cannot be reduced to pairs (Peirce, 1861/1982, 1992, 1903/1997 & 1931; see also, Cumming, 1996, 1999, 2000; Goble, 2010). How Peirce's account of semiosis will be brought to bear on the present study can be illustrated by application to Tsujii's two public statements (Oda, 2009; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009). Recall that Chapter 1 located these statements as twin entry points for in-depth study of how he was received at UBC. Chapters 4 and 5 develop and extend this initial analysis in relation to the interviews I conducted with Tsujii and members of his UBC audience.

3.6 Signs of the Pianistic Self in Performance

I am a pianist who happens also to be blind. This statement is a sign of Tsujii's self. For Peirce, "the self is a sign" (Michaels, 1977, p. 394), whose subjective presence is not available to introspection, as Descartes would have it, but instead is the result of the interpretation of perceptions, sensations, and the presence of others (Colapietro, 1989; Cumming, 2000; Liszka, 1996; Peirce, 1893& 1982; Odin, 1996; Short, 1996). The concept of 'self' in other words is nothing less than a sign of a sign, a cognition mediated by signs, rather than an unmediated intuition that precedes cognition. The performer's body, including its sensory, cognitive and bodily apparatus ("physical, kinetic properties") is transformed into a "performing body," translating potentiality into actuality, through absorption of the norms of both performance pedagogy, and of the aesthetic norms of the music which such pedagogy takes as its object of study (Tarasti, 2012, p. 92). Tsujii's statement "I am a pianist who happens also to be blind" ([Itsuko] Tsujii, p. 53) is a sign that, in the abstract, is a "first." It is a possibility, a quality of feeling, a sign of how Tsujii feels about himself; namely that he is a pianist, above all, and that his blindness is incidental to his pianism. It is a statement of selfhood as a "first," that is, as a

quality of feeling. When Tsujii performs for audiences whose ways of responding to him foreground his blindness, thereby contradicting his own sense of himself as *simply a pianist*, the sign becomes a "second", something other than a formulation produced by Tsujii's mind. Reflection on what it means to be a *blind pianist* and *simply a pianist* move Tsujii's initial statement as a sign into the realm of Thirdness. In practice, however, and in Peirce's own philosophical writings, these phenomenological categories, and the stages of meaning which a sign activates are not successive, but continuous. In other words, Tsujii's statement is not truly sign until it is taken to be a statement of fact by his audiences, or until these statements are questioned, and resisted (Cumming, 2000).

3.7 Signs of the Pianistic Self in Reception

The second example, as I have noted earlier, intertwines with the first. Tsujii has explained that he would like to be received as *simply a pianist*, in other words, as *not a blind pianist* (Oda, 2009, para. 6). This statement is likewise a sign. As a "first" the statement itself, signifies that Tsujii recognizes that he is treated differently from other pianists: there is a felt quality of difference (otherwise he would not repeatedly assert his identity with other pianists). As a "second", this statement is linked semiotically to its object, namely the real-world Nobuyuki Tsujii. The relationship between this statement (qua sign) and its object is different from that in Example 1. Whereas in Example 1, the original sign *I am a pianist who happens also to be blind* signified the qualities of feeling associated with how Tsujii defines himself, this second example articulates the statement and the object somewhat differently, that is as a statement of conflict between pianists who are treated simply as pianists, and those who are not,

and between pianists who want to define themselves in a particular way, and the reception practices of audiences which stand in the way of such self-representation.

The phrase “simply a pianist” has negative connotations in the reception of non-disabled pianists (Bratby, 2008; Huss, 2012). There is consequently, a tension between the meanings that the characterization of a pianist as “simply a pianist” assumes in different contexts. For example, *Le Devoir* has described pianist Beatrice Rana (also a Cliburn competition laureate, incidentally) thus: “She is not simply a pianist but above all an artist” (Artistes: Rana, Beatrice, para. 1).¹⁴

What I want to draw attention to here is how quickly the apparent common sense of Tsujii wanting to be treated as *simply a pianist* dissolves when considered in relation to the ambiguous, and even negative connotations of being *simply a pianist rather than an artist*, the more elevated status accorded to Rana).

Finally, the interpretant thus generated has a stronger relational quality than that produced by the statement in Example 1. The first statement can be interpreted as an assertion of self independent of how that self is perceived by others. However, the self is not separate or autonomous from the collective (Peirce, 1893). Tsujii’s statement in Example 1 can therefore not be divorced from how others perceive him (that is, as a Secondness) beyond the initial acknowledgement that Tsujii’s statement seems to indicate that he has a (relatively) unmediated sense of himself as an individual. Indeed, in the article by the pianist’s mother discussed in Chapter 1, this realization translates into the declaration that Tsujii must continually prove that his blindness is irrelevant to the quality of his pianism ([Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009, p. 53). However, the semiotic weight of Tsujii’s statement cannot be discounted by overemphasizing the relational

¹⁴This is my translation of the original in French: “Pas seulement une pianist mais avant tout une artiste.” I am grateful to Matt Dupont for double-checking the accuracy of my translation

aspects of Tsujii's self. In Example 2, the interpretant generated by Tsujii's stated wish that he would like to be received as *simply a pianist* links his presence as a pianist more clearly to how others should (ideally) receive him. Both statements however, have to take into account the systems of rules and conventions in Western art music (Thirdness) which mark blind pianists as different from sighted pianists, and which define ability as inherently different from—*other* to—disability (Straus, 2011; see also, Cumming, 2000).

My interviews with audience members discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 show how the *pianist/ blind pianist* dichotomy was taken up by these audience members and understood to refer, in multiple ways, to the real Tsujii (semiotic object) that they saw and heard onstage during his UBC recital. The interpretants generated in each case bear the imprint of semiotic codes. For those audience members who are themselves musicians, these semiotic codes are closely connected to the conventions governing Western art music performance and reception (and, as we shall see, in several instances, to performance pedagogy as well). For other discussants with little to no familiarity with Western art music, the semiotic codes which shape and constrain their ways of receiving Tsujii had less to do with the conventions of performance and reception, and were interpreted in relation to the rules and conventions governing ability and disability, and blindness and sightedness more particularly.

Seeing, hearing, and bodily comportment involve the production and reception of visual, aural, and kinaesthetic signs (Sebeok, 1978). Scholarship in Disability Studies in Music reveals the larger sociocultural systems which make seeing, hearing, and bodily comportment meaningful within Western art music performance and reception. These systems of meaning will be referred to in the remainder of this chapter as "semiotic codes of seeing, hearing, and movement." To exemplify what "semiotic codes of seeing, hearing and movement" refers to in

this dissertation, consider the following assessment of Tsujii's playing, by a music critic who was in the audience for the 2009 Cliburn Competition. Gil French (2009) describes what he saw and heard in Tsujii's performances (the excerpt does not discuss a particular performance by Tsujii at the competition, but offers instead a general assessment of Tsujii). French found this pianist to be more consistent than the other finalists, but also somewhat unfinished as a musician):

Sitting close to the stage, I noticed that his hands never leave the keyboard—in a millisecond he feels precisely where he is. But will he ever be able to rise physically above the keyboard, to play with more than the strength of his shoulders and forearms? And does he hear more than 'beautiful tunes' in his head? Time will tell. (French, 2009, para. 12)

An example of how audiovisual technology mediates and attenuates the reception of blind pianists, while at the same time structuring or codifying the sights, sounds, and bodily movements of musical performance is the following passage from a review of Peter Rosen's film of Tsujii's 2011 Carnegie Hall debut:

To *hear* the phenomenal blind Japanese pianist, Nobuyuki Tsuji, is a wonderful thing, but to *see* him play adds a new dimension to one's appreciation of his artistry. One immediately notes that he plays with a very flat finger position....I cannot say whether this has something to do with his sightlessness, or rather his training (or both) (Canfield, 2013, para. 2; emphasis added)

Contestation over the meanings of musical codes shows that music is a fundamentally social practice (McClary, 1986, p. 132; see also, Kawabata, 2004). Tsujii's performances generate musical signs which give expression and context to the linguistic signs, discussed

earlier, of the pianist's statements: "I am a pianist who happens also to be blind" (Performance), and "I would like everyone to think I'm simply a pianist" (Reception). My semiotic analysis moves flexibly between the phenomenological realm, that is, the *perception* of signs as meaningful units, on one end of experience, and the *interpretation* of the meanings of signs at the other (Lanigan, 2014).

My analysis explores how audiences situate Tsujii's recital within what they know or do not know of the technical, stylistic, and historical aspects of musical performance and reception. For Peirce, the context of a semiotic process is irrelevant, and he is forceful on this point, rejecting the idea that the interpretant, as a sign generated by a previous sign in reference to an object, needs to take context into account. The interpretant conveys the meaning of the previous sign, which for Peirce means "all that is explicit in the sign itself *apart from its context and circumstances of utterance*" (Peirce, 1955, p. 276; emphasis added). However, it is here that I mark another sharp difference between Peirce's approach and my own, because questions of bodily differences and analysis of the difference that bodily differences make in the reception of musicians with disabilities figure centrally in my semiotic study of Tsujii's UBC recital and its reception.

To round off this explanation of my analytical methods, I would like to clarify the connections between the phenomenological and semiotic dimensions of my analysis, in which respect my approach moves closer to that of Peirce. To do so, it will be necessary to introduce the taxonomical system which Peirce devised to categorize the sign in relation to its interpretant. Peirce himself distinguished between different types of signs, objects, and interpretants based upon their emergence within, and movement through the three phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. Subsequent scholars have drawn on these schemata to

explore a wide range of philosophical, educational, cultural and musical topics (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Jappy, 2013; Merrell, 2007; Turino, 2014). The scope of my own study requires that I leave Peirce's intricate categories of signs, objects, and interpretants aside, however, and instead concentrate on his account of the different ways that signs relate to their interpretants. It is to this task that I now turn, accompanying each explanation with illustrative examples.

3.8 Signs of Firstness: Rhemes

The categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist* are both signs which generate interpretants that refer to possible objects, and Peirce defines signs which relate to their interpretants in this way as rhemes (Cumming, 2000; Nöth, 1990; Turino, 2014). These signs refer to unspecified people, possible individuals belonging to the general category *pianist* who can play the piano, and who have a certain set of attributes through which they are identified, dichotomously as either blind or sighted pianists. As signs of possibility, *pianist* and *blind pianist* are therefore within the phenomenological realm of Firstness.

3.9 Signs of Secondness: Dicents

The second analytical category helps us to understand those interpretants generated by signs which have a relationship to their interpretants based on causality, that is, on a direct physical connection. Peirce defines such sign-interpretant relationships using the term *dicent*. *Dicents* can be illustrated here by means of two examples that forefront the congruities and tension between how Tsujii presents himself, and how audiences receive him: *Nobuyuki Tsujii is a pianist*, and *Nobuyuki Tsujii is a blind pianist*. These sentences are both assertions that link verbal statements (the signs) to an actually existing person (Nobuyuki Tsujii), and in this regard they are signs of an actuality (Cumming, 2000, p. 81). For these statements to be understood as

meaningful, they have to be understood as “really affected by” (Peirce, 1998, p. 143) the actual Nobuyuki Tsujii who shared the gold medal with Haochen Zhang at the 2009 Cliburn competition. Dicents operate at the juncture between performance and reception, initially pointing to what might be “taken” (Cumming, 2000, p. 89) as a literal truth, a fact in the phenomenological realm of Secondness. Upon reflection, followed by verbal expression of the understanding gained in such reflection, these assertions of truth turn out to be structured by a complex of rules and systematic meanings, interpretable through formal systems of knowledge (the phenomenological realm of Thirdness discussed in the next section). Within the pragmatist framework used in this dissertation, Tsujii’s statements name a contested reality, both musical (his performances as a pianist) and linguistic (statements by the pianist and his audiences). The category of *dicents* will help us to make sense of the educative possibilities and limitations of this contested reality.

3.10 Signs of Thirdness: Arguments

Two recurring themes in Tsujii’s reception highlight the complexities of the pianist’s (self) representation as a pianist *who happens to be blind*. Drawing on Disability Studies’ critiques of the “authorization to interpret that disability invites” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000, p. 59) in the conclusion to Chapter 2, I located this struggle over meaning in relation to the tension between Tsujii’s self representation as a *pianist* whose blindness is incidental, and his reception by audiences for whom his blindness is an important source of meaning. This line of thought may be extended here by gesturing towards two additional topics of speculation in Tsujii’s reception, buttressed by a similar sense of interpretive authority. The first is a question frequently asked by those who have watched and heard him perform (Cantrell, 2009; Chung & Inada, 2009;

Hewett, 2013; Nick, 2013): *How does Tsujii learn music?* The second is a statement: *Tsujii's physical movements do not correspond with the movement with the music.* One of the audience members I interviewed, herself a pianist, made this latter observation which I analyze further in Chapter 4. As I noted earlier in the present chapter, however, this sentiment has been expressed in different ways in Tsujii's critical and popular reception since the 2009 Cliburn competition.

Both the question about how Tsujii learns music and the statement about his bodily comportment at the piano reveal implicit and explicit knowledge of two basic conventions within Western art music performance and pedagogy related to the central role of visible musical notation and to onstage decorum. Peirce refers to sign-interpretant relationships which bring this understanding of rules and conventions into play as *arguments* (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010). In my own analysis I use this term, in a similar way, to mark interview responses which invoke systematic and formal knowledge of Western art music performance and pedagogy.

The first question discussed here by way of example directly marks Tsujii as a *blind pianist* since in Western art music sighted pianists learn music by reading notation, and do not necessarily have to answer questions about their learning methods: it is taken for granted that they read music visually (Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011). Chapter 4 takes up the complicated topic of Braille notation, explaining that Tsujii's preference for alternative learning methods has been an additional source of controversy in his reception by musicians and critics. The second statement is more ambiguous in how it positions Tsujii relative to the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy. Within the rules and conventions of Western art music performance, bodily movements that seem out of time with the way the music moves are not necessarily a sign of disability, but could indicate a lack of musicality and technical fluency (Cumming, 2000). In order to understand arguments expressive of signifying relationships based on rules and conventions analyzed in

Chapters 4 and 5, it will be necessary to move outwards from a discussion of analytical methods, and to consider the historical and cultural dimensions which shape Western art music's "cultural education of the sensorium" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82) and, consequently, the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy.

3.11 Semiotic Codes: The Rules and Conventions of Western Art Music Performance and Reception

The Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical traditions, which separate reason from emotion in musical experience, privileging the former over the latter, haunt much of the extant research on the experiences of performers and audiences (Cumming, 2000; Turino, 1999 & 2014). In the performance and reception of Western art music,

Audiences are taught to listen 'silently and respectfully' with *minimum bodily movement or emotional expression...* 'Appreciation' of music is often taken to mean having an intellectual understanding of the history and form of the musical composition, rather than an articulated emotional response. (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001, p. 5; emphasis added; see also, Cook, 1998; Frith, 1996; Small, 1998; Small, 1999)

Bringing this historical and critical perspective on musical experience to bear on the reception of Nobuyuki Tsujii's UBC recital, it becomes clear that disability does not render a body a "static figure of meaning" any more than does ability (Dykstra, 2001, p. 109). It follows, then, that the "cultural education of the sensorium" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82) does not produce immutable ways of sensing and not sensing bodily difference. Recalling our pragmatist framework, the categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist* cannot be understood as transcendent or

fixed categories with a self-evident basis in the distinction between seeing and not seeing, hearing and not hearing (Titchkosky, 2012). The ways in which Tsujii and his UBC audience experienced his recital in acceptance of, and in resistance against, the dictates of *silent* and *respectful* listening (to borrow from the excerpt quoted above) must be understood in relation to the dynamic and contingent sensorial pedagogy which renders Tsujii (in)visible and (in)audible as both a *pianist* and a *blind pianist* in contradictory ways.

Securing a place for musicians with disabilities in contemporary education scholarship necessitates asking how performances by musicians with disabilities might foster *un-teaching* and *un-learning*. The performances of musicians with disabilities call into question habitual ways of seeing, hearing, and feeling music (Straus, 2011). Learning through performances by musicians with disabilities might therefore involve, somewhat paradoxically, a willingness to *lose* our taken-for-granted prior knowledge of what it means to experience music: "The attempt to appreciate the sensory worlds of others, distant in time and place, necessitates an unlearning: that we subject to scrutiny our sensory education, of which the prejudice towards vision is only one part" (Gosden, 2001 p. 166).

In Western art music, the involvement of the body in performance and reception is circumscribed by codes of etiquette dictating that enjoyment expressed through physical movement must not be excessive, a system of rules which confers upon seeing (Gosden's *prejudice towards vision*) not merely a role supplement to hearing music, but which actively allows the power of seeing to curtail the range of permissible music-body relationships. Reviews of concerts often feature criticism not only of the performance, but also of the mannerisms, gestures, and other bodily performances by musicians and audiences considered to be distracting from the music itself. As I have noted earlier Tsujii's head movements have been identified by

some audience members (including two interviewed for this study) as out of place, and out of time with the rhythms of the music he plays. However, for Tsujii himself, the experience of playing the piano is entirely natural, and he uses the familiar notion of the piano as an extension of himself to emphasize this sense of organic unity (Tsujii, as quoted in Hewett, 2013; see also, Cumming, 2000).

The codes of bodily etiquette which teach musicians how to move rhythmically have their origins in the nineteenth century, with the emergence of a way of attending to music characterized by focus, and absorption on the actual music being performed, rather than on merely using musical performance as a diversion (Dahlhaus, 1989; Leppert, 1993). We may also take into account perspectives from outside music and education, in order to understand how bodily movement is performed and received as meaningful. Tony Jappy (2013) draws on Peirce in the context of visual interactions, for example, explaining that bodily gestures need to be "semiotically regular" in order to communicate meaning (p. 37). However, as Tsujii's example shows, such regularity does not forestall the contestation of meanings communicated through "semiotically regular" bodily movements. For the pianist, his movements are natural, and he expresses reluctance to analyze them further; for certain of his audience members, his bodily comportment at the piano is not natural, and not in keeping with what they know of Western art music's norms of performance. Peirce's way of construing the codified relationship between sign and interpretant through his specialized definition of arguments, guides Chapters 4 and 5 in teasing out the various dimensions of the contradictory meanings of the performer's physical relationship with the instrument (Cumming, 2000).

Ultimately, the methodological approach of this dissertation to musical performance and reception shows that the ways in which people experience music are never merely private, and

idiosyncratic, nor yet disinterested and objective, but always, and necessarily intersubjective and social—in a word, contested (Cumming, 1999 & 2000; Goble, 2010). As Lawrence Kramer (2003) reminds us, attempts to draw a bright line between the subjective and objective in our experiences of music fail to recognize that such attempts are themselves informed by a subjective valuing of cerebral over embodied participation in music: "music is never more engaged with subjectivity than when it is disengaged from the worldly grounds of subjectivity, and when, accordingly, 'subjective' verbal responses to it are written off as inessential or merely personal" (p. 131; see also, Kramer, 2007 & 2011). In other words, when musicians, scholars, and audiences lay claim, in various ways, to a transcendent musical experience, uncontaminated by distractions—to take the relevant example, a performer's disability—they are, paradoxically, laying claim to historical and socioculturally embedded practices of music-making that reflect the subjectivities of those who place value on disinterested forms of musical engagement (Cumming, 2000; Taruskin, 1995; see also Johnson, 1995).

3.12 Preview of Chapters 4 and 5

Culturally and historically contingent ideas about blindness, and about disability more generally, are of central importance in this study. Chapters 4 and 5 explore how such ideas mediated the interview responses of both Tsujii and his audience. During my interviews with UBC audience members, several of Tsujii's performances besides his UBC recital were mentioned by interviewees who had seen Peter Rosen's documentary about the 2009 Van Cliburn competition, and other performances by Tsujii available on the Internet. The analysis of my interviews with these discussants draws this mediating role of disability in culture (including

religious belief), and history into the foreground and marks the points at which tropes of disability enters the realm of everyday language.

In my conversations with Tsujii, the pianist defined his educative role as one of instilling in his audiences an awareness of the piano repertoire. Tsujii spoke of a desire to increase public attendance at concerts, and of fostering an appreciation among the concert-going public for the singular experience of live musical performance. The absence, on Tsujii's part, of a declared intent to teach audiences new ways of imagining disability, for example, to imagine blindness as a mode of perceiving the world differently (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82), however, reminds us of the complexity involved in studying the educative possibilities of performances by musicians who do not lay claim to a clearly defined teaching role (Gershon, 2010). Tsujii's reception in the media further attenuates such educative possibilities by legitimizing the significance of his public performances within the normative framework of a *blind pianist* challenging his sighted colleagues in the competitive arena, and on the international concert circuit (Shull, 2009, para. 1–4). These modes of representation shore up the idea that he has to prove himself to audiences as a "pianist" able to overcome blindness ([Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009, p. 53). The remaining chapters question the assumptions behind these modes of representation through semiotic analysis of my interviews with Tsujii and members of his UBC audience.

Piotr Sadowski (2009) takes Peirce's philosophical studies of signs, and subsequent extensions of Peirce's work severely to task for excessive abstraction, and, relatedly, a lack of mooring in actual communicative interactions between sign-interpreting agents, faults which Sadowski lays at the door of "philosophy-related humanistic disciplines" (p. 17). Unfortunately, Sadowski's critique is deeply flawed by repeated misrepresentations and incomplete readings of what Peirce actually wrote, problems which I cannot address in full here. One especially

problematic examples will suffice to show that trying to accord methodological validity to semiotics based on its pursuit of a purely scientific rather than humanistic framework is not a viable enterprise (pp. 15-17). Sadowski claims, erroneously, that Peirce's definition of interpretant accounts for human interaction alone. Both Peirce himself, and subsequent scholars influenced by his work across a range of disciplines demonstrate that Peirce's account of the actions of signs works to cover every possible dimension of experience, beyond human communication (Sadowski, 2009, p. 67; see also, Sebeok, 1976 & 1994).

Timothy Rice (1994) offers a definition of musical experience drawing upon his ethnographic fieldwork that helps to frame the concluding gestures of this dissertation. For Rice musical experience is produced by

the history of the individual's encounter with the world of musical symbols....That history consists not merely of the immediate, unanalyzed, sensate events that constitute a person's life but, more profoundly, of the dialectical movements between distancing, which invites explanation, and appropriation, which suggests a new understanding. (p. 6, emphasis in original)

In the chapters that follow, Rice's (1994) account of musical experience as a temporally inflected process that brings an audience into contact with different registers of meaning serves as a reference point for understanding the different ways that Tsujii and individual audience members explain, appropriate, and distance themselves from the language of disability in music.

Chapter 4: Blindness and Pianism (Not) Seen and (Not) Heard

Continuity does not preclude but rather entails difference (Short, 2007, p. 152).

The ‘semiotically real object’ we ...hear, and see is never identical to the ‘really real object’....since this ‘real object’ cannot be completely known once and for all, it can never be more than ‘semiotically real’ for its interpreters. (Merrell, 2003, p. 36)

4.1 Overview of Chapter

Chapters 4 and 5 employ a method of semiotic analysis derived from the pragmatism of Charles Peirce, in which the phenomenological categories of Firstness and Secondness provide the framework for sign interpretation in the experiential category of Thirdness. Using this interpretive framework, I explore the negotiation of the signs *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and a third sign—*real pianist*—invoked by Nobuyuki Tsujii in my first interview with him (discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter). Tsujii's self-representation and his reception by audiences emphasizing one or the other of these signs, or fashioning combinations thereof, constitute a network of sensory, bodily, and cognitive signifying relationships shaped by an *education of the sensorium*, a theoretical construct which I borrow from Disability Studies scholar Tanya Titchkosky (2008 & 2011) to account for disability in musical performance and reception. My analysis shows how Tsujii and individual audience members simultaneously uphold and call into question the normalization of sensory and bodily experience in the pedagogy of Western art music which defines a specifically musical education of the sensorium (Straus, 2011; see also, Davidson, 1993, 1994 & 2001). In this regard, performance and reception intertwine with education defined as a socio-cultural practice which both sustains and remakes dominant values (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1; see also, Straus, 2011).

The sensorial education and "dis-education" (Titchkosky, 2008, p. 50; Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82) through which Tsujii's performances are received as those of a *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* are constituted through the interplay, alignment, and collisions of affective (Firstness), embodied (Secondness), and conventional (Thirdness) signs moving in, and in between the communicative registers of music and language. In other words, a key supposition of my analysis is that what disability (specifically blindness) means, and how these meanings are agreed upon and contested by performer and audience emerge not only in linguistic conceptualizations of *pianist* and *blind pianist*, but also in diverse forms of musical experience. Expanding the insight that "language about music and music itself may be understood both to represent and to construct disability" (Straus, 2006, p. 114), I suggest that language about musicians and musicians (specifically performers) themselves both shape what it means to be a musician, and a musician with a disability. The communicative features of a performance, the sounds, sights, feelings, and movements of the performer's and audience's bodies can be understood as signs in themselves that enrich and complicate *musician* and *musician with a disability*, and by extension, *pianist*, and *blind pianist*, as signs.

It will be helpful at this stage briefly to review the features of Peirce's pragmatism that guide my exploration of the research problem as set forth in Chapter 1, and in my pursuit of answers to the core questions which I identified in Chapter 3. Of particular importance to my larger project is Peirce's path-breaking distinction between *interpretant* and *interpreter* to denote, respectively, the signifying properties of different types of signs, and the hypothetical members of interpretive communities of inquiry in which there is a shared framework for understanding what signs mean (Cumming, 2000, p. 68). Peirce himself was concerned with finding universal, normative criteria for sign-interpretation, and not to any great degree with the differing

interpretations of signs that may occur for the individual members of a sign-interpreting community. Subsequent applications of his work, as I noted in Chapter 3 however, have carved out a space for "concretely situated subjects" (Colapietro, 1989, p. 35; see also, Cumming, 2000) who not only ascribe meaning to signs, but are themselves constituted as relational selves through the action of signs (Colapietro, 1989; Goble, 2010; Lane, 2009). It is somewhere in between Peirce and these latter-day extensions of his pragmatist philosophy that this chapter finds its analytical starting point.

A central tenet of Peirce's pragmatism which will be explored in greater depth in the analyses of Chapter 5, is his rejection of the idea of unmediated perception. Although his philosophical system depends on the assumption that all perception is mediated by signs, Peirce nonetheless delineates a phenomenological category—Firstness—to account for the fact that sign-interpreting communities *feel* that unmediated perception is a component of lived experience. Peirce's incorporation of a *felt* sense of immediacy within his pragmatist philosophy helps us to examine Tsujii's own intuitions of, and feelings about what being a pianist *rather than a blind pianist* means to him (Interview, January 27th, 2014). Within this framework, Tsujii's stated reluctance to analyze his experiences of playing the piano offers an entry point for systematic inquiry into how these experiences are not merely his own to define, but are, instead, a contested space because of disagreements over the relationship between his blindness and his performances. We may therefore locate Tsujii's ostensibly intuitive and affective responses to the sign *pianist* as an experiential foundation continuous with his reception as a pianist by audiences in different contexts.

Tsujii's audiences offer multiple interpretations of what it means to be a pianist, shaped to greater and lesser degrees by their own intuitions and affective responses to specific features of

his performances, as well as by formal knowledge of Western art music. An important question in this regard concerns how performance pedagogy in Western art music trains eyes, ears, and bodies to become pianists. Upon Tsujii's assertion of being a *pianist* in the language associated with Firstness, and through the experiences his performances afford for audiences, it becomes possible for his audiences to build an interpretive framework, to be taught through the encounter with signs (CP, 2.227; see also, Colapietro, 2005).¹⁵ Firstness, then, accounts for the fact that a sense of unmediated perception, however illusory, is felt by sign-interpreting communities, while the categories of Secondness and Thirdness build upon this foundation, allowing for the exploration of how this felt sense of immediacy grows into assertions of reality and socially determined conventions respectively (Colapietro, 1989; Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Lane, 2009).

Although Titchkosky does not adopt a semiotic approach to advance her theorization of an "education of the sensorium," she is similarly concerned with the temporality of bodily difference, its evolution across time and space, and with the time-bound interpretations which such difference inaugurates. Gathering together these seemingly distant strands enables a sustained inquiry into the "dense backdrop of past, present, and future experiences" (Weiss, 2003, as cited in Titchkosky, 2008, p. 82) which shape both the self-perception and reception of

¹⁵ As I explained in a footnote to Chapter 1, I follow accepted protocol in citing the original works of Charles Sanders Peirce, for the two major publications of his complete writings used in this dissertation: *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (vol. 1–8), and *The Essential Peirce*. In-text citation of the first publication is abbreviated to CP, and of the latter to EP. In citing these publications (both of which are multi-volume works), the abbreviated name of the publication is given in parentheses. Using this particular citation as an example (CP, 2.227), the abbreviated name of the volume itself is followed by a volume number preceding the period. The number following the period indicates the paragraph number. For further information on this citation protocol, please see the prefatory note to the *Bibliography* in: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce-semiotics/#Bib>. Another helpful source is the *Editorial Notes* page for the digitized repository of Peirce's writings: <http://www.iupui.edu/~arisbe/>.

musicians with disabilities. Starting from the premise that the sensorial and cognitive apparatus of musicians with disabilities and their audiences is educated to think of sightedness and blindness through a full gamut of teaching and learning, ranging from the "public pedagogy of everyday life" (Luke, 1996, p. 7), to lived experience, and to the codified teaching and learning systems of formal education (Straus, 2011), the goal of this chapter's analysis is to show how interpretation of the semiotic categories *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* by Tsujii and his audiences bears the imprint of these repertoires of lived experience.

The semiotic analyses of interviews and media reception presented both in this chapter and in Chapter 5 follow Merrell's (2003) argument in the second epigraph to this chapter against fixing an ultimate reality in the objects that signs represent within an interpretive community (see also, Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2009 & 2010). The sign *pianist* and the signs *blind pianist* and *real pianist* interpreted by Tsujii and his audiences overflow the binaries of the ability/disability system which accepts some bodies as normal and marks others as defective or incomplete (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 5), producing an array of interpretants (signifying effects) that constitute musical performance as an "education of the sensorium" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82). As my analysis shows, within this sensorial education the constituent terms of the dichotomy are always in flux. In turn, these interpretants must be understood relative to the higher-level ability/disability system (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 5) which differentiates between *musicians* and *musicians with disabilities*, and, consequently, between the unmarked sign *pianist* and the marked sign *blind pianist*. In a different context, the analysis of musical form, Robert Hatten (1997) observes that there is "an asymmetry of opposition, in which the marked term is more narrowly conceived than the unmarked term" (p. 55). This insight can be extended to the present analysis, accounting for at least part of the reason that Tsujii is loath to accept being represented

as a *blind pianist* (Oda, 2009; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009). For him, the term is restrictive, defining his musicianship in ways that do not reflect his lived experience of being a pianist (Interview, January 27th, 2014).

Although Tsujii does not offer a detailed explanation of why the label *blind pianist* causes him discomfiture, his statements to the press on the topic of disability indicate a concern with the "narrower range of meaning" that lies beneath the surface of the sign *pianist*. For Tsujii, being received as a *pianist* means being able to move with greater freedom in a space which allows both him and his audiences to think of things other than "not-seeing" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82) during musical performance.

As explained in Chapter 3, the semiotic analyses in both this chapter and in Chapter 5 explore two sets of empirical materials. The first set consists of interviews I conducted with Nobuyuki Tsujii and a sample of eleven audience members from his recital on March 10th 2013 at the UBC School of Music. Of the twenty-one interviews I conducted in total between November 2013 and April 2014, I have selected initial and follow-up interviews with Tsujii and six audience members for discussion in Chapters 4 and 5, since these conversations allow for the deepest exploration of the topics relevant to the study as a whole.

The second collection includes magazine and newspaper articles, as well as film documentaries. These materials provide a broader context for exploring the reception of Tsujii's UBC recital. Analysis of these texts juxtaposes the pianist's own public statements about music and disability with his reception by music critics, journalists, filmmakers, fellow musicians, and the general public in the four-year period spanning Tsujii's shared gold medal at the 2009 Cliburn competition, his subsequent emergence on the international concert circuit, and his 2013 visit to UBC. As later chapters will show, the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy, and the

ability/disability system in which it is embedded (Garland-Thomson, 2002) have figured prominently in Tsujii's reception, intersecting at various points with larger debates about musical practices in formal education, and in culture more broadly. **Appendix 1** contains the complete interview schedule, comprising initial and follow-up interviews with Tsujii and the eleven audience members from his UBC recital.

Tsujii does not speak English fluently, and his manager from Japan, Nick Asano, who accompanied him during his 2013 visit to UBC arranged for a translator (Sachiko Koyama) to assist with the first interview (January 27th, 2014). For the second interview (April 11th, 2014) Asano himself was the translator, in which capacity he has also acted for previous interviews the pianist has granted to journalists. At the time of our first interview, Tsujii was in New York City for rehearsals and performances with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. The translator Sachiko Koyama, also was the interpreter for two public events in which Tsujii participated around the time of my first interview with him: the first of these was the premiere of Peter Rosen's (2014) documentary *Touching The Sound: The Improbable Journey of Nobuyuki Tsujii*. The second of the events was his appearance on WQXR's *The Greene Space*.¹⁶

In the quotations from my conversations with both Tsujii and the audience members included in the present chapter and in Chapter 5 I have deleted repetitions of words by interviewees, as well as verbal hesitations such as "um" and colloquial interjections such as "you know." The second editorial intervention stems from the fact that there are moments in the audio recordings of the interviews during which participants softened their voices while thinking about some aspect of our conversation. As well, there are several points in the audio recordings during

¹⁶ The webcast, including the complete audio recording of his appearance, as well as video clips of his performances are available at: <http://www.wqxr.org/>.

which individual words and phrases are inaudible because of problems with the Internet connection. As I explained in Chapter 3, I conducted both interviews with Tsujii, and the initial interview with one of the UBC audience members by Skype: face-to-face interviews were not feasible in these cases owing to the travel schedules of these interview participants. In my quotation of interview excerpts which include words and phrases that are inaudible or indecipherable for the two reasons discussed above I have set the single words "inaudible" and "indecipherable" apart from the main interview text using both italics and square brackets as follows: [*inaudible*] and [*indecipherable*].

4.2 Explanation of the Key Semiotic Terms: Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to summarize the principal semiotic terms that I use to interpret the two sets of empirical materials on which I base my analysis. In delineating "Affect," "Embodiment," and "Convention" as semiotic positions mapped onto Peirce's phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, I have drawn significantly on Naomi Cumming's (2000) explanation of the different signifying relationships associated with each category. By "signifying relationships" I mean the connectivity between a *sign* and the *object* to which that sign refers, producing a further sign (signifying effect), the *interpretant*. Although Peirce himself produced taxonomies of sign-types, sign-object relations, and sign-interpretant relations, it is the last of these, the relationships between a sign and its *interpretant* as experienced by a sign *interpreter*, which are relevant to my own analysis. Grounding his distinction of these different sign-interpretant relationships in his phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, Peirce formulated the terms *rhemes*, *dicents*, and *arguments*. Cumming (2000) shows how—as signs of Firstness,

Secondness, and Thirdness, respectively—*rhemes*, *dicents*, and *arguments* produce different kinds of interpretants (pp. 95–97). In her application of these categories to the study of musical performance and reception, Cumming draws out the sorts of questions implied by analysis of the sign-interpretant relationships to which *rhemes*, *dicents*, and *arguments* refer. I locate my own questions within the analytical framework offered by Cumming, using them as a point of departure for the more specific problems I open up in the present chapter and in Chapter 5.

4.3 The Meanings of Sign-Interpretant Relationships

The questions raised at the level of "Affect," in which *Rhemes* emerge might be summarized thus: What are the qualities of feeling and sensory experiences evoked by Tsujii's recital, and how might these be understood to give meaning to the *pianist/blind pianist* distinction? At this level of interpretation, we are dealing with general impressions of what it means to be a *pianist*, and *blind pianist*. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, Tsujii also invoked the category of *real pianist* implying that to be a *real pianist* is different from being a *blind pianist*. Tsujii is not positively linked to any particular category by sign-interpreters (for present purposes, I define Tsujii and his UBC audience as sign-interpreters). For audiences, the experiences of seeing and hearing him onstage produce interpretants which relate to their signs (*pianist*, *blind pianist*, *real pianist*) through possibility rather than actuality (*rhemes*). For Tsujii, on the other hand, sensing the type of audience he may have, and their possible reactions to his performances leave open for further analysis the questions that bring inquiry into Secondness (*dicents*) and Thirdness (*arguments*): what types of actual responses do particular audience members have (Secondness), and how do these responses fit within the rules and conventions of being a *pianist*, a *real pianist*, and a *blind pianist* in Western art music (Thirdness)?

At the semiotic realm of "Embodiment," *Dicents* produce meaning by raising questions such as: How are embodied relationships understood between Tsujii's physical movements at the keyboard and the resulting characteristics of his performances? How do these embodied semiotic relations further enrich and complicate the *pianist/ blind pianist/ real pianist* formation? Tsujii's embodied experiences of playing the piano lead him to define his presence as a *pianist* and to absent himself from the category of *blind pianist*. Audiences watching and listening to Tsujii as a *pianist, blind pianist, and real pianist*, whether in the concert hall, or through mediated formats such as films and sound recordings, will perceive different relationships between these three signs and the interpretants which they produce based not only on their own habits of musical experience, but also on the different levels of sensory, bodily, and cognitive mediation inherent in live performances versus sound recordings. The meanings of these categories are shaped by embodiment—what Susan Crutchfield (1997), also in relation to blindness/sightedness, refers to as "embodied contiguity" (p. 13)—between what audiences (don't) see and (don't) hear: the sight of the pianist making music is associated with the sounds the pianist makes at the keyboard through attributions of meaning based on the sensory and bodily experience of musical performance and reception. When "concretely situated" sign-interpreters (Colapietro, 1989, p. 35) make assertions cast in the form *I am (not)*, and *He is (not)*, these assertions of reality constitute sign-interpretant relationships as *dicents*.

Reaching the level of Thirdness, or "Convention," *Arguments* reflect an interpretive process which emphasizes formal knowledge and prior training within a musical tradition: What rules and conventions governing the meanings of *pianist, blind pianist, and real pianist* were consciously identified, or, in some cases, implicit in how Tsujii and his audience experienced his UBC recital? Over time, the rules that circumscribe the available range of meanings for the signs

pianist, *blind pianist* and *real pianist* recede into the background acquiring the status of common sense. However, if one starts from the premise (as I do in the present study) that musical performance can open up educative gaps between performer and audience analogous to those between teacher and student (Biesta, 2004, p. 13; Gershon, 2010), then the rule-governed meanings of *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* with which Tsujii and his audiences have different levels of familiarity may be called into question. The resulting critical reflection may take multiple forms, ranging from overt resistance against these rules and conventions, to demonstrated awareness of the internal contradictions in the way these norms are upheld. Analysis proceeds by examining how Tsujii and his UBC audience, as sign-interpreters relate *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist*, to particular sorts of *interpretants*, and works to map these interpretants along the continuum between overt resistance and demonstrated awareness identified above.

One final preparatory note, before analysis commences in the next section. In Chapter 3, I noted that James H. Johnson's (1995) explication of historical shifts in audience reception practices offers a helpful general taxonomy for organizing my own analysis: "sounds, images, ideas, emotions, vague feelings, and so forth" (p. 2). In the analyses presented in this chapter, and in Chapter 5, I locate the sign-interpretant relationships defined by *rhemes*, *dicents*, and *arguments* in each of these six categories (including the unspecified "and so forth") within the experiences of Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital that the pianist and individual audience members described during our conversations. Johnson's categorization of musical experience is capacious enough to allow for analysis of these conversations, as well as the modes of self-representation and reception gleaned from media sources between 2009 and 2013.

4.3 Sounds as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (In)Audible Interpretants Interpreted

The first section of this chapter explores how Tsujii's performances are heard/not heard in the domain of aural semiosis, starting from the premise that the sounds a performer makes and which the audience hears (or doesn't hear) are musical signs that constitute a non-verbal semiotic system (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010; Turino, 2009). In my first interview with Tsujii I asked him how he felt his UBC audience responded to his performance, framing my question in relation to the 2009 *TIME* Magazine article discussed in Chapter 1 (Oda, 2009). Recall that Tsujii was quoted in this article as expressing the hope that audiences will come to receive him as "simply a pianist rather than a blind pianist" (Oda, 2009, para. 6). Similar statements by other blind pianists who have achieved distinction in Western art music and in jazz provide a framework in which to situate Tsujii's response. Against this larger background Tsujii's apparent "disavowal" of disability (Shakespeare, 1994) is part of the social, cultural, historical, and aesthetic work that some musicians with disabilities have felt compelled to do in order not to be seen and heard as different from their non-disabled colleagues. I return to this issue in the third section of this chapter, explicating the sign-interpretant relationships produced by historically and culturally contingent ideas about blindness and sightedness that shape encounters between Tsujii and his audiences in sometimes unanticipated ways. For the moment, I quote Tsujii's response to my question, and explore its implications for how he is heard as a *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist*.

Honisch: You have been quoted as saying that you hope one day audiences will listen to you as a pianist rather than as a blind pianist. To what extent did you feel the audience at UBC was responding to you as a pianist, as you would like them to respond to you?

Tsujii (via translator Sachiko Koyama): As I recall, the enthusiasm and focus on the audience side was very strong, so I thought maybe most of the people there took me as a real pianist. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

To gain some sense of what it means for audiences to hear Tsujii with "enthusiasm and focus" as a *real pianist*, let us explore how individual members of his UBC audience described their experiences of Tsujii's recital. I have selected these interview excerpts because they both align with and diverge from Tsujii's equation of enthusiastic and focused listening with his reception as a *real pianist*.¹⁷

Rinaldo, a graduate student in health sciences, first heard about Nobuyuki Tsujii in 2010 when he was at his family home in South America. Rinaldo identifies himself as someone without formal musical training, who nevertheless enjoys attending concerts frequently. He told me that after watching a documentary film in which Tsujii appeared—although he couldn't recall the name of the documentary, Peter Rosen's (2009) *A Surprise In Texas: The Thirteenth International Van Cliburn Piano Competition* is the most likely candidate—he was "really impressed." Rinaldo explained that disability was not a central aspect of his initial response, that when he first heard and saw Tsujii in 2010 he didn't think of Tsujii as a *blind pianist*, and that this way of bracketing disability out of musical performance has remained central to how he experiences musical performances, including those by other musicians with disabilities. In relation to Tsujii more specifically, Rinaldo wrote to me following our first interview that: "After all, *in a recital, I don't have to see the pianist: I only have to close my eyes and listen to him*"

¹⁷ For a discussion of "focused listening" from a perspective grounded in the psychology of music please see Eric Clarke, Nicola Dibben, & Stephanie Pitts (2002) *Music and mind in everyday life* (p. 77).

(personal communication, December 2, 2013; emphasis added). Rinaldo's claim bears a striking resemblance to statements by members of the Cliburn jury following the controversy over the announcement of winners. For example, the chairman of the Van Cliburn jurors in 2009 was quoted in the media explaining that the jurors listened with *closed eyes* to Tsujii playing (as cited in Baird, 2010, para. 9).¹⁸ The assumption is that closing one's eyes prevents distraction from the sight of Tsujii as a *blind pianist*, and that his abilities as *simply a pianist* will be audible in a transparent way that is free from the intrusion of bodily difference. In other words, Tsujii's blindness should be not only not seen, in order to truly experience his performances, but also not heard. Within this normative framework, in order for the musical signs of Tsujii's performances to be received as *rhemes* that enable the sign-interpretant relationship to mean *real pianist*, and not *blind pianist*, blindness must become invisible and inaudible.

The presentation of bodily experience in the language of common sense depends on the assumption that what bodies do, for example seeing, hearing, and walking are part of a widely shared, if not universal, human experience (Michalko, 2002; Silvers, 1998). The consequence of this way of thinking is that the meaning of such abilities needs no further scrutiny, that "sight, hearing, mobility, and complex cognition are good in themselves and, consequently, their loss constitutes a deprivation of intrinsically valuable experiences" (Silvers, 1998, p. 89). The

¹⁸ The complex cultural and historical issues related to listening to music with eyes closed, on the assumption that visual distractions can thereby be filtered out is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, Elizabeth Kramer's (2006) discussion of *Kunstreligion* provides an account of historical reception practices which posits a connection between artistic and divine experiences (p. 74). Despite its thematic distance from present concerns, Kramer's discussion of the emergence of this practice during the early nineteenth century illustrates how present day performers such as Tsujii, and his mentor Van Cliburn discuss musical experience in ways that reflect the often unacknowledged imprint of these older ideas. In my own conversations with Tsujii, the pianist did not mention divinity, but did emphasize how important it is to him for his audiences to focus on his performances (a topic to which I return in Chapter 5). Van Cliburn, a 2009 Cliburn competition juror, and one of the UBC audience members I interviewed each located Tsujii's pianism in relation to invocations of a divine presence, a point to which I return later in this chapter. I am grateful to August Sheehy for drawing my attention to Kramer (2006).

disavowal of blindness that occurs in the examples discussed above, both by Tsujii and by two audience members who have seen and heard him as a *real pianist* participates in this ascription of inherent goodness and value to sensory, physical, and cognitive ability.

At the same time that he verbally rejects being received as a *blind pianist*, however, Tsujii counters pervasive assumptions about what this sign means through his mere presence on stage. Tsujii's assertion that when he plays he focuses on the music, the composer and the audience, rather than on himself (January 27, 2014) reflects a core tenet in Western art music, namely that the sounds of music are more important than the sights of music being produced and received. Identification between performer and audience and among individual audience members emerges through the combined activities of musical performance and reception (Small, 1998). The musician's onstage persona comes into the world as a "sonic self," formed through musical signification (Cumming, 2000, p. 23). By affirming the values of this pedagogical system in Western art music, Tsujii participates in the treatment of sensory and, by extension, bodily and cognitive differences as immaterial to transcendent musical experience. However, this attempt to locate an autonomous universe of sound at the center of musical experience raises questions about what musical experiences are thereby excluded. This conflict over meaning plays out in the clash of *dicents*, namely the multiple, sometimes contradictory, ways that musicians with disabilities assert their presence within a tradition that signifies their presence as troubling, as somehow illogical. Consider, for example, the following statement from percussionist Evelyn Glennie (n.d.):

I have truly never believed that the problems I experienced with my ears could in any significant way affect my abilities as a musician. Neither did I believe that just because no one else had ever succeeded in maintaining a career as a solo classical percussionist

that I would not be able to. I have not succeeded in spite of my deafness or because of it.
Deafness is simply an irrelevant part of the equation. (para. 7; emphasis added)

Glennie, in effect, identifies herself as *simply a percussionist rather than as a deaf percussionist*. In doing so, Glennie positions herself on one side of the ability-disability system (Garland-Thomson, 2002). By reproducing a sharp distinction between disability and ability, Glennie locates the former as a "problem" with her off-stage self, as irrelevant to her musicianship, and the latter in relation to a different, autonomous self formed in and through musical signs (Cumming, 2000, p. 23). Glennie's disavowal of disability in reflecting on her musical career might be considered antithetical to the Disability Studies project of acknowledging disability as an ambiguous, complex, and richly human experience (see Titchkosky, 2011). It is worth bearing in mind that Glennie, like Tsujii, does not subscribe to the trope of heroic overcoming widely critiqued within Disability Studies. By locating her deafness as "irrelevant," while at the same time publicly asking her audiences to re-examine their mistaken notions of what it means to hear musical sound (Glennie, n.d. B, para. 2–3), Glennie inhabits two positions simultaneously: on the one hand, defending the values of a tradition that normalizes hearing (Straus, 2011, pp. 150–181), while on the other hand destabilizing the very definitions of hearing which make the privileged status of hearing as ability possible. However, acknowledging the contradictory positions that musicians with disabilities such as Tsujii and Glennie inhabit is not to endorse the idea that what musicians with disabilities say about their bodily experiences in relation to their music-making is necessarily the last word on the matter.

An example of the sorts of problems that arise in too credulous a stance towards the public statements of musicians with disabilities can be understood by turning to a more recent

statement by Tsujii which, yet again, appears to frame what he does as a pianist in sonic terms to the marginalization of other domains of experience: "I believe that I became one with the piano when I was born, and I feel that it is only natural to express myself through the piano"(Tsujii, as quoted in Nick, 2013, para. 10). As with Glennie, the "self" that Tsujii feels he is expressing naturally through his instrument is a "sonic self" (Cumming, 2000, p. 23), a self constituted in and through musical sounds (p. 101). Two contradictory meanings follow from this claim. First, Tsujii's perception of intuitive habits, that everything he does as a pianist is natural and therefore resistant to explanation when he is asked about his sensory and bodily experiences of playing the piano, can be understood as a kind of embodied knowledge producing *dicents* which connect the physically embodied sounds he produces to the sonic interpretants he experiences. On the other hand, implicit in Tsujii's statement is the idea that since he was born without sight, the merging of his self with the piano allows him to experience in sound what he cannot experience through sight. The following excerpt from a review of one of Tsujii's performances highlights the difficulty that his audiences often have in understanding his embodied relationship to the piano as anything other than limited by blindness:

There are, to be sure, limitations. Since he has to address every note from so close to the keyboard, there is sometimes a lack of the complex resonance that sighted pianists can bring especially to fortissimos, and his phrasing can be breathless. He also occasionally has to make slight adjustments to the texture that sacrifice a fraction of pianistic excitement. (Fanning, 2014, para. 4)

Demonstrating similar tensions between evaluating Tsujii as *simply a pianist* and remembering that he is a *blind pianist*, *BBC Music Magazine* offers the following description of a scene from a

documentary film about Tsujii, which shows how quickly "enthusiasm and focus" on the sounds he makes as a *real pianist* can evaporate: his reception lapses into shopworn representations of blindness: "The camera lingers revealingly on close-ups of his neat hands, showing how flat the fingers are, and how relaxed their action, and underscoring the fact that through his finely-judged rubato he exercises total authority over tempo" (Church, 2013, para. 2). The reviewer concludes, however, that "the principal memory one comes away with is his engagingly *child-like presence*" (Church, 2013, para. 2; emphasis added)

At this stage though, we may ask: what does it mean to be *simply a pianist*? And how are pianists who are received as *simply pianists* able to signify their presence within Western art music in ways that differ from the ostensibly more limited representational environments available to *blind pianists*? Consider, for the purposes of comparison, the following uses of the phrase "simply a pianist" in a survey of the reception of sighted pianists, a topic introduced in Chapter 1. With the complicated exception of Beethoven (who is now remembered primarily as a composer and who became deaf later in life) all of these examples refer to non-disabled pianists.

First, the headline for a concert notice identifies John Lill as "more than simply a pianist" (Bratby, 2008). Although this report does not specify how Lill is "more than simply a pianist," the context suggests that Lill offers something more than mere pianistic virtuosity, that he inhabits a fraught space in which genius can shade off into eccentricity (Bratby, 2008, para. 2). In reference to the pianist Beatrice Rana in Chapter 1, I showed how the phrase *simply a pianist* can often be deployed as a subtle criticism, implying that it is not good enough for a pianist to be *merely* a pianist. In Tsujii's case, his insistence on being regarded as *simply a pianist* suggests a deeper contradiction in the reception of musicians with disabilities. For a pianist such as Tsujii, to be received as *simply a pianist* is not a way to qualify or express skepticism about his ability.

It is an extra step, as it were, which he must ascend in order for his pianistic ability to be considered seriously alongside, and compared favorably to that of sighted pianists.

The contradiction between Tsujii wanting to be regarded as *simply a pianist* in order to be taken seriously and the contradictory use of the phrase *simply a pianist* to refer to non-disabled pianists in the example discussed above suggest that being *simply a pianist* is anything but simple. A second example clarifies how *simply a pianist* can have a bluntly pejorative tone, stronger in its critical force than its ambivalent use in response to Beatrice Rana: "Jack Gibbons is not simply a pianist, he is a magician whose playing brings back to life another era" (1999, *Worcester MA Telegram and Gazette*, USA).¹⁹ In this excerpt, Gibbons, as a musical magician, is ascribed the singular ability to transport his audiences out of the world of ordinary pianism, a rhetorical strategy that makes the thought of hearing someone who is *simply a pianist* seem disappointing by comparison. Yet another example moves this phrase back into the realm of the approbative: "[Richard] Burnett's ...interpretations, especially those using the English pianos, are convincing and moving... we can then say that *Burnett is not a 'fortepianist', but simply a pianist, one of quality*" (Latham, 2006, p. 495; emphasis added). Reaching back to the nineteenth century, we find a discussion of Ludwig van Beethoven, Western art music's iconic musician with an (acquired) disability (Straus, 2011). William Mason (1892) describes the piano music of Beethoven thus: "Many of his piano passages lie most awkwardly under the fingers, and certainly would never have been written by a skilled virtuoso who was *simply a pianist...*" (Mason, 1892, para. 7; emphasis added)

¹⁹ I have been unable to find the original article. The excerpt which I have quoted appears as above on Gibbons' official website. Retrieved June 11, 2015, from: <http://www.jackgibbons.com/londonconcerts.htm>

Responding to the controversy over the gold medal tie between Nobuyuki Tsujii and Haochen Zhang, several of the Cliburn competition jurors insisted that it was Tsujii's musicianship, not his disability, which determined his success. The meritocratic ethos at the heart of international piano competitions obligates jurors to respond to competitors as *simply pianists*, and to evaluate the degree to which they are *real pianists* as demonstrated by their mastery over musical sound. The "honest assessment" claimed in the excerpt quoted below from an interview with one of the 2009 Cliburn jurors below is part of a code of conduct (a sign-interpretant relationship that falls within the domain of *arguments*) for both jurors and competitors. In the domain of *arguments*, musical differences among competitors are supposed to be *heard* only to the extent that these shape the technical and aesthetic qualities of their performances. Sight is seen as irrelevant, and disability, including blindness, must remain unseen: "This was not a sympathy vote.... It was a real honest assessment on the part of the voters of how he [Tsujii] played. We don't look at someone who overcame odds. This is not the way we judge" (Kaplinsky, quoted in Wise, 2009, para. 4).

As I noted in Chapter 1, several music critics have gone further than simply voicing their discontent with the jury's decision to award Tsujii a gold medal (Ivry, 2009), suggesting that the pianist is limited by an unsatisfactory method of learning music: in this context, the pianist's reliance on hearing (his preferred method) rather than on touch (through Braille notation, which he finds cumbersome) signifies against his realness as a pianist, producing sign-interpretant relationships which inaugurate a conflict over truth (*dicents*). Scott Cantrell (2009b), one of the music critics who covered the 2009 competition for *Dallas Morning News* writes, for example, that

The blind Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii, who took one of the two gold medals at the Cliburn, certainly impressed me with his mastery of major scores. But I kept wanting more color, more rise and fall of phrases; all of the other finalists struck me as more expressive players. (para. 1)

Cantrell observes parenthetically that "some of the expressivity was more learned than felt" (para. 1), but fails to clarify how his distinction between "learned" versus "felt" expressivity is audible. Struggling to define the absence of expressivity in Tsujii's playing, he lapses instead into the vague assertion that Tsujii's fellow competitors were *more* expressive. A Peircean approach to questions of how and what performers transmit through the non-verbal medium of music (and musical sound) allows us to understand that the expressive dimensions of performance are not merely subjective. Performers do not merely project their own "felt" expressive states, but that expressivity is, in fact, "learned" within the norms of a particular musical tradition (Cumming, 2000). Cantrell tumbles into a chasm of paradoxes bounded either side by unexamined assumptions about sensory ability and disability. Curiously, he ends up suggesting that a tactile engagement with musical notation by means of Braille is a more promising substitute for the kind of aural learning techniques that Tsujii prefers: curious, because we are simultaneously asked to believe that what matters, above all, is a pianist's control over musical sound, thus implying that the medium of learning should reflect the primacy of sound:

It has nothing to do with blindness, although I wonder if Tsujii hasn't been cheating himself of scores' interpretive directions by learning by ear—and thus dependent on the vicissitudes of the recording, or the pianist playing the piece for him. Braille music

editions, which he does not use, do include those directions. (Cantrell, 2009b, para. 1–2; emphasis added)

The subsequent passage, in which Cantrell moves from criticizing Tsujii's interpretive sensibilities to speculating about the possible cause for the absence of expressive depth is worth quoting in full:

His renditions may lack a true understanding of the music, and a sense of having something individual to say, but this is possibly due to the way that he learns the music: Tsujii used to study Braille music but found it so time-consuming he started learning pieces by listening to recordings. The problem with this is that he is learning the music through someone else's interpretation; if he is to develop as a musician he will need to find his own way of understanding the music he plays, independent of the interpretation he has heard in order to learn the notes. (Cantrell, 2009b; para. 2.)

Cantrell (2009b) does not elaborate on what he means by a "true understanding of the music" nor does he offer criteria for what constitutes individuality in musical performance. His subsequent discussion of Tsujii's way of learning music, based on the assumption that Tsujii's engagement with the music he plays is indirect, mediated by "someone else's interpretation" is therefore unconvincing. Cantrell fails to acknowledge the extent to which *all* performers learn through multiple other interpretations, a point to which I return in a later section of this chapter. For the present, it will suffice to note that Cantrell ascribes more *dependence* on able-bodied musicians, and on assistive technologies to Tsujii as a *blind pianist*, leaving unquestioned the

supposedly greater autonomy and more pronounced agency of Tsujii's sighted colleagues who are *simply pianists*.

Although he refrains from drawing a straight line between Tsujii's supposedly inadequate musical understanding and his unconventional way of learning music, Cantrell's (2009b) review of Tsujii's performances at the 2009 Cliburn competition implies that incomplete musical comprehension stems from a learning technique which, from the perspective of someone who has not actually used that technique (in this case, the distanced perspective of a music critic), is necessarily based on a remote engagement with the music. The assumption informing Cantrell's response to Tsujii is that for a pianist to learn music by ear rather than by eye, as it were, attenuates musical experience and learning. For Cantrell, the *blind pianist* who learns music by listening is further removed from original interpretive work than both *pianists* who can see musical notation and *blind pianists* who use Braille notation.

When I asked Tsujii to describe his methods of learning music, I mentioned that I had read an article from March 6th, 2013, in *The Coloradoan*. The author of the article, Stacy Nick, includes a (translated) question and answer exchange with Tsujii. In his response to her question about how he learns music, Tsujii replies: "Sometimes people mistakenly believe that I learn just by ear by listening to music. My method is completely different" (Nick, 2013, para. 16). I endeavored to get a clearer sense of the possible inaccuracies in how his methods of learning music have been reported by journalists:

Tsujii: Always when I'm asked that sort of question, I always say that I start by just listening to a CD, and I learn note by note. I just make sure that [*inaudible*]. Even today I learn from a tape. The tape was specially made for me, for one hand and then to another

hand [*the left and right hand parts are recorded separately*]. I study very carefully with the tape. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

The host for Tsujii's on WQXR's "The Greene Space" (Elliott Forrest) asked Tsujii a similar question on January 14th, 2014. The temporal proximity between Tsujii's response to this question for the webcast, and in conversation with me for my doctoral research provides a foothold for comparison:

Forrest: I think people would be curious—clearly you can't read music —how it is that you go about learning a piece.

Tsujii (via translator Sachiko Koyama): I used to learn from Braille scores but it really took quite a long time. Also, the music available in Braille scores is very limited, because there are not so many piano players who would have eyesight problems. I sometimes have to ask people to make Braille scores for me and that's also quite limiting. So now I actually ask someone to record hand by hand [*hands separately*]. All the information that I require to know the piece is also recorded. I ask someone to do it and make a special tape. I learn by listening to it and studying from it. (13 mins: 08 seconds–15 mins: 04 seconds)²⁰

For my own initial conversation with Tsujii, I pursued the topic of how he learns music by asking about the origins of this method:

²⁰ The quoted passage is based on my own transcription from the webcast. The entire webcast is available on the WQXR website. Retrieved June 11, 2015, from <http://www.wqxr.org/#!/story/webcast-pianist-nobuyuki-tsujii-greene-space/>

Tsujii (via Sachiko Koyama): The method was originally created by a teacher who I studied with since I was six years old. In the beginning I used Braille scores which really took a long time. The teacher came up with the idea of making a tape. Using this method I could learn pieces very quickly compared to when I used Braille scores, so ever since then I stick to that method. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

Tsujii's resistance against the label of *blind pianist* bears the imprint of a discourse of disability pushed to the edges of "familiar corporeal experience" (Cumming, 2000, p. 194) for people whose eyes, ears, and bodies are marked as abnormal. During our first interview, I also asked Tsujii about a statement attributed to him in a 2013 article by music critic Ivan Hewett in *The Telegraph*. The title of Hewett's article, *The Piano Is An Extension of My Own Body*, refers to a later passage in which Tsujii responds to a question he is often asked: how can he navigate the keyboard without seeing it?

Tsujii (via Sachiko Koyama): It's very difficult to explain to you in words because this is one of the natural things I do. I cannot really analyze what I do, and what I feel, and what I play. I don't think about how I play, I just play. Feeling and hearing, these are things I do really naturally so I cannot really analyze them. Even today as a professional pianist, I always feel the same towards the piano, and playing the instrument, and playing music. As a professional musician I feel responsibility for the composer but the same joy remains the same as the day when I started. The piano is a part of me, and I play very naturally. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

I mentioned watching Tsujii's rehearsal with James Conlon at the 2009 Cliburn competition, in the hopes of pushing the pianist towards expansive answers to my questions about his sensory and bodily experiences of playing the piano, and of drawing him out on more technical matters, such as those related to interpretation. However, in response to my question about his interaction with Conlon, and about what I suggested was the potential educational significance of his "teaching" the conductor a different way of approaching the task of coordination among a group of musicians (soloist, conductor, and orchestra), Tsujii replied quite briefly:

It's something I do very normally in everyday life so it's all very natural to me and if people ask me 'how are you doing that?' —that sort of question is very difficult to answer, because it's all natural to me. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

In contrast to Tsujii's stated belief that his piano playing is largely intuitive and therefore unavailable for analysis in relation to the senses and the body, Cumming (1996) accounts for synergies between experiencing music through the senses and realizing musical sound through bodily movement in a way that is more helpful for present purposes, because her approach bridges the language of the performer and that of the scholar. Cumming explains that "an understanding of musical gesture may be an embodied understanding, especially for the performer who does not attempt to articulate verbally what it is that he or she knows when realizing a [musical] structure through physical movement" (p. 133). Tsujii's reluctance to verbalize his own ability to translate bodily movement into "musical gesture" (a technical term which attributes qualities of movement to musical sound) once again redirects attention to musical sound rather than to other domains of musical experience whether visual, aural, or kinesthetic.

A 2009 article by Juliet Chung and Miho Inada in *The Wall Street Journal* begins with a description of how Tsujii plays the piano and a synopsis of the methods he uses to learn music. The same techniques for playing the piano that Tsujii describes as natural are here represented subtly as alternatives to what sighted pianists can do:

Pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii listens to the conductor's breathing for cues, since he can't see the [conductor's] baton. On stage, he feels for the edges of the keyboard before he begins playing, to orient his hands. He learns new pieces through listening and memorization, rather than reading the notes. (para. 1)

These commentators do not mention the video of Tsujii's rehearsal with James Conlon before the final round of the 2009 Cliburn competition, which I had asked the pianist about during my first conversation with him.²¹ However, I would like to discuss both the video itself and what I initially hoped to learn from Tsujii about his experiences of this rehearsal. During the specific interaction which I alluded to earlier, near the end of the rehearsal, the two musicians have to figure out how to synchronize the piano and orchestra after a pause of several beats. Typically, pianists and conductors will communicate visually in such a situation, but in this case, Tsujii and Conlon had to figure out a different, non-visual strategy. After several unsuccessful attempts, in which Conlon tried counting the rhythm of this passage out loud, Tsujii says something in Japanese to the translator, who then explains to Conlon that the pianist can follow him by listening to him breathe.²² This alternative method for achieving coordination works

²¹ At the point of writing, this video is no longer available on YouTube.

²² I have been unable to verify the name of the translator present at this rehearsal, but according to the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* (2009), Tsujii's translator was Kay Nakamoto, "a professional interpreter from Bedford [Texas]" (Getting personal, para. 1). However, Nick Asano clarified that although Kay Nakamoto was the official translator

instantly, and Conlon expresses his surprise at how quickly the initial difficulty is resolved. As mentioned earlier, during my first conversation with Tsujii I suggested that this moment was educationally significant in the sense that not only the conductor, but anyone who watches the video becomes aware of a way of experiencing music not only through the musical sounds themselves, but also through heightened awareness of breathing. Because visual interaction between soloist and conductor typically dominates in this type of situation, breathing is not often emphasized in quite this way.

In response, however, Tsujii did not pursue what I had identified as an educative possibility, once again invoking the idea of instinct and a feeling of naturalness in how he plays the piano. Although he did not respond in the way I anticipated (indeed hoped), I came to understand that Tsujii's attention to breathing in such situations is inseparable from how he experiences music (Interview, January, 27, 2014). In the role of researcher I had lapsed into hearing Tsujii primarily as a *blind pianist*, despite my intention to do something different, and was brought up short by this realization producing *dicents* in my own interpretation of my conversations with him and inflecting the Thirdness of our shared understanding of the pedagogical codes of Western art music with a moment of Secondness. In order to proceed further with my analysis following our conversations, I therefore had to remember that for Tsujii himself his piano playing is not *naturally* about blindness. Here I allude to Koppers' (2013) observation that the spectacle of disability comes to dominate the reception of performers with

who was hired for the competition through the *Van Cliburn Foundation*, another translator, Rena Miyamoto assisted with translation during the final round of the competition. He explained that the latter translator is featured in Peter Rosen's documentary about the 2009 Cliburn competition (personal communication, May 19, 2015).

disabilities, rendering other dimensions of their subjectivities, and of their creative work as subordinate to the overpowering effects of their destabilizing corporeal presence (p. 50).

However, the subjective presence of the performer is a vigorously contested topic within music studies even leaving aside the particular complexities that disability poses in shaping a performer's self. The performing tradition in which Tsujii situates himself demands that the performer's subjectivity be at the very least subordinate to the music that she or he plays, and that, ideally, the performer and audience concentrate on music as sound to the exclusion of the body as a site of meaning in and of itself. The ways in which such norms shape reception may be understood by considering a shared emphasis among Tsujii and two audience members, Ava and Yvette.²³ Both Ava and Yvette are themselves trained pianists and were completing doctoral level studies in music when I interviewed them. In our conversations about Tsujii's recital, they emphasized qualitative and affective features linked to the signifying effects of the *sounds* of Tsujii's UBC recital (Interviews, December 13th & 17th, 2013). Both of these audience members expressed particular appreciation of Tsujii's final-round performance of Chopin's Piano Concerto in E minor, excerpts of which they heard in Peter Rosen's documentary about the 2009 Cliburn competition. Although in performance and reception, musical sound is assumed to be paramount (Straus, 2011; Tsay, 2013), the assumption belies the contradictory position of musical sounds as signs (Cumming, 1999 & 2000). In a more complicated vein, the pedagogy of Western art music often neglects the affective, qualitative features of musical sound in favour of those formal and technical aspects of music (independent of actual musical sound) regarded as having a more objective verifiable basis. The tension between "learned" musical knowledge and "felt" musical

²³ I have assigned pseudonyms to all audience members I interviewed.

intuition (to invoke Cantrell's 2009 dichotomy in responding to Tsujii) is pinpointed by Naomi Cumming (1999):

A potential for subjectivity (in its pejorative sense) is taken to attend the description of the qualities of sound in performance, qualities which are taken to be impermanent and ephemeral, and to be understood only by one gifted with a special kind of musical intuition. Greater security of knowledge... is, however, accorded to accounts of musical structure, especially those which draw upon a recognised theoretical framework. (Cumming, 1999, p. 437)

As pianists themselves, however, Ava and Yvette felt that the qualities of sound which they heard in Tsujii's interpretation of Chopin, both during the Cliburn competition and in his 2013 recital at UBC, offered moments of significant musical meaning. Even within their seemingly shared interpretive framework, however, contradictions emerged in our conversations and it is to a discussion of these tensions which I now turn.

Yvette invoked images of purity and child-like innocence, familiar imagery associated with the historical and cultural reception of blind people, including blind musicians (Barasch, 2001; Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011). Such imagery also has manifested in the self-representation of blind people who have left memoirs to posterity, a topic which cannot be pursued here (Hollins, 1936; Husson, 2001).²⁴ In an earlier section of the present chapter, I noted this imagery being used to make Tsujii present as a *blind pianist* in a 2013 *BBC Music Magazine* review of one of Tsujii's concerts (Church, 2013). Before discussing how Yvette invoked these images in her

²⁴ The exact date of the original publication of Husson's memoirs is not given, but the editors note in their introduction that Husson wrote this document in 1825 (p. 1).

response Tsujii's recital in 2013, it will be helpful to situate her observations in the larger context of her recollections of hearing Tsujii play the piano for the first time. During what turned out to be our only interview together (see Appendix 1), Yvette told me that she heard about Tsujii's shared gold medal at the 2009 Cliburn competition shortly after the results were announced, and that she watched a few videos of Tsujii's competition performances on YouTube:

Yvette: The first thing I thought was that the Chopin Concerto No. 1—I feel that his Chopin is very pure. It's as though he's not playing in a competition, it's more as though he's playing a concert. (Interview, December 17, 2013)

Later in our conversation, Yvette differentiated Tsujii from other pianists by drawing attention to a quality of innocence which she perceived in his onstage comportment during his 2013 UBC recital. As I noted in Chapter 2, such perceptions of innocence and purity are a recurring theme not only in Tsujii's post-Cliburn reception, but also more generally in the reception of blind musicians. Yvette remembers that

At the time I was thinking it's his father or uncle who helps him on and offstage [*Tsujii's manager from Japan, Nick Asano*]. How he bows is more like a child, in a childish way he bows to everyone. It leaves a very deep impression, because you never see others [other pianists] appear on stage in this way. When he bows, at that moment you know he can't see, but he's still trying to bow to different directions so I think this is something that's very touching. (Yvette, Interview December 17, 2013)

For Yvette, then, the realization that Tsujii is blind, produces an interpretant that is both a *rheme* and *dicent*, because of its affective dimensions (encapsulated in her use of the adjective "touching), and the awareness of difference.

Although Ava also felt that the excerpts of Tsujii's performance of Chopin's E minor Piano Concerto featured in Peter Rosen's documentary about the 2009 Cliburn competition were deeply moving, she characterized Tsujii's interpretations of other works by Chopin for his 2013 UBC recital as unremarkable. She found Tsujii's rendering of music by Debussy during this concert to be more musically convincing, and to demonstrate a greater command of the instrument. What stands out in the following statement by Ava, excerpted from our first interview, are the opposing points of view taken by her and Yvette (both of whom, as noted earlier are pianists themselves) as to whether Tsujii's interpretations of Chopin, in particular, make him sound like he is playing for a competition rather than for a concert. Comparing Tsujii to other pianists she has heard in the same recital hall, Ava explained that

His Debussy has really a wider range of sonority than other pianists who use the same piano in that hall, especially in the *Estampes*. With the Chopin it's pretty much standard playing I would say, how competition pieces sound like. (Interview, December 13, 2013).

Within a shared discourse among musicians, competitive performances are characterized by a certain guardedness and conventionality, often motivated by a desire to please the judges, and increase the likelihood of winning a medal (Cumming, 2000, p. 38; McCormick, 2008 & 2009). On the other hand, so the thinking goes, concert performances are more likely to reveal a musician's artistic sensibilities, to the extent that the musician feels less obliged to avoid playing wrong notes, or to refrain from straying too far from interpretive norms. However, as Cumming (2000) observes, the distinction between concert performances and competition performances is by no means hard and fast (pp. 39–41). However, in comparing Tsujii's Cliburn competition performances with his UBC recital in this way, Ava and Yvette position themselves as part of an interpretive community in which Tsujii's ability to sound like a *real pianist* depends at least as

much on his ability to avoid sounding like a *competition pianist* as it does on his ability to avoid being typecast as a *blind pianist*. Through their responses to Tsujii's recital, Ava and Yvette demonstrate a fundamental problem with the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy: in the context of an actual musical performance, various other types of *pianist* become important in how audience members experience the performance, and each new semiotic category of *pianist* must then be understood in relation to, and in opposition against, historical and cultural systems that accord these various types of *pianists* greater and lesser value. In the next section, I pursue how Tsujii is *seen* as a pianist, and work through the visual interpretants generated by his presence on stage, and in the media.

4.4 Images as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (In)Visible Interpretants Interpreted

This section explores how Tsujii is seen/not seen in the domain of visual semiosis, based on the premise that the sense of sight and, along a sensory continuum, the sense of blindness figure prominently in the performance and reception of musical meaning (Cumming, 2000; Leppert, 1991; Straus, 2011; Tsay, 2013; Turino, 2009). The degree to which a response to the sounds of Tsujii's performances can be submerged by popular representations of the image of blindness is illustrated in the *BBC Magazine* review discussed in the preceding section (Church, 2013). That shift in register demonstrates the power of representations of blindness as *arguments* within the popular imagination. As *arguments* (in the more restricted sense which separates Peirce's definition from ordinary usage), these representations link signs of blindness to conventional interpretants of innocence and naiveté (Barasch, 2001; Straus, 2011). Situating Michael Church's (2013) *BBC Magazine* review of a concert that Tsujii gave in Russia within the present discussion of visual semiosis, it is relevant to mention that the author's review is of a DVD of the concert, in other words, a highly mediated format which emphasizes the sight of

music in performance. Church's abrupt shift in register, from a sharp focus on what it was like to hear and see Tsujii in performance, to a visual representation of the naive, innocent *blind pianist* highlights the contradictory nature of Tsujii's critical reception even within a single text by a single author. Tsujii is simultaneously heard as a *real pianist* capable of exerting rhythmic (sonic) control over the music he performs (demonstrated through musical sounds as dicents), and seen as a *blind pianist* whose naiveté can never be banished from the audience's memory regardless of his demonstrated musical excellence (visual representations of blindness as *arguments*). It is worth repeating the penultimate line in Church's (2013) brief review: "But the principal memory one comes away with is his engagingly child-like presence" (para. 2).

In a review of the recording of Tsujii's 2011 Carnegie Hall debut, Dan Morgan (2012) describes the pianist's elegy for the lives lost in the 2011 earthquake and tsunami (which Tsujii played as an encore, and the reception of which at his UBC recital I discuss in Chapter 5) as "a modest and unassuming work, whose serene central theme is firm and indomitable; the writing is just as assured as the playing" (para. 8). Explaining that he was originally skeptical about Tsujii's pianistic abilities because of the "effusive comments" on the CD box, Morgan concludes with a virtuosic display of normalizing discourses: his rendering of Tsujii's blindness is shaped by deeply sedimented ways of seeing blindness, modes of reception situated at the juncture between history, society and culture:

I was determined to take a... more rational view of this pianist. As it happens I'm now utterly convinced Nobuyuki Tsujii is that rarest of creatures [a pianist who] marries technical prowess with daunting levels of insight and flair. *Indeed, as he plays he constantly looks around him, as if responding to the commands of a hidden muse; it's*

rather distressing at first, but that sense of invisible communion strikes me as an apt and powerful metaphor for his artistry. (Morgan, 2012, para. 9; emphasis added)

Morgan's (2012) description of Tsujii modulates rapidly from a "rational" analysis of the technical and interpretive features of the latter's pianism (aspects which can be located in the realm of musical sounds) into a semiotic landscape of musical sights familiar in the reception of blind pianists, and similar in tone to Church (2013). The metaphors that this reviewer uses oscillate between the seen and the unseen: Tsujii's "hidden muse" and "invisible communion" are qualitative signs of Firstness (*rhemes*), making no claims upon reality, but instead relying on the assumption that the reader will somehow intuit this world of the unseen. Although clothed in the garb of a subjective response on the critic's part, the affective interpretants produced by these qualitative signs can be found in the critical reception of blind pianists throughout the twentieth century (Prosnak, 1970; see also, Lubet, 2010; Sacks, 2007; Straus, 2011).

Morgan's (2012) putatively subjective response to Tsujii is situated within Thirdness, an ensemble of semiotic codes or *arguments* that govern the reception of *blind pianists* through the conventional binary of sensory ability (whose interpretants refer to the external world of sensory experience) and disability (whose interpretants refer to the internal world of the spirit, and of social isolation; see Sacks, 2007; Straus, 2011). The invocation of divinity and of other-worldliness in reference to Tsujii is, in turn, part of a larger network of signification which represents blind artists, musicians and poets as isolated from the world of ordinary human interaction and sensory experience, while simultaneously blessed with spiritual insights that infuse their creative powers (Barasch, 2001; Lubet, 2010; Sacks, 2007; Straus, 2011). The figure of the *blind pianist* thus becomes marked through a series of codified reception practices, as a

symbol of the divine, a vessel through which audiences can forget quotidian experience and ascend into spiritual realms.

In contrast to Ava and Yvette whose responses to Tsujii's UBC recital I discussed earlier, several audience members identify themselves as non-musicians lacking the expertise to comment on technical aspects of Tsujii's recital. Their responses demonstrate the ways in which seeing, primarily, and hearing, secondarily a musical performance informs reception. In what follows, I discuss excerpts from my interviews with Theodor, a graduate student in the social sciences who enjoys listening to music while studying, but locates himself outside the social and cultural world of any particular musical tradition. For him, music functions as a diversion, rather than as a primary aspect of his educational or professional life.

In our first conversation, I asked Theodor what he thought of Peter Rosen's (2009) documentary *A Surprise in Texas: The 2009 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition*, which he had seen prior to attending Tsujii's recital:

Theodor: It was nice to see that he is happy about the little things in life and there is nothing special about it and that is I think how it should be.

Honisch: There is nothing special about?

Theodor:...in terms of how people perceive Tsujii, that his blindness is something 'special.' He is just a really good pianist. (Interview, November 30th, 2013)

What stood out for Theodor in Peter Rosen's documentary about the 2009 Van Cliburn competition were the ways in which the social interactions between Tsujii, his mother, and the

host family establish Tsujii as part of the larger community of host-families and competitors. Theodor's reaction to the documentary focuses on seeing Tsujii's social interactions with the host family rather than on hearing the excerpts of Tsujii performing in the competition. This emphasis can be attributed to his acknowledgement later in our first conversation that, in his daily life, music is "just something in the background" (Interview, November 30, 2013). For Theodor, Tsujii's blindness recedes from view in Rosen's film, as it should, not primarily through his demonstration of pianistic excellence, but through his ready participation in the social life, the temporary communities established during the competition. Theodor's distant relationship with musical sound as a background diversion also informs a short written statement that he sent to me in the weeks following our first interview, an excerpt of which I quote below. The emphasis on the visual, in particular the tension between how "difference" can be seen or not, is striking:

If I had dropped in in the middle of [the] recital, I probably would have had no indication that the piano player was different from others. Maybe only very observant people would see that there was/is a difference. (personal communication, December 14, 2013)

Before our follow up interview on February 24, 2014, Theodor sent me an expanded version of the statement above, which is worth quoting in its entirety, because of the qualifications it makes to the shorter version quoted above. Theodor explains how his lack of formal training and his infrequent participation in musical events may shape his response to Tsujii:

There are two major things that come to my mind when thinking about the recital. Firstly, if I had dropped in in the middle of the recital, I probably would have had no indication that the piano player was different from others. Maybe only very observant people would

see that there was/is a difference. And secondly, I noticed that quite a few members of the audience had tears in their eyes. This was even the case for some individuals I would not have expected this to happen. So I wonder if this is due to the fact that this happens more often during high quality recitals or due the fact that this recital was played by an unusual pianist. In both cases it might be that my lack of experience in attending recitals does not provide a good base for comparison (personal communication, February 23, 2014)

This statement can be usefully juxtaposed in relation to our first interview, during which Theodor recalled that he was mostly not aware of Tsujii's blindness. Again, he framed his sudden awareness of this "difference" in the language of visual experience. In the excerpt quoted below, we have a manifestation of the sight of the blind pianist as a *dicent*, producing an interpretant which refers to embodied experience: Theodor's ability to see Tsujii onstage, and his interpretation of Tsujii's bodily movements on and off stage. At the same time, however, in both the first and second versions of the written statement, Theodor qualifies his own capacity to interpret what he sees by suggesting that "more observant" audience members would be able more fully to understand what it is that makes Tsujii different. In our first interview, Theodor had expressed a somewhat similar ambivalence to Tsujii's disability, albeit this time without comparing his own understanding of Tsujii's pianism, to that of hypothetical fellow audience members:

Theodor: During the recital, the only time I was reminded of anything related to disability or ability was when Nick guided Nobuyuki Tsujii to the piano. And they agreed probably at some point in time that the piano is to your left and behind you. It was the only time that I was reminded about anything. Yes, someone with a disability might need some form of support in some areas of life. (Interview, November 30th, 2013)

The sight of a blind pianist being led to and from the stage is a strong visual sign of blindness, with a long history of representing blind people as dependent upon the sighted (Barasch, 2002; Hollins, 1934; Husson, 2001).

Theodor then brought up a topic that I had not thus far mentioned, namely the fact that Tsujii communicated with people during his visit to UBC through Nick Asano's translations. Theodor suggested that this circumstance created what he characterized as a "language barrier." Going further, he explained:

A language barrier might influence some of the perceptions one could have about the interactions, and about what part of the interaction was influenced by the language barrier and what part wasn't. So that there might be some kind of 'noise' in determining what part of the interaction was actually influenced by Nobuyuki Tsujii being blind and what part was influenced by Nick having to translate. (Interview, November 30th, 2013)

Let us recall our discussion in Chapter 2 of the contested space in between disability and identity. Tsujii's self-representation, and the reception practices of Theodor discussed above call into question the idea that for a person with a disability to insist upon a "person first linguistic scheme" overpowers "the ambiguity that intersects disability and person, human and body" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 84). Instead, attending to the multivalent significations of visibility and auralness that both unify and separate these linguistic schemes, the forms of meaning that live at the juncture between language and music, might push those who receive disabled people in various settings including not only musical performances but also the academic spheres of Disability Studies and disability culture, toward the uncomfortable realization that *common sense* and *common resistance* (in disability culture) against *common sense* are not so very common

after all: "The meaning of bodies, minds and senses are formed from our relations from the in-between of histories, politics, and cultures through and against which we perceive each other" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 92; see also Michalko, 2002).

In my follow up interview with Tsujii, I asked him about a passage from a 2011 review of one of his concerts which grabbed my attention, since it attributed cross-modal associations between imagined visual experiences and musical sounds to the pianist:

Honisch: I found a review of one of your concerts from April 10th 2011, and the author of this review quotes you as saying 'I like blue and orange. I like to think which color goes with which piece.' Is that an accurate quotation?

Tsujii (via translator Nick Asano): Nobu²⁵ confirmed that he likes the colors blue and orange. (Interview, April 11, 2014)

A miscommunication occurred in this part of our conversation, since I was not interested simply in whether Tsujii *likes* these colors. Instead, I wanted to understand whether Tsujii associates color with sound through his performances in the conscious manner suggested by that particular reviewer, a point which I hastened to clarify:

Honisch: When you did the solo recital at the UBC School of Music, do you recall whether you were trying to connect certain colors to the music of Chopin and Debussy?

Tsujii (via Nick Asano): As you may have seen, Nobu is a little bit embarrassed. He never tries to connect certain pieces to certain colors. He said that it sometimes happens,

²⁵ 'Nobu' is Tsujii's preferred nickname. He asked me to address him by this nickname shortly after I was first introduced to him, the day of the question and answer session on March 8, 2013.

but he does not have memories of this experience. It seems that it is not very important to his music-making. (Interview, April 11, 2014)

Tsujii's reported experience of occasional rather than systematic cross-modal associations suggests that these moments relate signs (colors) to their objects (sounds) through interpretants that are *rhemes*. In other words, a sign-interpretant relationship based on these incidental sight-sound associations is not embodied through a reference to the world of truth-claims (*dicents*), nor systematically codified (*arguments*), but rather qualitative, and independent of any reference to an external reality: a sensation of *blueness* or *orangeness*. Tsujii's response suggested that it would be unproductive to pursue a discussion of synaesthesia (systematic cross-modal associations that relate signs (musical sounds) and interpretants (sensations of color) as *arguments*).²⁶ However, even if the direction I had hoped to take didn't materialize, through Tsujii's reply I came to understand that the 2011 review perhaps overstated Tsujii's cross-modal associations (Rocha, 2011, para. 3). Unexpectedly, Tsujii's response motivated me to *learn from signs*, by questioning my previous assumptions that the relationship between the visual and aural experiences can be made accessible to systematic inquiry.

4.5 Ideas as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (Un) Conventional Interpretants

Interpreted

Let us now consider how Tsujii's self-representation and reception both uphold and remake the aesthetic and pedagogical conventions of Western art music, the practices in which musical experience is taught and learned, and which depend on the often unexamined operation

²⁶ For a discussion of synaesthesia that explores cross-modal associations within a semiotic framework, see Cumming, 2000, p. 109).

of what Rosemary Garland-Thomson (2002) has described as the ability-disability system (p. 5). In what follows, I am concerned with the tacit and acknowledged *ideas* and their foundational ontological and epistemological assumptions that Tsujii and his audiences bring into the concert hall. Going further, this part of the analysis considers the role that these assumptions play in shaping how musicians with disabilities and their audiences interpret the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist*. In this regard, considering the *ideas* that shape musical performance and reception provides a larger backdrop to the performance and reception of Tsujii's UBC recital.

We may begin this discussion by turning to Peirce's pragmatism, the fundamental insight of which is that the meaning of the verbal language used by musicians and audiences to communicate emotional, bodily, and technical aspects of musical experience depends on the habits of the senses, mind, and body to which belief in the descriptive and interpretive power of this language give rise (Cumming, 1996, 1999, & 2000; Goble, 2010). The formative influence of historical and cultural tropes of blindness is not readily apparent on the literal surface of Tsujii's reception by music critics and audiences, or in his own statements to the media. In the interviews I conducted with the pianist and members of his UBC audience, such tropes were often presented as statements of opinion, of a possible situation (*rhemes*), or as unmoored references to how things actually are in a sign-interpreter's experience of reality (*dicents*).

However, as a consequence of the teaching and learning of technical, stylistic and expressive norms in Western art music "*a culturally determined sign (or set of signs) is imprinted in the trained body*" (Cumming, 2000, p. 29; emphasis in original; see Nöth, 2010). It is not only the performer's body which is "entrained or habituated" in the production of musical sound (Cumming, 2000, p. 29), however, but also that of the audience (Straus, 2011, pp. 150–

181). Against this pedagogy of musical experience, structured as I have noted above often invisibly and inaudibly by the ability-disability system (Garland-Thomson, 2002), dominant representations of blindness are to be understood as sign-interpretant relationships which constitute *arguments*, meaningful in relation to historical, cultural, and geographical shifts in the understanding of what blindness and sightedness mean (Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011).

In our first interview, Ava said that the way Tsujii moves his head while performing "doesn't make sense with the music" that there was, in effect, a mismatch between the performer's physical gestures and the rhythmic profile of the music (Interview, December 13, 2013). Her perception of a mismatch between Tsujii's physical gestures and the rhythmic profile of the music offers an example of how dissimilar lived experiences of the world and the embodied frames of reference that develop through these experiences shape the perception of physical movement in response to music (Interview, December 13, 2013; see also, Davidson, 1993, 1994, & 2001; Straus 2006 & 2011). Ava's observation exemplifies Secondness through embodiment, a reaction between self and other which constitutes sign-interpretant relationships as *dicents*. Something is amiss, notes Ava, but subsequent reflection cannot resolve this tension. From her perspective, it is simply a visible (but not audible) feature of his playing. I would argue here that both Secondness and Thirdness mediate this reaction, producing interpretants that are both *dicents* and *arguments*. In identifying this mismatch, Ava mobilizes a signifying relationship dependent upon an assertion of fact (*dicent*): the way Tsujii moves does not correspond to the way the music moves (Interview, December 13, 2013). However, as a trained pianist, her response depends on her recognition of and mastery of the technical and interpretive norms of piano performance, the pedagogy of which delimits, among other things, the proper correspondence of bodily and musical gestures (Cumming, 2000, p. 96). This level of knowledge

produces sign-interpretant relationships as *arguments*, manifestations of the rules and conventions of musical performance.

In contrast to Ava, Edith does not have any formal musical training. As a graduate student in education, and as both a teacher, and self-identified visual artist, Edith does not identify music as a significant part of her life. For this audience member, the movements that Tsujii makes with his head and body express subjective musical experiences that, in her role as sign-interpreter, produce interpretants as *rhemes*: qualities of feeling that are plausible without being either assertions of fact (*dicents*), or part of the codes and conventions of Western art music (*arguments*), with which, by her own acknowledgement, she is unfamiliar (Cumming, 2000, p. 96). Although she cannot relate to music herself, Edith accepts the legitimacy of diverse bodily responses to music, and does not perceive a mismatch between Tsujii's physical movements and the music he plays (Interview, December 10, 2013). In her way of responding to Tsujii, Edith reminds us that music can be used "to shape and extend the potentialities of the body" (Cumming, 2000, p. 194). As Cumming has argued, music has the capacity to expand the actual bodily repertoire of one who chooses to learn how to move in an appropriate way. Where such actual motion is absent, a 'feel' for the virtual agency in which a 'body' is formed has to be acquired by a listener through a process of abstraction, recognizing movement as that of another entity, rather than as a possibility of one's own bodily self. (p. 194)

In a rather different vein, Philip Alperson (2008) reminds us of the continuity...between the physical instrument and the player's bodily connection with the instrument. Many musicians put the matter clearly when they speak of their instruments

as extensions of their bodies. The truth is that it is difficult to say where the instrument ends and the rest of the body begins. In this sense, musical instruments are embodied entities. (p. 40; emphasis added)

For performers with disabilities, however, the continuity between the physical instrument and the player's bodily connection with the instrument, however strongly felt by a specific performer, cannot only fail to be understood by individual audience members, but can sometimes be experienced by them as a *discontinuity*, as in the responses of Ava and Yvette (musicians), and Otis (a non-musician) to Tsujii's physical movements at the piano. Were it *simply* the case that musicians with disabilities can *simply* relate to their instruments on their own terms, and in response to their own embodied experiences, then there would be no need for Tsujii to insist that his blindness is secondary to his pianism, or, in a related vein, for Glennie (n.d. [b]) to declare that her deafness is "irrelevant" (para. 7). They would be received as *simply* musicians. The implications of a musician with a disability such as Nobuyuki Tsujii identifying the piano as a bodily extension (Hewett, 2013) are by no means as straightforward as Alperson's (2008) claim about the continuity between a musician's body and a musician's instrument would suggest. While Alperson rightly observes that the meeting place between the two is difficult to pin down, that ambiguity is unheeded in normative reception practices which account for the relationship between a disabled musician's body and a disabled musician's instrument by resorting to narratives of overcoming or by casting the instrument in the role of a kind of compensatory technology, enabling musicians with disabilities to emulate their non-disabled counterparts, instead of considering how they might redefine physical and musical embodiments.

Tsujii's own ideas about experiencing music cannot be automatically given credence as representing the right way to think of disability, and as providing the most authoritative

framework for receiving him as a *pianist*. While it is the case that sighted pianists are not faced with the same need to "prove" their legitimacy ([Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009, p. 53), this does not mean that the conflict over recognized forms of musical experience can be resolved by tilting the balance of power towards formerly excluded modes of musical experience. The critical work of rethinking the conventions of musical performance and reception is far less tidy (Straus, 2011).

I turn now to a theme first presented in the first section of this chapter, namely the conflict over how methods of learning music have become a locus of disagreement in Tsujii's reception. In the earlier discussion I located this disagreement in the realm of the senses, explaining how sign-interpretant relationships as *rhemes* and *dicents* render this conflict as one between possible ways of learning music (*rhemes*) and assertions about the relative (lack of) depth in interpretive reflection available through learning by listening (Tsujii's method) and learning by feeling (Braille notation). I discussed how one commentator on the 2009 Cliburn competition (Cantrell, 2009b) suggested that what Tsujii failed to achieve sonically was somehow linked to his inadequate learning techniques (although this connection is never specified in Cantrell's account). I would like to revisit that discussion and recontextualize it in relation to contested ideas about blindness and sightedness which shape musical performance and reception.

In an email interview entitled *Nobuyuki Tsujii—The modest master* (n.d.) available on the website for the *Knowledge Network* television station, Tsujii responds to the question of how blindness has shaped his experiences of playing the piano. This question figures prominently in Tsujii's reception, and overlaps with several of my own questions for the pianist as discussed earlier in this chapter. Stated simply, my goal in asking questions similar to those which he has been asked by journalists and by audiences was to compare and contrast his responses in

different contexts, in this case, press coverage of Tsujii's career, public question and answer sessions, and in-depth interviews for a research project. Emerging discrepancies, as well as repetitions provide a foothold for discussion of how Tsujii identifies himself as a *pianist* at the juncture of musical meaning (his performances), and linguistic statements. In thinking this way, I am guided by Joseph Straus' (2011) assertion that both language about music and music itself shape the representation of musicians with disabilities (p. 14). At the same time, I extend Straus' claim by attempting to understand how linguistic and musical meaning influence how musicians with disabilities represent themselves. Returning to the matter at hand, then, here is Tsujii's response for the *Knowledge Network* interview

I don't know. I cannot compare a life with blindness to...one without [blindness].

That said, I have been very much lucky to meet wonderful teachers who have guided me. In particular, I cannot thank too much one of my teachers, Professor Kawakami, who had developed unique [sic] system of learning music. It was huge labor [sic] for me to learn new music on braille [*using Braille notation*]. (Nobuyuki Tsujii —The modest master, para. 6–7)

Tsujii acknowledges that he cannot compare being blind with being sighted when asked how his disability has shaped his pianism. However, (sighted) music critics such as Scott Cantrell and Benjamin Ivry who have responded to his performances by speculating that particular aspects of his musical sensibilities have been impeded or lessened by blindness fail to admit, in like fashion, that they cannot compare the experience of being sighted with that of being blind. Instead, there is a tacit sense that blindness can be simply relegated to a secondary, at best, or marginal, at worst, position, as a way of being in the world imagined by people who

can see to be nothing more than the absence of the ability to see (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82).

Moving to the second part of the email interview excerpt quoted above, Tsujii credits this particular teacher with devising the method that made it possible for him to learn music through sound recordings made by assistants. However, Tsujii quickly arrives at a recurring source of contention in how music critics have responded to him, often implying that his way of learning music, through sound recordings rather than Braille notation, results in a superficial understanding of the music:

When I mention this, sometimes I got misunderstood as if I was listening to someone's CD and 'copying' it. However, what my teacher does is to record the music hand by hand. Then he re-records the music with verbal comments about composer's markings. He tries to avoid any personal interpretation, to allow me to add my own view [interpretation].

(Nobuyuki Tsujii—The modest master, para. 8)

An initial difficulty in understanding why this method of learning music has become a locus of disagreement is that Tsujii does not specify exactly who misinterprets his methods for learning music. What is at stake in such instances of misunderstanding will necessarily differ according to context. In our conversations, Tsujii was adamant that the recordings made by his teachers and assistants are the starting point for careful study on his own, not merely a pre-interpreted text which he digests and then repeats in performance.

A statement, quoted frequently in publicity materials for Tsujii's recitals, also appears on Tsujii's official website: *There are no barriers in the field of music*. This statement is represented in publicity materials (including on his website) as central to how Tsujii positions himself within Western art music, and therefore provides an important part of the system of ideas that shape his self-representation as a *pianist* and *real pianist*, and his disavowal of the category of *blind*

pianist. Here, the belief attributed to Tsujii (which he affirmed during the March 8th question and answer session which I moderated) constitutes a *dicent* sign, producing an interpretant that refers to a truth-claim about the world, namely the absence of barriers. However, here is where Tsujii's perspectives run directly against Disability Studies critiques: "Some ways of making disability present as reasonably excluded entail people living with disability as a justified absence. As a justifiable absence, this conception of disability acts as a barrier to inclusion for some disabled people" (Titchkosky, 2008, p. 46).

Ivry's (2009) call for *blind pianists* to not perform with orchestras in public "out of simple respect for the composer" offers one such example (however polemical its intent one cannot be certain) of an appeal to "justifiable absence." The barriers which Tsujii's statement would have us believe are absent in Western art music often manifest in rather more obscure ways than the coarse assertions and gaps in logic exemplified in Ivry's 2009 *Wall Street Journal* polemic. For example, in her article from 2012 in *Matilda Ziegler Magazine for the Blind* entitled "Harsh Criticism for Blind Pianist," Mei Ling Liu argues that Tsujii has often been treated unfairly by music critics, a stance similar to my own as outlined in Chapter 1. My own position would be more accurately characterized as an *argument* in the Peircean sense of a signifying relationship built on the tensions between the rules and conventions of Western art music, on the one hand, and on the other, the critical apparatus in Disability Studies that provides a shared understanding among scholars in this field of inquiry concerning the norms of critique. Where my own stance overlaps with that offered by Liu is upon the premise that Tsujii's reception is contradictory, and operates, at times, according to a seeming double standard. In response, Liu (2012) offers a trenchant critique of the ways in which a *blind pianist* on the international concert circuit

encounters barriers of all kinds. When Tsujii ascends stages around the world, Liu argues, his bodily presence constitutes a demand for inclusion and

challenges the innate values of some who have paid the price of toiling through the rigid and brutal structure of a traditional classical music career. In the face of such a threat, the natural tendency is to dismiss the phenomenon of Nobuyuki Tsujii as some side-show that ... should not be allowed to...reach the highest echelon of the sacred music halls.²⁷

(para. 13)

The sharp language in this article merits further consideration. Although not a Disability Studies scholar herself, Liu's critique of the pianist's reception chimes with those advanced within Disability Studies. Liu invokes the figure of *the blind pianist* as a disruption of the status quo in Western art music (see also, Lubet, 2004). Carried further, Liu's reference to the "natural tendency" to treat Tsujii as a "side show" could very well be stretched towards Disability Studies analyses of the tendency to treat performers with disabilities as participants in a freak show, a cultural spectacle which holds the popular imagination in thrall (Garland Thomson, 1996; see also, Howe, 2010; Straus, 2011).

Tsujii does not situate his brief commentary on the lived experience of being *a pianist rather than a blind pianist* explicitly in relation to social, cultural, and historical ideas about the body and about bodily difference. Even so, these deeply rooted ideas about bodily difference in general and blindness in particular cannot be ignored. For one thing, these ideas, made familiar in religious discourse, history, mainstream culture, and education, are often taken up by Tsujii's

²⁷ The reference to "sacred music halls" is confusing, since "music halls" refer to a type of popular entertainment in Britain from the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. From the context of the article, and also because of the nature of Tsujii's career as a musician, the reference should instead be to "concert halls."

audiences. By way of illustration, when I asked Yvette what sorts of background assumptions, expectations or ideas she had about musicians with disabilities, in general, and about Nobuyuki Tsujii, in particular, prior to attending his recital, she recalled hearing an old saying which she described as follows: "If God closes one door it must be He opens another door" (Interview, December 17, 2013). From invoking an old idea referring to the relationship between disability and the divine (Lubet, 2010; Sacks, 2007; Straus, 2011), her response modulates to the language of personal opinion, incorporating this relationship into her own prior beliefs about musicians with disabilities: "I think that when people lost something, they must gain some other thing" (Interview, December 17, 2013). Her interpretation of how Tsujii's blindness shapes his pianism is shaped not solely by the assumption that blind pianists have to cope with the loss of sight, but by the assumption that they are blessed by God in gaining heightened ability in another aspect of their lives. In particular, the idea that blind musicians are uniquely sensitive to sound has deep historical and cultural roots (Straus, 2011, pp. 170–171). This assumption has been critiqued not only within the Music and Disability Studies scholarship, as in the preceding reference, but also historically, by at least one blind musician, Alfred Hollins, whose (1936) memoir *A Blind Musician Looks Back* I discussed in Chapter 2. Yvette's reference to the loss of "something" and the acquisition of "some other thing" invokes the idea (which she herself acknowledges is familiar) that people with disabilities are divinely marked, and even favored by the acquisition of unique sensibilities to replace that which has been taken away from them (Straus, 2011).

Yvette went beyond the codified reception of people with disabilities according to a discourse of compensation and suggested that musicians with disabilities actually can play "much better" *because* of their disability (Interview, December 17, 2013; see Straus, 2011, for a similar discussion, albeit in a different context). This tension must be acknowledged in order to

understand why Tsujii disavows the identity marker of *blind pianist*. As symbolic signs, the words *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* already have such unstable and contradictory meanings, that restricting analysis to the force exerted by convention (semiotic codes) flattens out their complexity.

An article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* quotes the jazz pianist George Shearing apparently disavowing blindness in a manner that reads almost identically to the statement attributed to Tsujii by his mother in her article *Don't Call Him the Blind Pianist!* ([Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009). The context for the statement attributed to Shearing is his rejection of identity categories both in relation to musical idiom (jazz) and to disability. Shearing resists categorization not only in relation to ability-disability, but also in relation to musical style: "I am not a jazz pianist. I'm a pianist who happens to play jazz. I am not a blind pianist; I am a pianist who happens to be blind" (Lehman, 1987, p. 10 D). Here we have an overlap between *dicents* as assertions of fact (including negation), taking the form of "I am..." and "I am not..." and *arguments*, conventional practices of self-representation through which pianists who *happen to be blind* work to construct a counter-semiotics in which disability is interpretable as lying outside selfhood.

In contrast to Shearing, however, Tsujii's own public statements do not reveal a discomfort with being identified as part of a single musical tradition, but rather with being identified as blind. Tsujii embraces Western art music and takes on the responsibility for cultivating in audiences an enduring love for its repertoire, yet his disavowal of a disability identity resembles that of Shearing in its separation of disability and self.

4.6 Emotions as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (Un)Affecting²⁸ Interpretants

Interpreted

In this section, the analysis focuses on the affective meanings or emotions through which the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* are negotiated by Tsujii and his audiences. These affective meanings further enrich and complicate how he is seen/not seen, heard/not heard, and, going further still, converge with, and diverge from, the tacit and consciously acknowledged ideas about music and the body which provide the semiotic repertoire for his public performances. In both of my interviews with Tsujii, his responses to my questions about his visit to UBC and, in particular, about his recital, kept reaching outward beyond the context of the recital and *Fireside Chat*, and pulling into our conversations his memory of two events that for him had far greater personal and professional significance than his visit to UBC: the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan; and the death of Van Cliburn on February 27, 2013, less than a month before Tsujii came to UBC.

Several audience members expressed reservations about Tsujii's own compositions. Tsujii's program for both the Fireside Chat on March 8, and the solo recital on March 10 featured several original compositions, including an *Elegy* which he wrote in memory of those who lost their lives in the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Given the mixed reaction to his compositions (including the *Elegy*), I wanted to find out more about his purpose in writing these compositions, especially the *Elegy*, a piece which he has frequently included as an encore for his

²⁸ "Unaffected" is used here in the second of its two available meanings, to refer to "having no effect upon the feelings." Unaffected, adj. (2015). *OED Online*. Oxford University Press. Available from: <http://www.oed.com/>. In keeping with a methodological concern not only for the presence but also the absence of meaning of particular kinds of signs for the interview participants, my analysis consistently juxtaposes the ways in which signs fulfill their possible meanings (interpretants) for these interpreters with the failure of such materialization, as signified by the parentheses preceding each descriptor attached to the interpretants.

recital programs, including for his 2011 Carnegie Hall debut (Schweitzer, 2011). I asked Tsujii what message he wanted to send to the people of Japan and to the world through his music:

Tsujii (via Nick Asano): It was such a huge disaster, and I was almost sure so many people were lost, and even the survivors were undergoing really tough experiences. I thought 'What can musicians do to help them? What should musicians do under such a situation?' I finally thought: 'I am a pianist, I will do what I can,' and so I made this *Elegy*, or prayer for the victims and also to encourage the survivors. I think I can transfer such emotions into music better than into words. (Interview, April 11, 2014)

Here, the larger context for Tsujii's assertion, a *dicent*, that *I am a pianist* shifts from an individual disavowal of disability, towards an expression of the capacity to respond musically to a national trauma. Being a *pianist* gave Tsujii the impetus to write a piece of music through which he could express feelings he considers himself unable to articulate verbally (Interview, April 11th, 2014). At the same time, this changed context for his assertion that *I am a pianist* bears out his assumption that to be a *pianist* is to be able to do things with music, while to be a *blind pianist* is to be unable to do these things.

4.7 Vague Feelings as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (Un)Certain Interpretants

Interpreted

Extending the analytical work of the previous section to a more uncertain territory, this section discusses how those feelings perceived by Tsujii and his audiences as beyond analysis or resistant to explanation shape how they interpret the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* in ways that they may feel without being able to verbalize. "Vagueness" plays an important role for inquiry in Peirce's account of pragmatism, and his arguments concerning this role, and more

recent discussions of vagueness ground the analysis presented in this section (Bergman, 2009; Chiasson, 2001; CP 1905, 5.506). As Peirce (1905) explains "vagueness...is no more to be done away ...than friction in mechanics" (CP 5.512). In pursuing the *vague feelings* that Tsujii and his audiences had prior to his UBC recital, and those that emerged during the recital itself, my analysis aims to understand vagueness as a quality of feeling, an embodied response, and a rule-governed system in musical experience, influencing how Tsujii and his UBC audience interpret the *pianist, real pianist, blind pianist* triumvirate.

As I noted at the outset, Nobuyuki Tsujii sensed that most of the audience for his 2013 UBC recital responded to him as a *real pianist* (Interview, January 27th, 2014). Tsujii equates being received as *not a blind pianist* with being received as a *real pianist* (Interview, January 27, 2014). Let us therefore consider how *vagueness*, operates as part of Tsujii's habitual way of representing himself through public statements. A published interview in *The guide: Istanbul* from December 12th, 2011 contains the following exchange:

Your sense of hearing is very acute. Are you able to tell when an audience is particularly moved or excited?

Yes, I can pick up on signals that the audience is moved, surprised, or carried away by the rhythm of the piece. If I perceive positive reactions from the audience, it encourages me a great deal. (para. 6–7).

In the context of analyzing musical form, Naomi Cumming (2000) explains that "indeterminacy and vagueness" are not to be dismissed as irrelevant to systematic inquiry as the manifestation of "descriptive inadequacy on the part of the interpreter" (Cumming, 2000, p. 175; emphasis added), and her observation can be usefully extended to musical performance and

reception, understood as activities which depend on varying degrees with the conventions of interpreting and understanding musical form. Tsujii's answer to the question in the interview excerpted above should likewise not be derided as an instance of "descriptive inadequacy" but rather taken as a starting point for further exploration: an instance of vagueness with unknown but not unknowable implications for understanding what it means for him to be a *pianist* capable of sensing his audience's reactions through channels other than sight.

The cross-modal associations I discussed in my second interview with Tsujii (April 11, 2014) and which turned out to have been overstated in a review I had read can nonetheless guide us in our pursuit of the role of vague feelings in ascribing meaning to the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist*. We can find a basis for doing so, at least initially, in previous philosophical studies of musical experience: "Music's appeal to the auditory and tactile senses...inspires cross-modal imagery and response across the sensorium..." (Higgins, 2012, p. 113). We may then ask, along with Kathleen Higgins (2012): What happens when we "conjure responses in other sensory modes in connection with our experience of music?" (p.113).

In his written statement following our first interview, which I discussed earlier, Rinaldo goes beyond rejecting disability as a central part of Tsujii's identity as a performer, and suggests what initially seems like a strange a reference to cross-modal experience: "*Definitely, he's not a blind pianist, just a wonderful pianist. He's the kind of musician who enables me to see colors and to smell perfumes in music*" (personal communication, December 14, 2013; emphasis added).

Rinaldo explained in our follow up interview that his written statement describes a non-systematic experience which he does not consider to be synaesthesia (Interview, March 12, 2014). I would argue that when such cross-sensory responses happen as if by chance, we enter

the realm of the fictive. Cross-modal responses to music are not always part of a systematic diagnosable "condition" that can be brought into the world of reality with rubrics such as synaesthesia (Cumming, 2000). However, while Tsujii and Rinaldo both described their cross-modal associations as incidental, this is not to say that their experiences are purely subjective, inaccessible to further analysis, despite their own insistence to the contrary. Non-systematic cross-modal associations are a Firstness, perceived by sign-interpreters as *rhemes*, yet ultimately continuous with embodiment as *dicents* (Secondness). By virtue of articulation through the cognitive realm of language (Thirdness), these initially non-systematic associations (or non-codified meanings) become part of a system of incidental cross-modal associations which are not unique to an individual who experiences such moments. Instead these multi-sensory moments can be communicated to, and understood by other sign interpreters, thereby becoming *arguments*.

4.8 And So Forth: (Im)Possible Interpretants and the Fictive Simplicity of Being a Pianist

In concluding this chapter and setting the stage for Chapter 5, my analysis shows how the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* acquire meanings for Tsujii and his audiences that exceed the semiotic worlds of Affect, Embodiment and Cognition delineated in the preceding sections of this chapter. What Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2002) refers to as "the disability/ability system" comprises four levels of meaning and provides a framework for understanding the multiple forces which constrain and enable Tsujii's self representation and his reception by audiences. This binary system cannot, even so, contain the signs *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* within this

system for interpreting and disciplining bodily variations; second, it is a relationship between bodies and their environments; third, it is a set of practices that produce both the able-bodied and the disabled; fourth, it is a way of describing the inherent instability of the embodied self. (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 5)

My interviews with Tsujii positioned us on either side of a recurring, sometimes unbridgeable gap. On the one side, my questions aimed to elicit from Tsujii a richness in detail concerning his experiences of playing the piano absent in the journalistic reports on his career. On the other side of this gap, however, Tsujii's interpretations of my questions were filtered through multiple experiential and contextual aspects: the presence in both interviews of a translator, his status as a public figure who has become familiar with questions from journalists and audiences that run along predictable lines, drawing forth equally predictable responses. To illustrate this scripted quality, when I asked Tsujii to describe his sensory experiences of music, (primarily hearing and touch) and their impact on his piano playing, he replied in a manner that closely parallels his reply when I asked him earlier in the same interview to describe the experience of feeling a sense of oneness with the instrument:

Tsujii (via Sachiko Koyama): It's very difficult to explain. I never really thought about this because it's a very natural thing that I do. I cannot really analyze what I hear and what I play. I always think how I should express the music, but hearing is something I do very naturally so I cannot really analyze it. This sort of question is very difficult to answer. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

Tsujii's difficulty in explaining how he experiences music, and in sorting out how, precisely, his own pianism is similar to that of *pianists* with whom he claims identity, seems to place him outside the category of musicians who use performance as a communicative medium through which to teach audiences to think differently about disability. Within a Disability Studies framework, this latter approach is at the core of performance as a pedagogical enterprise. Rejecting the language of "tragedy, loss and dependency... disabled people use cultural interventions...to subvert and query these meanings, and disability culture emerges as a counter culture" (Kuppers, 2013, p. 6). Kuppers assumes that in order for disabled performers to "subvert" or "query" harmful and inaccurate disability-tropes, they must consciously disrupt particular cultural spaces, and consciously rewrite the performing self. What remains unexplored, however, is the possibility that performers with disabilities in mainstream artistic and cultural traditions such as Western art music may destabilize normative accounts of sensory, bodily and cognitive difference using the very aesthetic and pedagogical norms they have ostensibly internalized, those very conditions of legible meaning which they claim to uphold in their public statements about what it means to be an exponent of Western art music.

The extent to which the sign *blind pianist* apparently continues to discomfit and even frustrate Tsujii, five years on from his 2009 Cliburn competition gold medal, may be understood by means of the following statement, attributed to Tsujii in an article that appeared two days after my own follow up interview with him:

I believe blindness has nothing to do with artistic quality [and] Beethoven is one of my idols. As people don't call Beethoven a 'deaf composer,' I wish people would call me a 'pianist' instead of 'a blind pianist,' and try to enjoy the music I play. That said, if

handicapped [sic] people and their family [sic] feel encouraged or touched by my piano playing, it would be a great honor for me, too. (Tsuji quoted in Ikenberg, 2014, para. 8)²⁹

Compare Tsujii's statement with what the German bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff (2008) has to say about his own presence as a musician with a disability:

I do not like being presented as a model handicapped person. I am not a role model or a life counselor, and I am not here to assuage the guilt of a society that equips certain office buildings with special entrances but otherwise punishes its physically incapacitated with constant disrespect. (pp. 204–205)

Quasthoff's remarks reveal a complex positioning in which the singer is simultaneously aware of his relatively privileged upbringing while allying himself with "the larger disability community, and a profound anger at the injustices [this community] experiences" (Straus, 2011, p. 141).

Given Tsujii's endeavors to represent himself as first and foremost a *pianist*, and his uneasiness with the frequent practice on the part of music critics and audiences of identifying him as first a *blind pianist* and only then acknowledging him as a *real pianist*, it is not possible simply to interpret his responses through the theoretical perspectives of Disability Studies, since to do so would be to push Tsujii's own claims to selfhood to the margins. However, it is also not possible to take up Tsujii's self-representation as a value-neutral statement about how things really are and to rest upon the assumption that, given time, his audiences will somehow learn to accept him in the ways that he would like.

²⁹ The article in its original form has the grammatically incorrect "handicapped people and their family." It should read "handicapped people and their families."

Nobuyuki Tsujii reminds us that his pianism is not *naturally* about blindness (Kuppers, 2001, p. 26). In so doing, Tsujii is not merely rejecting a disability identity, thereby acquiescing in the representation of disability as a tragedy which befalls individual bodies. Frustrated by reception practices that diminish what he aims to transmit as a musician, Tsujii's verbal statements (Oda, 2009; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009) work to achieve a kind of counter-signification as *dicents*. Tsujii does not position himself in straightforward opposition to performers who embrace a disabled identity through performance art, a sphere of cultural and political activity with which he is unfamiliar. In virtue of the distance Tsujii works to achieve between disability and music, and, as we have seen, in being supported by individual audience members in this separation of the body from music, his effort to perform a counter-signification offers at least a possible antidote, through a relationality between sign and interpretant that operates in the realm of Firstness (*rhemes*). Because this realm of meaning exists prior to being asserted as fact (*dicents*) and prior to codification in larger networks of meaning (*arguments*), these emergent forms of counter-signification aim to unwrite "cultural narratives that preempt anything else the artist might be trying to communicate" (Kuppers, 2001, as cited in Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 4).

Another member of the UBC audience, Sylvina, has extensive experience teaching students with disabilities. She responded to my question about how her views on the deleterious effects of labelling and categorization might have been challenged or reinforced following her attendance at Tsujii's recital by positioning her post-recital thinking in the latter domain:

Sylvina: When I heard Tsujii's recital I felt like my philosophical position around labels was really validated. I thought to myself, why would we even want to go there with someone like Tsujii? (Interview, March 17, 2014)

In a two-paragraph written statement which Sylvina sent to me approximately two weeks later, she elaborated upon the question of labelling students according to abilities and disabilities. The passage quoted below from her written statement sounds a note of hesitation, thereby giving a clearer idea of the gaps and tensions between different corners of academic scholarship (in this case between Special Education and Disability Studies). In this sense, her subsequent reflections following our first interview are similar in tone to that of Liam, expressing uncertainty as to what the *Beyond the Screen* series accomplished to complement and extend the educative significance of Tsujii's recital. Sylvina and Edith (whose background as I noted in Chapter 4 is in Arts Education) both offer perspectives on disability in the arts and in education that closely track how Tsujii himself wants to be received; like the pianist, these audience members are reluctant to treat disability as inseparable from selfhood, a way of thinking that aligns with specific corners of Disability Studies scholarship (Sapon-Shevin, 2001, p. 161). Here is an excerpt from Sylvina's written statement which gets at the fundamental difficulty in both classroom discussions about bodily difference and in scholarly research within and across the disciplines that grapple with these questions:

While there are conceptual and philosophical debates about labeling and the nature of disability, in the end, there is the important question of how, specifically, to support students who have educational needs as a result of disability. It is difficult to shift the conversation to a strength-based approach to learning, one that takes ability—be it artistic, linguistic, mathematical, kinesthetic—as its starting point. (Sylvina, personal communication, March 31st, 2014)

A sign, Floyd Merrell (2003) explains, "is known only to a greater or lesser degree, never absolutely" (p. 36). That semiosis remains forever incomplete presents both constraints and opportunities, methodologically, and will give us much to ponder in Chapter 5. The interpretation of the signs *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* by Nobuyuki Tsujii and his audiences provide instructive examples of how different levels of familiarity with the rules and conventions (semiotic codes) of Western art music performance and pedagogy shape the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy, itself a product of the ability/disability system (Garland-Thomson, 2002, p. 5) that has often been at center stage—and certainly never entirely backstage—in Tsujii's post-Cliburn career. As Naomi Cumming (2000) explains, the subjective presence of a sign-user (interpreter) who "draws out" the meaning (interpretants) of signs is not the presence of a mere "vehicle of interpretation" but rather of an interpreting agent who becomes present within multiple, now overlapping, now contradictory, semiotic worlds, shaped by history, culture, education, and the body (p. 287). These multiple factors are taken up in Chapter 5, which turns to the educative possibilities of musical performance and reception as defined by Tsujii and the audience members whose insights into the meanings of *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* shape the ensuing analysis of what musical performance can and cannot teach.

Chapter 5: Towards a Musical Education of the Sensorium

Music, an art which self-evidently does not exist until bodies make it and/or receive it, is thought about as if it were a mind-mind game....[T]hese practices of the mind are nonpractices without the bodily practices they call for—about which it has become unthinkable to think. (Cusick, 1994, p. 16)

What draws listeners to music...is what cannot be paraphrased....And that is not the kind of response that anyone's books can instill. It is picked up, like language, from exposure and reproduction, which eventually lead to internalization. (Taruskin, 2008, p. 349)

Nobuyuki Tsujii expressed all the broken parts that lay dormant (or not so dormant) inside of us and then mended the wounds all in a breath of music. The performers didn't seem anxious about performing; the goal was not to show off or to exhibit, but to touch and to move the audience. To create beauty...In the pauses that created suspense in passages lay poetry...Then when the next note sounded, I felt a sense of ecstasy. The performance possessed all the qualities of a diamond with its distinct clarity. (Danos, 2015, para. 7)

5.1 Overview of Chapter

In what follows, I identify *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* as signs within larger networks of meaning that constitute a musical education of the sensorium. I show how the interpretants produced by these signs both harmonize with, and clash against Tsujii's larger educative goals as a musician. I draw attention to points of convergence and divergence between Tsujii's own way of understanding *the educative* as a performer, and how his audiences define the educative capacities of musical performance, in general, and how they locate Tsujii's UBC recital within their prior interpretative frameworks of what it means for musical performance to be educative. I consider the responses of individual UBC audience members to Tsujii's recital within the context of the presence and absence of music in their lives, and relative to their stated familiarity (or lack thereof) with Western art music. Drawing on the scholarly works discussed in Chapter 2, this analysis extends conversation about the different, sometimes contradictory frameworks of lived experience that performers and audience bring into the concert hall, and

which therefore play a significant role in shaping the educative gaps (Biesta, 2004, p. 13) between performer and audience. Susan Cusick's (1994) critique of analytical approaches to musical experience that fail to take the body into account is addressed specifically to scholars in music studies. However, using her critique as an epigraph for the present chapter helps advance my own project, which strives to remain attentive to the differences that bodily differences—including disability—make in the musical experiences of performances and audiences (Straus, 2006, pp. 123–124), in general, and of Tsujii and his UBC audience in particular.

Chapter 3 presented two interlocking concepts as a theoretical motif for this dissertation's analysis of the ways in which bodily differences mediate the possibilities and limits of teaching and learning through the aural, visual, and kinesthetic signs of musical performance: "the education of the sensorium" and "the dis-education of the sensorium" (Titchkosky, 2008, p. 50; 2011, p. 82). The former concept refers to how sensory perception is taught and learned at the meeting place between history, society, and culture, and how this sensorial pedagogy is folded within our lived experiences within these larger trajectories. The latter idea refers to the cultural education which leaves some people unable to imagine that disability is, indeed, missing from human experience (Titchkosky, 2008, p. 50; 2011, p. 82; see also, Gilroy, 2000; Howes, 1991). Chapter 4's analysis of the interpretants produced by the signs *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* demonstrates that Tsujii's self-representation through musical performance is interpreted in sometimes contradictory ways through audience reception practices, bearing the imprints of both an education and "dis-education" of the sensorium within Western art music. These semiotic threads are woven into the present chapter's discussion of how Tsujii's understanding of what it means to teach his audiences to appreciate Western art music through performance is taken up and resisted by different audiences, individually and collectively. As with Chapter 4,

the analysis shifts back and forth between discussion of Tsujii's UBC recital and the broader, indeed global landscape of his reception by musicians, journalists, music critics and the general public since his shared gold medal at the 2009 Van Cliburn competition.

5.2 Sign-Interpretant Relationships and Meaning Revisited

I begin with a summary of the different signifying relationships which framed the analysis in Chapter 4, explaining how I adapt them to the thematic concerns of the present chapter, as we pursue *the educative* in Tsujii's UBC recital and its reception.

Rhemes produce interpretants that raise questions about the qualities of feeling and sensory experiences evoked by Tsujii's recital and about how these affective and sensory dimensions situate an education of the sensorium in the gap between performance and reception. How does this affective realm, in which Tsujii and his audiences find themselves unable to analyze their experiences of musical performance, simultaneously constrain and enable *the educative* in his UBC recital?

Dicents are interpreted by asking what role embodied experiences of Tsujii's performances play in educating both the pianist and his audience? At this level of interpretation, Tsujii and his audience are aware of differences in their experiences of the world, but have not yet done the interpretive work of resolving these tensions, or, at least, of locating them as the starting points for further inquiry.

Arguments direct analysis to the level of semiotic codes, tapping into the formal knowledge that sign interpreters have acquired through training and through absorption of educational and sociocultural norms of what signs are supposed to mean within a given interpretive context. In the present context, interpretants relate to their signs as *arguments* by

revealing varying degrees of (un) familiarity on the part of Tsujii and his UBC audience with the norms of Western art music performance and reception taught in university and conservatory music programs, contexts which normalize musical experience (Straus, 2011, p. 150)

Walter Gershon's (2010) essay on the role of musicians as public intellectuals discussed in Chapter 2 collapses the distinction between scholarly reflection on music and the practices associated with making and receiving music. Of particular relevance is Gershon's refusal to differentiate among scholars who research music from various disciplinary perspectives, those "musicians who write about their ideas," and those musicians who *simply* make music without necessarily setting out to teach their audiences (p. 633). Several of the musician-scholars whose work I draw on in this study fit the former description, combining scholarly study of music with active careers as musicians (Cumming, 2000; Rosen, 2001 & 2002; Taruskin, 1995). To the extent that he focuses his energy on being a *pianist*, limiting his educative intent to increased musical understanding which he can conceivably accomplish through performance, Tsujii falls within the latter category, that of a musician concerned primarily with performing music, rather than with teaching his audiences about music by telling them what to listen for, or how to listen (Interview, January 27, 2014). As the sixth and final chapter will show, Gershon's (2010) approach offers both intriguing possibilities and intractable limitations for locating Tsujii's performances and reception within the scholarly landscape of research in music, education, and the body.

Tsujii's definition of what it means to educate audiences through musical performance is complicated by a musical "education of the sensorium" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82), through which

he has learned to disavow (Shakespeare, 1994, p. 287) blindness.³⁰ For this reason, it is worth lingering over Gershon's (2010) brief acknowledgement that "whether or not music is intended to educate, it *almost always* has the potential to do so" (p. 630; emphasis added). The *almost always* is left unexplored in Gershon's essay, his focus being those positive instances of teaching and learning through musical activity defined in the broadest terms, and often indistinguishable from activities which are merely agreeable or distracting. Absent discussion of philosophical and historical pronouncements concerning music's educative capacities, Gershon's essay lapses into a celebratory account of what music can do in fuzzily defined ideal circumstances, without more than a cursory acknowledgement that sometimes a musical experience is limited in its educative force, and that musicians themselves do not always embrace the work of teaching through music. In our example, Tsujii's disavowal of blindness places him at odds with disability activists and scholars, for whom cultural and artistic practices are defined as educative to the extent that they transform audiences' understanding of bodily difference (Barnes & Mercer, 2010, p. 208). I return to this topic at various points in the present chapter, in order to account more fully for the complexities that lie beneath Tsujii's apparently straightforward declaration of how he defines his own educational role as an exponent of Western art music. On the one hand, as interviews I conducted with Tsujii and with individual members of his UBC audience show, his goals are not always clearly realized or clearly thwarted, because individual audience members may already have the sort of appreciation for Western art music that Tsujii aims to foster. Conversely, they may lack interest in music to begin with, and find that they are not changed in their position by the actual experience of live performance, a context which Tsujii feels is of vital importance to

³⁰ Shakespeare (1994) describes people with disabilities as "dustbins for disavowal" (p. 287).

real musical experience. While the responses of Tsujii and individual audience members to my interview questions occasionally converged in their agreement that his disability was irrelevant to the UBC recital, such consensus is more apparent than real, informed as it is by their very different backgrounds in general, and their varying degrees of musical knowledge, in particular. Furthermore, sharp differences between how Tsujii speaks of his role—implicitly resisting the role of teacher by interpreting my question to be about his role as a musician—and how practitioners of disability arts link artistic practices to an avowed politics (something which musicians in Western art music such as Tsujii typically do not do) must be taken into account.

Returning to a point I raised at the outset, this chapter calls attention to the *almost always* left unresolved by Gershon (2010, p. 630) as a gap in which education through musical performance and reception *may take place* (Biesta, 2004, p. 13), and in which Tsujii and his audiences locate music and bodily difference as of greater and lesser importance to the emergence of *the educative* in musical performance. Simultaneously, however, my analysis qualifies this educative possibility by attending to those moments in which there is a *failure* of music (and musicians) to educate.

Tsujii's performances and their reception by audiences are embedded within the ability/disability system as I discussed in Chapter 4 (Garland-Thomson, 2002). We must therefore consider *the educative* in his music-making in relation to both possibilities and limitations of the contested *pianist, blind pianist, real pianist* system of representation. Understanding the degree to which the roles of performer and teacher, on the one hand, and audience and student, on the other hand, overlap and diverge in complex ways within this hierarchical system of cultural meaning is a significant aim of my analysis. Tsujii's self-representation as an educator through musical performance, and his audiences' receptiveness to

the piano repertoire of Western art music which is Tsujii's primary concern can be richly understood against this larger backdrop.

In cultural studies the way audiences are conceptualized reflects some of the core assumptions of the teaching side of this equation: "as teachers, we inevitably locate ourselves precisely within a circuit of production and reception and no doubt take our own priority for granted" (Radway, 1988, p. 83). With this insight as a point of departure, I turn now to the analysis itself, once again using, as in Chapter 4, James H. Johnson's (1995) general taxonomy of audience reception practices (p. 3) as the overarching semiotic framework.

5.3 Sounds as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (In)Audible Interpretants Interpreted

Building on Peirce's view of semiosis as an activity through which sign-interpreting agents learn from experience, Winfried Nöth (2014) advances the claim that "signs are educators... we learn from signs" (p. 7). Nöth's account does not, however, detail the historical origins of Peirce's claim. Apart from a reference to the Socratic method in which learning through signs is equated with "teaching through dialogue" (Nöth, 2014, p. 7), there is no discussion of the work of St. Augustine of Hippo, or of the educative role of signs in theological discussions. The larger history of the idea of signs as communicative vessels which teach us how to experience the world is likewise beyond the scope of the present study (Topping, 2012, p. 145). However, St. Augustine's definition of signs brings us closer to understanding not only Peirce's distinctive account of the action of signs, but also Nöth's examination of the tensions attached to the latter's claim that signs teach, a claim that ascribes agency to signs themselves, not solely to human interpreters who make sense of signs. As we shall see, Peirce's normative account of signs develops an account of the interpretant as autonomous from the interpreting

agency of an individual sign interpreter. The present study navigates a middle ground, working to understand how signs compel certain interpretations, while being redirected, sometimes in subtle ways by sign-interpreters. In order to clarify the deep historical roots obscured in Nöth's definition of signs as "educators" let us turn to St. Augustine—himself influenced by the Roman scholars—who writes: "A sign is something that shows itself to the senses and something other than itself to the mind [*Signum est quod et se ipsum sensui et praeter se aliquid animo ostendit*]" (Meier-Oeser, 2011, 2.1 Augustine (354–430) para. 1)." Ryan Topping (2012) reads St. Augustine's definition as a foundational moment in conferring educative value on a signifying unit, the claim, more simply put, that "[a] sign is capable to teach" (p. 145).

In contrast to Biesta (2011) who distinguishes between *learning from* and *being educated by* in the context of educating for democratic citizenship, the pragmatist framework built by Peirce, and invoked by Nöth in his claim that signs enable us to learn does not embrace this distinction with such firmness. Biesta (2011) argues that the conscious effort to teach does not necessarily produce an outcome that demonstrates the student has learned what the teacher aimed to transmit (p. 14). However, Peirce's own brief comments on pedagogy, located within his pragmatist philosophy, are by his own admission shaped by his training in experimental methods in science (Peirce, 1905/1998, p. 331–332). For this reason, Peirce treats learning as the outcome of sustained and rigorous inquiry into lived experience rather than as the product of formal classroom instruction and the knowledge contained in books. For Peirce, it is lived experience of the world that constitutes the primary stuff of pedagogy, and he goes so far as to say that philosophical inquiry bereft of self-directed thought cannot advance knowledge to any great degree: "Nothing can be learned out of books or lectures, they have to be treated not as oracles but simply as facts to be studied like any other facts (Peirce, n.d., quoted in Greetham, 1997, p.

271).³¹ It is within this context that Nöth's (2014) claim that signs teach us through our everyday encounters with the world can be understood as a consequence of the core tenets of Peircean pragmatism. In contrast to other philosophical approaches, especially the universal doubt and introspection of Cartesian philosophy of which he is particularly critical, Peirce does not discount sensory experiences from the pedagogy of experience, nor does he believe in a sharp separation between the senses and the mind: "our very percepts [sense impressions] are the results of cognitive elaboration" (Peirce 1905/1998, p. 336). In Peirce's approach to semiotics, the possibility of signs being educative intertwines with his account of the relational self formed in and through semiosis: "the human being, the self, mind and language are made of verbal and nonverbal sign activity" (Petrilli, 2009, p. 609; see also Colapietro, 1989; Cumming, 2000; Haack, 2014).

Susan Haack (2014) explains how Peirce's pragmatist conception of the pedagogy of experience begins with a reason to doubt one's prior beliefs, motivating inquiry into those aspects of experience which are puzzling, and leading, ideally, to the formation of new ways of making sense of the puzzling experience. This new framework of understanding then becomes part of a habitual set of practices for encountering the world (see also, Goble, 2010). My goal in applying this pragmatist framework to the reception of Tsujii's UBC recital, and, by extension, to his reception since the 2009 Cliburn competition has been to understand how the communicative medium of musical performance might spur both Tsujii himself, and his audiences to rethink the adequacy of their prior beliefs and assumptions about what it means to be a *pianist*, a *real pianist*, and a *blind pianist*. Going further, what are their reasons for accepting, rejecting,—or

³¹ The passage quoted in Greetham (1997) comes from one of Peirce's unpublished manuscripts (MS 304).

finding a position in between acceptance and rejection—the belief that such rethinking is in fact necessary. With this goal in mind, here is Haack's (2014) explanation of how Peircean pragmatism situates the educative within the domain of lived experience: "...what prompts inquiry is the need to put doubts and their discomfort to rest by replacing the old, broken belief-habits that experience disrupted with new beliefs" (p. 321). Thus conceived, lived experience educates us not merely by presenting us with any experience at all, but specifically with an experience which is anomalous in some way (here Peirce's training in experimental science shines through), and which therefore demands figuring out:

Someone might object that you sometimes learn things that, as we say, you had no desire to know....But in the context of Peirce's theory of inquiry, this is no real objection. For in the circumstances described, he would say, experience (something you hear, read, see) unsettles some previously-settled belief(s), which throws you into a state of doubt, which leads you to struggle to form a revised opinion. (Haack, 2014, p. 321)

In what follows, I start from a narrower premise within this larger claim, namely that performers and audiences learn from the visual, audible, and kinesthetic meanings which musical signs convey to our eyes, ears, and bodies (Nöth, 2014, p. 7; see also, Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2005, 2009, & 2010). Tracing out the consequences of the premise that education (teaching and learning) occurs through semiotic channels (Nöth, 2014), and that learning occurs through the work of interpreting signs (CP, 7.536), I show how the interpretation of musical sounds qua signs (Cumming, 2000) by Tsujii and his audiences constitute musical performance and reception as interlocking activities with the capacity to educate (Gershon, 2010, p. 630). In subsequent sections of this chapter I take note of those instances in which Tsujii's response to my question about how he defines his educative role were not matched by responses from the UBC audience

members whom I interviewed. The pianist focuses on wanting audiences to enjoy his performances, and, more broadly, to develop an appreciation for Western art music. For various reasons which I examine later in this chapter, although the UBC audience members I interviewed spoke of enjoying his recital, it is by no means clear that their prior interest, or lack thereof, in Western art music, was substantially changed by attending his recital. Simultaneously, I discuss several instances in which UBC audience members spoke of having learned something personally valuable from attending Tsujii's recital. What these audience members felt they learned, however, does not fit with Tsujii's stated aims, nor with the definitions of music as public intellectualism (Gershon, 2010), nor yet with the understanding of education as an activity that takes place in a relational gap (Biesta, 2004).

During my first interview with Tsujii, instead of asking him directly whether he understands his role as a performer to involve teaching his audiences to question their prior beliefs about disability, I found a different entry point, a question and answer session on March 8 2013, at the University of British Columbia, in which he was the featured guest and which I moderated, with the assistance of a translator from UBC. Responding to my question, Tsujii observed that, although he was happy that a capacity audience was present, the event itself was unremarkable. He quickly moved on to a discussion of two events that were personally significant for him, and which influenced how he felt during his visit to UBC: the passing of Van Cliburn on February 27 2013, and the two-year anniversary of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan on March 11, 2011 (Interview, January 27, 2014). With the aim of asking him more about these two circumstances and their associated memories during a follow-up interview, I then charted a course that I hoped would lead me to the very heart of what I wanted to understand in the first interview, namely Tsujii's educative aims as a pianist:

Honisch: What do you think the role of the performer is? Specifically, to what extent do you think that performers have a responsibility to educate their audiences?

Tsujii (via translator Sachiko Koyama): There are a number of people who don't really know about classical music. I would hope that those people who don't really know about music would come to the concert hall, to real performances, to live performances, and I would like them to get interested in this kind of music, and in what I do. And I would like them to come back again in the concert halls. Actually, this is what Mr. Van Cliburn had said to me just before he passed away, that he would like me to be that kind of pianist who could draw audiences into the concert halls. I just keep developing myself in that tradition, and I hope to open the gates for many different audiences. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

Although Tsujii defines his educative role as a performer as one of increasing the audiences for Western art music, rather than of purposefully teaching people about music, in practice the distinction is uncertain. In making reference to what Van Cliburn had said to him about the type of pianist he should become, Tsujii locates himself within a set of pedagogical practices built on the idea that experiencing Western art music in a concert hall setting is "educative and edifying" (Nettl, 2005, p. 245). In order to understand the congruities and tensions between what Tsujii aims to communicate through his performances, and what his audiences are (not) prepared to receive, we must revisit the central topic of Chapter 4, what I have described, at the beginning of this chapter, as the contested interpretants produced by the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist*. At this point it is also worth noting that the sign *teacher* emerges within this semiotic space, rendered as an absence. With the exception of Edith

who referred in several instances to Tsujii's role as an *educator* (on which more later in this chapter; Interview, December 10, 2013), neither Tsujii nor any of the audience members with whom I spoke made any direct reference to the possibility that Tsujii taught something through his UBC recital (see the first epigraph to Chapter 1), let alone through his performances more generally. The sign *teacher* then, refers to Nobuyuki Tsujii as an absent object, whose bodily presence on stage does not produce an interpretant (signifying effect) clearly linked to teaching, either for Tsujii himself or for the majority of audience members interviewed for this study.

The three public statements by Tsujii on the matter of his reception as a *pianist/blind pianist*, which I adumbrated in Chapter 1 and analyzed in Chapter 4, provide important context for understanding the implication of Tsujii defining himself as responsible for fostering appreciation and knowledge of the Western art music tradition. The first statement is at once a statement of selfhood and of identity. As Chapter 3 noted, selfhood and identity have been conceptually distinguished on the grounds that "selfhood" differentiates self and other, whereas identity inscribes the self with meaning by enumerating the specific ways in which one self is different from another (Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 33). The framework for understanding selfhood used in the following analysis, however, locates the self as a product of the action of signs, originating in Firstness (Affect), developing into Secondness (Embodiment) and distinguishing the self and other, and ultimately into the symbolic codified systems of Thirdness (Cognition), in which the self is infused with the conventions dictating what type of self one can inhabit, while always leaving the possibility open for transformation through further semiosis, or the action of signs (Peirce, 1893).

By declaring that he is a pianist *who happens to be blind*, rather than a *blind pianist* Tsujii lays claim to a pianistic self different from *blind pianists*, while simultaneously acknowledging,

precisely through this gesture of disavowal, that his identity is marked. His identity is different from that of other pianists, in having to constantly assert his status as *simply a pianist*. While he may not name the forms of representation which mark him as different, nevertheless by not allowing his audiences to forget this dualism, Tsujii positions himself against both mainstream and disability culture. Invoking a putative, abstract *blind pianist*, a sign that produces a possible interpretant, and therefore acts as a *rheme*. Tsujii equates being taken seriously with being treated as what he is *not*, a negation of *the blind pianist*, a reactive embodied tension that constitutes *simply a pianist* through a semiotic relationship between sign and interpretant that takes the form of a *dicent*. Simultaneously, to the extent that Tsujii identifies people with disabilities as part of his audiences, it is not with the aim of building a coherent politics aimed at addressing problematic representations of disability. Instead, for Tsujii, communicating through music to other people with disabilities conceived as *possible* audience, depends first on a repetition of the act of distancing himself from the semiotic freight attached to *blind pianist*.

Peirce develops his philosophy of synechism as a manifestation of the semiotic realm of Thirdness. An important aspect of synechism is its rejection of dualisms of all kind. The synechist's refusal to grant a separation between self and other, and, significantly for my larger analytical goals, between selfhood and identity (Peirce, 1893, p. 2) enriches, even as it complicates our analysis of Tsujii's response to my question about his aims as a musician/educator. Our analysis will therefore be well served by looking for those moments in which the distinction between *pianist* and *blind pianist* collapses.

In Chapter 2, I surveyed ongoing debates among educators, scholars, musicians, and media commentators in order to demonstrate the complex relationships between self and other which the seemingly diametric "person-first" and "disability-first" linguistic schemes create

(Campbell, 2009a; Michalko, 2002; Titchkosky, 2012). These contrary perspectives are relevant to present purposes, and will therefore be taken up throughout this chapter. The second of Tsujii's public statements (Oda, 2009, para. 6) is a tacit acknowledgement of the gap between Tsujii's *self*, what it is like to be him, and Tsujii's *identity*, the ways in which he is different from other pianists. By expressing the hope that he can "shake off the label" (Oda, 2009, para. 6) of "blind pianist," Tsujii concedes that audiences do not always receive him as he would like.

Complicating matters still further, Tsujii both upholds normative ideas about disability (blindness) as a damaging and constraining label, while resisting the "hypervisibility and instant categorization" (Kuppers, 2013, p. 49) which the language of disability as pathology maintains. This contradiction emphasizes Tsujii's agency while simultaneously announcing the structural and discursive limits on his agency. In other words, while Tsujii can insist through his public statements that he is *not a blind pianist*, and can claim, through the act of performing in public, that his pianism and his blindness are distinct, such acts of individual resistance are not his alone to make. The constraints upon his agency are both structural, formed through an ensemble of institutions that limit his capacity to be heard, and discursive, shaped by a set of practices that do not simply reflect more or less true accounts of what it means to be a *pianist* and *not a blind pianist*, but actively constitute these very categories both in themselves, and as a dichotomy. In the dichotomous framework, being taken seriously as a *real pianist* involves not being relegated to the category of *blind pianist* (Roman, 2003;³² Ruitenbergh, 2008).

³² Despite its application in pursuing a completely unrelated topic, Roman's (2003) notion of "structural registers of voice" provides a theoretically apt way of making sense of how Tsujii's resistance to being received as a *blind pianist* does not name a gap that can simply be filled in the more audiences come to accept him as *simply a pianist*. Instead, multiple historical, cultural, aesthetic, and educational forces are at play in his self-representation and in his reception.

As noted in Chapter 4, music critic Scott Cantrell wrote extensively about the 2009 Cliburn competition for *The Dallas Morning News*. He responded to the gold medal tie between Tsujii and Zhang with several blog posts (Cantrell, 2009a, b, & c), including an entry entitled *Another Blind Pianist* (Cantrell, 2009b).³³ In the opening paragraph of this blog which I discussed in Chapter 4, Cantrell places disability at the center of his analysis of Tsujii's playing: "The blind Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii...certainly impressed me with his mastery of major scores."³⁴ But I kept wanting more color, more rise and fall of phrases" (Cantrell, 2009b, para.1; emphasis added). In revisiting this blog post here, my aim is to draw attention to conflicts over more and less real *blind pianists* (the signifying interaction between signs and interpretants which produce *dicents* as competing assertions of truth). In this case, Cantrell makes us aware not only of the difference between blind and sighted pianists by asserting factual linkages between how pianists learn music and the persuasiveness and artistry of their music-making, but also of the codes and conventions that delimit musical artistry, signifying relationships between signs and interpretants that produce *arguments* as rule-governed meanings. This level of semiosis identifies more and less skillful *blind pianists* as those whose expressivity comes as close as possible, given the limitations assumed to arise from their disability to the musical skills normatively assumed of their sighted counterparts (Hollins, 1934; Isaacs, 1945). Cantrell's gambit involves comparing Tsujii to another blind pianist, Deborah Saylor, a competitor in the 2005 *Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition* through an implicit appeal to Western

³³ I have retained the original capitalization of the blog post in order to enable readers to locate this source more easily. The blog does not offer DOI or permanent URLs.

³⁴ "Scores" in this context is a term used by musicians to refer to notated musical compositions. A "major score" is an informal way to describe those compositions which are considered of central importance to a performer's repertoire.

art music's aesthetic and cultural system of interpretive rules and conventions. Although at a superficial level, Saylor seems to rise higher than Tsujii in Cantrell's estimation, the critic effectively damns both pianists with faint praise: "*For an 'amateur'*, Saylor (who I believe learns music by Braille) produced the rich expressivity and coloristic range I kept wanting to hear from Tsujii" (para. 3; emphasis added).

Implicit in Cantrell's critique is the notion, presented as a subtle appeal to reality, that Braille notation is connected to Saylor's greater musical expressivity. The qualifying phrase "*For an amateur*" allows Cantrell to mark Saylor as a non-professional pianist, and therefore as subject to less rigorous standards of evaluation than Tsujii, whose participation in the non-amateur stream of the Van Cliburn competition by definition places him in the category of professional or, at least, aspiring professional pianist. Cantrell's mode of reception blocks the possibility of Tsujii disrupting Western art music's *education of the sensorium*, (the way pianists are taught to see, hear, and feel music in ways that relegate bodily difference to the margins), not allowing that Tsujii might have something different to teach his audiences about the meaning of musical experience. I would argue that there are two main possibilities for Tsujii to teach his audience absent in Cantrell's commentary. First, the more general possibility that as a result of watching and hearing Tsujii's performances, audiences might come to question the sensorial hierarchy which obliges sighted musicians to learn music by first seeing it on the printed page, a hierarchy which—having imagined blindness as nothing more than "not-seeing" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82) —requires blind musicians to learn music by feeling it through Braille notation, rather than by ear, in order to prove that their learning is sufficiently thorough (Straus, 2011, pp. 170–174).

The pedagogical assumption in Cantrell's criticisms of Tsujii's performances is that the senses have their proper place in different moments of the pianist's craft, and that certain sensory experiences of music are more likely to lead the pianist towards deep study of the music than others. Again, it bears repeating that this normalization of musical experience is neither natural nor inevitable, but is the product of an ensemble of pedagogical practices in university and conservatory music programs that train students in proper sensory and bodily comportment (Straus, 2011, p. 150). Second, I would argue that Cantrell fails to consider the more specific possibility that Tsujii might teach his audiences something which they did not previously know about Western art music, a possibility which recalls Wittgenstein's aphoristic complaint (see the first epigraph to Chapter 1) that audiences too often fail to consider what musicians might have to teach. In my own interviews with audience members I had hoped to find manifestations of both of these educative possibilities in their experiences of Tsujii's recital at UBC. As I detail in later parts of this chapter, however, this did not happen in the way that I had imagined.

Theodor, who identifies himself as a non-musician, is considerably more cautious in approaching questions of disability, in marked contrast to Cantrell's assumptions about the superiority of specific techniques of learning music, and the suitability of Braille notation for *blind* pianists. Cantrell's familiarity with the pedagogical conventions of Western art music, and with the technical vocabulary of performance is evident in his references to "color" and to the "rise and fall of phrases" (Cantrell, 2009b, para. 1; see also, Cumming, 2000). The audience he addresses is idealized as a group of listeners conversant in these codes. Despite being unfamiliar with these semiotic codes by his own admission, Theodor acknowledges the fallibility of his interpretation, emphasizing that he did not have any clearly articulated doubts as to the viability of playing the piano without sight prior to attending Tsujii's recital. Instead, Theodor represents

his curiosity as a set of "how" questions (Interview, November 30, 2013) that, as we found out in the previous chapter, Tsujii encounters frequently in question and answer sessions, and in interviews with the media (Interview, January 27, 2014).

Theodor discovers "a highly fallible self...in [the failure] to interpret some aspect of music that resists incorporation into categories already known" (Cumming, 2000, p. 57), thereby receiving an *education of the sensorium* in the gap between what he knows about the standard ways to learn music, and Tsujii's lived experience which makes blindness visible as a difference that requires an alternative way of learning music. In contrast, music critic Cantrell closes off the possibility of inhabiting such a "fallible self," of learning to question his own presuppositions about musical experience. Instead, Cantrell simply incorporates Tsujii and Saylor into the categories of musical experience which he takes for granted, organized by a dichotomous separation of *blind pianists* and *sighted pianists*.

Interestingly, however, Cumming's (2000) claim that a musical self "appears" when prior habituated forms of musical experience are thrown into disarray (p. 57) does not square with Tsujii's own publicly stated experience of musical selfhood, despite the framework he shares with Cumming as a performer trained in Western art music (p. 54). Recall that for Peirce, a community of sign-interpreters need not be present in the same time and space, and that in extending this definition of community to those defined by musical practices of various kinds, Cumming takes a similarly open approach. It is therefore possible to consider how Tsujii's stated experiences of musical selfhood can be compared against the normative claims and rigorous pragmatism adopted by Cumming (2000).

Tsujii's pianism has not, from his point of view, evolved or been formed through his "failures to interpret some aspect of music" (p. 57) in relation to previously learned "music-

experiential" categories (Boretz, 1992, p. 273). In this regard, Tsujii's perception of his pianism as natural, and as naturally not about disability widens the gap between him and his audiences. In being confronted with a *pianist* who seems "different" (Theodor, Interview, November 30, 2013) audiences have to deal with a musical experience that may not fit comfortably within previously known categories.

Theodor pointed out as much in two written statements that he sent to me after our first interview, and the expanded version of which I discussed in Chapter 4 (personal communication, December 14, 2013 and February 23, 2014). The fallible musical self emerges as a consequence of a Secondness, the shock of an audience's experience in which some aspect of Tsujii's piano playing "resists incorporation into categories already known" (Cumming, 2000, p. 57). A struggle over the meaning of *argument* signs (whose interpretants fall within *known categories*) produces *dicents* (whose interpretants, at least initially, resist incorporation into the codified rules formed through semiotic networks of *arguments*). Cantrell's (2009b) lack of skepticism towards his prior beliefs after hearing Tsujii play, and after learning about Tsujii's method of learning music, offers an instance of education through musical performance in which the upholding of dominant values (in this case the semiotic codes governing proper ways to learn music for sighted and blind pianists) is reflected in the continued operation of sign-interpretant relationships as *arguments*. The gap between music critic and pianist, in this case, fails to produce a transformation in the knowledge of either Cantrell or Tsujii. However, recalling Jennifer Sandlin's (2010) definition of education as a space in which cultural norms are both upheld and questioned (p. 1), it would be simplistic to banish Cantrell's (2009b) response to Tsujii's music-making from our pursuit of *the educative*. We would do well instead to locate his statements within the experiential gap between Tsujii and his audiences, and the theoretical gap

between Disability Studies critiques of normalizing practices, and modes of reception which uphold those practices. It is within this gap that musical education of the sensorium can take place, a gap which positions musical sounds as objects of struggle and contestation (Biesta, 2004, p. 13). However, it must be acknowledged that, in the present example, the possibility of Cantrell changing his mind or revising his assumptions about the proper way to be a *pianist* and to learn music seems remote, that the gap between Tsujii and Cantrell is not productive of education, but rather unbridgeable.

In contrast to Theodor who said that, prior to attending Tsujii's UBC recital he wanted to find out more about *blind pianists* achieving fame, Ava's initial interest in Tsujii arose from the expectations she had about what type of pianist Tsujii would be as a *competition laureate* rather than as a *blind pianist* (Interview, December 13, 2013). As I noted in the previous chapter, Ava is a trained pianist herself. I asked her what she thought about Ivry's (2009) *Wall Street Journal* denunciation of Tsujii's final round performances at the 2009 Cliburn competition, and in particular his exhortation that "soloists who cannot see a conductor's cues should not be playing concertos in public out of simple respect for the composer" (Ivry, 2009, para. 2). Ava had not read this article prior to our interview, and thus was relying on my summary of Ivry's main criticisms of Tsujii. I explained the context of Ivry's recommendation that blind pianists should not appear onstage with orchestra, noting that Ivry specifically mentioned Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto performed by Tsujii in the final round of the competition. Ava had seen Peter Rosen's (2010) documentary in which the opening of Tsujii's performance is briefly heard, including the much talked about lack of coordination between soloist and orchestra at the beginning. She responded to my question by drawing on her own experiences as a pianist, and of playing the specific work for which Ivry criticized Tsujii:

Ava: The fact that I don't remember means that it doesn't really mean that much. Things like that can happen. I don't think it's anybody's fault. I wouldn't blame one or the other. But I disagree that blind pianists shouldn't appear in public just because of that. The rest of the piece was amazing, it was only that one page. On that page you just need to feel the music. He doesn't need to see the conductor at that moment. Of course it helps, but it's not very much important. (Interview, December 13, 2013)

As the conductor Ron Spigelman (2009) explains, in his response to Ivry's (2009) article, characterizing Tsujii's performance as a disaster is untenable. It is worth quoting Spigelman at length, since his response is strikingly similar to that of Ava. Although I had asked Ava if she had read Ivry's (2009) piece, I did not ask her specifically if she had read Spigelman's blog post, in the hope that she would therefore frame her own response in greater detail, and from her own perspective as a pianist. Spigelman (2009) offers a hypothetical example of the outlandish implications of justifying the absence of musicians with disabilities *because* of their disabilities. Taking the iconic figure of Ludwig van Beethoven as an example, Spigelman wonders if Ivry would ask Beethoven to stop being a composer "out of 'respect' for the composers who can hear." Spigelman goes on to explain that,

I was at all of the rehearsals with Nobuyuki and the orchestra [during the 2009 Cliburn competition] and...it was one of the most communicative and pure music making experiences I have ever witnessed...soloists don't follow conductor's cues, it's usually the other way round! (Spigelman, 2009, para. 4–6)

It is worth noting, that although Spigelman's response to Tsujii is ostensibly more positive than that of other commentators, his reference to "pure music making" faintly resembles the trope of blindness as a sign of spiritual purity and childlike innocence discussed earlier. Spigelman's commentary does not elaborate on what he means by "pure music making" nor does it raise the question of whether music making of any kind can be pure, an adjective which sustains the idea of music as an activity apart from the quotidian, as transcendent (Cumming, 2000; Straus, 2011; Taruskin, 1995). That his description of Tsujii's rehearsal with conductor James Conlon as an instance of musical purity is part of a larger critique of what he perceives as Ivry's unfair response to Tsujii, is significant, highlighting the pervasiveness of this representational system in both seemingly positive and obviously negative responses to the work of a blind musician.

Moving back to present analytical concerns, the quoted interview excerpt from Ava and the passage drawn from Spigelman (2009) show that bodily responses to music are not simply extensions of intuitive patterns of bodily movement, but are the result of the body having been trained to respond to music in a circumscribed range of ways deemed appropriate to a given musical tradition (Cumming, 2000; Davidson 1993, 1994, & 2001). For this reason, bodily response within the Western art music tradition becomes a disputed territory in the struggle over more or less valid ways of experiencing music. Sorting out the range of positions drawn up in this contested space demands a willingness to acknowledge the fallibility of acquired habits of musical experience (Cumming, 2000, p. 57). Unlike Ivry (2009), both Spigelman (2009) and Ava refuse to disqualify Tsujii from the domain of *real pianists* simply for a momentary lapse in coordination between soloist and orchestra, a lapse which Ava, in particular, accepts as among the occupational hazards of *simply being a pianist* (Interview, December 13, 2013).

Ava's response to my questions about her recollections of *A Surprise in Texas* contrasts sharply with that of Theodor, for whom the social interactions between Tsujii and his host family were paramount, playing an instrumental role in showing that "there's nothing special" about his blindness (Interview, November 30, 2014; see Chapter 4). For Ava, the most important moments in the documentary were musical:

Ava: It was really inspiring, especially for me as a pianist. After the whole documentary, a lot of other pianists came to me and said 'it's really inspiring, and it made me want to practice.' I think what struck me the most is when he played the Chopin concerto. I think that's when he hit the bull's eye. (Interview, December 13, 2013)

Ava also recalled that "someone sitting beside me was in tears too" (Interview, December 13, 2013). The strongly emotional reaction of both Ava and her fellow audience member at the documentary screening demonstrate the continuity between Firstness and Secondness, between *rhemes* and *dicents*. In this case, the *dicent* relation is constituted in their physical experience of being moved to tears. Such affective responses (sign-interpretant relationships as *rhemes*) are not, as this interview excerpt reveals, merely private, incapable of being understood by others:

At issue in the discussion of musical writing (or conversation), is whether the kinds of musical perception that people feel are 'intuitive' do in fact proceed from some mysterious origin which renders them inaccessible to critical scrutiny, or to intersubjective rapport. (Cumming, 2000, p. 54)

Like Theodor, Rinaldo has no formal musical training, as I discussed in Chapter 4. Unlike Theodor, however, he attends live concerts frequently, professing a lifelong appreciation for Western art music. His musical background is characterized by a deep interest in listening to

pianists, in particular. During our conversations he mentioned several classical and jazz pianists, making comparisons between Tsujii and other blind pianists, and between Tsujii's evolving interpretations of certain works, and those of other pianists (Interviews, December 2, 2013 & March 12, 2014). In this regard, his responses to Tsujii's pianism constitute sign-interpretant relationships as *arguments*, that is, as rules and conventions of performance and reception that Rinaldo has gained not through formal pedagogy, but through knowledge of music acquired by his repeated attendance at concerts (Cumming, 2000). To the extent that Rinaldo already had developed knowledge of, and appreciation for Western art music prior to Tsujii's recital, his presence at the recital itself did not serve as an instance of the successful realization of Tsujii's educative goals as the pianist himself defined these during my first interview with him (Interview, January 27th, 2014). However, it is nonetheless the case that Tsujii would recognize in Rinaldo precisely the sort of audience member who might listen to him with the requisite "enthusiasm and focus" (Tsujii, Interview, January 27, 2014), which, as explained in Chapter 4, Tsujii understands as a mode of reception which obliges audiences not to be distracted by questions about bodily difference, and about the relationship between Tsujii's blindness and his piano playing.

In Chapter 4, I discussed sensory perceptions in relation to music, and pursued the question of how, unexpectedly, both Tsujii and one member of his UBC audience (Rinaldo) define non-systematic linkages across the senses as features of how they experience music. In the brief written statement he sent me following our first interview, Rinaldo explained that Tsujii is "the kind of musician who enables me to see colors and smell perfumes in music" (personal communication, December 2, 2013). The question which took shape when I first read this passage concerned whether what Rinaldo was articulating here was his perception of having

been transformed by some sort of sensory education as a result of Tsujii's recital, or whether it was a primarily sensual experience for him which produced no significant change in his musical understanding. In our follow up conversation, I therefore asked Rinaldo to say more about these cross-sensory experiences to which he replied "I don't think this is *kinesthesia* [sic]" (Interview, March 12, 2014).

Before proceeding to a fuller discussion of Rinaldo's response to this question, it is necessary to take note of inaccurate terminology, specifically his reference to *kinesthesia*. Taking his subsequent explanation into account (in the remainder of his answer quoted below), it is reasonable to assume that Rinaldo meant *synaesthesia* instead of *kinesthesia*, since the latter refers to the sense of movement, rather than to cross-sensory associations. Continuing, he explained that

I can actually see colors inside my brain, depending on the waves from the piano. The colors change, not just with Tsujii. I can't explain it. It's a kind of Nirvana or something, music has this faculty. (Interview, March 12, 2014)

For Rinaldo these cross-modal associations are not willed into existence as *dicents*, nor are they part of the codified, pathologically intelligible condition signified by *arguments* signs which produce interpretants as scientific knowledge of *synaesthesia*: they happen by chance, as *rhemes*. Similarities between Tsujii's resistance to analyzing his experiences of playing the piano and that of Rinaldo when asked about his cross-sensory associations (*I can't explain it*) help us understand the ambiguity of ability and disability in relation to self-other interactions, and the ambiguities that define different kinds of ability and disability within the larger binary of ability and disability (Titchkosky, 2003, 2008, 2011, & 2012). In other words, Tsujii's cross-sensory

associations when he performs cannot be understood as a function of his blindness, a dimension of experience that happens because he is consciously working to imagine what he cannot see in terms of what he can hear. By the same token, Rinaldo's associations between the visual, the olfactory, and the aural are similarly haphazard, and do not reflect a conscious attempt to define himself as able to experience music in ways that someone who lacks any one of these sensory abilities cannot. Let us now consider how Otis, a graduate student in the social sciences, also frames his own musical inclinations within the domain of recreation. Despite his casual interest in music, Otis recalled having heard other musicians with disabilities during his childhood. Unlike the other audience members, however, Otis was not able to attend Tsujii's recital, but was present at the question and answer session on March 8.

During my first conversation with Otis about seeing and hearing Tsujii play the piano, I mentioned that another audience member whom I interviewed (Ava) could not make sense of Tsujii's bodily movements at the piano.³⁵ For her, these movements were not expressive of the music he was playing because of a lack of synchrony between body and music (Cumming, 2000; Davidson, 1993, 1994, & 2001). I noticed that this revelation elicited a quick smile and I therefore asked him to explain his reaction to Tsujii's performance at the Fireside Chat on March 8th: "I also felt that way about how he vibrated [sic] his body" (Otis, Interview, February 3, 2014). I did not ask Otis for clarification, but based on the context of our conversation, it is reasonable to assume that what Otis meant to say instead of "vibrated" was "moved" (Otis does not speak English as a first language).

³⁵I did not mention Ava by her real name to Otis during our conversation. I had not yet devised pseudonyms for interviewees at this stage of my research, so I simply said "One of the other audience members I interviewed..."

Otis' quick smile was an instance of recognition through a shared experiential vocabulary of *dicents* (Embodiment). Although Otis identifies himself as a non-musician, lacking technical knowledge of music, nevertheless a tacit familiarity with codified bodily movement interpretable through the sight of a performer moving, and the (in)ability to correlate this interpreted sight to musical sounds locate the responses of Ava and Otis at the convergence point between the two most privileged senses in Western art music, namely seeing and hearing (Lubet, 2010; Straus, 2011), and along the continuum between embodied signs (*dicents*) and codified signs (*arguments*). The normative limits placed on embodied responses to music not only in formal pedagogical contexts, but also, informally in what, adapting a phrase from Carmen Luke (1996, p. 168), I call the *public pedagogies of musical life* constituted in spaces outside the classroom and concert hall (Gershon, 2010; Luke, 1996; Pinar, 2010) enable both these audience members, despite very different educational backgrounds, to identify the embodied kinetic signs (*dicents*) of Tsujii's physical gestures as incongruous with the visual and aural, sensory and affective signs (*rhemes*). The interaction between these different semiotic levels constitute the rhythmic profile of the music. Simultaneously, however, these limits, which enable musicians and audiences without disabilities to interpret musical experience in the language of rules and conventions (*arguments*), prevent musicians and audiences with disabilities from inclusion within a shared universe of musical experience, unless they normalize their embodied practices of music-making and reception as far as possible (Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011).

In the realm of cultural Disability Studies, the term “blindisms” has been used to refer to the bodily movements of blind musicians, such as Thomas Bethune (also known as Thomas Wiggins) in the nineteenth century, and Stevie Wonder in the twentieth century (Rowden, 2009; Straus, 2011). As Terry Rowden (2009) explains, in discussing the reception of both musicians,

the term originates in research on blindness, and serves as the umbrella term for an array of bodily movements that purportedly originate in the experience of being blind (p. 28). While there is a sense in which “blindisms” may be understood to make Tsujii’s blindness visible, to the extent that the term pathologizes specific behaviours of blind musicians, it clashes with the Disability Studies framework adopted in the present study (Rowden also notes that the term has “problematic” connotations; p. 28). It is therefore more productive to emphasize that for Tsujii himself does not perceive anything out of the ordinary in how he moves through the world, and in performance. When considered in this way, it is not merely Tsujii’s blindness that gives rise to contested meanings; instead, Tsujii himself demonstrates that the contours of normalcy are contested.

Returning to the reception of Tsujii’s recital at UBC, Otis stopped short of speculating as to the reasons for Tsujii’s bodily movements, and their apparent lack of synchronicity with the music he played (Interview, February 3, 2014), as did Ava (December 13, 2013). Had they offered possible reasons for the perceived difference between Tsujii’s bodily movements and the rhythms of the music he performed, the *dicents* which I draw out in their responses to Tsujii would have evolved into *arguments*, gathering up for examination the various threads through which bodily movement in response to music becomes the stuff of convention (Straus, 2011; see also, Davidson, 1993, 1994, & 2001; DeNora, 2001).

In contrast to the guardedness of these two audience members, however Tsujii’s critical reception both during and following the 2009 Cliburn competition has often served as a forum for speculation about why Tsujii moves at the piano in specific ways. Peter Rosen, whose documentary film of the 2009 Cliburn competition provided the basis for conversations with Theodor, Rinaldo, Ava, and Yvette also worked with Tsujii for a (2014) documentary entitled

Touching The Sound: The Improbable Journey of Nobuyuki Tsujii. Rosen has suggested that Tsujii's head movements enable the pianist to locate the origin of sounds in his immediate surroundings (quoted in Ikenberg, 2014, para. 21–23; see also, Peterson, 2015, para. 3). The exchange is worth reproducing at length (lightly edited for clarity and brevity. The original source is available online and may be double checked):

Ikenberg: What is different about the way [Tsujii] plays as opposed to the way *a pianist with all his or her senses* [emphasis added] plays?

Rosen: Have you seen any films or concerts of Ray Charles or Stevie Wonder performing? Nobuyuki does the same thing with his head. Wherever he is, whatever it is that he's playing, he has very rapid head movement from side to side, *and it has nothing to do with the rhythm of the music. His head isn't bobbing around to the rhythm the way another musician's would.* [emphasis added]

When asked why Tsujii's head moves in these ways, Rosen speculated that apparently, blind people have a sense of the space they're in when they move their heads. The slight difference between what they hear with their head to the right, and what they hear with their head to the left gives them some sort of spatial perception. So he's always sizing up the way everything sounds...by moving his head a lot while he plays. (Ikenberg, 2014, para. 21–23)

Ikenberg's (2014) framing of the question already pinpoints Tsujii not only as different, but as different from other pianists because of his incomplete sensorial apparatus. Rosen's (2014) possible responses to Ikenberg's question are thus already limited in scope. In explaining how he

understands Tsujii's pianism, Rosen represents Tsujii as *the blind pianist* who relies on extraordinary hearing to compensate for his lack of sight, a trope which has figured prominently in discussions of blind musicians (Hollins, 1934; Straus, 2011, pp. 170–171). Particularly striking is Rosen's assertion that Tsujii's head movements are *unrelated to the rhythm of the music*. For Tsujii himself, it appears that such tidy distinctions between moving through the world, and moving in response to music are untenable. Recall that when I asked him about his experiences of both navigating the world, and of hearing and moving in response to music, Tsujii described these experiences as so deeply ingrained that they feel like second nature to him as *rhemes*, and are, consequently, resistant to verbal explanation as *arguments* (Interview, January 27, 2014). However, there is a higher-level mismatch, one that goes beyond music, and extends to interactions with his audience, whether that audience shares the time and space of live performance in a concert hall, or whether this audience is more precisely understood as a public produced textually in media reports and concert reviews (Warner, 2002, p. 50). Although, in the case of Edith, her perception that Tsujii has an organic and unified relationship to his instrument was central to her experiences of his recital, for Rosen and two of the audience members I interviewed, any possible acceptance of such a sense of unity is interrupted by the assertions of fact (*dicents*), themselves dependent for their reality on the semiotic codes (*arguments*) of Western art music performance and pedagogy. Through the interaction of these semiotic registers Tsujii's embodied relationship with the piano becomes incongruous because of its departure from the norms of musical experience defined by music performance pedagogy (Howe, 2010; Straus, 2011).

In this regard, we quickly encounter the limits of a "union of selves" (Colapietro, 1989, p. 78) within an interpretive community of musicians and audiences. The limits become apparent

when a performer's own perception of his bodily movements as "natural" and "normal" is juxtaposed with audience perception of disjuncture, a feeling of rhythmic incongruity, at once unnatural and abnormal. At the same time that parts of her reception of Tsujii's recital bear the influence of her training in the norms of Western art music performance, Ava observes that Tsujii's musical development parallels that of any other pianist—the ability to *see* in the normative sense does not define the entirety of what it means to be *heard* as a pianist (Interview, December 13, 2013).

5.4 Images as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (In)Visible Interpretants Interpreted

This section explores how Tsujii and his audience experienced and interpreted visual signs during his 2013 UBC recital, situating these interpretations in relation to their prior musical habits including both listening to and performing music. The difficult question arises as to how interpreting visual signs of musical performance might constitute *the educative* in ways recognizable as part of an encounter characterized by teaching and learning, rather than the broader effect of transformation in understanding not necessarily linked to teaching and learning in the specific context of education research (Biesta, 2004; Gershon, 2010). In search of a way of answering this question even provisionally I draw attention to congruities and tensions between how Tsujii and his UBC audience define *the educative* in musical performance, using this as the starting point of my analysis. I then point to how their experiences and interpretations of visual signs align with and clash against their definitions of *the educative*. Although the philosophical writings of Peirce figure more prominently in this study than those of subsequent pragmatists, John Dewey's influential writings on educative and miseducative experiences provide a way of

enlarging the scope of my concerns with how musical performance and reception can be understood to embody both educative possibilities and limitations (Dewey, 1938 & 1987).

Within the pragmatist orientation towards semiotics adopted in the present study, the visible cues, or visible signs that a performer generates through her or his bodily comportment constitute part of the raw data for audience interpretation, shaping, among other things, an audience's "first impression upon a musician's stage entrance" (Platz & Kopiez, 2013, p. 170). Through interpretive reflection, an activity characterized by Peirce as learning through signs (CP, 2.227), what they see the performer do on stage guides "an audience's performance evaluation" (Platz & Kopiez, 2013, p. 170). As what audiences see becomes part of what they hear in a given performance, how the musicians are (not) seen, influences how they are (not) heard (Tsay, 2013; see also, Leppert, 1991). In that sense, my separation of these categories following Johnson's (1995) taxonomy of audience reception practices is problematic, even as it strives for the conceptual tidiness which systematic analysis demands.

Drawing on her work as an arts educator Edith criticizes the widespread expectation that audiences bring into art galleries, namely that the work displayed in galleries and museums will be explained to them. She appreciated the absence of any similar pedagogical intervention in Tsujii's recital, an absence which, it must be acknowledged, defines musical performance, separating a performance in the strict sense from a different format such as a lecture recital, in which the relationship between performer and audience is more clearly pedagogical. I asked Edith about what it was like to encounter music that was unfamiliar to her in Tsujii's recital, and to not have materials available at this event that would provide some sort of contextual information about the repertoire Tsujii played. Instead of talking specifically about Tsujii's recital, Edith discussed musical performance more generally:

Edith: I think what keeps me interested and keen during a concert is seeing how it comes together. If it is very long I could see myself sleeping, my mind would wander away. I'm not knowledgeable about what's going on musically. (Interview, December 10th, 2013)

As noted earlier in this chapter, Tsujii defines his educative role as inhering in his ability to foster interest in Western art music for his audiences, leading them to regular attendance at live concerts (Interview, January 27, 2014). Several audience members I interviewed, including Edith in the passage quoted above, explained however, that Tsujii's UBC recital had not fundamentally changed the position of music in their lives.

Honisch: To what extent were you visually engaged with watching Tsujii during his recital?

Edith: With pianists, I'm always fascinated with their hands. I don't know how they do it. To me, it seems impossible to do with my own two hands. I definitely was looking at his hands. You know how with pianists you can see if they're feeling it? I can't feel what they're feeling, but I enjoy seeing that they're feeling it. It's like going to an art gallery, and you don't get the art but you can see other people are completely stuck to the image, leaning in more, or going back, even though someone might not be getting the same experience as another person, but seeing that it somehow strikes others. He [Tsujii] does this particular head movement. I think that's how I engaged in looking at, in seeing how he was experiencing it but not necessarily relating in the musical sense. (Interview, March 18, 2014)

The passage below provides a deeper context for her visual engagement with Tsujii's performance. I have italicized her repeated references to *seeing*, in order to frame subsequent analysis of how visual signs produce interpretants for Edith that may be usefully understood to constitute *the educative* in musical performance. The excerpt quoted below frames her response to the sight of Tsujii in performance as productive of ambiguous meanings stemming from her lack of familiarity with the codes and conventions (*arguments*) of Western art music. In this regard, her description of the visual imagery that stood out for her positions affective signs (*rhemes*) and embodied signs (*dicents*) as interlocking semiotic spaces. The educative gap between Tsujii as pianist and herself as audience member is identified in relation to the semiosis of imagery:

Edith: I haven't seen that many pianists play live, to me they all look different. Again, because I haven't seen a lot of concerts I don't understand why some people close their eyes or lean back, or move back and forth. I don't get it but—I don't know, you can see something is happening. I don't know what it is and I can't put words to it. (Interview, March 18, 2014)

As with Rinaldo and, indeed Tsujii himself, Edith is brought to awareness of the limits of verbal communication in naming parts of experience which seem to be only intelligible affectively and through bodily response. When I asked her more specifically to delve into her memories of the physical movements that Tsujii made while performing, movements perceived by Ava and Otis as incongruous (Interviews, December 13, 2013 & February 3, 2014), Edith had this to say:

To me, his physical movements showed how he was responding and how he was expressing his feelings. I remember some people said afterwards it's because he's trying

to listen. I don't know enough to say that but I think, as long as your hearing is working, everything is fine. (Interview, March 18, 2014)

The contradiction that emerges in reflecting on the statement above has to do with Edith's ambivalent position to the body in music. On the one hand, she accepts Tsujii's bodily movements as a valid form of self-expression, a subjective musical experience which becomes intersubjective, through its acceptance by this audience member, (Cumming, 2000, p. 54). On the other hand, however, she upholds the idea that normal hearing, in Tsujii's case, ensures that he is not prevented from doing what he wants to do musically. Absent in her response is the question, then, of how musicians who cannot hear *normally* can nevertheless account for their own musical experiences (Glennie, n.d. [a] & [b]).

Edith's account of Tsujii's recital as well as the parallel she draws between the experience of attending a concert and that of going to an art gallery create a distinct image of education taking place in the gap between performer and audience. Although I did not ask her to explain in more detail how she understands this analogy between going to an art exhibit and attending a concert, Biesta's (2004) account of education taking place in a relational gap suggests that there are several gaps to consider in Edith's hypothetical art exhibit: between the art work, an individual viewer, and between an individual viewer and the other viewers in the gallery or museum. For Edith, the educative dimensions of Tsujii's UBC recital push the audience towards an imaginative projection of what it must be like for the performer and other audience members to find meaning in a musical experience to which she herself cannot easily relate, but to the legitimacy of which she nonetheless bears witness. Such meanings may result in a variety of responses ranging from bodily movement in response to the music, to rapt attention signified by

corporeal stillness (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010; Leppert, 1991). Edith's way of defining *the educative* in Tsujii's recital acknowledges that aesthetic experiences are not locked away in a private, subjective realm (Cumming, 2000, p. 54). Nor, it must be emphasized, is the mere act of witnessing someone else's musical response educative in and of itself. Indeed, Edith defines *the educative* in Tsujii's recital by rejecting disability as an important part of the experience of his recital. In this regard, Edith's response stands in stark opposition to how *the educative* is defined within disability arts and culture. In the latter context, artistic practices educate to the extent that they inaugurate an open confrontation with dominant representations of disability as a negative aspect of lived experience to be ignored, cured, accommodated, rather than claimed as a valuable and richly complex part of lived experience (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, pp. 205–206; see also, Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004, p. 10).

Although Otis did not attend Tsujii's recital, I asked him to tell me about the stories he felt that Tsujii created during his performances in *A Fireside Chat with Nobuyuki Tsujii* (henceforth *Fireside Chat*) at St. John's College on March 8th, based on the possibility that his account of Tsujii's musical narratives might cast my core research questions in an unfamiliar, and productive light. The narrative dimensions of music has generated interest in music scholarship (Straus, 2011; Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010). Recent work on narrative in music from a psychology of music perspective, and on the narration of disability in Disability Studies in Music scholarship (Howe, 2010; Straus, 2006, 2008, & 2011), informed my question to Otis. More specifically, I wanted to examine Joseph Straus' (2011) claim that despite its non-conceptual meanings, music has a narrative capacity analogous to that of language, including the capacity to narrate "stories about disability"(p. 12) in the context of the reception of the *Fireside Chat* in which there was both language and music, as opposed to the recital which was a more strictly

musical encounter between Tsujii and his audience. Having earlier heard from Edith that she felt that Tsujii's role as an educator through music was a function of his ability to separate his disability from his music making, I wanted to find out how Otis might construe this relationship in his experiences of the *Fireside Chat* during which Tsujii's blindness came up for discussion in questions asked by a number of audience members.

Otis: It was quite a long time ago. When I closed my eyes and listened to Tsujii, I remembered images of my hometown. (Interview, February 3, 2014)

Otis described a sensation of peacefulness that came over him while listening to Tsujii's performances at the beginning and ending of the *Fireside Chat*, and explained that *not-seeing* but rather listening intently, his experiences of Tsujii performance brought back memories of his own life before he arrived in Vancouver (Interview, February 3rd, 2014). The images of his own life are conjured up through an introspective mode of listening, opening up a complex relationship between the outward world of lived experience (*dicents*), and the inner world of memory and sensation produced by musical experience (*rhemes*). Here we have a response to Tsujii's music making that initially seems entirely unrelated to the task of defining *the educative*. However, I would argue that the context of the *Fireside Chat* transforms Otis' response to Tsujii as signifying a possible educative experience, and therefore a *rheme* that shapes the educative in terms of a quality of feeling, rather than a really embodied (*dicent*) or codified (*argument*) signification. The memories of his home which Otis associated with Tsujii's playing were what he initially recalled when I asked him whether his experiences of music had been transformed in some possible way as a result of attending the *Fireside Chat*. Taking up these memories of his lived experience which he associated with Tsujii's playing, Otis then pointed towards a kind of self-affirmation through music, of what he described as the path ahead in his life. While this

definition of *the educative* does not correspond to those in the scholarly literature that informs my analysis, to the extent that Otis interpreted my question in this way, his own definition of *the educative* need not correspond to the features of education in the real world (*dicents*), but rather acquires meaning as a possible way of understanding the educative (*rhemes*), as I have argued. However, this is not to suggest that *the educative* can be defined merely according to subjective whim and caprice, and to endorse the notion that education happens simply when a performer or audience member claims that it does.

Instead, by connecting the pianist's performances at the *Fireside Chat Tsujii* to memories of his past life, Otis draws our attention to three possible way of understanding the educative gap between Tsujii and himself: first, to the extent that such an apparently personal response does not fit clearly with Tsujii's own educative aim of cultivating greater appreciation for Western art music, it is possible, but not guaranteed, that learning could happen by means of this gap, if subsequent reflection on the part of Otis were to propel him towards articulating with greater precision why it is he feels this link between musical sound and personal memories—what ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2008) characterizes as "internal context" (p. 7)—makes sense. Second, for Peirce, interpretation of signs, rather than the mere sensory and kinesthetic experience of signs, is the necessary first step in learning from signs. And, third, as I noted in Chapter 2, the capacity of music to tell stories about human experience has been acknowledged by scholars in the various sub-fields of music studies, including, recently Music and Disability Studies (Straus, 2011, p. 12).

While scholars of music and disability do not link the narration of disability to analysis of the educative capacities of music, Otis's response nonetheless inhabits a complex space in between recognized modes of musical experience (in relation to music and narrative), on the one

hand, and more unfamiliar practices of learning through music. In this sense, Otis' response might compel a reimagining of dominant representations of what it is that makes musical performance, as a dimension of culture, educationally valuable (Sandlin, 2010, p. 1; see also, Nettl, 2005, p. 245). If Tsujii and Otis were to encounter each other in the future and converse about their respective life experiences, and were to discuss their respective definitions of the role of musical performance in providing a space in which to reflect on lived experience, then there is the possibility for *the educative* to transform into a more coherent relational pedagogy, in which Tsujii and Audience Member come to understand their relationship to each other, as musician and audience, in new ways, and to reposition themselves in the world accordingly (Gershon, 2010, p. 628; see also, Ellsworth, 2005).

I would like now to return to the written statement that Otis sent to me approximately two weeks after our second interview, in which he explained in more detail what he learned from listening to Tsujii's performances at the Fireside Chat:

Nobuyuki's performance also reminded me that we should focus on the 'music' *per se* [itself] when listening to it. Listening to the music with eyes closed helps me to appreciate the music more in depth, by feeling the message and the conception of the music. The cadence and conception of a person's music are able to deliver his/her values. What I heard from his performance is nothing but 'spirit.' I learned that musicians use music to express their spirit; just as writers use words to express their spirit. (Personal communication, para. 2, March 30, 2014)

Although Otis identifies himself as a non-musician, the statement I have quoted above highlights a fundamental tension between scholarly approaches to the study of music that

demand a focus on the music itself, and more recent approaches often grouped together under the rubric "The New Musicology" which situate music in relation to gender, race, disability, class, and sexuality. This body of scholarship starts from the premise that music is not simply a set of autonomous artistic and cultural practices, but necessarily reflects historical prejudices, and systems of oppression and exclusion (Agawu, 1996; McClary, 1990 & 2002; Shepherd, 1991b; Taruskin, 1995). I will argue that future research in Education on the role of musicians with disabilities as intellectuals, will need to take these scholarly debates into account, and, moreover, to consider the extent to which audiences for Western art music unconsciously absorb ideas about the autonomy and transcendence of music, even if they do not identify themselves as musicians, or as part of the cultural system of Western art music, more generally.

5.5 Ideas as *Rhemes*, *Dicents*, *Arguments*: (Un)conventional Interpretants Interpreted

Let us now enter the realm of cognitive signs, analyzing the multiple ways that Tsujii and his audience defined his 2013 UBC recital as educative. I first alluded to the following interview excerpt (in paraphrased form) in an earlier section of this chapter. I quote it here in full now, in order to establish an entry point into the sorts of beliefs about music's value and function as an art form, its place in education, and its role in society more broadly that shape encounters between musicians and their audiences:

Theodor: I didn't actually know that there were famous pianists with disabilities, for example, being blind, and I wanted to know more about this. (Interview, November 30, 2013)

There is resonance here between Theodor's observation and Peirce's notion of learning through surprise, a pedagogy that occurs when experience presents the mind with unanticipated circumstances: surprise produces *dicents*, since the unanticipated has to be embodied in a real

experience of some sort, rather than merely summoned up in the imagination (Cumming, 2000; Meyer, 1956; Peirce, 1903/1997). Theodor connects his interest in attending Tsujii's recital to his initial *surprise* that pianists with disabilities have achieved widespread recognition, forming the basis for a possible re-examination of whatever prior beliefs he had about musicians in general, and musicians with disabilities in particular. As subsequent excerpts from my interview with Theodor show, the extent to which he actually learned something new, revising his prior beliefs into a new semiotic system (*arguments*), as a result of attending Tsujii's recital is much harder to ascertain:

Honisch: Did you have any questions or doubts about how disabled musicians can function?

Theodor: Not doubts, but questions, in the sense of: how do blind musicians practice? How do they learn a piece of music, for example, if they can't see the sheet music?
(Interview, November 30, 2013)

As a counterpoint to Theodor's questions about *blind pianists*, let us consider a statement by Tsujii on the subject of ideal bodily and social comportment as a *blind pianist*: "A blind pianist should just enjoy playing the piano and not think of oneself [sic] as being blind" (Tsujii, quoted in Fleming, 2010, para. 10). Worthy of attention is the grammatical slip in the passage above from an abstract *rheme* signifying a possible *blind pianist* to an embodied *dicent* which signifies an actual pianist, possibly Tsujii, through the reference to *oneself*. As I noted in Chapter 4 Tsujii does not speak English fluently and therefore has an interpreter present for his interviews with the media. This was also the case for both of my interviews with him. In the

excerpt quoted above from John Fleming's (2010) article, the translator is not named, but Fleming mentions that he interviewed Tsujii by telephone through a translator (para. 6). As a result, it is not certain whether the grammatical slippage is by Tsujii or by his translator. This uncertainty necessitates a certain guardedness in drawing any firm conclusions about what the apparent shift in focus from generality to a more personal tone signifies about Tsujii's own relationship to the semiotic category *blind pianist*. It is nonetheless useful to reflect on the implications of this slippage for understanding the complexity of Tsujii's location within dominant representations of *blind pianists* and *pianists*.

As a general category of sign that relates to its object in such a way as to produce interpretants as *arguments*, what it means to be a part of the dominant representation of *blind pianists* is necessarily shaped by conventions and rules determining what it means to be a *pianist* who makes music without seeing notated music, the keyboard, and other musicians, rather than by the actuality, that is the sensory, physical, and cognitive experiences of making music as a *blind pianist*. Simultaneously, the slippage from the general category *blind pianists* to an individual *blind pianist* highlights the possibility for resistance against normative definitions of disability. An awareness of Tsujii's statement prior to one of his performances might provide a foothold as a result of which the performance can become educative, provided there is corresponding emphasis given to Sandlin's (2010) definition of education as an interplay between normative and counter normative meanings (p. 1). Although Tsujii fits the conventionally agreed upon general category of *blind pianists* in that he, too, cannot read music visually, navigate the keyboard by seeing it, and communicate with other musicians through sight, Tsujii does not think of himself as a *blind pianist* and consistently reminds his audiences that he does not accept his representation in this fashion. In this way he is reminding his audience

that the reality of actually being a *pianist* for him is defined by a lack of correspondence between *blind pianists* as a general category and an individual embodied *blind pianist* such as himself.

In this statement, Tsujii starts off by making a general recommendation that *blind pianists* should concentrate on the pleasure that music affords, subsequently shifting to a more ambiguous register in which *oneself* signifies both the unspecified *blind pianist* in the first part of the statement, while also possibly referring to Tsujii himself. An analysis of the multiple contextual factors such as the presence of a translator for this particular interview, and what Tsujii actually meant to say might show my own interpretation to be erroneous (and, to be sure, I did not ask Tsujii specifically about the passage quoted above). To the extent that any of his audience members might read this passage without having the chance to speak with him, however, the potential for this statement to be read in ways that go beyond his intended meaning creates yet another gap between Tsujii's self-representation and his reception. To put it differently, the potential for *misinterpretation* must be taken into account when exploring what a musician such as Tsujii aims to teach (an appreciation for a particular musical tradition) and what audiences are or are not prepared to learn (about musicians with disabilities, as in the case of Theodor, or about the capacity of music to narrate human experience, as in the case of Otis (Biesta, 2004; see also, Barenboim, 2009; Jankélévitch & Abbate, 2003).

As noted earlier, in our first interview, Tsujii briefly mentioned a conversation he had with Van Cliburn shortly before the latter's death in February 2013. During our follow up interview, I asked Tsujii to tell me more of what he remembered about his conversation with Van Cliburn, since he mentioned that his mentor's passing had a profound emotional impact on him (Interview, January 27, 2014). As recalled by Tsujii, Van Cliburn took note of the emergence of technologies which mediate musical experience, and create an unprecedented level of access to

musical performances. Subsequently, however, Cliburn encouraged Tsujii to prioritize live performance over recordings as a singular opportunity for audiences to learn to appreciate Western art music:

Tsujii (via Nick Asano): Mr. Cliburn said that the masterpieces of classical music have real value only in the concert hall. The audience has to completely concentrate on the music. Mr. Cliburn said it is crucial for classical music to survive, to bring audiences to the concert hall for live performances. (Interview, April 11, 2014)

It is necessary to understand the interpretive work that audiences have to perform in order to be receptive to Tsujii's goals as a pianist who aims to teach through the medium of musical performance. Furthermore, our analysis must attend to the complex relationships between the background knowledge audiences would need to have in order to develop increased appreciation for Western art music, on the one hand, and, on the other, the larger historical discourses which shape Van Cliburn's belief in the educational and cultural value of Western art music. Although Cliburn himself became an iconic figure in both the United States and in Russia after he won the inaugural *International Tchaikovsky Competition* in Moscow in 1958. In his interviews and other public appearances, he has emphasized the place of music, and the role of musicians in overcoming cultural difference through the transcendent power of music ("Van Cliburn," n.d.; see also, Horowitz, 1990). To begin understanding how such a discourse might complicate Tsujii's own acknowledgement of Cliburn's ideas on his own way of thinking about music, it is necessary to step back into the thematic space of the previous chapter, namely the differing interpretants to which the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* give rise. With these interpretants in mind, let us consider how the background knowledge of audiences might

complicate the educative possibility that, as a result of his performances, there might be heightened public interest in Western art music. To explore this tension more closely, I revisit my first conversation with Edith which not only helps to explicate the relationship between the analytical focus of Chapter 4 and that of the present chapter, but which also fills in the larger background for Edith's sensibilities in defining *the educative* as profoundly rooted in visual interaction. For Edith, the visible presence of disability, and by extension, of musicians with disabilities is not a matter of discomfiture, at least not initially:

Honisch: What sorts of background assumptions did you have about disabled musicians, in general, and about Nobuyuki Tsujii in particular prior to attending his solo recital?

Edith: If I hadn't known about it [disability] before coming to Canada, I think I would have been more shocked, more impressed, more uncertain, not really knowing what it would be like. But because when I moved here, because I have very close friends who are disabled—(Interview, December 10, 2013)

At this point in her response, Edith's voice trailed off momentarily, and then she mentioned a friend of hers who is blind. Explaining that this friendship, in particular, has transformed her understanding of bodily difference, Edith concluded that "I didn't expect him [Tsujii] to be better or worse just because he's blind" (Interview, December 10, 2013). Then, charting a different course, she linked my question concerning her prior assumptions about disabled people and disabled musicians to the ongoing need for critical reflection on difference, broadly construed. Pursuing this line of thought in a more confident tone, Edith spoke of her continued desire to "keep on learning and understanding the stereotypes I have and the barriers

that need to be broken down" after attending Tsujii's recital (Interview, December 10, 2013). Her observations simultaneously uphold Tsujii's emphasis on being a *pianist* rather than a *blind* pianist, while contradicting his public and oft-quoted belief in the transcendence of music. Fine-tuning her response still further, Edith made the intriguing suggestion that Tsujii's visible presence on stage during his UBC recital achieved a kind of continuity between music and the body, one which leaves a lasting impression upon his audiences. In keeping with her responses to my questions thus far, she continually referred back to her own perceived distance from the meanings of musical experience:

Because I don't feel music I'm always impressed when I see people feel music. You could see this certain sense of oneness in himself. It's almost like when you paint or draw, the brush—it's almost like the piano becomes an extension of you in a certain sense.

(Interview, December 10, 2013)

The embodied knowledge referenced in the above interview excerpt is not independent of rules and conventions about proper, aesthetically effective use of the body in artistic and musical activity. It was nonetheless possible for Edith, who is not disabled herself, to identify what she described as a *sense of oneness* between Tsujii and his instrument. She invokes the metaphor of a musical instrument, as similar to other artistic tools in its creation of an "extension" with the body of the artist and musician (Interview, December 10, 2013). At the same time, her way of framing this dimension of Tsujii's UBC recital is consistent with the idea that aesthetic experience, and the evaluations to which it gives rise are a mutually transformative, and therefore educative process. Aesthetic appraisal especially forces us to encounter the object at a level where we allow ourselves to be moved and shaped by it (Burrell, 1968, pp. 129–130). Following

Burrell's (1968) discussion of the openness to self-transformation involved in aesthetic encounters, I would argue that if we search for *the educative* simultaneously in the possible gaps between Tsujii and his audiences (following Biesta, 2004), and in the possibilities for self-formation that music affords, then we can find a way to situate Edith's seemingly distant visual engagement with musical performance productively within a relational gap between musician and audience, and to consider how education can and cannot take place in such a gap between a visual (Edith) and aural (Tsujii) response to musical performance.

To the extent that Edith was open to being moved and shaped by Tsujii's performances through visual engagement, her responses cumulatively offer a version of *the educative* in musical performance that can be understood as taking place in a relational gap between Tsujii's desire that his audiences should always concentrate on the music he performs, and her own efforts to look at what was happening during his recital: watching his hands, and observing his onstage demeanor, and finding parallels between dimensions of musical experience with which she feels little affinity, and those of the visual arts with which she strongly identifies. Going further, I would suggest that it is precisely because of the gap, and even outright discord between how Edith separates Tsujii's disability from her experience of his UBC recital, and the insistence in disability arts and culture that *the educative* is achieved through transformation of such assumptions about disability (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004) that Tsujii's performance can be the site of future—if not present—educative possibilities. From possibility (*rhemes*) further reflection, and sustained conversation will bring the *educative possibilities* to the level of actuality (*dicents*) and, given adequate time for such possibilities to solidify into conventions and rules, such transformation can translate educative possibilities into a system of signs or *arguments*.

Edith is impressed by a sense of continuity between artists and the materials and instruments through which they create art. There is a sense in which such claims are part of a *lingua franca* for creative people in the visual and sonic arts. Yet, to the extent that disability has so often been taken to represent "limit without possibility" (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 82), it is necessary to reconsider my previous analysis of Edith's response as upholding the idea of *the educative* in art and music as a process of transformation, and instead to locate her observation as a disordering of normative common sense. Read as a disruption, her response shows how the fundamental continuity between the musician's body and instrument unfolds in ways that defy containment within normalized sensory and corporeal systems of meaning (Garland-Thomson, 2002; Titchkosky, 2012).

Anxious questions about how a blind pianist is able to function *despite not being able to see* seem less inevitable, less a matter of common or "uncommon sense" (Michalko, 2002) and more like the disabling consequence of a world in which senses are placed in a hierarchy that excludes those with different eyes and ears from the human community (Garland Thompson, 2005; Straus, 2011). I was struck by how closely Edith's observation that musical instruments and artistic tools become extensions of artists and musicians parallels a statement attributed to Tsujii in the 2013 *Guardian* article by Ivan Hewett discussed earlier. As I explained previously, Tsujii did not expand on the statement attributed to him in the article's title, namely that "the piano is an extension of my own body so I know where everything is." In pursuing Edith's own similar observation, I left my interjection completely open, in order to see to what extent she might (not) elaborate on how she perceived Tsujii's bodily relationship to his instrument. I did so by merely noting that I had read an article in 2013 that made a similar point. Although Edith had not read that article (or anything else about Tsujii prior to attending his recital) she explained

I think he shows, or exhibits that very well. I don't get music, I don't know music, I don't understand music, I don't know what that experience would be like for someone who had just heard it. If I had to close my eyes and just listen I don't know if it is bad. I can't tell the difference. (Interview, December 10th, 2013)

Edith differs noticeably in her visual engagement from the primarily aural engagement of Rinaldo who, as I noted earlier, closes his eyes and "just listens" when he attends a concert, a reception practice which he explains on the grounds that he doesn't need to see the musician on stage in order to become fully immersed in the music (personal communication, December 2, 2013).

Dana Gooley's (2004) study of nineteenth century performance and reception in connection with the pianist and composer Franz Liszt situates this discomfort with the sight of musical performance historically, and argues that it is a consequence of the epistemological assumptions of "idealist aesthetics" according to which music can be known and understood through hearing alone. Within such an approach "the visual is inherently a compromise of sound" (Gooley, 2004, p. 11). I return to this matter in Chapter 6 explaining some of the methodological constraints and unrealized opportunities for attempting to recover the sensory experiences of musicians and their audiences in live performance.

Rinaldo's own listening practices are consistent with those of several jurors at the 2009 Cliburn competition for whom telling the difference between a good and bad performance—in contrast to Edith who describes herself as "not musical"—depends primarily on the ability to hear (however see Tsay, 2013, discussed in Chapter 2, for empirical research that contradicts these pervasive assumptions among musicians). Despite his initial emphasis on musical sound,

Rinaldo talked about Tsujii's onstage comportment, specifically in relation to what he felt was Tsujii's clear sense of happiness in being on stage (Interview, December 2, 2013). Where Rinaldo and Edith find a commonality in their aural and visual experiences of Tsujii's UBC recital is at the juncture of a deeply focused attention on music instead of on disability. Edith vigorously claims that *the educative* dimensions of Tsujii's UBC recital are to be found in the negation of bodily difference, as a result of which his audiences can understand his UBC recital as part of the *lingua franca* of musical performance, rather than as a singular event whose educative capacity depends on its power to stimulate critical reflection on disability and to effect transformation in understand of bodily difference (Interview, December 10th, 2013). Going further, she defined Tsujii as *educator*, and his recital as *educative* in the following way:

Edith: I felt the way he communicated was so heartfelt and genuine. You could see from his smile that he was enjoying looking at the audience and bowing as we clapped. He responded to the audience as though to say 'I appreciate that you're enjoying the music.' That in itself was a teaching experience: he made it all about music as well about his own experiences when he dedicated that one piece to victims of the tsunami. That was the most important point all along. He really helped the audience to realize it's not about him, it's about music. I think his role as an educator came out more so by leading us towards focusing on his performance and not on his blindness. He wasn't going to play music that showed how sad blindness is. How he responded was detached from the focus on him being blind even though he obviously embodies that role. Art focuses a lot on the person. My best pieces are made when I draw back on memories of art from my point of view, and that's what experience is. It is what we know best, and art involves translating that experience onto canvas, or through the piano. And it can be a painful one. I think he does

that beautifully, and in a smart way. The whole process could very well have been about him being full of tears. (Interview, December 10, 2013)

Since Edith had not heard of Tsujii prior to attending his UBC recital there is no larger musical context in which to place her observations. By way of comparison for present purposes, here is what Rinaldo had to say when I asked him during our follow-up interview about what he thought Tsujii might teach his audiences through musical performance. He responded by making a tentative connection between Tsujii's recital, which he cast in the familiar language of overcoming disability (Straus, 2006 & 2011; see also, Howe, 2010), and his own scholarly research as a medical researcher:

Honisch: What do you think Nobuyuki Tsujii might teach people through what he does as a performer?

Rinaldo: I think this is an example of surpassing limitations. (Interview, March 12, 2014)

At this point, I interjected, in order to ask him how he defines "limitation." It was here, more precisely, that he formulated his analogy between musical performance (Tsujii), and musical composition (Beethoven), in relation to his own scholarly research:

When I was working on my thesis, my supervisor asked me how my work was going.

And I told him, 'I have only a few data for my research. My supervisor asked 'Will this be a problem for you?' and I said, 'No, if Beethoven could write the Fifth symphony with

only four notes, actually only two notes,³⁶ then with these few data I can develop something more. That's what I mean by surpassing limitations. For me this performance by Nobuyuki Tsujii was a turning point in my life. For Nobuyuki, who is so young, and blind—so, anyone can surpass anything.

Honisch: So Tsujii's recital was a turning point in your life for this reason?

Rinaldo: No, not because of that, it was just because of the excellence of the performance, because of this. When I watched the documentary—there are a lot of blind pianists, for example, Ray Charles and Stevie Wonder—but they are not so amazing as it was with Nobuyuki Tsujii. (Interview, March 12, 2014)

My request for clarification as to how Rinaldo defines "limitations" and what it means, to him, to surpass limitations, steered our conversation away from the narrower question of how he experienced the educative possibilities of Tsujii's performance. However, this time I took the opposite tack, by asking what he felt he might have learned from Tsujii's UBC recital, rather than asking, more generally, what Tsujii might teach through his performances. Staying with the topic of limitations in his initial response, Rinaldo nonetheless went into greater depth this time, explaining:

Rinaldo: I learned how to surpass my limitations. Not only my personal limitations but also the limitations of analysis of my research data. This is a kind of surpassing that can be applied in every area of life, in your personal life is one example.

³⁶ This is a reference to the famous opening motif of Beethoven's Fifth symphony: three short notes followed by a longer note.

Honisch: If I understand you correctly it seems as though the technical and musical elements of Tsujii's performance open up onto larger processes of learning?

Rinaldo: There is a kind of sensibility, a kind of feeling that is not intellectual, maybe you don't know how to feel but you feel, and this can help you learn. (Interview, March 12, 2014)

However, when I asked him to describe in greater detail this "sensibility," this non-intellectual sense that he learned how to surpass limitations through Tsujii's recital Rinaldo said that he was unable to do so: "I told you I don't explain it, I just feel."(Interview, March 12, 2014)

From a Disability Studies perspective, the fundamental paradox in Rinaldo's definition of the educative in Tsujii's recital is that, while he insisted in our first interview (December 2, 2014) that Tsujii's blindness is irrelevant, he nevertheless defines Tsujii's educative interventions through musical performance in the familiar language of overcoming disability (Titchkosky, 2012; see also, Straus, 2011). At the same time, while he initially posited a relationship between Tsujii's overcoming limitations in the form of disability and his own overcoming of limitations in the form of scant research data (Interview, March 12, 2014), when I pressed him on the definitional questions related to his understanding of what limitations mean, his analogy broke down. Instead, like Tsujii, and Edith, he acknowledges the limits of conceptual language to articulate what, on his view, can only be felt (*rhemes*), not explained (*arguments*).

Rinaldo's description of his changed sensibility before and after Tsujii's recital in the interview excerpt quoted below show the continuity between the three semiotic levels of Affect (*rhemes*), Embodiment (*dicents*), and Cognition (*arguments*):

Honisch: You observed that you are uncomfortable with the term "disability," that you prefer the term "limitations." Can you explain how you distinguish between the terms "disability" and "limitations?"

Rinaldo: The term "disability," the word "disability" is not compassionate, it is a kind of pity. Look at this poor guy [Tsuji], how lucky he is that even being blind, he can play the piano this way. He has just a "limitation," the same limitation I have, that I cannot learn how to play the piano. I can never be a runner, a marathon runner. However much I train I never will be a marathon runner. I think the word "disability" is—I don't know how to say in English—diminish [sic] that he is a very talented man and very good musician.
(Interview, March 12, 2014)

In our first conversation, Rinaldo told me that he could summarize his feelings during Tsuji's UBC recital with a single word "peace" (Interview, December 2, 2013). I asked him to elaborate on this statement during our follow-up interview, and, more specifically, to discuss the extent to which this feeling of peace remained in his memories of Tsuji's recital:

Rinaldo: When I left the concert I was a better human being, more able to handle interactions with other people regardless of ability or disability. This is what the concert brought to me. (Interview, March 12, 2014)

There is a strong ethical dimension to how Rinaldo experienced Tsuji's performance, making him more aware of the interdependence of human communities in the concert hall and beyond. Despite, or perhaps because of the distance between Rinaldo's discussion of his sense of

personal transformation, and Tsujii's stated goals as a musician, it is worth lingering over the implications of Rinaldo's statement. I hasten to add that the larger context for Rinaldo's identification of an ethical component to Tsujii's recital involved disability rather than the educative dimensions of Tsujii's performance, which as noted earlier, Rinaldo framed in relation to learning how to surpass limitations. Nevertheless, historically, music's educative capacities have been tied frequently to ethical frameworks. In particular, the idea that music can transform people's character for the better has a long history in Western thought (Higgins, 2012; Warren, 2014). At the same time, however, Rinaldo did not situate his own account of a transformation in his ethical sensibilities within longstanding philosophical debates about this purported capacity of music. It is advisable, therefore, to locate Rinaldo's understanding of ethical transformation through music in the realm of Affect. As Alexander Rozin, Paul Rozin, and Emily Golberg (2004) explain,

It is the memory of musical experience that determines whether we choose to repeat the experience in the future, whether we recommend it to others, and how we evaluate the past quality of our musical lives. Hence, a study of remembered affect and how it derives from moment-to-moment affect is a critical component of an overall understanding of musical affect. (p. 16)

5.6 Emotions as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (Un)Affecting Interpretants

Interpreted

Walter Gershon (2010) includes affective responses to music as part of what it means for a given musical experience to teach audiences (p. 628; see also, Ellsworth, 2005, p. 1). This section explores how well his broad definition of *the educative* in music can help us to

understand how emotional signs might be identified as contributing to the educative possibilities and limitations of Tsujii's UBC recital. It will be necessary to understand the degree to which the emotional signs that Tsujii and his audience conjure up can be interpreted in ways that Peirce associates with learning *through* signs (CP 2.270, & 7.536; see also, Cumming, 2000). For example, Edith describes being moved by the sight of Tsujii deeply immersed in the act of making music:

I love watching people, how they move to music to music, it's clear that they feel it. I'm absolutely numb to it. I always considered music as something not part of who I can be, or who I am. (Interview, December 10, 2013)

In our follow-up conversation several months later, excerpts from which I have discussed in previous sections of this chapter, Edith clarified this statement about the absence of music in her life:

I think—music, in a sense—it's not that it isn't important to me, it's more that no one ever pursued it in the culture where I was, in the home where I was. These things become inherited in a sense. I don't know how to dance, I can't feel rhythm. However, I have to say that when I'm painting or drawing or thinking—I need music in many ways. But to me, what makes the music are the lyrics. If the lyrics hit home at a particular stage—I guess I would look at music in a different sense, I would look at the verbal part of it as opposed to the musical part of it. (Interview, March 18, 2014)

This kinaesthetic representation of music as something foreign to the self, as a communicative practice that largely falls outside her subjective sense of who she is (*"I love watching*

people...how they move to music...it's clear that they feel it...I'm absolutely numb to it...") sharply differentiates multiple levels of experience, and therefore defies containment within the narrower topic of "images" delimited by the subheading of this section. Precisely because of this complex relationship, Edith's self-described lack of musicality considered in relation to her vicarious enjoyment of their visible bodily responses to music presents intriguing possibilities for further analysis. Furthermore, the importance of texted music (music with lyrics) in her work as an artist, and in moments of introspection provides the larger context for her explanation during our first interview that her primary focus during Tsujii's recital was on observing the movements of his hands and body.

In the interview excerpt quoted above, Edith points towards a semiosis that helps us to understand the limits of music's power to educate: as countervailing semiotic forces to those that ground my analysis, namely, *Affect*, *Embodiment*, and *Cognition*, Edith produces what initially seem to be their polar opposites: unaffecting (Firstness), disembodied (Secondness), and cognitive (Thirdness). She loves *seeing* people absorbed in music, but cannot *hear* and thus *feel* musical rhythm in the ways she perceives other people can. I would argue that her response shows that the interplay of visual, aural, and kinesthetic signs in how she experienced Tsujii's recital, brings into focus the *limits* of music's educative capacity because her own distanced relationship to music, remains intact. In contrast, however, to the extent that she expresses the need to go on understanding the relationship between disability and artistic expression after Tsujii's recital, I would argue that Edith's response simultaneously highlights the educative *possibilities* of Tsujii's role as a musician with a disability, thereby departing from, and creating a gap between how Tsujii himself wants his role to be defined (as a conduit between composer and the public, and as an advocate for Western art music) and how individual audience members

such as herself respond and are left unchanged. In other words, the educative possibilities and limits of musical performance can sometimes be opened up simultaneously by a single audience member in responding to a musical performance.

In order to understand the educative possibilities and limits of musical performance from the performer's vantage point, I asked Tsujii to compare and contrast "playing for audiences in educational settings such as schools and universities and for a wider public in other types of performance venues such as concert halls." In response, the pianist noted that although the acoustics of performance venues are "of course, different" he does not separate educational from cultural venues in the manner suggested by my question: his goal as a musician remains constant. There is no difference, from his perspective, between constituting a public through musical performance, and making music for a public.

I always want my audience—whoever that is or wherever that is—I just want them to really enjoy the music. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

Tsujii's emphasis on musical performance as primarily an activity through which he hopes to bring pleasure to his audiences corresponds to musicological discussions of musical performance as, above all, "expressive and communicative" (Taruskin, 1995, p. 23). Because of this emphasis on communication in the encounter between musicians and audiences, it will be helpful to consider similar kinds of resistance to the broader educational goals of bringing Tsujii to UBC in the first place, and of creating a series of events to coincide with his visit.

During my first interview with Ulrich, who was involved from an early stage in the planning of the *Beyond the Screen* series I wondered what opportunities and challenges he might have felt Tsujii's visit might present for the university community. Ulrich is not himself a

musician, but is familiar with key aspects of the history of Western art music. During our conversations, Ulrich drew on this knowledge to trace connections between the history of composition, performance, and reception, and the politics of inclusion based on race, gender, and disability, in particular, within Western art music. Within this context, his observations on the significance of Tsujii's presence at UBC open up a range of considerations that extend beyond the recital itself:

Ulrich: The first thing I was thinking when the idea came up to do this was that it was both an opportunity for the university to bring someone who's obviously very interesting and of interest to many people—without even going into why it was interesting, there was already a great deal of interest. But then the second thing I was thinking was that the interest in itself was something interesting. That we could explore the issues of why this was either remarkable or unremarkable that he was blind and why people thought it was interesting. And as we thought about that more, that that was, in fact, what the academic or scholarly purpose of bringing him was. That beyond hearing him and beyond the fact that there was going to be a lot of people interested in this event, and in hearing him live, that we could do other activities in terms of raising issues about merit, what is it to be a great pianist and why— what does sight have to do with that, or a lack of sight? But also a sense of overcoming and how disability often generates narratives of overcoming and a kind of sense of, I can almost say, accomplishment on the part of the individual. But then what person at the top of a field isn't hard-working and accomplished? Why is there a special narrative of overcoming, and where does that come from, what—just exploring that. That's obviously one of the reasons he was of interest. But not only that. Things about, in certain circles it would be things like color blindness, not looking at disability,

but judging people by the content of what it is you are trying to measure. Those were all things I thought could be done. And then as we began organizing, it became more concrete. (Interview, Ulrich, April 10, 2015)

In response to my follow up question about the more specific educative implications of Tsujii's recital for the UBC community, Ulrich's response is rich in detail and thus is worth quoting at length:

Ulrich: I remember thinking— there was this particular idea that in limiting the number of people who could come see him despite this wide interest— that we probably could have sold out the Chan Center [*the Chan Shun Center for the Performing Arts on campus*] and had a thousand people. Instead we had two hundred people, mostly students, therefore making it impossible for a lot of the people who wanted to see him. And we received some not so vague criticism for doing it that way. It's interesting, as I thought about that and what it is to have a concert performance and—I'm not saying that all the people who went to see him went for the right reasons. But because it was on campus it was a limited audience. A lot of them were students, some of whom were aware of what we were trying to do in terms of the larger series [*the Beyond the Screen series*]. I think in that sense it was a more nuanced, more self-conscious and reflective audience that was watching and listening to him that night than perhaps his other performances. I'm not saying therefore it's better, but the choice to make it that way, the university context, to put it on, to not have cost recovery, I think all of those came in to the takeaway: that this was a particularly special kind of performance, it was interesting because of who the audience, was, not just who the performer was. And so that's another way to think about

it. Who was in the audience? What did they already know and what brought them to that performance, what kinds of thoughts and ideas and feelings did they have about what was going on? That was an educative and pedagogical moment in and of itself, versus a 'consumption of music' performance that was basically organized to just be a concert. That's another way I thought about it, that it wasn't just about the concert, it was a very interesting way of framing the audience, what they knew and what they questioned and thought about. (Ulrich, Interview, April 10, 2014)

It is instructive to contrast Ulrich's reflections on the subjectivities of the UBC audience with Tsujii's own more ambiguous way of relating audiences in general to a particular audience. On the one hand, Tsujii wants his audiences to participate in a singular experience through live performance, a rarified event which provides the kind of emotional immediacy that recorded music lacks. Through this distinction between recorded and performed music Tsujii becomes part of a community in the Peircean sense, united by a shared set of values, and a common interpretive framework in which the individual and the collective are mutually dependent (Cumming, 2000; Goble, 2010). For Tsujii, his past, present and future as a pianist depend on the community of musicians, journalists, and audiences developing an interest in what he does musically, and through this burgeoning interest, to populate the ranks of people interested in the piano repertoire of this tradition.

On the other hand, Tsujii is not especially concerned with who a given audience is, and how one audience may differ from another: he just wants them to enjoy the music. In contrast to Tsujii, however, Ulrich offers a very different account of what distinguished the UBC recital from "just another concert" that Tsujii might perform. He explains that the university context is

crucial to understanding its educative capacities. Although he didn't frame his response in relation to contemporary philosophy of education, it is worth noting that Ulrich emphasizes the relation between performer and audience in Tsujii's recital. For Ulrich, *the educative* and *the pedagogical* are inseparable from the relationships that emerged within the particular setting of the performance itself: the recital hall of a university music school populated by an audience whose background of lived experience, including whatever they knew of Tsujii's shared gold medal at the 2009 Cliburn competition, and his subsequent critical and popular reception were directly relevant to shaping whatever educative possibilities manifested during the performance.

Liam, an amateur jazz pianist who also has substantial knowledge of the history of Western art music, was also involved in the planning of the *Beyond the Screen* series. Although by his own admission, he played a less active role, Liam emphasized how the educational aims behind this type of series can ultimately fail to answer its guiding questions. For Liam, the *Beyond the Screen* series as a whole ultimately left unresolved the fundamental tension that Tsujii has repeatedly invoked, namely the difference between being a *pianist* and a *blind pianist*.

I asked Liam to what extent his own notions of learning music were challenged by seeing and hearing Tsujii perform, and in particular, how the question that Tsujii is frequently asked of how a blind musician learns music, figured in his own reactions to Tsujii's recital. Liam suggested that the question to ask is not how a blind musician learns music but rather "how does a blind person become a musician in a world that's not configured around his particular situation or condition?" (Liam, Interview April 10, 2014).³⁷ I have quoted the following interview excerpt at length because it defines the limits of the present study with particular clarity. In the end, the

³⁷ Because of their schedule constraints, I conducted my first interview with Ulrich on the morning of April 10, and with Liam later that afternoon.

series of events did not, for this audience member, bring a heightened sense of what it is to be a *blind pianist*, nor yet, what the supposed differences between *blind* and *sighted pianists* mean in actual practice:

Liam: It's so hard, maybe because of the way my time in the recital happened. The whole event was overdetermined partly because we framed it around these sorts of things. It's hard, it seems disingenuous for us to frame the event for months as 'He's a blind pianist' and then 'Forget that he's a blind pianist when you actually walk into the recital hall.' I don't think that was ever going to happen. I don't know the motivations of everyone who went. Some people went because he's a media superstar. In those cases I'm assuming you're going because you know who he is. I don't bracket that going in. But that said you're not only thinking about it. It's boring to think about that question for two hours, sitting there watching the recital. It seems to me that—I'm not learned enough with that kind of advanced music to make really heads or tails in that way of what he's actually doing. For me it's astounding that anyone acquires that kind of technique. I mean, I don't have that kind of technique. I've done enough piano lessons to sort of know what you need to get there but I'm assuming that anyone who acquires that kind of ability and talent, [*inaudible*] in lots of ways. But it's also interesting for me 'How often do you practice?' I think someone asked him [at the *Fireside Chat*]. I don't know if I had a good way of reconciling or integrating that with the conversation about his disability. I don't think it came together for me in a coherent way. *Yes, Tsujii's a blind pianist but what does that mean? I don't know.* (Liam, Interview, April 10th, 2014; emphasis added)

Let us revisit the interview discussed in Chapter 4, *Nobuyuki Tsujii—The modest master*(n.d.), since it opens up additional entry points leading to the thematic core of the present chapter. Especially noteworthy, in this regard, is a register of discourse which we have already discussed as a recurring feature of Tsujii's public statements about what it means for him to be a *pianist*:

On stage, I always try to devote myself to the music, and to the composer. I try to enjoy the beauty and the wonder of these masterpieces, and wish... the audience...would share the joy of experiencing [the] music.

At the same time, I can hear and sense the reaction of the audience. If I sense positive sign[s]... that audience is concentrating [on] the music and sharing it with me, [this] gives me energy (para. 4–5).

The idea that pleasurable delight demotes music from a high intellectual standing is traced by Taruskin (2008) to the eighteenth century, and to the writings of Immanuel Kant in particular, an historical context absent from Gershon's (2010) brief discussion of Western art music. Taruskin (2008) sympathizes with the efforts of music educators and musicians to assign a singular transcendent appeal to art music, writing that "one can understand an impulse to try to reclaim for music the status thus denied it by downgrading its sensuous appeal and relegating that aspect to the low category of entertainment" (p. 341). In contrast to Gershon (2010), however, who simply collapses public intellectualism and public entertainment, Taruskin (2008) carefully distinguishes among different kinds of pleasure, and argues that the only question worth asking is what *kind* of pleasures are afforded by music (p. 341).

Leaving aside the different ways of framing the entertainment/education binary in music that the above synopsis reveals, Tsujii's concern with his audiences enjoying themselves through his performances is not to be simply derided as lesser in educative status to the work of a musician whose mission to teach through performance is voiced with greater clarity, or clothed in the garb of education (Gershon, 2010, p. 633), or, for that matter, in ethical aims (Higgins, 2012).

Tsujii's response to my question about how he conceives of his educative role is consistent with a basic assumption in Western art music: the performer's first duty is to delight rather than instruct, and although "instruction can be delightful," the different aims of scholarship and performance should not be conflated (Taruskin, 1995, p. 30). Further complicating the landscape of music as public intellectualism sketched at times indistinctly by Gershon (2010), the pianist and scholar Charles Rosen (2002) implicitly rejects the idea that constituting a public is an important aim of musical performance, although he does not ground his arguments in educational theory. As explained in Chapter 1, the distinction turns on the degree to which *constituting* a public fosters critical reflection on questions of inclusion and exclusion (Feinberg, 1993/1998, p. 164; see also Warner, 2002). While Rosen (2002) distinguishes the priorities of musicians from those of educators, his perspective both harmonizes with and clashes with that of Tsujii, since Tsujii also makes no consistent distinction between the work of teaching his audiences about music through his performances, and merely providing them with a pleasurable experience.

Tsujii's refusal to distinguish between performing in educational institutions such as schools and universities, and in cultural institutions such as concert halls can be understood as related to his sense of the continuity, then, between entertainment and education through music,

or perhaps, conceived another way, his lack of interest in education itself, and his insistence on prioritizing musical considerations (Interview, January 27, 2014). With the caveat that the distinction between these types of venues is by no means as clear cut as I have suggested (see Barenboim & Said, 2002; Gershon, 2010), Tsujii's assertion that his primary concern is to bring the enjoyment of music to his audiences (Interview, January 27, 2014) is consistent with Rosen's (2002) argument against considering the presence of an audience as a determinant in "the success of a public performance" (p. 126). However, to the extent that Tsujii addresses his educative role to audiences who are not familiar with Western art music (especially its piano repertoire), he expresses—indirectly—a concern with constituting a certain *kind* of public through his performances, namely an audience which will not only enjoy his performances, but learn more about Western art music, ultimately making concert attendance part of their lives. Instead of constituting a public by raising questions about inclusion and exclusion (Feinberg, 1993/1998), Tsujii works to constitute a kind of universal public, an undifferentiated audience who all share his enthusiasm for a particular musical tradition. Rosen's (2002) statement is worth quoting in full, since Tsujii's frequent invocation of the semiotic codes of *focused listening* reflects assumptions very similar to those which inform Rosen's argument:

The success of a public performance does not depend on the nature of the public. In private, the approval of the connoisseur may have more weight than that of the layman; in public, the ignorant music lover is equal to the expert...The success [of a concert] may properly be determined by the intensity of the attention of the listeners...All pianists want applause, but quiet attention is the best tribute (pp. 126–127; emphasis added)

5.7 Vague Feelings as Rhemes, Dicents, and Arguments: (Un)Certain Interpretants Interpreted

Chapter 4 noted that Peirce treats *vague feelings* as a legitimate part of experience, and his phenomenological category of Firstness accounts for precisely this dimension (Bergman, 2009; Chiasson, 2001; CP, 1905, 5.506 & 5.512). I analyzed vague feelings as interpretants of the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* through which Tsujii and his UBC audience described their experiences of his recital. Locating *vague feelings* as an analytical category of experience in this section of the present chapter allows for an understanding of how Tsujii and his UBC audience interpret *the educative*, both its possibilities and limits, through their vaguely defined feelings of what it means to teach and learn through musical performance and reception. Thus conceived, *the educative* is not produced solely through learning by means of signs, (Nöth, 2014) but also in those realms of experience (sign-interpretant relations as *rhemes*) which exist prior to analysis and interpretation, but which are nonetheless part of how Tsujii and his UBC audiences *feel* that teaching and learning can occur through the affective dimensions of musical performance. In this regard, my analysis moves closer to Gershon's (2010) approach in his essay on public intellectual interventions through musical performance. It is important to take note, however, of the contrast between Peirce's pragmatism, which treats affective responses and sensory experiences as a vital component, but nonetheless only as a starting point for learning through signs, and Gershon's (2010) less discriminating embrace of affective responses and sensory experiences as synonymous with learning (p. 628).

As noted earlier, Peirce is adamant that learning by means of signs cannot occur through sensory impressions or qualities of feelings (Firstness) alone, but that learning through signs begins at the semiotic level of Thirdness, when the sensory and affective experiences associated

with Firstness become the focus of interpretation. However, for Peirce, interpretation occurs in the abstract realms of formal logic. He does not consider that different sign interpreters will experience different interpretants, but rather locates sign interpretation within communities of inquiry who will, as it were, share interpretants. If we start from the premise that "music has a variety of descriptive powers... [and] can embody and express every aspect of the human condition, including disability" (Straus, 2011, p. 45), then how might particular moments of Tsujii's recital, shared by the pianist and his UBC audience in my interviews with them, constitute music's necessarily vague (non-conceptual) evocative powers as instances of teaching and learning? To begin answering this question, let us step back into Chapter 4, and in particular, recall how Tsujii responded when I asked him about the reception of his UBC recital:

Tsujii: As I recall the enthusiasm on the audience side was very strong, so I thought maybe most of the people took me as a real pianist. (Interview, January 27, 2014)

The complex definitions of *the educative* offered by Rinaldo (Interview, March 12, 2014) and Otis (Interview, February 3, 2014), show that there is no immediately recognizable link between teaching and learning in familiar educational spaces such as schools and universities, and the vague feelings which these audience members associate with Tsujii's educative capacities as a pianist, and with his performances. How, then, can their definitions of the musically educative be understood as dimensions of experience available for semiotic analysis? As *rhemes*, definitions of *the educative* which are represented by sign-interpreters in relation to personally meaningful aspects of their lives, whether personal (Otis) or professional (Rinaldo), need not be dismissed as irrelevant to the scholarly pursuit of teaching and learning as objects of systematic research. However, it is also not possible convincingly to argue that merely by virtue of

conjuring up memories and feelings, however strongly relevant and personally compelling, a given musical performance is educative. This remains one of the intractable problems in this dissertation's analysis, and as I argued earlier in Chapter 2, it is also a problem that besets Gershon's (2010) argument for musicians as public intellectuals. As I noted in that chapter, Gershon stops short of analyzing specific instances of what makes a given musical experience educative, how audiences learn, and musicians teach, instead arguing simply that all music and all musicians have the potential to teach, regardless of context, and regardless of any stated intent to teach on the part of musicians, and any desire to learn, on the part of audiences: "...thinking is not necessarily removed from experience, music is not removed from the intellectual, the public, or an experience, and whether or not music is intended to educate, it almost always has the potential to do so" (p. 630).

Gershon does not posit criteria for those instances in which music fails to educate, and when musicians fail to qualify as public intellectuals. Indeed, in relation to the latter, Gershon argues, without qualification, that "not only *can* musicians be public intellectuals, but [also] all musicians *are* public intellectuals" (p. 628; emphasis in original). In this regard, the parts of my theoretical framework that examine the possibilities and limits of *the educative* in Tsujii's performances as part of a broader public intellectualism through music fail to help us make sense of the very different modes of response to Tsujii's pianism analyzed in the present study.

5.8 And So Forth: (Im)Possible Interpretants and the Musical Education of the Sensorium

What is the "and so forth" (Johnson, 1995, p. 2) of musical performance and reception? And how might *and so forth*—re-imagined not merely as variations of, or extensions to "sounds,

images, ideas, emotions, vague feelings" (Johnson, 1995, p. 2), but instead as a remarkable and often unremarked experiential universe, constitute educative possibilities and limitations in musical performance? Otis's introspective account of his musical experiences discussed in the preceding section exemplifies a situation in which "personal development and social interaction are closely connected in musical experience: participants do not make choices between these two aspects, but rather seek a balance which allows them to satisfy their personal motivations and musical needs" (Pitts, 2005, p. 33).

Ben Curry's (2012) analysis of the negotiation of selfhood through the aural, visual and kinesthetic signs of musical experience does not link musical semiosis to an account of music's educative capacities, or lack thereof. His approach nonetheless offers a useful frame of reference for understanding how Otis's filtering of Tsujii's performances at the *Fireside Chat* through his own repertoire of personal lived experience might constitute *the educative* in a way that does not carry us down the treacherous slopes of relativism. Instead, certain features of Otis' response to Tsujii bear upon a central concern of education, one that has occupied educators and scholars of education in various contexts ranging from philosophical inquiry to curriculum studies: the cultivation of, and sustenance of individual subjectivities (Bonnett, 2009; Pinar, 2009). What Otis himself described as a response to Tsujii's performances that was personally meaningful, can therefore be understood not only as part of a shared system of meaning in Western art music, as the following passage from Curry (2012) indicates, but also, to stand at the entry to an area of inquiry less familiar in educational research than it is in music studies, namely the formation of selfhood, and the re-imagination of subjectivity through musical experience, in general, and musical performance and reception, in particular (Cumming, 2000; Straus, 2011):

Due to the listening habits that dominate Western musical practices, there will be a tendency to bring to mind those memories that are intensely personal and significant to our identity, those memories that are, we might say, important in the construction of subjectivity. (Curry, 2012, p. 159)

The message that Otis heard as relevant to his own life in Nobuyuki Tsujii's performance at the *Fireside Chat* guides him to a hypothetical future course of action through an affective linkage between Tsujii's performance and his own reminiscences of lived experience, past, present, and future (Interview, February 3, 2014). In hearing a message relevant to his own life in Tsujii's music-making, Otis was making sense of his world, and interpreting specific aspects of his life through Tsujii's performance (Gershon, 2010, p. 628). This represents a possible sort of interpretation of musical signs (Cumming, 2000, p. 95), one which initially seems rather distant from any conventional form of education through music, yet which might be understood as a possible way of hearing *the educative* through *rhemes*, prior to any actual association with real-world teaching and learning (*dicents*) or with a system of teaching and learning based on the transmission of formal knowledge (*arguments*). One might consider this way of responding to Tsujii to constitute an instance of a therapeutic response, a possible interpretation which I cannot pursue here.³⁸ There is no assertion of fact (*dicent*), nor any conventional association (*argument*) between such personal reflection and musical performance.

³⁸ For a useful summary of the literature on therapeutic uses of music, please see Straus (2011), pp. 156–157. Straus' discussion lays out the problematic ways in which music therapy has perpetuated the marginal position of people with disabilities in relation to music, by treating disability as the focal point of intervention through music, with the aim of reducing the perceived negative consequences of disability.

Otis suggests a possible way of interpreting Tsujii's performance, namely as an affirmation of the value of hard work (as characterized by Otis himself). This is not an instance of Tsujii teaching something specific through his performance, nor yet of Otis learning to appreciate Western art music as Tsujii would like. Instead we are left with a response to Tsujii's music making that inhabits the realm of the fictive: it does not correspond to the reality of the outside world, but having been summoned into existence by Otis it acquires an existence nonetheless as a personal narrative. Otis's connection between the stories that Tsujii told through his performance and his own personal experiences steers discussion away from disability towards an "aspect of the human condition" (Straus, 2011, p. 45) not represented in any obvious way by the musical signs of Tsujii's *Fireside Chat* performances. The *rhemes* produced in Otis's interpretation suggest a possible musical response that floats independently of the codified norms of Western art music, and therefore makes no claims to factuality (*dicents*), nor appeals to the rules and conventions of performance and reception (*arguments*). The responses of Rinaldo and Otis, in particular, demonstrate how vague feelings stand at the entry point to the *and so forth* of musical performance and reception, bearing out the assertion that "signs can take on a life of their own, becoming displaced from the meaning intended for them" (Cumming, 2000, p. 37).

Musical experience takes shape through habits acquired by both performer (Cumming, 2000, p. 17) and audiences (Meyer, 1956). In both of our conversations, Edith avoided a sharp distinction between those whose immersion in music extends into their everyday lives, and those who cultivate a more distant engagement, or even non-engagement with music. Responding to my question about how she construes the relationship between being a musician and an educator prior to the *pianist/blind pianist* dichotomy, Edith, herself an arts educator, gives a clear account

of the difficulty that besets any attempt to find correspondences between musical (musician-audience) and educative (teacher-student) interactions:

Edith: I think it's a blurry line because—I can't speak for him, but attracting an audience because he's a blind pianist is one thing, but attracting an audience because he's a pianist is another. I think it's hard to control that and to educate them. There will always be a mixture of those who come because he's a blind pianist but who will, hopefully, eventually, look at him as a pianist, and those who look at him as a pianist and just enjoy the music. You will always have the audiences who see what he does out of a sense of pity. In a way I think there'll never be a complete balance because of how society is constructed. I think he has a big challenge, not because he's blind but because of us as an audience. I think there will forever be that mixture of people in his audience. It seems to be a constant educational process. It has to be repetitive, and cumulative, and it has to cater for the mixture in the audience. You have the ones who are looking at him as a blind pianist, and the ones who are looking at him as a pianist. I think it's very important that someone like him remains persistent because there are very few chances to learn these things. (Interview, March 18, 2014)

Edith locates Tsujii's dual role as educator and musician in his ability to resist the separation of disabled musicians and artists from their non-disabled colleagues (Interview, March 18, 2014). For Edith, learning through the arts has to focus on the forms of signification (including sensory and affective dimensions) that are unique to each art form, and she situates Tsujii's possible role as an educator within this larger claim.

I asked Ava how attending Tsujii's recital might have challenged (or reinforced) her own ideas about what it means to be a *pianist*, focusing on two dimensions in particular: possible changes in her understanding of what it means to experience music through the senses, and, on a larger scale, the emergence of a transformed sense of how formal music pedagogy might be in need of renovation:

Ava: I'm not sure, except that maybe if he [Tsujii] has limitations then I should challenge myself more. But that's only one side. It's not only eyes that matter, it's the support from parents, teachers, good education, so even if one aspect is taken away it's not the end of the world. (Interview, March 11, 2014)

Once again, we encounter the educative limits of musical performance. Ava did not clearly perceive a change in her own ideas of what it means to be a *pianist* as a result of attending Tsujii's performance. It is not only that Tsujii is "different from other pianists" within a normative representational scheme (a difference Theodor admitted he would be hard-pressed to understand compared to "more observant" audience members: personal communication, December 14, 2013). The coherence of an audience also becomes a fiction, attenuating the distinction between "happening in public" and "constituting a public" (Warner, 2002). Tsujii defines what it means to be a pianist in the language of affect, on the one hand, (*rhemes*) and on the other, in the language of normative values (*arguments*), namely a desire to cultivate appreciation of a music he considers to be valuable. Tsujii does not consciously identify any critical, political, or ethical impulses in his performances, and on the surface, at least, does not actively work to "constitute" a public through his performances. Nevertheless, several audience members I interviewed, Theodor, Rinaldo, and Edith, may be understood to have constituted

themselves as a public, and to offer a way of understanding Tsujii's recital as *educative*, by virtue of their sustained reflection on questions of difference.

My way of understanding the distinction between "public" and audience" is influenced by Michael Warner's (2002) delineation of the various meanings attached to the former term in different circumstances. For present purposes, what is most relevant are the congruities and tensions between public defined as a "concrete audience" sharing the common time and space of a performance *in public*, and a public defined as the collectivity summoned forth by being addressed through the production and reception of texts (p. 49). Edith acknowledged, in our follow up interview, that her lack of familiarity with music means that a live performance compels her attention and interest in the act of "seeing it come together" and that, if a concert is overly long, "I could see myself sleeping, and my mind would wander away" (Interview, March 18, 2014). Her self-identification as a non-musician, however, and the possibility of her falling asleep or being inattentive, do not, even so, necessarily banish her from membership in this public within the UBC audience whose existence I have posited. As Warner (2002) explains, the criterion that a public be constituted "by virtue of address" does not demand complete and unqualified attentiveness from its constituent members: even a "notional" attentiveness suffices for a public to take shape (p. 61). Although the immediate context for Warner's analytical insight concerns membership at the level of nation, it is productive to consider how the similarities and differences between audience members as *members of an audience* and *members of a public* simultaneously fill in and widen the gaps between Tsujii and his audience, and between individual members of Tsujii's audiences.

Where then does Tsujii fit relative to the model of musician as public intellectual advanced by Walter Gershon (2010)? It is precisely because of this uncomfortable fit that a

musician such as Tsujii can help us rethink the demands that we place on musicians simultaneously to entertain and educate (Barenboim & Said, 2002; Gershon, 2010; [James] Johnson, 2002; Taruskin, 2008). Edith argues that Tsujii's role as educator emerges in his capacity to (re)direct the audience's attention to music rather than to the circumstance of his blindness. However, it is not Tsujii's rejection of a disabled identity which Edith primarily supports (Campbell, 2009a & b; Titchkosky, 2012). Instead, she is responding to what she saw and heard Tsujii do onstage during his UBC recital, formulating her definition of his role as musician and educator based on her interpretation of the sensory experiences of seeing and hearing his recital (Interviews, December 10, 2013 & March 18, 2014). Understanding what musicians with disabilities such as Tsujii teach their audiences through musical performance requires attention to the different forms of musical experience, in which sensory presence and absence—seeing/not seeing, hearing/not hearing, moving/not moving—shape what it means to be a musician, an audience member, and to create an educative encounter. This encounter is cast in the form of what James H. Johnson (1995), in a different context, memorably describes as "a continuous negotiation conducted at the boundaries of musical sense" (p. 3). *Pianists, blind pianists, and real pianists*, are *rhemes*, signs that refer to semiotic objects of both possibility and limitation, upholding even as they reshape the historical, social, pedagogical, and aesthetic conventions in which pianists and their audiences interpret their affective, embodied, and cognitive experiences of performance and reception. Recalling Floyd Merrell's (2003) distinction between the "semiotically real," and the "really real"(p. 36) in the second epigraph to Chapter 4, these signs acquire multiple meanings for different pianists and different audiences in different times and places, in the interpretive activities of "concretely situated subjects" (Colapietro, 1989, p. 35), rather than in abstract pronouncements on the separability of disability and self by

pianists and their audiences, or in theoretical claims as to the inseparability of disability and self in scholarly discourse (Campbell, 2009 a & b; Titchkosky, 2012). It is this irreducible difference that constitutes the "education of the sensorium" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82) through musical performance.

The multiple interpretants produced by the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* which Tsujii asserts, and which inform both his pianism, and his reception by his audiences, delimit the extent to which his audiences separate the performance of music, and the performance of disability (Straus, 2011, p. 126). Tsujii's performance of music, and his refusal, or perhaps reluctance to perform disability must be taken into consideration in analyzing how the pianist and his audiences understand the educative dimensions of his performances.

This chapter has developed the argument that the capacity for a given musical experience (both performance and reception) to educate, as well as the incapacity to educate do not merely differentiate one performance from another, but also differentiate a given performance *from itself*. The potential for Tsujii's performances to teach both himself and his audiences to question normative definitions of seeing and hearing exists alongside, not in opposition to their inability to achieve such an outcome:

Classical music...is made as art but frequently serves as entertainment. Even when it serves as art, it doesn't necessarily stop serving as entertainment. But it also exhibits qualities that are neither acknowledged nor accounted for by the category of entertainment, qualities that can be understood only from the expectations of a different function—that of art. (Johnson, 2002, p. 47)

Castigating Johnson for what he describes as a "categorical, invidious, didactically italicized, and altogether untenable distinction" between music's aesthetic and entertaining roles, Taruskin (2008) argues that to conceive of Western art music in this way is to neglect its social role, prioritizing the need of musicians to feel they are doing something transformative over the pleasurable experiences that music brings to audiences (p. 340).

Live musical performance is both an aural and visual practice in which performers and audiences see, are seen, hear, and are heard (Tsay, 2013; see also, Leppert, 1993; Pitts, 2005). Performances by musicians with disabilities present the opportunity to consider how performers and audiences (do not) see, (are not) seen, (do not) hear, and (are not) heard. The possible qualities of feeling (*rhemes*) which performers and audiences experience through music are components of "learned code[s] of recognition" (Cumming, 2000, p. 17). When performers and audiences describe music in affective terms, these descriptions are not simply interior states of mind, but reflect interpretive practices which are "culturally entrained" (Cumming, 2000, p. 17). This much is true of musicians and audiences relatively familiar with the conventions of a musical tradition. But what of those audience members who lack the technical vocabulary to explain their understanding of what a *pianist* does in performance that enables that performance successfully to convey qualities of feeling? What differences are made in the gap left by the absence of such a vocabulary? Perhaps the responses of some audience members at Tsujii's recital (I have in mind the responses of Rinaldo and Otis in particular) might lead to a reappraisal of Peirce's claim that

The mere experience of a sense-reaction is not learning. That is only something from which something can be learned, by interpreting it. *The interpretation is the learning* (CP, n.d. 7.536; emphasis added).

Approached within a strictly pragmatist framework, then, Gershon's (2010) definition of education through the affective and sensory experiences of music falls short of explaining how it is that teaching and learning can take place through emotional responses to music, on the one hand, and, on the other, through the activities of seeing musicians make music, and of hearing the sounds that they make, since, as Peirce would have it, both of these dimensions of experience are prior to learning (Gershon, 2010, p. 628). Peirce's version of pragmatism demands that the feelings which music conjures up in musicians and their audiences, and the sights, sounds, and bodily movements music evokes serve as the starting point for *interpretation* of these experiences: they do not constitute visual, aural, and kinesthetic signs or, more broadly, musical signs as educators in and of themselves but require development and interpretation within particular contexts, in order to *become*, or *fail to become* educators (Nöth, 2014). However, thinking back to Cumming's (2000) observation concerning the tendency of signs to float far beyond their originally intended meanings (p. 37), perhaps it is this very capacity for tremendous displacement that constitutes musical performance as an affective, embodied, and cognitive practice with much to offer to scholarship in Education, Disability Studies, and Music.

Chapter 6: Infinite Semiosis and the Education of the Sensorium

Disability is not, therefore, one subject of art among others. It is not merely a theme. It is not only a personal or autobiographical response embedded in an artwork. It is not solely a political act. It is all of these things, but it is more. It is more because disability is properly speaking an aesthetic value, which is to say, it participates in a system of knowledge that provides materials for and increases critical consciousness about the way that some bodies make other bodies feel. (Siebers, 2010, p. 20)

To give permission to the artist within your disabled body is an outrageous act of defiance. (Klein, as cited in Johnston, 2012, p. 5)

6.1 Piano Competitions and Universities: From Disavowal to the Reavowal of Disability?

Shortly after the announcement of the shared gold medal between Nobuyuki Tsujii and Haochen Zhang at the 2009 Cliburn Competition, Timothy Mangan (2009) reported that "Tsujii's win is already causing a bit of controversy," citing as evidence music critic Scott Cantrell's speculation "that Tsujii's compelling story and appearance onstage strongly influenced the jury." Retreating abruptly from this unreliable, if dramatic claim, Mangan continued his hand-waving: "for whatever complex of reasons, he riveted the audience. And juries, even at the highest level, are not immune to audience responses" (para. 5–7; see also, Cantrell, 2009a, b, & c). Tsujii *the pianist* is absent in Mangan's account, replaced not merely by *the blind pianist*, but rather by a much larger sign: a longstanding representation of disability as a sign of *inability*, as the "master trope of human disqualification" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000, p. 3). The competitive environment in which Tsujii's blindness signifies disqualification is itself laden with meaning, signifying *spectacle*. Musical performance constitutes an "extreme occasion," (Said, 1991, p. 17), while simultaneously asserting its ubiquity in everyday life (Cook, 2013, p. 413). The competitive environment in which Tsujii's visible blindness was interpreted by Cantrell and other music

critics as evidence of inability, leading them to disqualify him as a *real pianist*, intensifies the quality of spectacle that attends the performer's body, (Straus, 2011, pp. 125–126), demanding that the performer's senses, body, and cognitive apparatus perform spectacularly well. Against the *spectacle of the performer in performance*, both the *spectacle of disability* itself, and the heroic *spectacle of achievement-in-spite-of-disability* that Tsujii's Cliburn competition performances were interpreted to signify lend a new texture to the contradictory position of musical performance as both singular and ordinary (Cook, 2013 & Said, 1991).

The enduring signifying effects of *disability as disqualification* mean that it is not only Tsujii himself who struggles to break free of the negative connotations tethered to blind pianism in repeated acts of individual resistance (Ikenberg, 2014, para. 9; Oda, 2009, para. 6; [Itsuko] Tsujii, 2009, p. 5). His audiences are also swept up into this struggle between individual and collective interpretations of what it takes to be seen and heard as a *real pianist*. As my analysis of the reception of Tsujii's recital at UBC has shown, the (im)possibility of resistance against the *spectacle of disability as disqualification* unfolds within the institutional regimes of Western art music pedagogy, and within the pedagogical systems of the schools, universities and concert halls in which he performs, regimes in which his blindness is tightly bound to the historical signification of disability as "the material marker of inferiority itself" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2000, p. 3). This final chapter considers the extent to which the *Beyond the Screen* series succeeded in staging a critical intervention not only in Tsujii's struggle to define himself as a *pianist* on the international concert circuit, but also in the reception of musicians with disabilities more generally. The questions at the core of this chapter follow from the analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 5: what is the role of a university-based series such as *Beyond the Screen* in teaching audiences to experience musical performance with different eyes, different ears, and

different bodies? And how might relational gaps between musicians with disabilities and their audiences be reimagined so that education can take place anew in these gaps? (Biesta, 2004, p. 13).

In what follows, I detail the contributions of my dissertation to the fields of Education and Disability Studies, and to the burgeoning subfields of Disability Studies in Education and Disability Studies in Music. To that end, I frame the present chapter in relation to the core questions of the *Beyond the Screen* series. The following questions, summarized in Chapters 1 and 2 and situated relative to the semiotic analyses presented in Chapter 5, are taken from the poster for *Beyond the Screen* distributed on campus in 2013, and posted online. Here are the introduction and guiding questions of the series quoted in full:

How do prejudices about disabled musicians affect their reception and chances for success?

How can we re-imagine the teaching of music in ways that account for different approaches to learning and performance?

What are the responsibilities of the university? (Beyond the screen: disAbility and the arts, 2013, para. 1)?

The semiotic analyses presented in Chapters 4 and 5 identify the educative dimensions of musical performance, as contested spaces in which binary distinctions between mainstream and disability culture, and between "person-first" and "disability-first" language dissolve, leaving behind residues of marked and unmarked signification that are no longer distinct elements, but have instead begun to coalesce into new streams of meaning. These chapters showed that historical debates about the educative function of music are crucial to how we understand the musical encounter between Nobuyuki Tsujii and individual members of his UBC audience. These histories were not directly invoked in my conversations with either Tsujii or with

individual members. Nevertheless, Tsujii's repeated emphasis on attentive listening on the part of his audience, and his interpretation of focused attention on the music itself as a sign that his audience receives him as a *real rather than blind pianist* tendrils in multiple directions, producing different interpretants that constitute musical performance as educative, entertaining, instructive, delightful, and everything in between (Gershon, 2010; Taruskin, 1995). Tsujii's belief in the aesthetic and cultural value of Western art music, Rinaldo's expressed sense of personal transformation after Tsujii's recital, and Edith's definition of Tsujii's role as an educator in shifting focus away from disability towards music, emphasize different features of the educative in music, splintering the supposed coherence of Tsujii's use of the phrase *simply a pianist* as a hypothetical sign representing his full acceptance by his audiences as *not a blind pianist*. The disavowal of blindness, in this case, is bound up with larger historical and philosophical disavowals of the bodily and sensory delights afforded by music. Pursuing analysis along these multiple semiotic channels shows the great extent to which philosophical and historical debates have entered into the realm of common sense, leading to a state of affairs in which musical experience is taken for granted, and questions about what it means to experience music through the senses, and through the body are assumed to depend on a normative subjective presence.

Disability Studies in Education and Disability Studies in Music provide a framework that intersects with Tsujii's ongoing struggle to locate himself as an unmarked *pianist* rather than a marked *blind pianist*. By considering performance and reception in tandem, my dissertation enriches and complicates the role of musicians as public intellectuals assigned by recent educational theory (Gershon, 2010; Pinar, 2010). Going further, my analyses demonstrate that recent philosophy of education inquiry into the relational gaps between teacher and student in

which "education takes place" (Biesta, 2004, p. 13) can be productively used to make sense of the relational gaps, educative and otherwise, between musicians with disabilities and their audiences. In so doing, I reimagine the relationship between the concert hall and the classroom not as a simple continuum (McReery, 1968), nor as a fundamental distinction (Taruskin, 1995), but as a relationship that is constantly negotiated through each instance of performance and reception, and each subsequent reflection on the meanings of musical performance. My dissertation stages its central contribution by locating the educative function of musical performance in relation to the role that a musician performs, and how that performance is received in a circumscribed time and space, in which the real and the fictive, affect and cognition, actual and imagined experience, inhabit a semiotic continuum. Along this semiotic continuum, the position of musicians with disabilities within the sphere of public intellectualism cannot be understood without taking into account the congruities and tensions between "person-first" and "disability-first" language, and by extension, the distinction made in Disability Studies, and disability culture between *disability artists* and *artists with disabilities* (Johnson, 2012, p. 5).

The three questions raised by the *Beyond the Screen* series stand at the entrance to further research on *the educative* as a contested space in which struggles over the meaning and significance of disability in musical experience become deeply intertwined with struggles over the body in relation to the self. It is here that Titchkosky's (2011) explanation of how people learn to think of disability as present and absent is helpful for critical analysis. The question of how Tsujii's blindness is interpreted as a presence and an absence by his audiences has led us along a trajectory spanning the international competitive arena, the concert circuit, and the classrooms, seminar rooms, and teaching studios of formal education. The specific features of Tsujii's reception since the 2009 Cliburn competition tie in with the more expansive question of

the reception of musicians with disabilities, and the ways in which these musicians teach their audiences to reimagine disability in the hazy, and sometimes unmapped regions between aesthetics, culture, history, politics, and education. The enormity of this critical work by no means absolves us from the responsibility to fold such analysis into the pedagogy of performance and reception, that is, the formalized practices through which musicians are taught to become performers, and through which audiences are taught the proper ways of experiencing music according to the dictates of Western art music: "Finding ourselves in the middle of an education of our sensorium, the theoretical imperative to wonder about who, what, where, and when becomes crucial" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 83).

Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital presented a singular opportunity to study its educative dimensions, but the initial deep focus of my research problem on the recital itself needed to be rethought following my first interview with the pianist, since, for him, the activity of public music making is unmarked by greater or lesser degrees of meaning: concerts are simply concerts regardless of where they take place (Interview, January 27, 2014). Pursuing the implications of this gap between the priorities of my research, and those of the interview participants in the concluding section of this chapter, I raise the disconcerting possibility that musical performance is not properly considered an educative enterprise (Carroll, 2003). I characterize this possibility as disconcerting because to acknowledge such a circumstance is not merely to say that the recent educational scholarship which informs the present study needs to be refined, or redirected (Gershon, 2010), but that the very foundation of this literature is unstable. By extension, the sorts of questions with which this dissertation has wrestled, and its answers would not only cease to be relevant to education scholarship, but would seem to be fruitless queries in the first place.

My stance since the beginning of this research, before conducting a single interview, was one of caution towards the association of music with educative possibility, coupled with acceptance that not only Tsujii but also individual audience members might balk at the idea of linking music and education on intersecting pathways between my background reading in Education, and Disability Studies in Music, and what I had read about and seen of Tsujii in the media. However, caution and acceptance operate within certain limits, and the assumption that guided my research was that the questions I was asking were indeed worthwhile. Later in this chapter I discuss musicological scholarship (McClary, 1990; Taruskin, 2008) that punctures the rhetorical gambits of weighty intellectualism and ethical transformation in music. Drawing on the insights from this musicological literature, I suggest that Gershon (2010), is right to blur the boundaries between pleasure in music and educative transformation through music, but that he is mistaken in simply conflating the one with the other. What is crucial for educators to ask in considering performances by musicians with disabilities and their reception by audiences as a suitable topic for classroom and seminar discussion, is for a thoughtful and sustained examination of pleasure and delight as a multi-level universe of meaning, the components of which require teasing apart (Taruskin, 2008; see also, McClary, 1990), rather than either a monolithic entity opposed to serious critical inquiry or as the equivalent of critical inquiry expressed sonically. It will suffice, for the present, to foreshadow this more sustained discussion by mapping its historical and philosophical coordinates.

As far back as the nineteenth century, a shift in the places where music was seen and heard, precipitated by the emergence of public concert venues, transformed music's educative possibilities. Noël Carroll's (2003) discussion of the interplay of the aesthetic and the educative fails to mark this shift in time clearly, but his main point is nevertheless well taken. There is, in

any case, a wealth of ethnomusicological, musicological, and philosophical literature which supplies the historical dimensions missing from Carroll's analysis (Dahlhaus, 1987 & 1989; Goehr, 2004; Nettl, 2005). What is relevant for present purposes is the question of the larger discourse with which Tsujii identifies when he told me that he felt his UBC audience demonstrated focus and enthusiasm in their response to his recital, and that he associated this absorbed listening on their part with being taken seriously as a *real pianist* (Interview, January 27, 2014). The possibility of such absorption is the result of an historical shift in Western art music, related to the separation of a supposedly autonomous music from musical practices designed to fulfill a certain function, such as religious observances, or public ceremonies. The relegation of mere entertainment to places other than dedicated concert venues was a consequence of this shift, as Carroll (2003) implies: "serious music mutated into absolute music to be sequestered in newly emerging concert halls, designed to focus contemplation on the musical fabric of the composition" (p. 369). When Tsujii argues that he wants his audiences to focus on the music he plays and positions his blindness as incidental or irrelevant (Interview, January 27, 2014), his statement has historical roots obscured both by the common sense notion that the performer is merely the conduit of musical signification (Cook, 2013; Cumming, 2000), as well as by the critical pedagogical stance that for people (including musicians) with disabilities to embrace normative ideas signifies merely that they have become fluent in an "oppressive" language (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 13). Again, what is at stake is not a matter to be solved by adjudicating more or less correct interpretations of what it means to be a musician with a disability within the confines of particular sociocultural and sociopolitical frameworks separated by the binary distinction between oppression and emancipation. Instead, what is needed is sustained engagement with the multiple and shifting contexts that give different

meanings to how musicians with disabilities/disabled musicians perform, and how they are received. The aesthetic components of their performances should not be considered either on their own terms, as individualized gestures of acquiescence with, or resistance against oppression, nor yet as subordinate to the pedagogical and aesthetic norms of a dominant practice. At the point of entry, analysis must be open to the possibility that the dividing line between disability arts and culture, and mainstream culture does not mark the difference between autonomous and socially engaged performances in the ways that are specified in the scholarly traditions that bear on these issues.

6.2 Contributions of Dissertation to Education and Disability Studies

My original contribution to knowledge lies in elucidating the multiple semiotic channels through which musicians with disabilities can and cannot embody a public intellectual role, and are marked and unmarked through interpretants generated by the signs *musicians with disabilities* and *simply musicians* (Andrews, 1990; Shapiro, 1983). The presence of musicians with disabilities onstage has the potential to provoke audiences to ask who is included and excluded from normative accounts of musical experience in concrete instances of performance and reception. However, there are worlds of difference between the potential and the actual for such an encounter to be educative. The mere presence of a musician with disability on stage does not guarantee that education will take place. My dissertation reveals the problems that arise when the role of all musicians as public intellectuals is asserted without sufficient qualification or contextualization (Gershon, 2010), or without a delineation of the educative possibilities and limitations that emerge both through music itself and through linguistic representation of musical experience (Gershon, 2010; Pinar, 2010; see also, Cumming, 2000; Straus, 2011).

A major source of disagreement in the scholarship to date has been the extent to which the individual agency of a musician, understood as an avowed intent to educate, plays a central role in defining musical performance as a form of public intellectualism (Barenboim & Said, 2002; Gershon, 2010; Pinar, 2010). For musicians with disabilities working within the mainstream tradition of Western art music as opposed to the more politically engaged sphere of disability arts & culture (Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004; Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Sutherland, 1997), the relationship between public performance and public intellectualism is complicated by their own relative inclinations towards questioning normative definitions of disability. A shared, but neglected consideration for mainstream and disability culture as it pertains to the reception of musicians with disabilities, is that the extent to which musicians with disabilities push their audience towards critical reflection itself reflects the historical and sociocultural conditions which have delimited the roles of musicians within society, and within different music historical periods (Barenboim & Said, 2002; Fulcher, 2008; Straus, 2011; Symes, 2006; Taruskin, 2008 & 2009; Treager, 2007).

My analysis shows that the two seemingly distinct categories of *pianist* and *blind pianist* are further complicated by a category that Tsujii invoked in my interviews with him, and which he associated with being received as a *pianist*, namely, a *real pianist* (Interview, January 27, 2014). The examination of this semiotic interplay within the circumscribed context of his UBC recital, shows that the presence of a distinction between *artists with disabilities* and *disability artists*, used within Disability Studies to differentiate mainstream and subcultural aesthetic interventions by performers with disabilities (Johnson, 2012, p. 5), does not help us understand Tsujii's complex position as a musician, nor yet his role in educating his audiences. Instead, I argue, the *artist with a disability/disability artist* binary perpetuates distinctions between popular

and high culture, and between politically engaged and apolitical art that give short shrift to the struggles over meaning that emerge in actual instances of performance and reception. Going further, the way disability arts defines "the educative" (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; see also, Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004) is not incompatible with *the educative* in Western art music (Dahlhaus, 1987; Nettl, 2005). For this reason, I argue that a more productive approach to understanding the reception of musicians with disabilities is by taking the specific contexts of performance and reception into account, thus allowing for sustained examination of the relationships that emerge between performer and individual audience members during the time and space of performance, and as these are subsequently recalled by both performer and audience (Abbate, 2004; Cumming, 2000; Small, 1998).

The meaning of bodily difference has been the source of continued disagreement between able-bodied and disabled people, as well as among *people with disabilities/disabled people* themselves (here I extend the *artist with disabilities/disability artists* distinction), crystallizing in struggles over the relationship between the individual body and the self (Campbell, 2009a; Koppers, 2014; Michalko, 2002; Titchkosky, 2008, 2011, & 2012). The stakes are neatly encapsulated in Tobin Siebers (2010b) elaboration of a disability aesthetics as "the way that some bodies make other bodies feel" (p. 20). The distinction between *disability artist* and *artist with a disability* maintained within disability culture can be understood to extend this debate about the different registers of self in relation to the claiming and disavowal of a marked category such as disability (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Johnson, 2012; Sutherland, 1997). Explaining how *disability artists* have been posited as theoretically separate from *artists with disabilities*, Kirsty Johnston (2012) writes, "While some have found value in [these]

distinctions, it is clear that identity politics play an important role both in claiming a space or in being cast as a disability artist" (p. 5).

The semiotic codes for receiving Tsujii's performances are over-determined by well-schooled discourses of disability in the media, in culture, and in formal education. Educators interested in enlarging the scope of difference and inclusiveness in university settings through critical analysis of musical performance must therefore find ways to counteract these discourses, aligning such interventions with core tenets of Disability Studies (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Gabel & Danforth, 2006; Linton, 1998). The method of semiotic analysis I have used to examine both interviews and media texts offers an entry point into this task because of its attention to how bodily difference is by turns acknowledged, ignored, and resisted in Tsujii's reception at UBC and around the world. The analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 follows the interpretive growth in the signs *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist*, charting movements from sensory perception and affective responses (Firstness), to bodily reactions (Secondness) perceived as immediate by Tsujii and certain of his audiences, to formal categorizations of musical experience by other audiences who are trained musicians (Ava and Yvette) that render blindness by turns visible and audible, invisible and inaudible, within the sensory, bodily, and cognitive norms of Western art music pedagogy, performance, and reception.

I show that semiotic codes are themselves not simply static representational systems, but sedimented layers of interpretive movements from the senses to cognition that have normalized particular ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking about music (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010; Danesi, 2010), and by extension, that have circumscribed what it means to be a *pianist*, a *real pianist*, and a *blind pianist*. I use a Peircean perspective that does not give primacy to rule-governed systems of signs, that is, semiotic codes, but rather is capable of taking into account

how signs sometimes escape conventional meanings in specific interpretive contexts. This perspective shows that too narrow a focus on semiotic codes leaves a host of other relevant factors related to the reception of performance insufficiently examined (Cook, 2013; Cumming, n.d., 1999, & 2000; Goble, 2005, 2009 & 2010; Turino, 2009 & 2014). Too strong an emphasis on sign systems would not adequately account for how *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist*, qua signs, do not have merely conventional meanings (Deledalle, 1989; Eco, 1984).

In Peirce's philosophical studies of signs, the cognition associated with verbal language (the communicative medium of teaching and learning) is separate from the cognitive possibilities inaugurated by sense-impressions and affect. Peirce does not, even so, banish sense-impressions and affect to a realm without any cognitive import whatsoever. Instead, different forms of cognition are continuous with each other via the experiential categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness: "Mere feeling [the realm of affect and emotion] is cognitive insofar as feelings occur within the teleological structure of semeiosis [sic], as interpretants" (Short, 2007, p. 206). The sign-object-interpretant relationships, and their associated interpretive relationships as identified by the categories of *rhemes*, *dicents*, and *arguments* account for both the continuities and discontinuities between *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* as defined by Tsujii and individual UBC audience members. The sense-perceptions and feelings conjured up in response to Tsujii's music-making as a *pianist/real pianist/blind pianist* are distinct from but continuous with the physically embodied and conceptual modes of recognition of these categories expressed verbally in our interviews with new binary markings of interpretants shaped through the interplay of Secondness and Thirdness (Andrews, 1990, p. 58). Whereas language about music operates in the conceptual realm of Thirdness, musical experience, situated in the time and space of an actual performance, brings Firstness and Secondness into play as well (Cumming, 1999 &

2000; Goble, 2010; Turino, 1999 & 2014). This analytical framework allows for the inclusion of dimensions of experience that cannot be accounted for in reference to semiotic codes, but that are nonetheless experienced by sign-interpreters as instances of affect or emotion (Firstness), and of physically embodied response (Secondness).

As my analysis shows, Tsujii's stated wish that one day audiences receive him as "simply a pianist" (Oda, 2009, para. 6) operates in between *the fictive* and *the real* (CP 5.311; CP 5.405; EP 2.209), acquiring the force of reality (Secondness), when particular audience members receive him as a pianist, and state their preference for bracketing out his disability, as in the case of Theodor (see Chapter 4, p. 175) and Rinaldo (see Chapter 4, p. 195). However, the move towards reality is itself part of an overarching fiction, namely, the fiction that sensory, cognitive, and bodily differences are irrelevant (Michalko, 2002; Titchkosky, 2012). The different levels of priority that Tsujii and his audiences give to linguistic and musical meaning guided my analyses in seeking out "the varying levels of immediacy and convention that occur in the human perception of signs" (Cardillo, 2008, p. 26). I noted that for some interviewees, including Tsujii himself, their experiences of the UBC recital, in particular, and of musical performance more generally, depend to a much greater degree than others on affective connotations that they claim lie beyond their capacity to interpret.

Affective meanings have been unwelcome in traditional approaches to music pedagogy (McClary, 1990), making it hard to ascertain the role of formal education in producing *pianists*, *real pianists*, and *blind pianists* as categories through which Tsujii's UBC audience interpreted his recital. I return to this problem in the next section of this chapter in reflecting on the limits of what my dissertation has been able to accomplish. Taking up Peirce's concern with the cognitive role of sense-impressions and qualities of feeling for immediate purposes, it is nonetheless

possible to ask: what place do sensory and affective meanings have in the educative role that Tsujii defines for himself as a pianist?

As I noted in Chapters 4 and 5, the type of affective response to music which Gershon (2010), drawing on Ellsworth (2005), defines as a form of learning is hard to recognize as educative in the sense of producing a transformation in understanding, or a heightened awareness of one's relationship to others (Gershon, 2010, p. 628; see also, Ellsworth, 2005). Gershon's definition of learning through musical experience is indistinguishable from a merely emotional response. However, because Peirce's approach is based on continuity rather than on sharp distinctions between modes of experience taken to be fundamentally dissimilar, it is worth pursuing the question of whether the gaps between the sort of musical enjoyment Tsujii wants from his audience and the actual responses of UBC audience members discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 register as educative in some hitherto unfamiliar way. To understand how these disparate modes of reception might cumulatively signify instances of teaching and learning taking place within these gaps, it will be helpful to consider their responses from the philosophical and theoretical perspectives set forth in Chapter 3. In particular, what is at stake in the separation of disability and mainstream culture is not only a struggle over the relationship between disability and the self, nor yet a cleft between disabled and non-disabled bodies, but rather part of a long-standing conversation—animated by frequent disagreement—about the meaning of *the educative* in musical performance (Dahlhaus, 1987; Gershon, 2010; Nettle, 2005; Plummeridge, 2001, pp. 22–23).

While purely affective responses to Tsujii's UBC recital cannot be understood as educative in the sense of transforming how the pianist and his audience experience music, such responses can be analyzed by musicians and audiences, teachers and students, in subsequent

reflection following a given performance. To the extent that such conversation can take place, teachers and students will need to understand the musically educative as dependent not on subjective interpretation, nor on collective agreement, but as continually remade through the encounter between individual and shared meaning.

Encounters between musicians with disabilities and their audiences must necessarily play out atop a dynamic foundation in which disability arts and culture, now an increasing presence in scholarly discourse, can no longer range along lines separating pure academic scholarship from engaged political activism. Mainstream cultural and artistic traditions such as Western art music are not usefully understood as antithetical, and only antithetical to the struggle for disability rights (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Sutherland, 1997). Definitions of *the educative* that tie teaching and learning to an avowed politics in disability arts and culture (Sutherland, 1997), while sustaining the idea that educative value in Western art music derives from nothing more than the perpetuation of a canonical repertoire and its associated value systems (Gershon, 2010; Nettl, 2005), fail to consider that affective responses to musical performance, including to performances by musicians with disabilities within a particular musical tradition can be subjected to critical examination within and across disability and mainstream cultural systems.

Furthermore, *the educative* depends not on adherence to an avowed politics, as in disability culture, nor to the aesthetic and pedagogical norms of a musical tradition, as in Western art music, but rather on understanding musical performance as an encounter which renders senses, minds, and bodies present in certain ways and absent in other ways. Whether or not the performance as encounter *becomes* educative depends as much on what happens after the performance as during: what, if anything, changes in how performer and audience relate to each other, and in how they experience music? Although the pragmatist framework of the present

study gives priority to Peirce rather than to John Dewey (whose work is much more familiar to education scholars), or to William James, it is worth considering at this point Dewey's (1938) definitions of the educative and the miseducative, which are directed perpetually at future experience: while the educative initiates a cohesive chain of successive experiences, each of which relates in tangible ways to prior experience, the miseducative inhibits such a cumulative engagement with experiential phenomena (p. 25).

Having been taught all their lives to see, hear, and move in the world in ways that reflect broader social and cultural representational systems for producing able-bodied and disabled selves and others, how does musical performance (fail to) become a catalyst for musicians with disabilities and their audiences to disorder the common sense of ability and disability?

Within the last decade or so, the expansion of educational research beyond the classroom towards the forms of teaching and learning enacted outside formal institutions such as schools and universities has created a polarized atmosphere in which the refusal to discuss pedagogy at all clashes with an equally problematic catholicity in which "anything and everything remotely educative" is up for consideration in research (Gaztambide-Fernandez & Arraiz-Matute, 2011, p. 15). I criticized this latter tendency in Gershon's (2010) essay on the role of musicians as public intellectuals, arguing that his conflation of intellect and affect, sensory experience and formal knowledge, produces an account of *the educative* in music that is overly inclusive, failing to register the very different contexts in which music is made and received. Although this dissertation bears out my initial skepticism towards his claim that "*all* musicians are public intellectuals" (Gershon, 2010, p. 630), a claim which glosses over important questions of context, Gershon's equation of musical affect and pleasure with a form of learning through the senses does find a measure of support from musicological literature, which he does not reference

(Taruskin, 2008). Taruskin (2008) rejects “the claims of those who affect to pursue the arts for reasons other than pleasure or satisfaction” and argues that the important question for scholarly analysis is “pleasure of what kind?” (p. 341). This is, itself, hardly a new question: several decades earlier, Richard Poirier (1967) asked: “Why isn't there more talk about pleasure, about the excitement of witnessing a performance, about the excitement that goes into a performance of any kind?” (p. 528). My dissertation offers a way into continued discussion of the pleasure and excitement of witnessing a musical performance from a perspective that takes sensory, bodily, and cognitive difference into account. My semiotic approach is informed by a sustained concern with what such pleasure and excitement might teach us about the tacit sociocultural and pedagogical assumptions which shape the interactions between musicians with disabilities and their audiences.

From the vantage point of formal education, the question which cannot be answered *a priori* is whether such pleasure and excitement is of the kind that derives from the confirmation of long-standing tropes of disability, or whether musicians with disabilities and their audiences are pleased and excited that new ways of sensing, feeling, physically responding, and analyzing musical experience become possible. In claiming this possibility as a contribution of my research, I acknowledge Glenn C. Savage's (2014) reminder in another context (namely of writers and their audiences) that "the educative power of dominant cultural discourses...is never absolute, unidirectional, or contained, but is multidirectional, diffuse, and riddled with complexity" (p. 84). Critical analysis of pleasurable experiences in the performances of musicians with disabilities thus involves exploring why audiences might be moved or feel pleasure in such performances beginning this exploration in the gaps revealed by a musician's stated communicative aims, modes of musical experience, and the musical experiences that

audiences may disclose in conversation following a performance. The extent to which Western art music, as a deeply rooted cultural tradition, exerts an educative power in the way that scholars say it does (Dahlhaus, 1987; Nettl, 2005) that is, on an idealized realm, can be productively contrasted with the contradictions and complexity that emerge when such claims are considered against what musician and audience see, hear, feel, and think in an actual performance.

In order to ground this claim empirically, two aspects of Rinaldo's response to Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital first discussed in Chapter 4 can be opened up still further here, folding his response within a long standing conversation in Western art music about seeing and hearing music, while casting a different light on how musicians are received through the senses. The (dis)play of sound, sight, and movement in the reception practices of audiences, is shaped by sociocultural norms governing the proper way to listen to music, to look at musicians, and to comport one's body in performance (Leppert, 1991; Raykoff, 2014; Stravinsky, 1936; Tsay, 2013). The restraining force exerted by such norms and their complex intersections with how Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital was received may be briefly considered by way of the following illustrative example recalled from my interview with Rinaldo discussed in Chapter 4:

At that time I was really impressed with his performance, and hadn't seen him as a blind pianist. After all, in a recital, I don't have to see the pianist: I only have to close my eyes and listen to him. In this sense, we both are blind, at least temporarily. (Rinaldo, personal communication, December 4, 2013, para. 1)

It is instructive to reach back into the past in order to understand the larger, albeit unacknowledged context for Rinaldo's assertion that seeing a musician in live performance is not necessary. The first implication of Rinaldo's response is that formal knowledge of the semiotic

codes of Western art music performance and reception is not the sole prerequisite for learning (informally, in his case, through attendance at concerts), that musicians should be seen and heard in certain ways and not in others. At the same time, however, formal knowledge of these rules and conventions can produce instances of resistance to the idea that music should be a disembodied, contemplative experience (McClary, 1990), and, furthermore, instances of reproduction that illustrate the deep historical roots of thinking about musical experience within a hierarchy of the senses. In this tension between resistance and reproduction we find a correspondence to Sandlin's (2010) account of education as a practice that both sustains and reimagines normative systems of meaning (p. 1). For this reason, formal knowledge of semiotic codes can produce transformative insights in ways that informal acquaintance with the norms of musical reception cannot. Contrast, for example, Rinaldo's statement with the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky's (1936) argument against listening to music with eyes closed, as part of a more general discussion of musical experience:

I have always had a horror of listening to music with my eyes shut, with nothing for them to do. The sight of the gestures and movements of the various parts of the body producing the music is fundamentally necessary if it is to be grasped in all its fullness. (p. 72)

Here we have an apparent reversal of positions: Rinaldo, a self-identified non-musician, claims that the sight of music in performance is a distraction, while one of the most famous composers in the Western art music tradition resists a sensorial hierarchy between the visual and aural in order to achieve a more complete "grasp" of music in performance as the outcome of bodily movements. To be sure, the different historical positions from which they speak cannot be ignored or minimized. However, the present-day relevance of Stravinsky's insight is underscored

when we recall the 2013 study by Chia Jung Tsay discussed in Chapter 2. Tsay's findings upset long held assumptions that professional musicians value sound over sight by showing that they are, in fact, influenced by visual stimuli to an extent similar to non-musicians.

Earlier I located a central contribution of this dissertation in establishing with greater clarity the boundaries of *the educative* as a space contested within mainstream and disability culture. My analyses show that to speak of rigidly separate domains of meaning in *the educative* is misleading. However, it is important to acknowledge that this is not an original insight based solely on my own research, but rather continues a critical intervention of Disability Studies in Music scholarship, specifically on disability in musical performance (Howe, 2010; Lerner, 2006; Straus, 2011). Starting from the premise in Disability Studies that "exaggerating or performing difference, when that difference is a stigma, marks one as a target, but it also exposes and resists the prejudices of society" (Siebers, 2008, p. 118; see also, Siebers, 2010a & b), Music and Disability Studies scholarship has argued that "performers with disabilities may claim disability as an affirmative part of their identity, a defining part of the self that they perform (along with the music they perform) for their audience" (Straus, 2011, p. 129).

A brief digression into theoretical territory is necessary here. In Chapter 3, I pointed out that selfhood and identity have been conceptually separated in educational and philosophical inquiry (Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 33). Such distinctions are not often part of music scholarship, and Straus' (2011) argument treats self and identity as fluid and interchangeable, concerned as he is with the role of music in enabling musicians with disabilities to constitute and perform a self through musical sound. This difference in approach does not, however, lessen the relevance of his observation for present purposes. All the same, it is necessary to reiterate that in my approach, Tsujii's sense of self, expressed publicly in his belief that his blindness is irrelevant to

his music making, is not identical, as it were, to his identity, that is, who he is taken to be by his audiences (Ruitenbergh, 2005, p. 33). Tsujii's disavowal of blindness is related to his sense of self as *simply a pianist*, or as he described his UBC audience's reaction to me, as a *real pianist*, while the extent to which this disavowal is sustained and resisted by his audiences is related to his identity as a *pianist*, and *blind pianist*, and as we have seen, the ambiguous question of what it means for any pianist, whether disabled or not, to be acknowledged as a *real pianist*.

Separating disability from selfhood through the “person-first” language which Tsujii, Rinaldo, and Edith used in my interviews with them, has been a representational strategy more readily accepted by Disability Studies in Music scholars than by their counterparts in Disability Studies in Education. Nevertheless, to the extent that “continuity does not preclude but rather entails difference” (Short, 2007, p. 152)³⁹ it is possible to map unexpected common ground discovered in my interviews with Tsujii, and individual audience members, between Education, Disability Studies in Education, and Disability Studies in Music. To begin this cartographical project, I would like to return to a theoretical underpinning of this dissertation, namely Titchkosky's (2011) elaboration of disability as the outcome of an "education of the sensorium." The conceptual distinction between selfhood and identity will help us refine our understanding of how Tsujii's self and identity produce multiple relationships between blindness and pianism, and consequently between the pianist and individual audience members.

Tsujii's reluctance to being categorized as a *blind pianist* pulls into sharp focus the frequent divergence between theoretical work in Disability Studies on the inseparability of disability and selfhood (Campbell, 2009; Garland-Thompson, 2002; Michalko, 2002; Titchkosky,

³⁹ The context for the passage I have quoted is an elucidation of Peirce's semiotic categories of Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness, and the continuities between emotion and logic.

2012), and the exigencies of lived reality for many people with disabilities, for whom “claiming” disability (Linton, 1998) is considered either to portend negative consequences, or to be a distraction from what they want to communicate in public interactions whether on or off stage (Glennie, n.d. [a & b]; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 4). Musicians with disabilities often feel compelled to assert the separateness of their disability from their musical selves in order to be taken seriously as musicians. Within the mainstream aesthetic and pedagogical practices of Western art music, performers have found it necessary to avoid being seen and heard as “different” as a necessary condition of their inclusion. When these musicians are nonetheless represented as fundamentally different, whether by the press, by fellow musicians, or by other audiences, gaps open up between the self these musicians project, and receptivity on the part of their audiences to their linguistic and musical identities. While such gaps can be understood as the locus in which "education takes place" (Biesta, 2004, p. 13), determining the extent to which any one of these gaps realizes its educative potential is fraught with complexities, as the next section of this chapter shows.

In both of my interviews with Tsujii (January 27, 2014 & April 11, 2014), the pianist expressed a marked preference for communicating musically rather than verbally. Gershon's (2010) framework for positioning musicians as public intellectuals tilts in the direction of "utopian proposals and prescriptions" for which Taruskin (2008) has faulted several scholars (Attali, 1987; Blacking, 1973; Small, 1998). For Taruskin (2008) the categorical approaches favored by Small, Blacking, and Attali reassert the very privilege and elitism against which they make strenuous pronouncements by reducing the aesthetic and cultural significance of non-Western musical traditions to their corrective effects. In the work of these scholars, musical traditions from outside the West (taken for granted as the center of musical development) are

seen and heard largely as models for a lost ethos (from the periphery) to which Western art music should return. In addition to what he identifies as their neoprimitivist proclivities, however, Taruskin faults these scholars for subscribing too readily to the kind of idealism which closely neighbors totalitarianism because of its attempt to decontaminate music, scrubbing away its real world layers of politics, social hierarchies, and marketability in order to retrieve a supposedly pure essence (Taruskin, 2008, pp. 5–6). Along similar lines, I would argue that Gershon's (2010) refusal to distinguish between musicians who simply make music, and those who talk about music for the edification of their audiences (p. 633) does not help us to understand how Tsujii's pianism might register as a form of public intellectualism. Not least among my reasons for questioning Gershon's inclusive approach is the fact that Tsujii does not use music as a vehicle through which to spur critical reflections on disability. As noted in Chapter 5, Audience Member 3 characterized this very disengagement from disability on Tsujii's part as part of his "role as an educator" (Interview, December 10, 2013), but, again, such a response must be situated within larger conversations about, and disagreements over, just how the educative role of performers with disabilities is to be construed (Abbas, Church, Frazee, & Panitch, 2004).

The educative role of performers in the concert hall raises additional questions about how well the analogy between concert halls and classrooms discussed in Chapter 2 holds up to scrutiny. As we have noted, Taruskin (1995) criticizes music history pedagogy for taking an overly didactic approach to performance, whose aims he differentiates from those of scholarly inquiry. For Taruskin (1995), treating the concert hall as a forum for classroom pedagogy collapses the necessarily different aims of musical performance and scholarship, although Taruskin carefully notes that he does not support a straightforward dichotomy between the two.

Outside the context of Western art music, Fletcher Ranney-DuBois (1985), on the other hand, takes a more open-ended approach, in the context of his study of Joan Baez' musical activism. Du Bois asks whether it is sensible "to speak of Baez teaching in her capacity as a singer" and to what extent classrooms and concert halls can be understood to overlap in their function (p. 226). Although such a framing is plausible within specific contexts, a report from 1968 about music education programs featuring the *Seattle Symphony Orchestra* in collaboration with local schools conveys the difficulties involved in pursuing an analogy between the concert hall and classroom. These difficulties must be given due attention in teasing apart the educative possibilities and limitations of Tsujii's 2013 UBC recital. The 1968 report concludes optimistically:

The concert hall can function effectively as a classroom; and perhaps just as important it can bridge the gap between music education and the 'professional' world of music, between the school music program and the real function of music in the community. (McReery, 1968, p. 111)

Missing from Gershon's (2010) argument in favor of considering all musicians as public intellectuals is a discussion of the fundamentally different contexts in which musical performance and public intellectualism, as sites of practice, often occur. This is not to say that the purposes of concert halls and classrooms cannot overlap (Taruskin, 1995). Indeed, Taruskin (1995), subtly invoking Horace's famous dictum regarding the dual purposes of poetry, namely instruction and delight, argues that musical performance (the purpose of which is to delight) and scholarship (the purpose of which is to instruct) can be complementary. But Taruskin tempers this claim by observing that instruction and delight also diverge, and that the two cannot be treated as synonymous (p. 30). Within the realm of public intellectualism, the

traditional linkage of public intellectual work to the realm of engagement with ideas, has swept musicians to the margins of intellectual discourse, a division of educational labor neatly encapsulated in Wittgenstein's aphorism which introduces Chapter 1. Although Gershon duly notes this hierarchy, his solution is to treat music as a system of meaning which "contains knowledge," supported by the claim that "the organized/emergent sounds that are music pass implicit/explicit ideas to those who hear it" (p. 628). This claim is weakly defended in his later discussion of empirical research he conducted with elementary school students about the educative role of music in their communities (p. 635).

Despite its temporal and thematic distance from the present study, DuBois' (1985) discussion offers instructive methodological parallels. In contrast to Tsujii, who wants his audiences to simply enjoy the music he performs (Interview, January 27, 2014), an approach decidedly at odds with the possibility of a musician functioning as a public intellectual, Joan Baez's work as a musician has been much more strongly inflected by political and educative agendas. Based on his interviews with the singer-songwriter, DuBois (1985) observes that Baez posited several "criteria for a good audience." A larger aim of her concerts was "to give them [her audiences] an opportunity to be confronted with ideas about non-violence and seeing human rights violations irrespective of ideology" aims which DuBois identifies as "pedagogical in purpose" (p. 228). Situated against Tsujii's rejection of the possibility that performing in schools and universities differs from performances in concert halls, as well as against his claim that he always has the same wish for his audiences, that they enjoy the music he plays (January 27, 2014), it would appear that on a traditional model of public intellectualism, Baez' career is much easier to understand.

Although the *Beyond the Screen* series aimed to guide audiences in reflecting on the questions and topics enumerated at the beginning of this chapter, my own interviews with Tsujii made it clear that the educative aims of the series were not important to him as a musician. When I asked Tsujii to share his thoughts on the question and answer session on March 8, and on his reception by the audience for that event, his response was that the experience was "nothing special," and that although he was feeling "a bit special" at that time it had nothing to do with the question and answer session itself (Interview, January 27, 2014). Instead, Tsujii discussed the recent passing of his friend and mentor Van Cliburn, the namesake of the competition in which Tsujii shared the gold medal in 2009. He also explained the personal significance of the second anniversary of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, two topics which I pursued in my follow up interview with him (April 11, 2014) and which I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

The disjuncture between my own interest as a research in Tsujii's participation in the question and answer session, and his interest in discussing these other circumstances which had great personal meaning for him raises a perplexing methodological question. In this case, the desire to pursue whatever an interview participant might find of greater relevance and personal interest in the course of a conversation risked breaking the frames of the core research problem, what was at that stage an interest in finding out how the fact of Tsujii's recital taking place at UBC, and of there being a question and answer session before the recital, shaped his experiences of being received within a university setting. Tsujii's suggestion that performing at schools and universities is not fundamentally different from performing outside of educational institutions, in more public settings such as concert halls aligns with Gershon's (2010) argument that musicians can teach their audiences through music regardless of the specific circumstances in which a performance takes place. This apparent alignment in Tsujii's perspective as a performer, and

Gershon's as a musician and scholar, became increasingly problematic as a frame of reference during the research phase of this dissertation, however, leaving me without a way to understand the relationship between the more obviously educative aims through which the *Beyond the Screen* series took shape, and Tsujii's presence as a musician whose recital was designed as the center-piece of that series, but whose own sense of his presence did not fit with these educative aims.

The question of how to relate the differing contexts in which Tsujii performs to Tsujii's own straightforward and consistent self-representation as a pianist is important to consider in understanding whether the educative aspects inhere within the music that he plays (a view consistent with the musicological literature discussed in Chapter 2 as well as with Tsujii's own perspective), or whether the educative must somehow be located in the stated aims of the performer, for example, if Tsujii were consciously to use music as a communicative medium through which to dismantle his audience's inaccurate understanding of what it means to be disabled (a definition of the educative embraced within disability arts and culture). Even my own approach which argues that the educative begins as a process in the relationship between Tsujii and his audience does not entirely resolve these complexities. The gaps between Tsujii and his actual and potential audiences are not necessarily of a kind that signals an educative interaction but, in some cases, would seem to indicate potentially irreconcilable frameworks of understanding. By way of illustration, a recent magazine profile of Tsujii demonstrates that Tsujii's blindness continues to dominate his reception in the media some six years after his Cliburn win, even in the absence of a direct reference to Tsujii as a *blind pianist* even as the pianist himself continues to resist any suggestion that his music-making is somehow different

from that of other pianists.⁴⁰ The article, originally in German, is entitled ““I do not have to see the baton””(Buhre, n.d.) and features an interview with Tsujii (conducted with the assistance of an unidentified interpreter):⁴¹

Working with an orchestra is actually not such a problem. I perceive how the conductor breathes, I don't need to see the baton in order to know where the entry is. I also perceive what the orchestra wants, it's like a wave that flows to me and that I must follow (as quoted in Buhre, n.d., para.5).⁴²

Buhre's subsequent observation is striking, upholding the historically and culturally ingrained assumption that there is something miraculous about a *blind pianist* being able to play with an orchestra, without, what is more, being able to see the conductor's gestures. Simultaneously, however, Buhre acknowledges that Tsujii himself does not share this assumption, and does not experience the mixture of fascination and anxiety which his aural interactions with the conductor produces in his audiences: "What seems like a miracle to the audience, Tsujii himself finds less complicated" (Buhre, n.d., para. 5).⁴³ In my own interviews with Tsujii, the pianist did not merely suggest that music-making is "less complicated" for him than it is often assumed to be, but that, in fact, his experience of music making feels completely natural, indeed, normal to him. Significantly, Tsujii explained that how he experiences music,

⁴⁰ The day, month, and year, of the article are not provided, but an up-coming concert on March 2016 (the year may be erroneous) featuring Tsujii and the Dresden Philharmonic is mentioned on the webpage for the article: <http://www.concerti.de/>

⁴¹ The original article is in German, and all translations from quoted passages are mine. The title, in German, is: "Ich muss den Taktstock nicht sehen können."

⁴²" Die Arbeit mit demOrchester ist eigentlich nicht so ein Problem. Ich spüre, wie der Dirigent atmet, ich muss den Taktstocknicht sehen können, um den Einsatz zu bekommen. Ich spüre auch, was die Orchestermusiker wollen, das istwie eineWelle, die zu mir fließt und der ich folgen muss.'"(as quoted in Buhre, n.d., para. 5).

⁴³"Was dem Zuschauer dabei wie ein Wunder erscheint, empfindet Tsujii selbst als weniger kompliziert" (Buhre, n.d., para. 5).

and how he moves his body when playing the piano is inseparable from his lived experiences of moving through the world (Interview, January 27, 2014). What this meant, among other things, was that Tsujii expressed discomfort when I asked him to describe his sensory, tactile, and kinesthetic experiences of playing the piano (Interview, January, 27, 2014).

Tsujii's reception as a *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* extends into the world of film because of Tsujii's appearances in several documentaries by Peter Rosen (2010, 2011, & 2013). These films narrate Tsujii's emerging career in relation to the Cliburn competition (Rosen, 2009), and, subsequently, on the international concert circuit. As such, these filmic representations raise questions about the cultural and social significance of bodily difference, documenting how Tsujii, a *pianist* became a *real pianist* through his competitive success, and his Carnegie Hall debut following that initial success (Rosen, 2011). Going further still, there is the question of how, having become a *real pianist*, Tsujii's filmic representation nonetheless continues to be sculpted by the semiotic force exerted by the sign *blind pianist*. Rosen (2013) situates Tsujii's "improbable" post-Cliburn career as part of a study of national trauma and collective memory, specifically the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, reminding us that the figure of *the blind pianist* has been an imposing presence not only beyond the screen, as it were, but also on screen. In such cases, however, the audience is left with very little understanding of the reality of making music with a disability, because of the cinematic emphasis on "the interplay that structures sound-body ideals" (Raykoff, 2014, p. 220). Chapter 4 considered how three audience members I interviewed who had seen Rosen's (2010) film about the Cliburn competition, (Theodor, Rinaldo, & Ava), focused on different aspects of the film. In the case of Theodor, what seized his interest were the social interactions between Tsujii and his host family, and the depiction of Tsujii as a pianist just like the other competitors. Theodor felt that the film

successfully shows that "there is nothing special about disability" (Interview, November 30, 2013). For Rinaldo and Ava, on the other hand, what was most remarkable about Tsujii's presence in the documentary were the excerpts of his competition performances (Theodor, Interview, December 2, 2013; Rinaldo, Interview, December 13, 2013). A common thread in their responses to Rosen's film, however, is their rejection of disability as an inseparable dimension of Tsujii's identity as a *pianist* and their interpretation of the film as expressive of the possibility to achieve this separation of sensory difference and the filmic representation of musical experience.

When I asked Tsujii how he defines his role as an educator, the pianist began by suggesting that the experience of live performance is irreplaceable, and he wants to ensure the continuation of Western art music performance (relatively) free from technological mediation. In framing his response in this way, Tsujii situates himself within a shared understanding among performers, that the performer's role is subordinate to that of the composer (Cumming, 2000; Pawlo, 2015; Taruskin, 1995). Tsujii subsequently explained that he hopes to expand the audiences for Western art music by generating interest in "what I do as a pianist" (Interview, January 27, 2014). Again, by responding thus, Tsujii claims a space within a larger community of musicians concerned about dwindling concert attendance (Barenboim & Said, 2002; Fineberg, 2006; [Julian] Johnson, 2002; Kramer, 2007). Recent musicological scholarship, however, teaches us to be skeptical towards the assumption, both on Tsujii's part and on the part of the community of performers in which he claims his place, that Western art music even needs larger audiences in the first place. Taruskin (2008), for example, is uncompromising in his criticism of this assumption, castigating proponents of Western art music for accepting without question that there is something uniquely valuable about this tradition:

Belief in its indispensability, or in its cultural superiority, is by now unrecoverable, and those who mount such arguments on its behalf morally indict themselves....What is destroying the credibility of classical music is an unacknowledged or misperceived collision of rights. (p. 332)

Extending this line of critique in another direction relevant to present purposes, scholars exploring the sociological and psychological aspects of musical practices have raised a host of questions about a core value in Western art music pedagogy, held to inhere in separating one's musical experiences from one's experiences of the world more generally:

Functionlessness [autonomy] is, perhaps paradoxically, regarded as one of the crowning achievements of Western art music. Having become free from everyday practical concerns, music could aspire to lofty ideals; it has become, for many people, a special realm of pure, abstracted, and particularly intense experience, with a spiritual or religious quality reflecting the universality of human concerns. (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010, p. 68)

On the one hand, it is precisely this autonomy from "the realm of necessity" that Dahlhaus (1987 & 1989) has linked to the educative function of music as conceived in the nineteenth century, the idea being that music educated its audience members by forcing their attention onto the musical processes unfolding in time (Dahlhaus, 1987, pp. 29–30; see also, Carroll, 2003; Nettl, 2005). On the other hand, Tsujii's insistence on directing his audiences' attention to the music, without any distractions from the contingencies of real life would seem to be antithetical to a large-scale shift in latter-day scholarship on intersections between musical and lived experiences of the world (McClary, 1990; Straus, 2011; Taruskin, 1995), retreating

instead to an outmoded separation of art and life. Further complicating all of this is Tsujii's way of construing his educative role, aligning—as the above excerpt shows—with a nineteenth century view of the educative function of music.

I turn now to a third and final consequence of this dissertation's exploration of the educative as a contested space of meaning in Tsujii's reception at UBC. Chapter 5 discussed my second interview with Rinaldo during which he explained that he left Tsujii's recital a different person, inspired by a new sense of human connection, and "better able to help people regardless of ability or disability" (Interview, March 12, 2014). The situation with Rinaldo's response to Tsujii's recital differs in a number of key respects, other than the obvious differences of historical context, from long-standing philosophical inquiries into the relationship between music and ethical transformation (Higgins, 1991 & 2012). Rather than dismissing Rinaldo's response as wrong, or even as problematic simply by virtue of its uncomfortable fit with recent scholarship, however, we may gain some understanding of its levels of complexity when we consider Rinaldo's description of self-transformation in relation to his acknowledgement, later in our interview, that beyond a certain point, critical reflection is impossible: "I don't think, I just feel" (Interview, March 12, 2014).

In Chapter 2, I discussed the philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle, and I wish to return to the latter's writings in the context of the present discussion. For Aristotle, "music's educative function is entangled with its representation of states of character." Ethical and spiritual meanings are central to Aristotle's conception: music "instructs its listeners in the manner in which they find themselves disposed to the world" ([Roger] Savage, 2010, p. 112). The task in pursuing the implications of Rinaldo's response to Tsujii from an educational perspective is to work at finding out both conscious and unconscious influences of these

philosophical traditions in how audiences define the educative in performances by musicians with disabilities, and work to historicize, when necessary, the way musicians and audiences take up these ideas in the concert hall. In other words, the sentiments that musicians with disabilities and their audiences express in response to a musical performance are not merely subjective, and idiosyncratic, but often part of larger histories of thought in which assumptions and beliefs are at work that do not align well with present day representations of disability as bodily difference, and as a valuable part of human experience (Straus, 2011).

Rinaldo's resistance to marking Tsujii's blindness is decidedly at odds with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle in which normative standards of sensory ability and corporeal integrity are vitally important. The incongruity of his subsequent, albeit unconscious invocation of ethical transformation through music with the philosophical systems that do not make room for the disabled body in music is the proper subject for the classroom. The educative possibilities experienced by Rinaldo are thus open to critical examination, and to reframing as educative limits in the context of classroom discussions between teachers and students.

A productive way to approach such classroom discussion is by juxtaposing the newer educational scholarship on music and public intellectualism discussed in Chapter 2, with older philosophical inquiries into ethical transformation through music outside the context of formal education, claiming a place for music in the formation of societies. Edward Lippmann (1963), for example, has discussed how the philosophers of antiquity bound ethics and music together, observing that a fundamental concern in their thinking was with the role of musical experiences within the life of the community. An important consequence of this approach to classroom discussion would be to understand *the educative* in music as continuous with its effects on those who participate. Rendering Rinaldo's description of personal transformation following Tsujii's

recital available for critical analysis would thus entail understanding how the musically educative has been historically continuous with more apparently subjective concerns in philosophical traditions such as those of antiquity:

The ethical value of music cannot be confined to formal education, for schooling simply foreshadows, or more usually echoes, life in general: the place of music in education should provide a view of its place in society, or in society as it once was or desires itself to be. And at the same time, social occasions not explicitly defined as educative may be of the greatest significance in molding ideals and character. (p. 193)

Whether such historical debates are consciously acknowledged or not by present-day musicians with disabilities and their audiences, or whether they are even aware of these larger debates is not ultimately the main point. For scholarly inquiry to proceed effectively, and for gaps to become spaces in which education can take place (Biesta, 2004, p. 13), it is imperative for research such as the present study to illuminate such connections, to show the ways in which the notions, ideas, sentiments, and desires which contemporary performers and audiences express have histories. Rinaldo's sense of personal transformation upon attending Tsujii's UBC recital cannot be simply accepted or rejected as either a successful example of this performance having been educative, or, conversely, as a problematic example of an audience member mistakenly believing in an outmoded and discredited association between music and ethical transformation. For educators and scholars, musicians, and audiences, it is worth asking what such ideas mean in specific contexts, and how they are shaped in unspoken ways by historical and philosophical traditions. More precisely, to what can we attribute the moral or dispositional effects which seemingly collapse time by bringing Rinaldo's twenty-first-century observations about the

salutary effects of Tsujii's recital on his (Rinaldo's) subsequent interactions with other people, into contact with Aristotle's formal philosophical system which accords music a prominent role in teaching people how to relate to each other and to the world? By raising these questions here, I gesture not to what can be accomplished in these final pages of the present study, but rather to the gap between what Rinaldo said about his experiences of Tsujii's recital during our interview, and the interpretation I have offered of Rinaldo's account of the ethical value (to borrow Lippman's formulation) of Tsujii's recital.

There is a frequent slippage in the available literature on the educative function of music, between what music itself can purportedly teach, and what human agents making music (specifically performers), can teach through music (Gershon, 2010). This slippage has not been avoided in the present study, but instead of stopping in our tracks, we can acknowledge the importance of this distinction for classroom discussions about music and public intellectualism in which musicians can teach through music (Fulcher, 2008; Gershon, 2010), and about the sensory, embodied, and cognitive meanings made available through musical experience, and which might function in educative ways (Dahlhaus, 1987; Nettl, 2005).

This section concludes by summarizing the crux of the disagreement between the mainstream contexts in which musicians with disabilities perform and are received, and the politically oriented sphere of disability arts and culture in which disability is central to the self-representation of artists and musicians (Sutherland, 1997; see also, Johnson, 2012, p. 5). In contrast to the focus in Western art music on the performance itself as educative, disability culture defines *the educative* in relation to the body, focusing attention on the disabled body as a site of oppression, as well as a neglected medium for expressive communication. Within disability culture, artistic communication through bodily movement is ascribed singular

educative possibility because of the need to undo the traditional association between movement in a disabled body and the inability to move well (Kuppers, 2014, p. 114).

And so we come to an impasse between mainstream and disability culture in defining what it means for performance to embody an educative capacity, and the next section of this chapter pursues the strengths and limitations of my research arising in this impasse. My characterization of this tension as an impasse does not undo my earlier claim that *the educative* as construed in mainstream and disability culture respectively does not split into antithetical positions. Instead, I propose to think of this impasse by extending the relational pedagogy framework elaborated by Biesta (2004), and to reflect on how an education of the sensorium (Titchkosky, 2011) can begin to take place in the multiple social, historical, cultural, and political gaps between Western art music and disability culture.

6.3 Pianists, Real Pianists, and Blind Pianists: The Possibilities and Limits of Educating the Sensorium

The second question raised in the *Beyond the Screen* series offers a useful focal point for the ensuing discussion of the strengths and limitations of this dissertation: *How can we re-imagine the teaching of music in ways that account for different approaches to learning and performance?* This section grapples with what the semiotic analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 can and cannot do to advance debates about the representational systems which frame Tsujii's reception as a *pianist, real pianist, and blind pianist*. An urgent task for both educators and students in Education, Music, and Disability Studies is to reimagine gaps in lived experience and knowledge of sensory, cognitive, and bodily difference as the starting point of teaching and learning, rather than as the end points where the disciplinary boundaries of the scholarly fields relevant to this

study require disciplined adherence to circumscribed ways of making sense of such difference (Straus, 2011, pp. 80–81; see also, Sandahl, 2003, p. 26). To that end, it will be helpful to heed Titchkosky's (2011) reminder that "categorizing embodied existence cannot be avoided. But categorizing embodied existence can also be theorized and represented differently" (p. 52). The relative absence of theories of disability as corporeal difference capable of reaching disciplines whose approaches are different from, even antithetical to the critical interventions of disability does not prevent teaching and learning embodiment *differently* but is more productively understood as the starting point for this new relational pedagogy.

Ongoing debates in Disability Studies and more recently, Disability Studies in Education, about the socio-political and educational implications of person-first versus disability-first language exemplify one such theoretical space (Danforth & Gabel, 2006; Michalko, 2002 & 2008; Titchkosky, 2011 & 2012). No less is true of the supposedly fundamental distinction between *disability artists* and *artists with disabilities* that marks the political interventions of disability culture as distinct from the normalized aesthetic sensibilities of mainstream traditions (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999; Sutherland, 1997). Resistant to binary distinctions of autonomous versus politically engaged music-making, popular versus classical idioms, and mainstream versus subculture, the ambiguous relationship between disability and selfhood (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 84) raises questions not only about what musicians with disabilities can and cannot teach about the relationship between disability and self, and disability and identity, but also about the capacity of musicians to educate their audiences through musical performance, indeed, to remake the very terms of musical experience (Cumming, 2000; Leppert, 1991; Straus, 2011). Neither Disability Studies in Music nor Disability Studies in Education offer dominant perspectives on disability. If it were not still relatively rare for performances by musicians with

disabilities in Western art music to be seen and heard as educative, rather than as verifications of a limited set of disabling tropes, audiences might actually have other means through which to see, hear, and feel disability as embodied difference.

Tsujii's implicit distinction between audiences who receive him *as simply a pianist* and those who receive him as a *blind pianist* depends on an idealized audience, a fictive audience capable of hearing, being moved by, and experiencing a physically embodied connection to the music that he plays without being distracted by the visual impact of his blindness. Far from interpreting *pianist*, *real pianist* and *blind pianist* as unitary objects of experience falling along a series of more or less straightforward oppositions, thereby producing interpretants within established categories of meaning, individual UBC audience members responded to features of Tsujii's off-stage persona and his on-stage identity as a musician in ways that sometimes position him as simultaneously a *pianist* and a *blind pianist*. At the same time, their responses show that what it means to be a *real pianist* does not depend on a tidy separation of blindness and pianism as Tsujii would have it.

Musical performance is an especially productive space for coming to grips with the presence and absence of contingent, textured, complex, contradictory, and overlapping manifestations of embodiment. Small (1998) posits a link between the temporality of musical experience, and the temporality of encounters between self and other through music (p. 140). These concerns are not well represented in current scholarship on the role of university pedagogy in affirming the educative possibilities of musical performances in which bodily differences intrude upon "the landscape of a normally disembodied status quo"(Connolly & Craig, 2005, p. 244). A notable exception in this regard is Straus' (2011) discussion of the implications for university and conservatory music pedagogy of including sensory, cognitive, and bodily

difference in classroom teaching and learning, resulting in a much more complicated landscape of musical experience (pp. 156–160).

David Gramit (2002) criticizes Small's (1998) idealization of musical performance cited above for papering over the complexities involved in actively participating in a performance. This dissertation continues the work of redesigning the "normally disembodied status quo" (Connolly & Craig, 2005, p. 244) in university pedagogy while simultaneously calling for scrutiny of theoretical assertions about the differences that "person-first" and "disability-first" language have been understood to signify. When put to empirical test through semiotic analyses of actual reception practices, the slippery, at times elusive relationship between music and public intellectualism shows that "the difference that disability makes" (to invoke the title of Michalko's 2002 book) is a vital and hitherto missing strand in locating musical performance along a continuum spanning the delightful and instructive (Taruskin, 1995), the entertaining and the educative (Gershon, 2010). Tsujii's dynamic presence within and in between the signs *pianist*, *real pianist*, and *blind pianist* bears out Gramit's (2002) description of the messiness of performance situated in time and space, and rebukes Small's (2008) abstracted contemplation of the relationality of musical performance in an idealized temporality:

Musical performance may represent idealized relationships, but it is composed of present, concrete, and often unsatisfactory ones. As a result, discourse on the concert as event can usefully be read as an attempt to rescue an ideal in the face of experience of a far more resistant network of relationships and interests. (Gramit, 2002, p. 143)

Chapters 4 and 5 reveal both the possibilities and limits of semiotic analysis for inquiring into the reception of musicians with disabilities. Tsujii's insistence that what he most desires from his audiences is that they enjoy his performances operates at a level of meaning that

Christopher Small (1986) relegates to the “surface” of musical experience (p. 8). For Small (1986), merely appreciating “the beauty of the music and the seemingly miraculous communication of ideas and emotions from one individual to another through the medium of organized sound” is inadequate (p. 8). In contrast to his later theoretical work on musical performance discussed above, Small here pursues the deeper meanings that constitute musical performance as a ritual, in which attention to the music's sensory, affective, and technical aspects must be enriched by awareness of the specific context of a performance, and tempered by the realization that a concert does not merely happen in front of an undifferentiated, and passive audience. The social relationships of a musical performance are not simply a hierarchy, in which composer, performer, and audience play roles subservient to a transcendent musical experience, but rather constitute a series of interactions in which the audience plays an active role in shaping the meaning of that experience. The analytical task thus conceived requires us to take into account the specific musician or musicians, and the specific audience whose collective presence defines the time and space of a given musical performance (Small, 1986, p. 8): for present purposes, this means that in asking about the extent to which musicians with disabilities can simultaneously perform a public intellectual role, we cannot side step this question of who the performer and audience are.

Pianists in Western art music have sometimes construed their educative roles by emphasizing the act of performing music, rather than explaining music for their audiences in ways that bear striking similarities to Tsujii’s own utterances in this regard. For example, Vladimir Horowitz, in a 1986 interview for *Aspekte*, likened giving a performance to delivering a

lecture “without words” (3m: 20s–3m: 31s).⁴⁴ Here a methodological split must be acknowledged between a specifically musical semiotics and a primarily linguistic semiotics. The former's proper subject matter is the meaning of musical signs, in which linguistic communication figures as the necessary medium through which analysis is conveyed (Agawu, 1991; Cumming, 1999 & 2000; Hatten, 1997).

In contrast, the proper subject matter of a linguistic semiotics (Peirce's own priority), are the verbal systems of meaning which are the stuff of language (Cumming, 2000). Within this latter space, cognitive modes associated with musical affect and physical response are accorded less properly educative significance. A musical semiotics would more successfully engage the assumptions and implications of Horowitz' analogy between performing music and delivering a lecture, and would encompass the technical vocabulary necessary to consider this analogy in relation to Tsujii's professed inclination towards making music rather than talking about music. In this regard, musical semiotics would offer a much more plausible methodology for teasing out the implications of Gershon's (2010) claim that musicians who simply make music can nonetheless educate their audiences through the senses, and through affective response (p. 628). However, the difficulty would then lie in conveying the results of such an analysis to a readership in Education and Disability Studies not conversant with musical semiotics.

What I could not pursue in Chapters 4 and 5 is the question of the location of the sign *public intellectual* within unmarked/marked binary systems of meaning. This is a topic which

⁴⁴ The interview was broadcast on the German television program *Aspekte* on November 9th 1986. The interviewer was Alexander U. Martens. I am grateful to ZDF Viewer Services for sending me the information about the broadcast date of the interview (personal communication, June 19th, 2015; Achim Zeilmann, personal communication, July 8, 2015). An excerpt of the interview containing Horowitz' statement quoted above is available (at the point of writing) on YouTube: https://youtu.be/Nxixsf_-2n0

nonetheless bears on analyses of the public intellectual role of musicians (Wong, 1997 & 2004). In order to reach a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in ascribing a public intellectual role to musicians with disabilities such as Nobuyuki Tsujii, it is necessary to attend to the power imbalances that course through the sign *public intellectual*. As a result of this silence in my study, the effects of inequitable power on embodied differences have not been given due measure (Wong, 2004, p. 302). In order to understand how this limits my research, a brief discussion is in order here.

Ethnomusicological analyses of the markedness of the category *intellectual* from a critical theoretical perspective have shown how racial and gendered dynamics between researcher and informants constrain and enable public intellectual activity in music. This scholarly literature considers how power decrees that particular types of musicians can be seen and heard as particular types of public intellectuals and, going further, how such dynamics position researchers relative to the musician-public intellectuals whose practices they aim to understand (Wong, 1997, p. 441). I have examined the responses of Tsujii and individual audience members in relation to the scholarly literature in Education and Disability Studies without having adequately addressed the ways in which the representational systems which structure my chosen research methods enable me to understand certain aspects of Tsujii's reception at UBC, while foreclosing my ability to understand other aspects. Foremost among the latter, I would argue, are the ways in which Tsujii's reception as a *Japanese pianist* is situated within a particular convergence between race, ethnicity, and the historical Eurocentrism of Western art music (Yoshihara, 2007). The methodological implications run deep: "Respecting one's subjects and even sharing their beliefs is nothing new; finding ways to critique and to interrogate those beliefs is the challenge, especially when the ethnographic eye is itself

implicated" (Wong, 1997, p. 454). Although this dissertation is not cast in the form of an ethnographic study, Wong's observation is relevant because critiquing the beliefs about the relationships between sensory, bodily and musical experience espoused by Tsujii and by individual audience members implicates the researcher's own eyes and ears in seeing/not seeing, hearing/not hearing difference writ large. The education which the researcher's own sensorium has received is shaped not only by disability (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 82), but also by the differences that arise in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and institutional location (Wong, 1997 & 2004; Yoshihara, 2007).

The tension between marked and unmarked signs that occupies the core of my analysis is not solely the result of a hierarchy that applies to mainstream cultural traditions such as Western art music. In disability arts and culture, mainstream artists and musicians who locate their disabilities as secondary are marked as *not disability artists* because of the absence of an openly stated political intervention. A strong sense of the disabled body as a target of oppressive practices coupled with a desire to make art and music that critiques these practices while also insisting upon disability as a fully human mode of existence "is what makes a *disability artist* different from an *artist with a disability*" (Sutherland, 1997, p. 159; emphasis added). The system of representation in this context accords privilege to those who are seen, heard, and felt to claim disability. Within mainstream art and culture, on the other hand, both *disabled performers* and *performers with disabilities* are marked within a system of representation that assumes (as unmarked) the normatively able body, and in musical performance, in particular, exalts the extraordinarily able body (Howe, 2010; Lerner, 2006; Straus, 2011; Said, 19991 & 2008). Musicians with disabilities such as Nobuyuki Tsujii, I would argue, are therefore subject not only to "hypervisibility and instant categorization" (Kuppers, 2013, p. 49) in mainstream culture, but

in disability arts and culture as well. As a result, the "claiming" (Linton, 1998) and "disavowal" (Shakespeare, 1994) of disability cannot be accurately understood within the current dichotomies that separate mainstream, popular, and subcultural practices.

Another significant limitation of this dissertation is its lack of a sufficiently developed historical arc. Debates about the educative function of musical performance are an important aspect of Western art music, and the musicological literature has explored the nineteenth century manifestations of such debates which are most directly relevant to the present study (Dahlhaus, 1987 & 1989; Gramit, 2002; Toews, 2004). Chapter 2 offered an adumbrated version of this history, noting that questions about the educative power of music ultimately hearken back to antiquity. The values embraced by Van Cliburn, and which Tsujii connected to his own work as a performer in our first interview have been insufficiently historicized in this dissertation because of necessary limitations in scope. Adding to the difficulties of analysis is the fact that these values appear in both Cliburn's and Tsujii's statements as a shared system of meaning, in which the philosophical traditions and historical debates in which they participate are not directly acknowledged. This does not mean, however, that the buried historical roots underneath what they say publicly can be ignored.

In the nineteenth century, music was considered to educate the public in the attainment of refined musical sensibilities, the cultivation of morality, and the fostering of communal, civic, and national solidarity. Commentators differed primarily on the extent to which specific composers (rather than performers) could educate the public through their music, and disagreed about what sorts of features a musical composition would need to have in order to teach the public (Dahlhaus, 1989; Toews, 2004). Pianist and scholar Charles Rosen (1998) provides a historical context for some of the ideas about the educative function of music missing from

critiques of Western art music in educational theory (Abraham, 2007; Gershon, 2010; Symes, 2006). Tracing the emergence of musical performance as a truly public occasion, Rosen shows how the development of new venues for public musical performance precipitated a shift in the value accorded to instrumental music (music without words), "a prestige it had probably not had since the time of Plato" (p. 73; see also, Carroll, 2003).

Approaching this topic through the relevant philosophical debates rather than primarily in reference to historical sources, Charles Plummeridge (2001) notes that the educative function of music has, for centuries, and across cultures and countries, been tethered to an unblinking faith that music can "improve the human condition" (p. 22). Pointing out that beliefs in music's power to transform have been met with vigorous dismissal, Plummeridge documents continuities in these philosophical debates, namely the repeated association between the cultivation of musicality, and the development of "moral rectitude" (p. 22). Modulating to a different register, Plummeridge links historical shifts to the realm of empirical methodology, observing that in the twentieth century, music and moral development was replaced by a new pairing, music and cognitive development. The questions Plummeridge asks about the verifiability of "empirical claims about the educative power of music" (p. 23) both in relation to moral and cognitive development are directly relevant to the purposes of the present discussion, pointing to the convergence of inadequate historical grounding with the methodological difficulties of making persuasive empirical arguments about what musical performance can and cannot teach performers and audiences.

Beyond the difficulty of challenging audience members to identify how and what they learn through attending a musical performance, and of locating their responses to philosophical, historical, as well as ongoing scholarly debates, there is the more fundamental difficulty involved

in conversing with audience members about the role music does or does not have in their experiences of the world:

Many people struggle when asked to summarize the contribution that music makes to their lives, and resort to comparisons with alternative activities...before asserting a preference for music as fulfilling their need for what some researchers have termed 'serious leisure.' The role of music in the lives of those who participate regularly may be hard to describe, but it is undoubtedly significant in strengthening their well-being and *sense of self*. (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010, p. 166; emphasis added)

Chapters 4 and 5 acknowledged the occasional reticence I found in conversing with both Tsujii and individual audience members about the musical dimensions of the pianist's 2013 UBC recital. At times this reticence was intensified by uncertainty over exactly how to link disability to their experiences. The individual audience members I interviewed came away from Tsujii's recital with an unchanged level of interest in and engagement with music. None of them came away with changed ideas about blindness, in particular, and disability, in general. None of the audience members I interviewed felt that their previous interest (or lack thereof) in music had been transformed by attending Tsujii's recital. This does not, however, render the results of my study inert. Stated differently, the reception of Tsujii's UBC recital is inscribed in already established discourses which his performances do not always deter, and which his presence as a musician does not always dislodge. The work of understanding the educative possibilities and limitations of his performances does not end but rather begins in ambiguity, because the relationship between disability and self, a space of "pedagogic possibility" is itself ambiguous (Titchkosky, 2012, p. 84).

6.4 Neither Simply a Pianist Nor Simply a Blind Pianist: Infinite Musical Semiosis in the Gaps Between Marked and Unmarked Interpretants

In drawing this chapter to a close, I consider possible future research directions in Education, Disability Studies in Education, and Disability Studies in Music. To advance this discussion, I discuss the recent reception of two *pianists*, the first of whom is not disabled, while the second one is not only disabled but affirms himself as a *disabled pianist*. Taken together, both vignettes suggest the critical interventions in the meaning of bodily difference in music pedagogy, and in grappling with the role of musicians and musicians with disabilities in enlarging the sphere of public intellectualism.

Yet another piano competition, yet another disavowal of disability, this time at the *XV International Tchaikovsky Competition*, reminds us of prejudice not only towards musicians with disabilities, but towards the very idea of disability as sensory, cognitive, and bodily difference in the international competitive arena. To be sure, there are fundamental differences between the reception of the 2015 Tchaikovsky competition, and that of the 2009 Cliburn. For one thing, the most recent complaints were not directed at the awarding of the top prize, but rather at what some considered to be the unfairly low ranking of fourth-prize winner Lucas Debargue (Donohoe, 2015, *Tchaikovsky backlash: A judge explains*). Second, and more importantly, however, the disavowal of disability—to use Tom Shakespeare's (1994) formulation discussed in Chapter 4—did not come from Debargue himself, unlike Tsujii's post-Cliburn rejection of the category *blind pianist*. Instead, disability was disavowed for this pianist as illustrated by the following excerpt from Ismene Brown's (2015) account of an interview with Debargue: "I met him for a long interview. *He's not autistic—he's just crazy about music, obsessive about detail*

and nuance" (para. 6; emphasis added). Complicating these immediate differences, however, one potentially instructive similarity between Debargue's and Tsujii's reception concerns the matter of learning music by ear, a practice to which Western art music is not especially hospitable.

Aural learning as practiced by Debargue and Tsujii runs counter to the pedagogical tendencies of Western art music, specifically the normalization of musical experience within a hierarchy of the senses according to which musicians are supposed to learn music visually by studying printed music, while the communicative medium of musical performance shifts the sensorial focus to the sounds encoded by notation (Lubet, 2004, & 2010; Straus, 2011). Music criticism, in this context, functions as a defensive mechanism, marking with disapproval those pianists who venture outside the norms of Western art music pedagogy: "He reeled off the pieces he'd learned by ear: including Prokofiev and Scriabin sonatas and Rachmaninov's second concerto. *Could he play them accurately? I asked. He said, the essentials are there*" (Brown, 2015, para. 6, emphasis added). In this case, Debargue's revelation that he learns music by ear leads his interlocutor to wonder whether his understanding of the music is adequate for a *real pianist*. Similarly, as we saw in Chapter 1, Scott Cantrell (2009b) calls Tsujii's musical understanding into question, because of the latter's preference for learning by means of audio recordings prepared by his teachers, rather than by tactile learning through Braille scores. Cantrell's response to Tsujii can be usefully compared and contrasted with Browne's (2015) more oblique approach to Debargue. The central assumption plays out differently in both cases, but the unifying thread binding the reception of these pianists has to do with the expectation that a *sighted pianist* (Debargue) should use his visual ability to see the music on the page, while a *blind pianist* (Tsujii), unable to see, should nonetheless use his tactile ability to feel the music on the page.

Buttressing a representational system that positions Debargue as "different" in some unspecified way from the other pianists in the competition, Brown (2015) continues: "He told me that as a lonely teenager he'd identified with David Helfgott. A super-rational French journalist covering the competition said she found him borderline weird, but I think she is just super-rational" (para. 7). Debargue himself has made no public statements in which he either locates himself on, or absents himself from the autism spectrum. Brown's (2015) disavowal on his behalf can therefore be read as a kind of gesture of assurance to her readers that Debargue's music-making is, for all its weirdness, not pathological, but fits—for the most part, acceptably—within the norms of Western art music. Brown's article could very well generate an entire dissertation in response, but I can do no more than briefly highlight its points of contact with the concerns of the present study. Debargue's reception as "not autistic" but "just crazy about music" and "borderline weird" suggests that the first question of the *Beyond the Screen* series needs to be expanded to consider how prejudices attending the culturally imagined figure of the disabled musician shape the reception of non-disabled musicians as well. Parenthetically, there is a burgeoning literature on the reception of Glenn Gould, diagnosed posthumously as having lived with Asperger's Syndrome (Straus, 2011, pp. 137–138; see also, Maloney, 2006), and the ways in which this scholarship reflects both scientific and popular representations of musicians on the autism spectrum suggests multiple avenues of inquiry. In the journalistic discourse considered above, Brown (2015) silently exhorts her readers to take the ostensible subject of her account seriously, leaning heavily on both a fictive, and stereotyped autistic musician to situate Debargue as a legitimate *real pianist* in opposition to David Helfgott, an actual person, represented fictively in the film *Shine* who has not been taken seriously as a *real pianist* (see Lubet, 2006b).

The journalistic representation of disability as detrimental to the work of being a *real pianist* shows that piano competitions constitute an important sociocultural institution for educating the sensorium through a pedagogical framework that delimits what it can mean to play the piano at a high level, and what it means to learn and experience music in acceptable ways. This is not, of course, to argue that the standards, values, and norms that structure the competitive arena and the concert circuit are inherently arbitrary and oppressive, but to remember, instead, that they are neither inevitable nor immutable (Howe, 2010; Lerner, 2010; Lubet, 2006b). Highly publicized disagreements over pianists such as Tsujii and Debargue present us with the opportunity to rethink musical performance more broadly, as a potentially educative medium in which the dominant aesthetic and sociocultural norms of Western art music are sustained and remade (Sandlin, Burdick, & Schulz, 2010, p. 1).

Tsujii and the audience members I interviewed who attended his 2013 UBC recital often struggled to explain their own relationships to music. The uncertainty and reticence I encountered both in my conversations with Tsujii, and with individual audience members when I attempted to delve into their recollections of the sensory, affective, and kinaesthetic aspects of his recital fall into line with previous research (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010). Future empirical research would therefore need to reconsider the available theoretical frameworks and methodological techniques for studying how audiences receive musicians with disabilities (Howe, 2010; Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011) in relation to how audiences interact with musicians more generally (Pitts, 2005). At the same time, if such research is to expand our understanding of the educative dimensions (possibilities and limits) of musical performance and reception conceived as relational, then a stronger grounding in current education scholarship is

indicated. Of particular importance in this regard, is finding greater clarity in the theorization of pedagogy:

Pedagogy implies...an inter-subjective encounter between two or more individuals who are compelled into a relationship, whether by intention or interpellation, and through various modes of address. This is true whether one defines pedagogy in relationship to the specific task of transferring particular skills to an individual or in relationship to broad conceptions of public intellectualism. (Gaztambide-Fernández, & Arraiz-Matute, 2013, p. 57)

The burgeoning scholarship on bodily difference of which Disability Studies in Music is the most recent manifestation suggests that the lines between autonomous and politically engaged musical practices from the standpoints of musicians, audiences, and scholars are by no means as clear cut as they might have been in the past (Clarke, Dibben, & Pitts, 2010; Raykoff, 2014; Symes, 2006; Taruskin, 1995). The blurriness of these lines has direct implications for ensuring that Education scholarship on the relationship between music and public intellectualism proceeds on a sure footing. In popular music idioms, musicians have been associated “if not precisely with public intellectualism, then with a form of social and political engagement through music, in which social criticism is transmitted musically to audiences” (Misina, 2015, p. 4). In Western art music, the role of musicians as public intellectual is similarly ambiguous, and in the case of musicians with disabilities such as Evelyn Glennie might loosely be defined as social criticism conveyed through musical experience, rather than public intellectualism in the strict sense, or in the nebulous sense offered by Gershon (2010).

Future research might consider how the strategies of claiming and disavowing disability do not merely differentiate mainstream and subculture idioms but also create gaps and fissures within a seemingly stable cultural space, and it is here by way of illustration that I would like to offer my second vignette. In contrast to Tsujii the British pianist Nicholas McCarthy claims disability, identifying himself as a *one-handed pianist* and commenting publicly on the discrimination he has faced as a disabled musician (Duerden, 2015). A personal recollection shared by the pianist for a 2015 profile in *The Independent* offers an instructive example of the sorts of discrimination that formal educational institutions visit upon people with disabilities (Lerner & Straus, 2006; Lubet, 2004 & 2010; Straus, 2011), and which other musicians within this tradition have discussed in autobiographical form (Quasthoff, 2008). A local music school to which McCarthy sought admission did not permit him even to audition. Instead, a phone conversation with the school's director came to an abrupt end when McCarthy responded to a question about how, as a *one-handed pianist*, he would play the basic technical exercises required in the program: "I told her I didn't want to play the scales; I wanted to play music...She hung up on me. I was 15 at the time, and devastated" (McCarthy, as quoted in Duerden, 2015, para. 11–12). Later, after gaining admission to London's Royal College of Music, McCarthy became "the first one-armed pianist in its 130-year history" (para. 13).

Scholarly research yet to be carried out would therefore need to grapple with the congruities and tensions between artistic practices in disability culture and mainstream culture that emerge when, for example, musicians with disabilities in Western art music either claim disability, as we have seen with Nicholas McCarthy, or come to embrace a more amorphous position with respect to disability as in Tsujii's case. In Disability and Performance Studies scholarship, there are slippages between "person-first" and "disability-first" linguistic

representation by performance artists who locate disability as integral rather than incidental to their public performances. Even so, they are not focused solely on bodily difference, but often articulate a larger concern with moving beyond disability to “whatever else they want to communicate with audiences” (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 4).

Tsujii's claim that his goal is not to teach something specific about disability or music, but rather to expand the audiences for Western art music highlights the shortcomings of Walter Gershon's (2010) argument that "*all* musicians are public intellectuals" (p. 630; emphasis in original). Future research on the role of musicians with disabilities as public intellectuals must therefore come to grips not only with the different ways that they embrace and disavow disability as part of their musical personae, but also with the different ways in which public intellectualism has been considered both to include and exclude the creative work of musicians. On one level, Evelyn Glennie and Thomas Quasthoff come much closer to the definition of musicians as public intellectuals than Tsujii in the sense that they have made public statements about disability that go beyond disavowal, and have called for audiences to re-examine their attitudes towards disability in musical performance, in education, and society (Glennie, n.d. [a & b]; Quasthoff, 2008).

The theoretical and methodological difficulties quickly multiply in this regard, however, and I can do no more than adumbrate them here. Glennie's stated position on cochlear implants, for example, runs contrary to the critiques of normalization offered by disability scholars (Campbell, 2005; Davis, 2013, p. 72). Disagreement over medical interventions aside, however, Glennie still positions herself, indirectly, as a musician-public intellectual by taking a position on this contentious issue, thereby breaking the supposedly autonomous space inhabited by music and musicians (see also, Lubet, 2006, p. 1121). The claim advanced from within critical

pedagogy that "a large segment of the Deaf culture has identified with the ideologies of the oppressor (normally hearing)" contradicts the subsequent suggestion that Deafness should not disqualify people from music "but it should be their own decision, empowered by knowledge, whether they want to pursue these activities or not" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 103; see also Cruz, 1997a & b). The dualism between oppressor and oppressed, in this context, and the vague reference to "a large segment of the Deaf culture" paradoxically undoes the very liberation and empowerment that critical pedagogy scholarship wants to achieve. If a musician such as Evelyn Glennie adopts a belief that normal hearing is valuable, it does not necessarily follow from her embrace of such a belief that she is merely falling into step with an oppressive ideology. Furthermore, absent any clear engagement with the work of actual Deaf musicians, such binaries obscure the complexities that emerge from within each side of the putative dichotomy. In Glennie's case, while she has embraced cochlear implants and a belief in normalizing Deaf music-making, she has simultaneously, and publicly, asked musicians and audiences, hearing and Deaf alike, to question foundational assumptions about what it means to experience music.

In contrast to Tsujii, then, Glennie's career is much more inclusive of a recognizably public intellectual dimension. However, even here, the distinction must not be too sharply drawn. The preface to Taruskin's (2008) *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* criticizes a long-standing distinction between the roles of academic scholar and public intellectual which helps us to understand the problems inherent in trying to locate musicians with disabilities as public intellectuals based on the extent of their critical engagement with pervasive assumptions about disability. Drawing on personal experience, Taruskin argues that the distinction between public and scholarly writing, and the different audiences they supposedly address prevented him, at least initially, from being considered a public intellectual instead of an academic, on the

familiar grounds that academic writing is too burdened with jargon to communicate beyond a highly specialist readership (Taruskin, 2008, pp. ix–x). Taruskin's discussion does not explore the legitimacy of claiming whether performers who do not write about music to any significant extent might be considered public intellectuals (Gershon, 2010, p. 633). In Taruskin's case, he inhabits the world of the performing musician, the musical scholar and public intellectual simultaneously, and understands each role to be mutually instructive (1995 & 2008).

The body in musical performance is a space of infinite semiosis, contested in the semiotic realms of aesthetics, culture, history, and education. As William Cheng (2015) reminds us, auditions from behind a screen do not solve the problem of difference being seen, heard, felt, and thought as a problem. Instead such auditions

suppress conversations about *why* anonymizing operations are needed in the first place...Throw up a screen or turn your chair around, and purport to listen solely for merit by cutting all other human variables out of the equation.... We like to think that putting on blinders means we've done right by society. This imaginative fiction lets all of us off the hook.

Yes, a meritocratic society can be virtuous and productive. Its currency is hope. But we cannot presume it's free. The cost? *People*, plural. I mean the myriad aspects that make living matter—identity, love, diversity, and the idiosyncrasies that truly make all the difference in the world. How much longer can we afford to cover up these differences by literally turning our backs on one another? (para. 9–10)

The important lesson in Cheng's protest against musical encounters that screen the bodily presence of performers out of a purported concern with evaluating musicians "solely on merit" is that the overall framing of the *Beyond the Screen* series is itself implicated in perpetuating the systems of representation in which it sought to intervene. Meritocratic screening sustains an education of the sensorium in which the absence of disability acquires the fictive reality of common sense. The *Beyond the Screen* series provided a recognizable forum for public intellectualism in the sense of scholarly conversation reaching beyond the walls of academia and providing a dialogical framework for grappling with the questions that Tsujii's recital raised for many audience members, if not for the pianist himself. The educative capacity of the series is nevertheless complicated because of the lingering questions about how the university can begin to dismantle the screens which attenuate the plurality of human experience. By situating the reception of Tsujii's UBC recital within the context of the questions asked and (un)answered through the *Beyond the Screen* series, this dissertation disorders common sense representations of public intellectualism as a verbal performance engaged with the world of ideas, concepts and as a critical project devoted to the representation of human experience in language. Nobuyuki Tsujii's musical performances as a *pianist*, *blind pianist*, and *real pianist* teach us that verbal and musical meaning shape the social, historical and cultural construction of disability, and in their repeated encounters lie both possibilities and limits for educating the sensorium anew.

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Appendix: Schedule of Interviews

Initial Interviews

Nobuyuki Tsujii, January 27th, 2014

Theodor, November 30th, 2013

Rinaldo, December 2nd, 2013

Edith, December 10th, 2013

Ava, December 13th, 2013

Yvette, December 17th, 2013⁴⁵

Otis, February 3rd, 2014

Sylvina, March 17th, 2014

Ulrich, April 10th, 2014 (Morning)

Liam, April 10th, 2014 (Afternoon)

Genara, April 23rd, 2014⁴⁶

Follow Up Interviews

Nobuyuki Tsujii, April 11th 2014

Theodor, February 24th, 2014

Rinaldo, March 12th, 2014

⁴⁵ Yvette was unable to participate in a follow up interview (personal communication, March 31st, 2014).

⁴⁶ Audience Member 10 had to reschedule our follow-up interview (personal communication, May 7th, 2014) and because of my own time constraints at the time I decided not to pursue scheduling a follow-up interview.

Edith, March 18th, 2014

Ava, March 11th, 2014

Otis, March 17th 2014

Sylvina, April 7th, 2014

Ulrich, April 24th & 25th, 2014⁴⁷

Liam, April 23rd, 2014

⁴⁷ Ulrich had to unexpectedly cut short our follow up interview, but we resumed the following day.