

Today, a new music is on the rise, one that can neither be expressed nor understood using the old tools, a music produced elsewhere and otherwise. It is not that music or the world have become incomprehensible: the concept of comprehension itself has changed; there has been a shift in the locus of the perception of things.

Our society mimics itself, represents and repeats itself, instead of letting us live.

But the very death of exchange and usage in music, the destruction of all simulacra in accumulation, may be bringing about a renaissance. Complex, vague, recuperated, clumsy attempts to create new status for music—*not a new music, but a new way of making music*—are today radically upsetting everything music has been up to this point. Make no mistake. This is not a return to ritual. Nor to the spectacle. Both are impossible, after the formidable pulverizing effected by the political economy over the past two centuries. No. It is the advent of a radically new form of the insertion of music into communication, one that is overturning all of the concepts of political economy and giving new meaning to the political project. The only radically different course open for knowledge and social reality. The only dimension permitting the escape from ritual dictatorship, the illusion of representation, and the silence of repetition. Music, the ultimate form of production, gives voice to this new emergence, suggesting that we designate it *composition*.

There is no communication possible between men any longer, now that the codes have been destroyed, including even the code of exchange in repetition. We are all condemned to silence—unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. That is what composing is. Doing solely for the sake of doing, without trying artificially to recreate the old codes in order to reinsert communication into them. Inventing new codes, inventing the message at the same time as the language.

Alienation is not born of production and exchange, nor of property, but of usage: the moment labor has a goal, an aim, a program set out in advance in

a code—even if this is by the producer's choice—the producer becomes a stranger to what he produces.

Composition thus appears as a negation of the division of roles and labor as constructed by the old codes. Therefore, in the final analysis, to listen to music in the network of composition is to rewrite it: "to put music into operation, to draw it toward an unknown praxis," as Roland Barthes writes in a fine text on Beethoven.¹²⁶ The listener is the operator. Composition, then, beyond the realm of music, calls into question the distinction between worker and consumer, between doing and destroying, a fundamental division of roles in all societies in which usage is defined by a code; to compose is to take pleasure in the instruments, the tools of communication, in use-time and exchange-time as lived and no longer as stockpiled.

Is composition future or past? Is there a noise that can organize the transition toward it from the gray world of repetition? Is it possible to read composition in music—if it develops—as an indication of a more general mutation affecting all of the economic and political networks?

It is the individual's conquest of his own body and potentials. It is impossible without material abundance and a certain technological level, but is not reducible to that.

Utterance - noise - Composing

Composition can only emerge from the destruction of the preceding codes. Its beginnings can be seen today, incoherent and fragile, subversive and threatened, in musicians' anxious questioning of repetition, in their works' foreshadowing of the death of the specialist, of the impossibility of the division of labor continuing as a mode of production.

The New Noise

What practice of music should be read as the real harbinger of the future? The pseudonew proliferates today, making it difficult to choose. Musicology always situates this essential fracture back at the entry of noise into music. That was indeed when provocation and blasphemy, the cry and the body, first entered the spectacle. Their entry was imperative in a world in which brutal noise was omnipresent; it did not, however, translate into a real rupture of the existing networks.

This does not constitute, therefore, a new form of popular music, but rather a new practice of music among the people. Music becomes the superfluous, the unfinished, the relational. It even ceases to be a product separable from its author. It is inscribed within a new practice of value. The labor of music is then essentially an "idleness" (D. Charles) irreducible to representation (to exchange) or to repetition (to stockpiling). It heralds the negation of the tool-oriented usage of things. By subverting objects, it heralds a new form of the collective imaginary, a reconciliation between work and play.

The essential mutation, of course, is in the relation to oneself that music makes possible. The disappearance of codes, and the destruction of the communication that took place in the sacrifice or the commercial simulacrum, at first open the way for the worker's reappropriation of his work. Not the recuperation of the product of his labor, but of his labor itself—labor to be enjoyed in its own right, its time experienced, rather than labor performed for the sake of using or exchanging its outcome. The goal of labor is no longer necessarily communication with an audience, usage by a consumer, even if they remain a possibility in the musical act of composition. The nature of production changes; the music a person likes to hear is not necessarily the same music he likes to play, much less improvise. In composition—the absence of exchange, self-communication, self-knowledge, nonexchange, self-valorization—labor is not confined within a preset program. There is a collective questioning of the goal of labor. To my knowledge, the economic organization of this form of production lacking defined goals, and the nature of the new relation it creates between man and matter, consumption-production and pleasure, have never been expressed in theory before.

In composition, to produce is first of all to take pleasure in the production of differences.

Composition does not prohibit communication. It changes the rules. It makes it a collective creation, rather than an exchange of coded messages. To express oneself is to create a code, or to plug into a code in the process of being elaborated by the other.

Composition—a labor on sounds, without a grammar, without a directing thought, a pretext for festival, in search of thoughts—is no longer a central network, an unavoidable monologue, becoming instead a real potential for relationship. It gives voice to the fact that rhythms and sounds are the supreme mode of relation between bodies once the screens of the symbolic, usage and exchange are shattered. In composition, therefore, music emerges as a relation to the body and as transcendence.

But in composition, it is no longer, as in representation, a question of marking the body; nor is it a question of producing it, as in repetition. It is a question of taking pleasure in it. That is what relationship tends toward. An exchange between bodies—through work, not through objects. This constitutes the most fundamental subversion we have outlined: to stockpile wealth no longer, to transcend it, to play for the other and by the other, to exchange the noises of bodies, to hear the noises of others in exchange for one's own, to create, in common, the code within which communication will take place. The aleatory then rejoins order. Any noise, when two people decide to invest their imaginary and their desire in it, becomes a potential relationship, future order.

Composition liberates time so that it can be lived, not stockpiled. *It is thus measured by the magnitude of the time lived by men, which takes the place time stockpiled in commodities.*

One may wonder whether a model such as this, composed of liberated time and egoistic enjoyment, is possible. And in fact, on closer inspection, seemingly insoluble problems of coherence arise: first, others' noise can create a sound of cacophony, and each difference thus created, between units of composition, may be felt as a nuisance. Second, the complementarity of productions is no longer guaranteed, because compositional choices are not confronted by a pricing system (the market in representation) or ranking (planning in repetition).

Thus this social form for the recreation of difference—assuming it does not fall back into the commodity and its rules, in other words, into representation and repetition—presupposes the coexistence of two conditions: *tolerance and autonomy*. The acceptance of other people, and the ability to do without them. That being the case, composition obviously appears as an abstract utopia, a polar mode of organization that takes on meaning at an extraordinary moment of cultural climax.

In composition, stability, in other words, differences, are perpetually called into question. Composition is inscribed not in a repetitive world, but in the permanent fragility of meaning after the disappearance of usage and exchange. It is neither a wish nor an anxiety, but the future contained in the history of the economy and in the predictive reality of music. It is already present—in its fragility and instability, in its transcendence and fortuitousness, in its requirement of tolerance and autonomy, in its estrangement from the commodity and materiality—implicit in our everyday relation to music. It is also the only utopia that is not a mask for pessimism, the only Carnival that is not a Lenten ruse.

It announces something that is perhaps the most difficult thing to accept: henceforth *there will be no more society without lack*, for the commodity is absolutely incapable of filling the void it created by suppressing ritual sacrifice, by deritualizing usage, by pulverizing all meaning, by obliging man to communicate first to himself.