

truly what it is) as simply the successor to capitalism, slightly more efficient and systematic in its normalization of men and its frantic quest for sterilized and monotonous perfection.

At a time when values are collapsing and commodities converse in place of people in an impoverished language (which in advertising is becoming increasingly musical), there is glaring evidence that the end of aesthetic codes is at hand. "The musical odyssey has come to a close, the graph is complete."¹⁵

Can we make the connections? Can we hear the crisis of society in the crisis of music? Can we understand music through its relations with money? Notwithstanding, the political economy of music is unique; only lately commodified, it soars in the immaterial. It is an economy without quantity. An aesthetics of repetition. That is why the political economy of music is not marginal, but premonitory. The noises of a society are in advance of its images and material conflicts.

Our music foretells our future. Let us lend it an ear.

Prophecy

Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things; it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future. For this reason musicians, even when officially recognized, are dangerous, disturbing, and subversive; for this reason it is impossible to separate their history from that of repression and surveillance.

Musician, priest, and officiant were in fact a single function among ancient peoples. Poet laureate of power, herald of freedom—the musician is at the same time within society, which protects, purchases, and finances him, and outside it, when he threatens it with his visions. Courtier and revolutionary: for those who care to hear the irony beneath the praise, his stage presence conceals a break. When he is reassuring, he alienates; when he is disturbing, he destroys; when he speaks too loudly, power silences him. Unless in doing so he is announcing the new clamor and glory of powers in the making.

A creator, he changes the world's reality. This is sometimes done consciously, as with Wagner, writing in 1848, the same year the *Communist Manifesto* was published:

I will destroy the existing order of things, which parts this one mankind into hostile nations, into powerful and weak, privileged and outcast, rich and poor; for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy the order of things that turns millions into slaves of a few, and these

few into slaves of their own might, own riches. I will destroy this order of things, that cuts enjoyment off from labor.¹⁶

A superb modern rallying cry by a man who, after the barricades of Dresden, would adopt “the attitude of the rebel who betrayed the rebellion” (Adorno). Another example is Berlioz’s call to insurrection:

Music, today in the flush of youth, is emancipated, free: it does as it pleases. Many of the old rules are no longer binding: they were made by inattentive observers or ordinary spirits for other ordinary spirits. New needs of the spirit, the heart, and the sense of hearing are imposing new endeavors and, in some cases, even infractions of the old laws.

Rumblings of revolution. Sounds of competing powers. Clashing noises, of which the musician is the mysterious, strange, and ambiguous forerunner—after having been long imprisoned, a captive of power.

The Musician before Capital

The musician, like music, is ambiguous. He plays a double game. He is simultaneously *musicus* and *cantor*, reproducer and prophet. If an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted, he is its historian, the reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it. This duality was already present before capital arrived to impose its own rules and prohibitions. The distinction between musician and nonmusician—which separates the group from the speech of the sorcerer—undoubtedly represents one of the very first divisions of labor, one of the very first social differentiations in the history of humanity, even predating the social hierarchy. Shaman, doctor, musician. He is one of society’s first gazes upon itself; he is one of the first catalyzers of violence and myth. I will show later that the musician is an integral part of the sacrifice process, a channeler of violence, and that the primal identity *magic-music-sacrifice-rite* expresses the musician’s position in the majority of civilizations: simultaneously *excluded* (relegated to a place near the bottom of the social hierarchy) and *superhuman* (the genius, the adored and deified star). Simultaneously a separator and an integrator.

In the civilizations of antiquity, the musician was often a slave, sometimes an untouchable. Even as late as the twentieth century, Islam prohibited believers from eating at the same table as a musician. In Persia, music was for a long time an activity restricted to prostitutes or, at least, considered shameful. But at the same time, the ancient religions produced a caste of musician-priests attached to the service of the temple, and mythology endowed musicians with super-

natural and civilizing powers. Orpheus domesticated animals and transplanted trees; Amphion attracted fish; Arion built the walls of Thebes. The medicinal powers of music made musicians into therapists: Pythagoras and Empedocles cured the possessed, and Ismenias cured sciatica. David cured Saul's madness by playing the harp.

Despite the absence of an economic hierarchy in these societies, music was inscribed with precision into their systems of power. It is a reflection of the political hierarchy. So much so that many musicologists reduce the history of music to the history of the music of the princes.

Of course, in wealthy monarchies an orchestra has always been a display of power. In China, the musical code comprised five words: Palace, Deliberation, Horn, Manifestation, Wings.¹⁷ Words of power. Words of subversion. What is more, in China the number and arrangement of the musicians indicated the position in the nobility of the lord who owned the orchestra: a square for the emperor, three rows for high dignitaries. The emperor authorized the forms of music that would assure good order within society, and prohibited those that might trouble the people. In Greece, even though there was no state supervision of music (with the exception of Sparta), and in Rome, where the emperors ensured their popularity by financing popular entertainment, music was essential to the workings of power. Throughout antiquity, then, we find the same concern for controlling music—the implicit or explicit channeler of violence, the regulator of society. Montesquieu understood this; he stated that for the Greeks music was a necessary pleasure—necessary for social pacification—and a mode of exchange—the only one compatible with good morals. He explicitly contrasted music to homosexuality and proclaimed their interchangeability:

Why should music be pitched upon as preferable to any other entertainment? It is, because of all sensible pleasures, there is none that less corrupts the soul. We blush to read in Plutarch that the Thebans, in order to soften the manners of their youth, authorized by law a passion that ought to be proscribed by all nations.¹⁸

But a subversive strain of music has always managed to survive, subterranean and pursued, the inverse image of this political channelization: popular music, an instrument of the ecstatic cult, an outburst of uncensored violence. I am referring to the Dionysian rites in Greece and Rome, and to other cults originating in Asia Minor. Here, music is a locus of subversion, a transcendence of the body. At odds with the official religions and centers of power, these rites gathered marginals together in forest clearings and caves: women, slaves, expatriates. At times society tolerated them, or attempted to integrate them into the official religion; but at other times it brutally repressed them. There was a well-known incident in Rome that ended with hundreds receiving the death sentence.

Music, the quintessential mass activity, like the crowd, is simultaneously a threat and a necessary source of legitimacy; trying to channel it is a risk that every system of power must run.

Later, Charlemagne would forge the cultural and political unity of his kingdom by imposing the universal practice of the Gregorian chant, resorting to armed force to accomplish that end. In Milan, which remained faithful to the Ambrosian liturgy, hymnals were burned in the public square. A vagabond until the end of the thirteenth century, the musician subsequently became a domestic.

Vagabond

It took centuries for music to enter commodity exchange. Throughout the Middle Ages, the jongleur remained outside society; the Church condemned him, accusing him of paganism and magical practices. His itinerant life-style made him a highly unrespectable figure, akin to the vagabond or the highwayman.

The term *jongleur*, derived from the Latin *joculare* ('to entertain'), designated both musicians (instrumentalists and vocalists) and other entertainers (mimes, acrobats, buffoons, etc.). At the time, these functions were inseparable. The jongleur had no fixed employment; he moved from place to place, offering his services in private residences. He *was* music and the spectacle of the body. He alone created it, carried it with him, and completely organized its circulation within society.

The consumers of music belonged to every social class: peasants during the cyclic festivals and at weddings; artisans and journeymen at patron-saint celebrations; and at annual banquets, the bourgeoisie, nobles. A jongleur could very well play at a country wedding one night, and the next evening in the chateau, where he would eat and sleep with the servants. The same musical message made the rounds, and at each of these occasions the repertory was identical. Popular airs were performed at court; melodies composed in the palaces made it out to the villages and, in more or less modified form, became peasant songs. In the same way, the troubadours often wrote their poems to country airs.

Except for religious music, written music had not yet appeared. The jongleurs played from memory, an unvaried selection of melodies of their own composition, either very old peasant dances drawn from all over Europe and the Near East, or songs by noblemen or men of letters. If a melody was popular, numerous texts were based on it. All these styles functioned essentially within the same structures and were used interchangeably by the jongleurs, who effected a permanent circulation between popular music and court music.

In this precapitalist world in which music was an essential form of the social circulation of information, the jongleurs could be utilized for purposes of political propaganda. As an example, Richard the Lionhearted hired jongleurs to

compose songs to his glory and to sing them in the public squares on market days. In wartime, jongleurs were often hired to compose songs against the enemy. Conversely, independent jongleurs composed songs about current events and satirical songs, and kings would forbid them to sing about certain delicate subjects, under threat of imprisonment.

We should, however, note two distinctive characteristics of the court musicians: first, certain highly learned and abstract texts of the troubadours were not sung in the villages. Second, only the courts had the means to hire, for major occasions, orchestras of jongleurs, composed of five or six musicians.

But with these two exceptions, music remained the same in the village, the marketplace, and the courts of the lords throughout the Middle Ages. The circulation of music was neither elitist nor monopolistic of creativity. The feudal world, with its polyphony, remained a world of circulation in which music in daily life was inseparable from lived time, in which it was active and not something to be watched.

In the fourteenth century, everything changed. On the one hand, church music became secularized and autonomous from the chant; it started to use an increasing number of instruments, incorporated melodies of popular and profane origin, and stopped relying exclusively on its Gregorian sources. On the other hand, the techniques of written and polyphonic music spread from court to court and distanced the courts from the people: nobles would buy musicians trained in church choirs and order them to play solemn songs to celebrate their victories, light songs for entertainment, orchestrated dances, etc. Musicians became professionals bound to a single master, *domestics*, producers of spectacles exclusively reserved for a minority.

Domestic

Within three centuries, from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, the courts had banished the jongleurs, the voice of the people, and no longer listened to anything but scored music performed by salaried musicians. Power had taken hold, becoming hierarchical and distant. A shift in vocabulary confirms this mutation: the term *jongleur* was no longer used to designate a musician, but rather *ménestrel* [“minstrel”] or *ménestrier* [also “minstrel”], from the Latin *ministerialis*, “functionary.” The musician was no longer a nomad. He had settled down, attached to a court, or was the resident of a town. When they were not domestics in the service of a lord, the minstrels organized themselves into guilds modeled after those of craftsmen or merchants, with a patron saint (St. Julian of the Minstrels), annual banquets, a retirement and disability fund, and dues set by municipal legislation. In exchange, they demanded and won a monopoly over marriages and ceremonies, shutting out the jongleurs, who were independent and often nonprofessional musicians. Since the courts had the

means to finance resident musicians whom they held under exclusive control, the musicians acquired a new social position in Western society.

Until that time, the musician had been a free craftsman at one with the people and worked indifferently at popular festivals or at the court of the lord. Afterward, he would have to sell himself entirely and exclusively to a single social class.

Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), who became flute-master to the Prussian king Frederick II after performing at town fairs, changing from jongleur to minstrel, gives a marvelous description of his experience of this mutation—from a time when music was a job like any other to a time when it was the occupation of specialists. From a time of the vagabond to a time of the domestic:

My father was a blacksmith in the village. . . . In my ninth year, he began my training in the smithy's trade; even on his deathbed he declared that I had to continue in the trade. But . . . as soon as my father died, two brothers, one of whom was a tailor and the other a musician in the court of the town of Merseburg, offered to take me in and teach me their professions; I was free to choose which I preferred to adopt. From the age of eight, when I knew not a note of music, I insisted on accompanying my brother, who served as village musician in the peasant festivals, on a German bass viol, and this music, bad as it was, dominated my preference to such a degree that all I wanted was to be a musician. So I left for my apprenticeship in August of the year 1708, in Merseburg, under the above-mentioned Justus Quantz. . . . The first instrument I had to learn was the violin; I appear to have taken great pleasure in it and to have shown great skill. Then came the oboe and the trumpet. I worked especially hard on these three instruments during my three years of apprenticeship. As for the other instruments, like the cornet, the trombone, the hunting horn, the recorder, the bassoon, the German bass viol, the viola da gamba, and who knows how many others that a good musician must be able to play, I did not neglect them. It is true that, because of the number of different instruments one has in hand, one remains something of a bungler. However, with time one acquires that knowledge of their properties which is nearly indispensable for composers, especially those who write church music. The ducal chapel of Merseburg was not exactly rich at the time. We had to perform in church and at meals as well as at the court. When I finally finished my apprenticeship in December of the year 1713, I played several solos by Corelli and Telemann for the examination. My master excused me from three-quarters of a year of apprenticeship, but on the condition that I serve him a year longer in return for only half a journeyman's allowance. In March of 1718, the "Polish Chapel" was founded, which was to have twelve members. Since eleven members had already been chosen and

they needed an oboe player, I applied and, after an examination before the chapel master, Baron von Seyferitz, I was engaged into service. The annual salary was 150 taler, with free lodging in Poland. . . . I set about seriously studying the transverse flute, which I had also worked on: for I had no fear it would bring me animosity in the circle I was in. As a result of this new occupation, I began to think more seriously about composing. At that time there were not many pieces written specifically for the flute. . . . I left Dresden in December 1741, at which time I entered the king of Prussia's service. . . . '9

Behind a mutation in the status of the musician, a rupture between two types of music.

The relations of reversibility between popular music and court music did not, however, end suddenly. Inspiration continued to circulate, to move between the classes. Since the capitalist system did not immediately replace the feudal system, the rupture between the two musical organizations was neither sudden nor total.

On the one hand, court musicians continued to draw from the popular repertory: they composed motets or masses based on songs from the streets, but they were unrecognizable in their polyphonic complexity. In the sixteenth century, collections of printed scores destined for customers in the courts—music's debut in the commercial world—offered orchestrations of popular dances and songs: "collections of songs both rustic and musical."

On the other hand, the jongleur did not disappear, and has not even to this day. Relegated to the villages, he suffered a decline in social status: he became the village minstrel, an ambulant musician who was often a beggar, or simply an amateur who knew how to sing or play the violin. But popular music no longer received much from music of the court, whose composers wrote works exclusively on demand, in particular for important events such as royal weddings, victory celebrations, coronations, funerals, or simply the visit of a foreign prince. One or two decades after its invention by the Florentine Camerata, opera became the most prominent sign of princely prestige. Every prince's marriage had its own original opera, the prologue of which would include an aria in praise of the sponsoring prince, a dedicatory epistle.

The musician, then, was from that day forward economically bound to a machine of power, political or commercial, which paid him a salary for creating what it needed to affirm its legitimacy. Like the notes of tonal music on the staff, he was cramped, chaneled. A domestic, his livelihood depended on the goodwill of the prince. The constraints on his work became imperative, immodest, similar to those a valet or cook was subjected to at the time. For example, the consistory of Arnstadt, on February 21, 1706, reproached the organist of its new church, Johann Sebastian Bach, for his private behavior:

Actum: The Organist of the New Church, Bach, is interrogated as to where he has lately been for so long and from whom he obtained leave to go.

Ille: He has been to Lübeck in order to comprehend one thing and another about his art, but had asked leave beforehand from the Superintendent.

Dominus Superintendens: He had asked only for four weeks, but had stayed about four times as long . . .

Nos: Reprove him for having hitherto made many curious variations in the chorale, and mingled many strange tones in it, and for the fact that the Congregation had been confused by it. In the future, if he wished to introduce a *tonus peregrinus*, he was told to hold it out, and not to turn too quickly to something else, or, as had hitherto been his habit, even play a *tonus contrarius*.²⁰

A petty and impossible control to which the musician would be unceasingly subjected, even if in the bourgeois world of representation that control would be more subtle, more abstract than that which plagued Bach his entire life.

For all of that, however, the musician is not a mirror of the productive relations of his time. Gesualdo and Bach do not reflect a single ideological system any more than John Cage or the Tangerine Dream. They are, and remain, witnesses of the impossible imprisonment of the visionary by power, totalitarian or otherwise.

Understanding through Music

If we wish to elaborate a theory of the relations between music and money, we must first look at the existing theories of music. Disappointment. They are a succession of innumerable typologies and are never innocent. From Aristotle's three kinds of music—"ethical" (useful for education), "of action" (which influences even those who do not know how to perform it), and "cathartic" (the aim of which is to perturb and then appease)²¹—to Spengler's distinction between "Apollonian" music (modal, monodic, with an oral tradition) and "Faustian" music (tonal, polyphonic, with a written tradition), all we find are nonfunctional categories. Today, the frenzy with which musical theories, general surveys, encyclopedias, and typologies are elaborated and torn down crystallizes the spectacle of the past. They are nothing more than signs of the anxiety of an age confronted with the disappearance of a world, the dissolution of an aesthetic, and the slipping away of knowledge. They are no more than collections of classifications with no real significance, a final effort to preserve linear order for a material in which time takes on a new dimension, inaccessible to measurement. Roland Barthes is correct when he writes that "if we examine the