

Original Research Article

Comparing the Spatiality of Architecture and the Temporality of Music in the Ontological Horizon of Heidegger's Thought

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Received: 03/01/2026

Accepted: 10/06/2026

Available online: 23/08/2026

Abstract

Problem statement: The relationship between architecture and music has often been examined within the framework of formal analogies, sensory metaphors, and structural connections that are either reduced to rhythmic similarities and numerical proportions or are limited to the aesthetic experience of the audience. The central question of the research is that if architecture and music are both understood in Heidegger's thought as ways of the emergence of truth, what is the relationship between the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music, and how can this relationship open a new horizon for understanding the nature of art?

Research objective: To examine the relationship between architecture and music at a more fundamental level, within the ontological horizon of Martin Heidegger's thought, rather than focusing on formal or perceptual similarities

Research method: This research has a qualitative and analytical-interpretive aspect and, in accordance with the nature of the question, is based on the analysis of philosophical texts and a critical rereading of existing interpretations. Therefore, relying on the key concepts of Martin Heidegger's thought, especially his understanding of temporality, presence, the actuality of the artwork, and the relationship between making and inhabiting, the answer would be obtained.

Conclusion: Architecture and music are not simply two arts with different media, but two fundamental ways of realizing being; music as an art whose being unfolds in time, and architecture as one that enables the opening of space, are both understood in relation to the actuality of the work alongside the production process or the experience of the audience. Therefore, their comparison goes beyond the level of analogy only when formulated within the ontological horizon of Heidegger's thought and with a critical distance from common phenomenological readings. This conclusion can be extended to other arts, because every art represents a way of openness of existence.

Keywords: *Spatiality, Temporality, Architecture, Music, Martin Heidegger, Ontology of Art.*

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Although the relationship between architecture and music has a long record in the history of thought and art theory, it has generally been reduced to a level at which the two are either compared through formal similarities and structural proportions or

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understood in terms of the audience's perceptual and emotional experience. Within such approaches, architecture is often conceived as a "spatial" and static art in contrast to the "temporal" dynamism of music, while its ontological role in relation to time, dwelling, and the actuality of the artwork receives far less attention. Such approaches, whether in the

form of classical analogies based on number and harmony or in contemporary phenomenological formulations, generally fail to address a more fundamental level at which “the mode of realizing the being of the artwork” itself becomes problematic. The assumption that architecture and music are translatable into one another, however, has a long history. In the Western theoretical tradition, particularly since Roman antiquity, both arts were classified among the mathematical sciences, and their relationship was understood through number, proportion, and harmony. Vitruvius even regarded musical education as an essential component of architectural knowledge because, in his view, architecture, as a comprehensive discipline, incorporates the principles of other fields such as music (Christensen & Schnabel, 2010, 296). This approach, which continued throughout the Renaissance and has persisted in various forms to the present day, leaves the ontological question concerning their relationship largely unexamined.

In contrast to this reductionist approach stands the thought of Martin Heidegger. By introducing temporality as the fundamental horizon for the understanding of being, he radically criticizes the traditional metaphysical conception of time as either a linear succession of present moments or a neutral container for events (Heidegger, 1962, 39-41). Within this framework, time is not a property added to being/beings but rather the condition of possibility for their emergence and meaningfulness. Such a conception has direct implications for reconsidering the nature of architecture as an art that has often been analyzed outside the horizon of temporality.

Heidegger understands the artwork neither as an aesthetic object nor merely as a human product, but as an event through which truth emerges (Heidegger, 1971, 15-20). A “building” that has not yet reached its final realization is not yet an “architectural work”, and a “musical composition” remains incomplete until the fulfillment of its temporal realization (Dibadj, 2024, 51-52), through which truth can come into unconcealment. The

central question of this study, therefore, is: if architecture and music are both understood in Heidegger’s thought as ways of the emergence of truth, what is the relationship between the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music, and how can this relationship open a new horizon for understanding the nature of art?

Research Method

This study is qualitative and analytical-interpretive in nature and is situated within the interdisciplinary fields of architecture, music, and philosophy of art. Its objective is to explain the relationship between spatiality in architecture and temporality in music based on Martin Heidegger’s thought. The research method is grounded in the analysis of philosophical texts and the critical re-reading of existing interpretations.

• Data collection method

The data are collected through a purposive method, and the sources are organized into two principal categories: Primary sources consist of Martin Heidegger’s original works consulted through authoritative English translations. Secondary sources include philosophical and theoretical studies in the fields of architecture and music that interpret, develop, or critique Heidegger’s thought, as well as selected articles addressing phenomenology, spatiality, and the nature of architectural and musical works. The selection of these sources, employed critically rather than dependently, emphasizes studies that approach architecture and music as ontological questions.

• Data analysis method

The data are used through conceptual analysis and hermeneutic interpretation. The key concepts, such as temporality, opening, actuality of the work, inhabiting, and space, are first reconstructed within the context of Heidegger’s thought and subsequently examined comparatively in relation to architecture and music. This comparison is not intended as a formal analogy or an empirical similarity finding; rather, following Gadamer, it is undertaken as an

ontological comparison in the horizon of a unified conceptual framework (Gadamer, 2013, 268-270). Within this framework, philosophical concepts are understood in their own context, while prevalent phenomenological readings that focus primarily on lived experience or cultural meaning-making are subjected to critical reconsideration.

• **Validity of the research and its limitations**

The validity of the study is ensured through direct engagement with primary texts and the use of authoritative translations. Furthermore, in order to avoid arbitrary interpretations, key concepts are interpreted in relation to Heidegger's philosophical system as a whole rather than through selective appropriation. Nevertheless, the study is theoretical in nature and concentrates on the conceptual elucidation of architecture and music. Accordingly, it deliberately distances itself from field studies, case analysis of individual works, and investigations of audience experience, although occasional examples are introduced to facilitate the development of the argument.

Literature Review

Studies concerning the relationship between architecture and music generally are divided into two principal categories: Inside the country (Persian) studies, which have predominantly approached the subject from phenomenological, semantic, or cultural perspectives, and international studies, in which questions of art, time, space, and the work have often been examined within the horizon of Continental philosophy and Heidegger's thought.

• **Review of inside the country (persian) studies**

The article "A Comparative-Adaptive Study about the Meaning of Center According to Isfahan School and Heidegger's Thought," through Heidegger's interpretation of place, analyzes the concept of the "center" as an ontological event. Place acquires meaning only in relation to "human being-in-the-world", movement, and lived experience, while space is understood as a phenomenon dependent upon human presence rather than an abstract geometric

container (Partovi & Bagheryan, 2017, 18-19). Drawing upon Heidegger's metaphor of the "path", the authors argue that reaching the center in architecture requires passage and time tolerance (ibid., 23-24). Meaning in music likewise emerges only through the gradual process of listening. Consequently, this study provides a framework for formulating a non-analogical relationship between spatial and temporal categories.

The article "Conceptual Limits of Form in Architecture" approaches issues relevant to the present research from a different perspective. In this study, form is understood as a historically conditioned phenomenon dependent upon transformations in human thought and understanding; a perspective that implicitly situates form within the horizon of temporality and prevents its reduction to a merely spatial structure (Adeli & Nadimi, 2020, 67). Critiquing formalist and objectivist conceptions of form, the authors describe it as the outcome of perceptual, semantic, and lived forces and emphasize its multidimensional character (ibid., 56-66).

Other studies, such as "In Search of the Meaning of Home: Explaining the Physical Components Reflecting Its Meaning Through the Theoretical Lens of Phenomenology; Case Study: Hamedan Yard Houses" (Eslampour et al., 2022, 79-92), employ phenomenology to explain the experience of presence within architectural spaces. The central concern of this research is the lived experience of humans in space. While this perspective is undoubtedly important for architectural analysis, it also carries the risk of reducing spatiality to a psychological or culturally mediated domain.

Among other contributions, the article "Architecture as Absolute: Reviewing Aristotle's Metaphysics of Architecture" (Dibadj, 2024, 49-54) occupies a distinctive position. By reconsidering the relationship between potentiality and actuality in architecture and its analogy with music, the study emphasizes the priority of the actuality of the work over the process of making. Its significance lies in providing the possibility of analyzing architecture

and music at a pre-experiential level independent of audience experience, although its primary focus remains Aristotle rather than temporality in the precise sense of Heidegger.

Overall, a review of inside the country (Persian) scholarship indicates that although phenomenology and concepts derived from Heidegger have been employed in architectural analysis, they have frequently been reduced to lived experience, meaning, or narrative. Furthermore, the relationship between architecture and music is either absent from these studies or addressed only at the level of analogy. Consequently, little attention has been devoted to the parallel relationship between the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music within the horizon of Heidegger's thought.

• Review of international studies

Heidegger's thought has played a central role in the reconsideration of the nature of art. By presenting temporality as the fundamental horizon for understanding being, he demonstrates that human existence is always realized within a temporal structure (Heidegger, 1962, 39-41). This perspective appears to have provided the foundation for many international studies. For example, drawing directly upon Heidegger's distinction between chronological time and lived time, Jonathan D. Kramer argues that music does not represent time but rather creates it, situating the listening experience within the horizon of existential temporality (Kramer, 1988, 6-9). Likewise, Lawrence Kramer, employing a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach, demonstrates that meaning in music emerges through the mode of its temporal realization and the experience of listening (Kramer, 1990, 1-5). Moreover, Heidegger's conception of the artwork as an event of the emergence of truth (Heidegger, 1971, 15-20) has inspired numerous scholars to investigate music as an event whose being becomes unfolded through its temporal realization. David Lewin, for instance, within the framework of his phenomenological analysis, understands music as a network of relationships

in the process of occurring, one that acquires meaning only through time and cannot be reduced to a static structure (Lewin, 2011, 3-7). Similarly, Thomas Clifton describes musical experience as a mode of "being in time" that engages the listener within an open temporal field (Clifton, 1983, 1-4). Nevertheless, in most of these studies, music is examined independently.

Within the field of architecture, a number of studies have drawn upon Heidegger's interpretations of space and dwelling, understanding space as the opening of the possibility of inhabiting (Heidegger, 1971, 145-147). Christian Norberg-Schulz, for example, relying upon the concepts of dwelling and the identity of place, regards architecture as an art that enables human presence in the world through the opening of space and understands space as a phenomenon dependent upon the mode of human being (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5-8). Likewise, Dalibor Vesely, in his critique of technical approaches, emphasizes the understanding of architecture as a cultural-ontological event in which space takes shape through its relationship with historicity and lived experience (Vesely, 2004, 30-35).

At the hermeneutic level, the works of Gadamer and Palmer have emphasized the importance of historical and interpretive understanding in approaching philosophical and artistic texts (Gadamer, 2013; Palmer, 1969). From Gadamer's perspective, the understanding of a philosophical or artistic work is possible only when its historical development and interpretive tradition are taken into account, since every work or text carries a particular historical experience and body of knowledge without which interpretation becomes incomplete or distorted. Palmer similarly stresses openness to the horizon of meaning embodied in the text and cautions against rapid generalizations and reductionist interpretations, arguing that understanding each work requires conformity with its entire conceptual system and historical context.

In the interdisciplinary literature on architecture

and music, the structural comparisons proposed by Antoniades constitute one of the most influential approaches. Drawing upon concepts such as rhythm, proportion, repetition, theme, and formal organization, he establishes a form of analytical equivalence between them. In his view, a musical composition takes shape through the succession and development of motifs in time, while an architectural work emerges through the arrangement of geometric proportions and spatial sequences within the perception of the audience. Although Antoniades acknowledges the fundamental distinction between time and space, he metaphorically extends the temporality of music, understood as measurable succession, to the spatiality of architecture (Antoniades, 1992, 245-257). As a result, the relationship between them remains formulated within a largely static framework.

Overall, the review of international scholarship demonstrates that the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music each one has been examined independently within the horizon of Heidegger's thought. Yet, as in inside the country (Persian) studies, the conceptual, comparative, and parallel relationship between these two modes of realizing art, at an ontological level, has rarely been investigated.

Theoretical Framework

• Temporality as the fundamental horizon of understanding being

The theoretical point of departure of this study is Heidegger's conception of temporality as the fundamental horizon for understanding being. Heidegger explicitly demonstrates that time is neither an objective external framework nor a linear succession of present moments; rather, it is the fundamental structure that makes the understanding of any being possible. In his view, temporality is the condition for the emergence of meaning and the presence of being/beings, and without it no understanding of being can occur (Heidegger, 1962, 39-41).

Temporality possesses a threefold structure consisting of future², present³, and past⁴, which are understood as a dynamically intertwined whole. The importance of this insight for the analysis of art lies in the fact that a work, like human existence itself, is actualized within the horizon of such temporality rather than within the framework of chronological time (ibid., 373-377). Therefore, temporality is a mode of being that actualizes the work only through "its own realization".

The openness of being in music occurs when a musical work draws the listener into a horizon of meaning and presence that was previously inaccessible. The body of work is the place where the truth of being is revealed. (Heidegger, 1971, 40), and music, with its intrinsic temporality, creates this openness in the course of its transformation; As an illustration, in the fourth movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony, the orchestral rises and falls are not merely expressions of personal emotion; rather, they constitute the event of the disclosure of a world in which moments of silence are as meaningful as moments of sound. The listener participates in this openness and enters, together with the musical work, into the process through which being is unfolded (Bowie, 2007, 145-147).

• The artwork as the event of the opening of truth

Heidegger fundamentally criticizes the conventional aesthetic conception of art as an object of subjective experience. Instead, the artwork is understood as an event in which truth comes into unconcealment. In this sense, art is not a representation of reality but a mode of the emergence of truth (Heidegger, 1971, 15-20). Such a conception elevates art from the sphere of feeling or individual perception to an ontological level, where the artwork opens a horizon for understanding the world through its own realization.

In Heidegger's thought, the artwork is the place of a strife between world and earth: the world opens a horizon of meaning, history, and possibilities of living, while the earth continually resists complete

disclosure. This strife transforms the artwork into a live and dynamic event and prevents it from becoming static (*ibid.*, 41-45). The significance of this conception lies in the fact that questions concerning architecture and music are redirected from the issue of “what is represented” to that of “how realization occurs”.

• **The actuality of the artwork and the priority of realization over production**

One of the key concepts that enables a comparison between architecture and music at an ontological level is “actuality”, a concept rooted in the Aristotelian tradition but reinterpreted in Heidegger’s thought. By distancing himself from a merely technical understanding of “making”, Heidegger shows that an artwork attains its being only when it reaches “actuality”, rather than when the potential for its production merely exists (*Heidegger, 1962, 422*).

This insight is particularly significant both for understanding architecture and music individually and for clarifying their relationship to one another. In neither case does the being of the work reside in the intention of the maker or in the initial design; rather, it becomes established in its final realization. This priority of actuality over production allows them to be understood as modes of the realization of being, an idea that has also been emphasized in metaphysical reinterpretations of architecture (e.g. *Dibadj, 2024, 49-54*).

• **Spatiality and inhabiting: rethinking the concept of space**

In the essay “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”, Heidegger challenges the conventional metaphysical understanding of space as a neutral container in which objects are placed. According to him, space is not something that exists in advance and subsequently accommodates a building; rather, it is unfolded through the act of inhabiting itself. Human experience grants meaning to space (*Heidegger, 1971, 145-147*), and within this process, human and place are shaped together and mutually define one another.

Spatiality, in this sense, is a mode of openness that establishes the relationship between human being/beings and the world. Architecture is therefore not merely the physical organization of space but an event through which space appears as a field of presence and meaning. This understanding situates architecture within an ontological horizon, where every structure, form, and spatial arrangement reflects a particular mode of human existence in the world.

The openness of being in architecture occurs when space transcends its functional dimension and becomes a field for the disclosure of a world. Heidegger illustrates this through the example of a bridge spanning a river, a structure that brings forth the banks and the surrounding spatial totality while making dwelling possible (*ibid.*, 150-152). A contemporary example of such openness can be found in Le Corbusier’s Chapel of Notre-Dame du Haut at Ronchamp. In this work, light, form, and silence are intertwined, and space itself becomes an existential event. The walls function as modes of disclosure that establish relations between interior and exterior, earth and sky, darkness and light, transforming architecture into a participation in the emergence of being (*Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 46-48*).

• **The relationship between the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music within an ontological horizon**

Based on the foregoing theoretical considerations, music, as an art whose realization is inherently temporal, discloses truth in the horizon of temporality, while architecture makes inhabiting possible and unfolds truth in the horizon of spatiality. This distinction should not be interpreted as a difference of media or function reducible to material, tools, or sensory perception; rather, it refers directly to “the mode of being of the artwork in the world” (*Heidegger, 1971, 15-20*).

From this perspective, architecture and music are not merely two different artistic “categories” but two fundamental modes through which artistic being becomes actualized. Heidegger’s thought makes

possible a profound reconsideration of their nature and carries an important implication: the relationship among artistic domains can be formulated on the basis of their ontological equivalence, as a field in which different ways of “being-in-the-world” come into appearance.

Discussion

In Heidegger’s phenomenological understanding of art, the fundamental distinction between “being/beings” and “being” is the basis for music, by relying on the process of becoming, to take on meaning in the horizon of time, and architecture, by establishing itself in place, to be unfolded in the horizon of space. Time is the horizon that makes any understanding of being possible, since every emergence of meaning is realized through temporality (Heidegger, 1962, 39-41). Likewise, space is no longer conceived as a neutral container for objects; through inhabiting, it becomes the field of openness itself (Heidegger, 1971, 145-147). Nevertheless, Heidegger’s interpretation of the relationship between “making” and “inhabiting” has not always been adequately understood. Dibadj clarifies this distinction through a comparison between architecture and music: just as performing is not in itself equivalent to the meaningful realization of the work, making is not yet identical with inhabiting. This reflects the logic of potentiality and actuality inherited by Heidegger from Aristotle, though transformed beyond its original metaphysical framework (Dibadj, 2024, 51-54). On this basis, the comparison between the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music, as well as the possibility of extending this relationship to other arts, can be further clarified below.

• From formal analogy to ontological comparison

A considerable number of interdisciplinary studies on architecture and music have formulated their relationship on the basis of formal correspondences, numerical proportions, and a general conception of

beauty. Within such approaches, all arts are regarded as deriving from a common manifestation of beauty, differing only in their means of expression. Architecture achieves harmony through longitudinal proportions and music through sound ones. (Sadeghpour Firouzabadi & Khalilzadeh Moghadam, 2011, 106). Such analogies, however, leave unexamined the question of how the artwork itself comes into realization. Reducing form to physical structure or outward appearance is insufficient for explaining the nature of either architecture or music, since form acquires meaning only in relation to perception, historicity, and the mode of human being (Adeli & Nadimi, 2020, 56-57). This understanding highlights the necessity of an ontological comparison. The comparison between architecture and music becomes meaningful only when it is grounded not in similarities of media but in the manner through which the artwork attains actuality.

• The temporality of music; The realization of the work within the horizon of event

Music is always experienced through anticipation, recollection, and gradual realization. Nevertheless, a significant portion of interdisciplinary studies on architecture and music have framed the relationship between time and space through the distinction between “absolute music” and “program music”. According to this view, absolute music lacks representation, while program music with connotations of the other can represent meta-musical ideas, such as space, landscape, or architecture (Farahani, 2013, 16). By contrast, Heidegger’s interpretation of art is fundamentally incompatible with representational understandings of the work. This perspective has been reflected in phenomenological studies of music, where music is analyzed “as it is heard”. Musical meaning emerges through the temporal realization of listening experience (Clifton, 1983, 1-4), and music creates time rather than merely unfolding within it (Kramer, 1988, 6-9). Consequently,

the temporality of music cannot be reduced to a psychological experience in the framework of space representation. As an example, European modernist music, particularly the works of Mahler, Debussy, and Schoenberg, is especially significant. In these works, linear continuity and closed classical form give way to openness and structural suspension. This transformation is not merely a change in musical language but signals a shift in the experience of being through music, making it a place to contemplate time itself; Music intertwines the experience of anticipation, rupture, and return (Bowie, 2007, 112-115).

• **The spatiality of architecture: the disclosure of place beyond lived experience**

Architecture, on the other hand, is often analyzed through the lens of lived spatial experience (e.g. Eslampour et al., 2022, 79-92), a perspective that risks reducing spatiality to a psychological or cultural domain. Heidegger, by contrast, understands space not as a geometric container but as the outcome of the possibility of being itself (Heidegger, 1971, 145-147). Architecture opens a place as the field of human presence in the world (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, 5-8).

Heidegger's interpretation of the concept of "center" reveals that place is not a fixed point but an event of disclosure that acquires meaning only through movement, path, and human presence (Partovi & Bagheryan, 2017, 18-19). From this perspective, the center becomes a place that organizes human interaction with the environment, orientation, and spatial experience. Architectural spatiality is therefore detached from static interpretations and situated within the horizon of event and realization. As an example, the courtyard in traditional Iranian houses is particularly illuminating. It is not merely a geometric center but an intermediate space in which circulation paths, visual pauses, and surface changing from light create the conditions for meaningful presence and dwelling. As a field that regulates the relationship

between the body and spatial directions, the courtyard transforms spatiality from a purely individual experience into a structure that opens the world to inhabitation. Entrance, porch, and passageway function as disclosures of walking, seeing, and pausing, thereby granting the place its meaning within the realization of everyday life.

• **An asymmetrical analogy: the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music**

Once the spatiality of architecture and the temporality of music are established on an ontological level, a non-analogical comparison between them becomes possible. Such a comparison is neither symmetrical nor based on identification; rather, it emphasizes different modes through which truth is unfolded. Architecture, like music, can move from a merely physical condition to an eventual one in which form emerges through perception and realization (Adeli & Nadimi, 2020, 66-67). Music is intrinsically eventual, whereas architecture has the capacity to become an event. The asymmetrical character of this analogy is significant because spatiality and temporality cannot substitute for one another in terms of their structures of realization. Music cannot be "translated" into the spatiality of architecture, nor can architecture "represent" the temporality of music. Music exists only through the process of becoming, passage, and transience; its being remains perpetually suspended. In contrast, architecture, by establishing place and the possibility of permanence, creates return and orientation, and gives presence continuity.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that an interpretation grounded in the ontological horizon of Martin Heidegger's thought can provide a fundamental understanding of the relationship between architecture and music and offer a conceptual framework for comparing them based on the mode of realization of the artwork rather than structural or perceptual similarities. The temporality of

music must be understood as the mode of being of the artwork within the horizon of event, a mode realized through the tension between future, present, and past, and irreducible to the listener's psychological experience. By contrast, the spatiality of architecture is neither a geometric container nor merely a lived spatial experience; rather, it is the disclosure of the possibility of inhabiting and a mode through which existence is realized in the world. Architecture and music, therefore, are two distinct yet equivalent modes of the emergence of truth.

A further theoretical contribution of this study lies in its critique of dominant phenomenological approaches in both spheres. By focusing excessively on audience experience or cultural meaning, such approaches often reduce spatiality and temporality to subjective phenomena. From this perspective, a broader framework for interdisciplinary studies of the arts becomes possible: painting, through the placement of image and color within a field of emergence; poetry, through the tension between word and silence; theatre, through the unfolding of action on stage; and cinema, through the combination of narrative temporality and the spatiality of the frame, each brings forth a unique mode of the openness of being. What fundamentally unites them is the manner in which it discloses the work as a mode of presence prior to any human experience.

No Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there was no conflict of interest in conducting this research.

Endnots

1. Dasein
2. Zukunft
3. Gegenwart
4. Gewesenheit

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Habibdoost, M. (2026). Comparing the Spatiality of Architecture and the Temporality of Music in the Ontological Horizon of Heidegger's Thought. *Bagh-e Nazar*, 23(159), 25-34.

DOI: [10.22034/bagh.2026.570432.5973](https://doi.org/10.22034/bagh.2026.570432.5973)

URL: https://www.bagh-sj.com/article_245998.html?lang=en

