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## How Classical Became Classical

[MUSI 155]

### ***P Tagg: Notes on how classical music became 'classical' (March 2002 version)***

Extract from chapter 1 ('Towards a musicology of the mass media') of forthcoming book *Ten Little Title Tunes*.

#### ***Notions of music's importance.<sup>1</sup>***

Music's importance can be summarised quantitatively in the following points:

- average inhabitants of the Western world each spend \$70 a year on music;
- their brains register music for an average of 3½ hours a day – almost 25% of their waking life;
- today's eight-year-old has heard more music than our great-grandparents heard during their entire lifetime;<sup>2</sup>
- music business turnover in industrialised nations is much larger than those nations' budgets for aid to developing countries;<sup>3</sup>
- 90% of radio time listened to consists of music while 70% of TV programming features music either visually or as underscore;<sup>4</sup>
- music, previously confined to certain social spaces, can now be heard anywhere at any time.

None of this seems to have made much impression on public education which still tends to put music somewhere together with domestic science at the bottom of the school subject heap. Not only is less time in school devoted to music than to, say, Maths or English, its teachers are also paid less in some countries while having to put in more hours than their verbal or numerical colleagues. Music teachers also tend to work on shoestring budgets

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1. Unless otherwise stated, the statistics presented in the main body of text are based on the following sources. [1] Ala, Fabbri *et al.* (1983: 464-500); [2] *Fonogrammen i kulturpolitiken* (1979); [3] regularly appearing numbers of *Kulturrådets Mediabarometer* and *Veckans Affärer* (business journal). [4] Reebee Garofalo during a lecture at Göteborg in May 1986 (see also Chapple & Garofalo 1977). It should be remembered that figures quoted in the text are *averages* and include deaf people, babies and pensioners. Dollar figures raised by 20% to 1991 levels allowing (conservatively) for inflation since 1979 (Sweden), 1986 (USA), 1985 (Italy).
  2. Observation made by Bertil Sundin, professor of music education, University of Stockholm during a lecture to music teachers, November 1984.
  3. For Sweden, see the annual 'facts and figures' section of the popular *Lilla fickdagboken* diary; source: *Statistiska årsboken* (Swedish state statistical yearbook) for previous year. The music business turnover for the USA or the UK is larger than the GNP of some developing nations.
  4. Paper on cable television delivered at seminar 'Music and the Media' by Professor Lennart Weibull, professor of mass communication studies, University of Göteborg September 1989. It should be remembered that if the average inhabitant of the industrialised world watches two hours of TV per day, one hour of that broadcast time will, on average, include some form of music.

that rule out any chance of their keeping up with all the technological and aesthetic developments in their subject. Music's share of time on the curriculum and of money to teacher and subject bears in other words little or no relation to its extracurricular importance, neither economically nor culturally. Such disparity between the real social value of music today and the low status it occupies in the hierarchy of public education can also be observed in cultural politics as well as in higher education and research.<sup>5</sup>

Of course this set of anachronisms has many other facets: one only need think of all those youngsters who, having giggled or chattered their way through music lessons at school, go home and watch, listen to, dance to and even produce copious amounts of music. But there are deeper contradictions in our tradition of knowledge that have affected the official public image and status of music. We are referring here to exclusive and restrictive notions of knowledge and musicality, as well as to the dual anachronism between the practical and theoretical aesthetics of music. Let us consider the second of these contradictions first.

### **Musicology's main dilemma**

One pole of the contradiction between the practical and theoretical aesthetics of music is the understandable suspicion of many professional musicians, not least in the popular or mass media field, against talking about the music that they quite naturally feel speaks for itself.<sup>6</sup> The other pole is occupied by the verbal discourse of traditional musicology, by its canonisation of certain forms of Central European instrumental music as 'absolute' and by its inability (or lack of will) to deal adequately with others. This impotence is particularly noticeable in contemporary education where music teachers faced with the task of preparing pupils for the sorts of cultural reality behind the popular statistics just presented derive little or no help from most of the theory and history courses they so diligently followed during their professional training.

If we are serious about the necessity of developing a musicology for contemporary society, we will have to keep on arguing with the old guard musicologists who still won't touch mass-media music with a barge pole. Such arguments may be depressing and repetitive but they do have one advan-

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5. For example, although Swedish state expenditure on music for the fiscal year 1980-81 was \$50 million, its income from VAT on musical commodities was \$150 million, a 300% profit (K. Malm, editor of *Fonogramutredningen* (Stockholm, 1979), referring to statistics for fiscal year 1980-81, gathered from *Veckans affärer* and from music industry financial reports, during a lecture at Musik i Väst, Göteborg, November 1981). Similarly, although an international association (IASPM) and journal (*Popular Music*), both devoted to the serious study of music in the mass media, have been in existence for a decade, drawing their membership and readership from a wide diversity of university disciplines and music-related professions, disciplinary and faculty boundaries still present enormous obstacles to those attempting to give music the sort of attention it deserves in cultural studies, mass communication studies, film studies, sociology, psychology etc.
  6. The understandable nonverbalness of many musicians would be an important subject to research. Unfortunately we cannot discuss the question further here, save to quote Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention (*Freak Out*, 1966): 'But maybe that's not for me to say, they only pay me here to play'.

tage: by polarising the issue it is often possible to crystallise the essence of the interlocutor's otherwise implicit tenets and thereby to understand more explicitly why so many musicologists seem to have hitherto avoided mass-media music so successfully. This insight provides then a firmer historical basis for understanding the persistence of the European art music aesthetic and enables the formulation of strategies aimed at improving the situation. What, then are the inner sanctum mysteries of traditional musicology? We will start with the holy trinity of Germanic music aesthetics.

A B Marx's *Asyle der höheren Künste* (=Sanctuary of the Higher Arts),<sup>7</sup> Hanslick's *tönend bewegte Formen* (=tonal forms in movement)<sup>8</sup> and Adorno's hit list of listening types,<sup>9</sup> though valuable as concepts fixing a certain aesthetic of European classical music, are simultaneously all notions which can be seen as culminating and connoting a process whereby music as a symbolic system became divorced from words and the representational arts.<sup>10</sup> Putting things bluntly, the followers of such *Autonomästhetik* or *Wertästhetik* that resulted from this process either condemned music, if deemed 'bad' (the sort of music most people used), to an aesthetic purgatory called 'entertainment', *Trivialmusik* or *U-Musik*<sup>11</sup> or, if deemed 'good' (the sort of music they liked), lifted it into the lofty realms of 'Art' (with a big 'A', as in 'Asylum'), i.e. *Kunstmusik*. As Ling (1984, 1986) and Stockfelt (1988:68-91) point out, it is not before the 1830s — in German Europe — that the 'classics' become 'classical' and that terms like 'masterworks' and 'great composers' first get banded about.<sup>12</sup> It would be no gross exaggeration to suggest that the vast majority of musicological discourse written since A B Marx has been devoted to constructing and propagating an arsenal of terms and methods describing and extolling the complexities of European instrumental music in the bourgeois classical tradition at the expense of all other types of music.<sup>13</sup>

In today's mass-media reality, however, this musicological tradition has major weaknesses of which we choose to mention two:<sup>14</sup>

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7. *Asyle* = asylum, sanctuary, refuge. For fuller explanation see, as discussed by Stockfelt (1988), A B Marx *Ludwig van Beethoven. Leben und Schaffen*, Verlag Otto Janke (Berlin, 1901). Stockfelt (1988:92) also cites Schumann's belief that the bourgeois parlour music was really 'der echten Heimat der Kunst' (R. Schumann *Gesammelte schriftliche über Musik und Musiker 5 Auflage*, Leipzig 1914, I: 180, cited from Fellinger: 'Die Begriffe Salon und Salonmusik in der Musikanschauung des 19. Jahrhunderts', p.135 in Dahlhaus (ed., 1967).
  8. This well-known characterisation of music is taken from Hanslick's *Vom musikalisch Schönen*, 1st ed. 1854. Swedish translation of 2nd ed. (1858; Uppsala 1955).
  9. Adorno (1941:32-48; 1976:1-20), Middleton (1990:57-60). A detailed assessment of Adorno's work, particularly in connection with his relevance to popular music scholarship, is provided by Middleton (1990:34-63).
  10. This process is described in detail by Zoltai (1970:177-261) and summarised by Tagg (1979a: 36-38). See also section 'Musical absolutism' a few pages on from the point that sent you here.
  11. German musicologists will nevertheless swear there are no negative values in the term *U-Musik*, despite the existence of clear parallels like *U-Bahn* and *U-Mensch*.
  12. For more details on how classical became 'classical', see Ling (1984, 1986; both *passim*); see also Stockfelt (1988:61-91).

1. it is totally dependent on the standard European system of musical notation and thereby incapable of dealing with music whose complexities of expression cannot be recorded or reproduced in that system of storage;
2. through its one-sided interest in functional harmony and thematic development it concentrates on 'extensional' aspects at the expense of the 'intensional' (i.e. 'sound', inflection, timbre).<sup>15</sup>

The second of these weaknesses has also impeded musicology in its development of semiotic approaches that can establish relationships between music and the rest of human behaviour, for musics like film underscore or pop songs, which for obvious reasons cannot use the lengthy processes of organic thematic development as their main compositional dynamic, must rely on clarity and complexity of immediate sounds to communicate their meaning and interest.<sup>16</sup> This need for clarity presupposes that empirically provable relationships exist between individual elements of musical structure and whatever those structures connote to listeners in a given sociocultural context. This is one reason why music for film and television, not to mention pop songs and dance music — or, for that matter, any other music that makes no bones about its semantic or social functions — are rarely studied or discussed seriously by serious scholars of 'serious' music: the conceptual and methodological tools developed for 'absolute' or 'serious' music just aren't up to the job. In short, we need to develop methods of discussing music's real rather than its officially ascribed social and aesthetic values.

There are, however, deeper ideological levels at which the evaluative aesthetics (*Wertästhetik*) of traditional musicology impedes the understanding of music in our own day and age. The relative marginalisation or novelty value of popular music in most institutions of research, higher education and public funding is perhaps the most obvious symptom of such musicology, an exclusivist tendency also involving such historical blind spots as:

1. underestimation of the cultural importance of the European bourgeois 'private' sphere and of the women presumed to populate it, this creating the impression that almost all music worth talking about from the classi-

13. For example, it became necessary for musicologists finding important values in non-European musics and needing to describe aesthetic, expressive and social practices quite different to those of European classical music to create their own subdiscipline of ethnomusicology. To this day ethnomusicologists either join the ICTM (International Council for Traditional Music) and subscribe to the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* or the Ethnomusicological Seminar and subscribe to *Ethnomusicology*, while colleagues in the classical field join the IMS (International Musicological Society) and read a plethora of musicology journals like *The Musical Quarterly* or *Music and Letters*. Those of us who also wanted to study other musics have had to start our own organisation: IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music). It's a bit like the pass laws in South Africa during apartheid, when the white minority was exempt from having to carry identity cards: the only music not obliged to produce its identity in departments of musicology is European art music, while the music of the majority must qualify itself as 'ethno', 'popular' etc.

14. These matters are dealt with in greater detail in Tagg (1979a: 36-44, 1982b: 37-69).

15. The terms *extensional* and *intensional*, launched by Chester (1970) have become everyday currency in popular music scholarship

16. Other reasons for such compositional traits are discussed under the heading 'Proletarian Subjectivity' and in Tagg (1984).

- cal era was made by men only;
2. unwillingness to face the challenge of non-notated musics in our continent's history, this creating the impression that nothing of any value existed outside the canon;
  3. disregard for any historical fact that might upset the canon.

One example of such historical disregard is the exclusion of film music from standard accounts of music's history in the Euro-North-American sphere. This may not be the most important lapse in musicology's collective memory but it is, as we shall see, particularly striking because of film music's historical antecedents *in* the European art music canon. The lapse is also of specific relevance to this book in which visual associations to music play such an important part.

## **Musical absolutism**

### **Reasons for irrationality**

The rise of instrumental music during the 'classical' period of European music history is characterised by Zoltai (1970: 193 ff.) as an expression for the 'liberation of the ego', in that the referential straitjacket of baroque aesthetics, as described in various theories of affect, could be cast aside to make way for a more direct expression of feeling in music. Diderot (1762) puts these words into the mouth of Rameau's nephew:

Passions must be strong; the musician's sensitivity must be extreme — no wit, no epigrams, no pretty conceits!<sup>17</sup>

This outburst prefigures A B Marx's 'sanctuary' by seventy years and paves the way for 'the music itself' to be pondered upon as though it were an entity separable from other forms of human expression. In this way, music became a sort of discretely packageable and marketable commodity which, along with 'the emotions' and 'individuality', could be identified as a category of human experience and activity in contradiction with social and material realities. The nephew's outburst is indeed typical of much late eighteenth-century thought, rhyming well with inchoate notions of 'free will' and 'personality' as cornerstones of the subjective in its growing conceptual opposition to the objective or of individuality and emotionality as imagined opposite poles to the social and rational. Notions of music play a central role in this historical process whereby the subject's alienation from objective social processes is not so much reflected as confirmed and even celebrated. As we shall see, such celebration pervades much nineteenth-century European musical philosophy and it is important to understand some of the reasons behind the 'subjective-objective split' which is central to the 'autonomous' music aesthetics of traditional European musicology.

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17. 'Il faut que les passions soient fortes; la tendresse du musicien doit être extrême — point d'esprit, point d'épigrammes, point de ces jolies pensées!' From 'La querelle des bouffons' in *Le neveu de Rameau* (1762). Paris: Larousse (1966: 119, lines 298-299, 304-305); see also 'La querelle' lines 98-104, 109-110, 135-141 for similar statements.

The humanist liberation of the ego from feudalist metaphysical dogma went hand in hand with the bourgeois revolutionary movement against the absolutism of the ecclesiastical and monarchist hierarchy. It is therefore hardly surprising to find musical theory of the time reflecting an unwillingness to tie down musical expression by means of verbal denotation or any other type of non-musical reference. So long as such musical (and political) ideals were emancipatory vis-a-vis an outmoded system of thought they were able to lend support to the development of new forms of music and society. But what happened when those musical forms became the rule and their fans the rulers?

As already mentioned, it was in the 1830s that words like 'Art' and 'Masterpiece' started to appear regularly in discourse on music, especially that produced by certain artists and intellectuals populating Germanic Europe.<sup>18</sup> It was first there and then that the new 'free' forms of instrumental music extolled by Rameau's nephew were dubbed 'classical', an epithet that had rarely been applied to any sort of music previously.<sup>19</sup> Having become 'classical', the once emancipatory qualities of the music — its lack of readily perceptible connection to other forms of expression and the increased freedom of emotional expression imagined as the outcome of such independence — were canonised, with the composers petrified as statues or mummified into those little white alabaster busts of composers that classical buffs used to keep on top of well-polished pianos.<sup>20</sup> The dynamic independence that instrumental music once possessed had been dynamic and independent *in relation to* other, older, forms of music that were felt to be fettered by certain types of extramusical bonding. The once 'new' music was stripped of that historicity and, in its new state of sanctity, bottled and preserved in conservatories that by 1900 had successfully eradicated anything that might upset the canon, including the ornamentation and improvisation techniques that had once been part of the tradition whose champions the same conservatories professed to be.<sup>21</sup> This left the seemingly suprasocial 'music itself' deep frozen as sacrosanct notation and recruiting a century-and-a-half of *étude*-broiler instrumentalists to perpetuate it.<sup>22</sup>

European and North American musicology, a predominantly Germanic affair for most of its history (after all, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Wagner and Brahms were all Austrian or German), developed dialectic

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18. See pp. xx-xx, above. Reasons for a certain Germanic predominance in the field of music aesthetics are provided by Zoltai (1970: 193-210).

19. For more details about how classical became 'classical', see Ling (1984, 1986; both *passim*); see also Stockfelt (1988: 61-91). As we shall see, the 'autonomous aesthetics' of 'absolute music' is really an irrational and romantic movement: 'The new art is, partly by convention, called the classical style. It was not E.T.A. Hoffmann's name for it: Haydn and Mozart were, for him, the first 'romantic' composers' (Rosen 1975: 19). Note that Hoffman (1776-1822) died before the classics became 'classical'.

20. To illustrate this point, Dahlhaus (1989: 79) includes a photo of a Beethoven statue, the composer clad in a bourgeois coat folded like a Roman toga. Some of the alabaster busts were mass produced in off-white moulded rubber. I am the proud owner of one such hollow Mendelssohn which became one of my daughter's favourite bath time toys, due to its qualities of flotation and to its ability, when squeezed, to emit large bubbles under water. (PT)

tically with the conservatories, partly providing theoretical alibis for their musical and educational practices, partly influencing those practices actively. To be blunt, if the conservatories conserved 'the music itself' in practice, musicology conserved 'the music itself' as metamusical ideology. As we saw above, the freedom of self-expression without verbal or theatrical constraint had been the revolutionary drive of the new instrumental music that was later canonised as 'classical'. Once canonised, it needed theoretical structures, including verbal discourse, that could identify its special qualities. And if the new music's emancipatory driving power had been its unfettered quality of emotional expression then this would be the most natural thing for musicology to conserve and to theorise upon. The only problem was that the new instrumental music had derived its perceived freedom of expression — its

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21. Much about classical ornamentation practice has had to be rediscovered in recent years and improvising has only really been carried on in the classical tradition by church organists. It is also worth remembering that improvisation was one of the most important creative practices of the European classical music tradition: Landini, Sweelinck, Buxtehude, Bach, Händel, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt and Franck were all renowned not only as composers but also as *improvisers*, one of Beethoven's deepest complaints about deafness being that it impaired his ability to improvise. The ideological effects of the notation fetish (notation being the only concrete form of musical storage and commodification at the time) was to forestall sacrilege upon the 'eternal values' of immutable Masterworks so that the cultural (and social) status quo of yesteryear might be preserved *in aeternam*. For more about the perversion of the European classical tradition by 'autonomous' music aesthetics, see Tagg (1989: 288-295).
22. We are indebted to Jan Ling for the expression 'piano broiler', denoting the conservatory student who, neither improvising nor composing, practises scales, Czerny études and the canonic repertoire twelve hours a day in the hopes of emerging as an acclaimed virtuoso in a saturated classical music performance labour market. This may seem like a harsh caricature, but it is less severe than what Hindemith (1952: 218, ff.) had to say of the standard conservatory mentality. He wrote: 'If imagination is the agent that, over and above the acquirement of a reliable technique, ought to direct a future composer's instruction, we must accuse the majority of our teachers of a lack of this quality' ... 'Unacceptable to them is the irregular though sometimes successful way of the nonfitting teacher, but equally repulsive to them is the composer who without any pedagogic principle and regularity just lives an exemplary musical life which is more instructive to the students than all scholastic rules. It is the average teachers' unshakable belief in the stiff corset of schedules that is supposed to keep their pedagogic posture in shape, and they do not want to see that corsets are neither salutary nor fashionable. A superregulated bureaucracy, in our everyday life a mere ridiculous nuisance, grows into a disease with frequent fatal issue when applied to the arts and their instruction.'... 'The teaching of music theory, intended to acquaint the student with the composer's working material and its treatment, has in our teaching system been degraded to a tedious educational by-product, which is presented without any relation to practical music and is accepted listlessly and practised drearily. Students majoring in theory must, as a rule, be taken as the most deplorable products of our musical education. If you are totally ungifted for playing an instrument or singing, if you don't care for music history, even if you lack the least musical talent, there is still hope for you as a theory major. You just fill several quires of staff paper with dull harmonic progressions, sour counterpoints, and finally some old motets and fugues, and in due time you will receive your degree. By that time you have, of course learned how to pound simple harmony exercises on the piano, and that is entirely sufficient for your future job. What is such a fellow's future job? What else could he become but a theory teacher? For him the corset of scholastic regulations is not mere support: it is' ... 'the only way of keeping him upright. Hunting consecutive fifths is one of his favourite activities and on the fifteenth of November each year he reaches the six-four chord with his beginners' classes.' ... [It is absurd to believe] 'that rigid scholastic regulation by marks, credits, and all other frozen procedures of an outdated system can produce composers and theorists of a quality that our music-minded society has a right to demand.'

own internal 'musical' rhetoric and drama, so to speak — not only by virtue of being devoid of words and dramatic narrative, but also directly *from* words and dramatic action that similar music had accompanied. To put things simply: when music went instrumental and crossed the street from the opera house or theatre, it carried those dramatic references, meanings and structures with it into the concert hall. Rosen's account (1976:155) of the development of the classical Viennese symphony underlines this same point:

... 'the application of dramatic technique and structure to 'absolute' music' ... 'was the natural outcome of an age which saw the development of the symphonic concert as a public event. The symphony was forced to become a dramatic performance, and it accordingly developed not only something like a plot, with a climax and a dénouement, but also a unity of tone, character and action it had only partially reached before'.

This dramatic influence is particularly clear in crossovers between theatre and concert hall, as in Mozart's works where means of expression applied in recitatives and arias turn up regularly in quartets and symphonies. And the following rondo *fürs Fortepiano* by C.P.E Bach, devoid of thematic development in the classical sense, would lose all its obvious humour and expressive power if its audience had no clear idea of what each dramatic cell 'meant' (the rising minor arpeggio, the *piano* diminished sevenths, the virtuoso fantasia/toccata interruptions, the sudden D $\flat$  Neapolitan chord etc.).

**Ex. 1. C P E Bach: Rondo in C minor fürs Fortepiano**

How anyone can make any sense out of this piece of 'absolute' music (atomised *Sturm und Drang* expressionism if ever there was) without access to the vocabulary of baroque affects is hard to understand. After all, father Bach, with his passions and cantatas, had only been dead for some thirty years, i.e. the same sort of time that elapsed between Chuck Berry's *Roll Over Beethoven* (1956) and Aerosmith's *Janie's Got A Gun* (1989) or between The Kinks' *Sunny Afternoon* (1966) and Blur's *Park Life* (1996). Of course, Mozart could not hear Bach perform on recordings as we can hear the young Kinks or Chuck Berry, but current ease of access to music of the past on phonogram is counterbalanced by the speed at which musical ideas spread in the late twentieth century compared to the rate of change and the state of the media two centuries ago. The point is that whereas no popular music researcher or critic would claim the musical language of Chuck Berry in 1956 to be irrelevant in 1989 or that of the Kinks to be incomprehensible in 1996, such argumentation seems often to be applied by historians of European art music to the change from baroque into classical. In fact, historical relativity was apparently of little interest to nineteenth-century Germanic intellectuals with an interest in music who, in their zeal for 'liberty of expression' saw and heard such freedom almost exclusively in the instrumental concert-hall music of their day — music that was 'strong feelings' and 'no intellect', to revert to the slogan used by Rameau's nephew.

Now, intellectual justification for a 'strong-feelings-and-no-intellect' attitude to music requires either that you develop a verbal discourse based on inter-musician technical jargon, or that you make as few references as possible to any concrete extramusical phenomena, or that you run a combination of both. Old-style musicology tended to rank music according to principles of ostensible absence of referentiality: consequently chart toppers in musicology's aesthetic hot hundred have been mainly instrumental numbers (string quartets, symphonies, concertos), while, with the exception of a few *Lieder*, music explicitly related to words, dance, dramatic action, visual imagery etc. (e.g. programme music, tone poems) have rarely made the top ten. The lower status of music for the stage in this aesthetic hierarchy may also be attributed to the fact that whereas the 'purely musical' composition was commodified as notation from which you could reconstruct the sonic events, ballet and opera, as both visual and auditory events, remained virtually uncommodifiable until the video age. Whatever the case, Hegel made the autonomous aesthetic hit parade criteria quite clear by drawing the following distinction:

'What the layman (*Laie*) likes in music is the comprehensible expression of emotions and ideas, something substantial, its contents, for which reason he prefers accompanimental music (*Begleitmusik*); the connoisseur (*Kenner*), on the other hand, who has access to the inner musical relation of tones and instruments, likes instrumental music for its artistic use of harmonies and of melodic intricacy as well as for its changing forms; he can be quite fulfilled by the music on its own'.<sup>23</sup>

These ideas symbolise what later turns into the apotheosis of instrumental music of the Viennese school (Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven). It represents an

'autonomous' aesthetics of music and heralds in the notion of 'absolute music'.<sup>24</sup> It implies a historical decontextualisation of the 'new' music's 'independent' qualities and has been with us more or less ever since. In fact, it seems to be so entrenched in many musicological circles, with expressions like 'absolute music' and '*musica autonoma*' still in current usage, that it is worth casting a philological eye on the matter.<sup>25</sup>

### **The meaning of 'absolute'**

Of course, anything 'absolute' or 'autonomous' produced by humans will only be so in relation to something or someone else that is not dubbed with those epithets, otherwise there would be no need to use the words. This postulate, also applicable to the notion of 'absolute music' and its ilk, is supported by dictionary definitions of the two adjectives that make least nonsense qualifying the noun 'music':<sup>26</sup>

*absolute* 1. not dependent on, conditioned by, or relative to anything else; independent. 2. pure, unmixed: e.g. pure alcohol.

*autonomous*. independent of others.

Saying 'autonomous' or 'absolute' about music should therefore mean that the music thus qualified is independent of other music, that it is neither dependent on nor conditioned by nor relative to anything else and that it is 'pure music', not mixed with anything else.

One problem here is that not even the most adamant musical absolutist would, if asked explicitly for an opinion, tell you that as 'absolute' a music as Beethoven's late quartets were totally independent of the musical tradition to which their composer belonged. This must mean that although 'absolute' music is dependent on the existence of other 'absolute' music for its

23. Cited in Zoltai (1970:260; original source Hegel *Ästhetik*, Berlin 1955). The original German runs as follows. 'Der *Laie* liebt in der Musik vornehmlich den verständlichen Ausdruck von Empfindungen und Vorstellungen, das Stoffartige, der Inhalt, und wendet sich daher vorzugsweise der begleitenden Musik zu; der *Kenner* dagegen, dem die inneren musikalischen Verhältnisse der Töne und Instrumente zugänglich sind, liebt die Instrumentalmusik in ihrem kunstgemäßen Gebrauch der Harmonien und melodischen Verschlingungen und wechseldenen Formen; er wird durch die Musik selbst ganz ausgefüllt.' Please note that Hegel included vocal music under *Begleitmusik* (translated as 'accompanimental music').

24. Hence also the canonic repertoire of string quartets and symphony orchestras that still rely on Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven for their staple diet. Hence also the conservatory tradition of instrumental training where playing from the score, not improvising, is the order of the day. This historically frozen view of music aesthetics has remained so solid since the middle of the last century that musicologists studying any other music than the European 'classical' tradition must present pass cards identifying them as 'ethnomusicologists' or 'popular music scholars'

25. An example: at the *Musica e cinema* conference in Siena, August 1990, I heard the following pairs of opposites: *musica popolare* v. *musica colta* in the sense of functional music v. autonomous music and *musica per il cinema* v. *musica 'musica'*!. (PT)

26. Except where otherwise stated, all English dictionary definitions are from *The New Collins Concise English Dictionary* (London, 1982). The other definitions for 'absolute' are (1) 'complete, perfect' (goes a bit too far, even for the most intransigent classical buff); (2) 'free from limitations, restrictions or exceptions' (definitely inapplicable to classical music); (3) 'undoubted, certain' (might just as well qualify popular marches or rap music as classical music). The other meanings are grammatical (ablative absolutes etc.). Other meanings for 'autonomous' are either specifically political or biological.

own identity, it can nevertheless remain 'absolute' in the sense that it is imagined as unrelated to anything else *except* other music. This too is problematic for a number of reasons over and above those already presented.

The first is that the explicit negation of connection to or interference from anything else except music logically implies, on the part of those applying the adjectives 'pure' or 'autonomous' or 'absolute' to the noun 'music', a need to distinguish the music thus qualified from music that is *not* seen as warranting those adjectives or as warranting different adjectives. This makes the 'absolute' music dependent on the existence of 'unabsolute' music for its identity as 'absolute' music. Since any 'unabsolute' music must, at least by inference, be related to both other music and to things outside music, 'absolute' music must also, even if only indirectly, be related to things outside music, thanks to its obvious relation to 'unabsolute' music. Moreover, since those distinguishing one type of music from others by the qualifiers 'autonomous' or 'absolute' in no way make up the entire population, they are one of many other well-defined sociocultural groups identifiable by specific musical tastes and opinions.<sup>27</sup> Through such social connotation, a term like 'absolute music' refers to the sociocultural position, tastes, attitudes and behaviour of those that use it. It thereby identifies not only the music in relation to other music but also its users in relation to users of other music. By consequence of such unavoidable reference, music qualified as 'autonomous' or 'absolute' is an obvious contradiction in terms.<sup>28</sup>

The second reason for questioning concepts of musical 'autonomy' is related to the first and concerns the spin-off notion of 'the music itself'.<sup>29</sup> 'Absolute music' and 'the music itself' both imply that (some) music, apart from being able to transcend social connotations and uses, can also transcend biologically as well as culturally established patterns of synaesthesia. This would mean that demonstrable patterns of juxtaposition between music and pictures, between music and words or between music and bodily movement (as in film, opera, *Lieder*, ballet, not to mention pop songs, adverts, videos and popular forms of dancing) could never exert any influence on the composition and perception of 'absolute' music and vice versa. Moreover, if 'absolute' music were truly absolute, it would need no elements of biologically or culturally acquired synaesthesia to exist, with the consequence that 'unabsolute' music played in an 'absolute music' situation could have no 'absolute' music value, this turning those frequent performances of opera overtures in concert halls into anomalous absurdities. Conversely, 'absolute' music played in connection with anything but itself or other music would also be

27. Without this fact of sociology, the US format radio system, including classical stations, would fall apart. Music is renowned as a reliable indicator of other social and cultural patterns. See Denisoff & Peterson (ed., 1972: 4-5) or any number of *The Broadcasting Yearbook of America* or Karshner (1972) for the lowdown on 'demographics'.

28. See Silberman (1963: 179-199) on the social behaviour of classical concert-goers.

29. When distinguishing music as sounding structure from other objects and phenomena, we have tried to use the expression 'musical structure(s)', fully aware that we are denoting a culturally relative, culturally determined set of physical objects and not the physical (acoustic) objects themselves. This is because we are dealing with questions of meaning in music and because the question of relations between acoustic parameters and musically (culturally) meaningful parameters is way beyond the scope of this work.

pointless because its 'autonomy' would logically preclude any synaesthetic possibilities of perception. This would imply that the Taviani brothers were deluded when they included snippets from the slow movement of Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto in A* as underscore to scenes of deep emotion and dignity in *Padre Padrone*; it ought also to mean that Kubrick totally misunderstands the true values of European art music in *2001, A Clockwork Orange* or *The Shining* and that people must be declared musically incompetent if they respond to the *Elvira Madigan* effect.<sup>30</sup>

The third (and last) main problem with 'musical autonomy' is related to the first two and concerns those who listen to and compose 'absolute music'. We have already stated that the 'absolute' music fans are also members of society (social subjects forming at the same time an objective group by virtue of their intersubjectivity) and that the cultural group they constitute stamps 'their' music willy-nilly with the social connotations of their group, this rendering the 'absolute' music socially relative vis-a-vis other music and its users. Composers, however recluse or deaf, are of course also both social subjects *and* objects living in given historical contexts.<sup>31</sup> Their creative activity draws on a combination of affectivity and specific skills, neither of which can be severed from the context in which they exist: the music and ideas of the time and their tradition, the composers' personal / social history and the personal / social histories of the people that hear their works. The point may seem trite in view of the obvious changes in style and aesthetic values between different periods in the history of European 'classical' music, changes related to (though not necessarily coinciding with) those in other forms of human expression.

In short: if music called 'absolute' or 'autonomous' has ever had social connotations, if it has ever been written or played in given historical contexts by certain composers and certain musicians, if it has ever been heard in particular social contexts by a certain type of audience, if it has ever been related to drama, words or dance, then it cannot exist as 'pure', 'absolute' or 'autonomous'. Qualified in such a way, it can therefore only exist illogically, as indeed it does, haunting the corridors of many a learned music institution to this very day. How can such a muddled notion be so resilient?

To answer this question we have to understand why the conceptual disjunction of music from other symbolic systems was originally such an important (and natural) process and then compare that historical function with the role played by the aesthetics of 'musical autonomy' in more recent years.

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30. The first synaesthetic objection would disqualify E.T.A. Hoffmann outright. He once wrote that 'listening to Haydn was like taking a walk in the country' (Rosen 1976: 162). The second synaesthetic objection would make the use of Ligeti in 2001 (*not* the R or J Strauss pieces — they are tone poem and waltz respectively) or of Beethoven in *A Clockwork Orange* or Mozart in *Elvira Madigan* or Leonard Rosenman's arrangements of Händel in *Barry Lyndon* totally meaningless

31. i.e. the 'times': society, politics, religion, education, family, friends, technology, state of and attitude to nature, work, leisure etc. and all the other elements that vary from one historical context to another. Even individuals who feel they live *outside* their times nevertheless live *in* the times that make them feel out of them. Their experience of alienation would not be possible if they were not living in the context that caused it.

## **Musical metaphysics and patterns of subjectivity**

### **Affect Theory, the Enlightenment and musical metaphysics**

It is possible, as we have already suggested, to view the rise of Central European instrumental music in the context of the age of Enlightenment, natural science, rationalism and the bourgeois revolution. The emancipatory values of these developments in our tradition of knowledge are obvious and the subjective experience of such emancipation found collective expression not only in emotive slogans like *liberté, égalité, fraternité* but also in a music that was liberated from its earlier bonds — having had to make music under the constraints of feudal patronage and the baroque Theory of Affects (*Affektenlehre*).<sup>32</sup> This conceptual collocation of instrumental music with the liberation of the ego (individual, personality, subject) is, however, only part of the story, because the Enlightenment, in that it attempted to explain everything from God to gravity on the basis of material evidence, had also tried to explain music in relation to the 'natural world'.<sup>33</sup>

Now, since mechanistic notions of 'natural' sounds being 'reflected' or 'imitated' in music are so clearly unsatisfactory, music theorists of the Enlightenment basically sought to explain how the sounds of music relate to natural human feelings.<sup>34</sup> Mattheson (1739:17) puts the matter in the following terms.

The movement of the heart is ... founded, i.e. has its cause and origin, not in the mere sounds ... that can as such be measured, classified and put down on paper, but in the many and various concepts that the spirit (*Gemüth*), according to numerous different circumstances, associates with those sounds. And who will say that such spiritual concepts are mathematical? Because the soul, as a spirit, is moved emotionally. By what? Surely not by the sounds themselves, nor by their size, form and shape alone; but rather their skilful, ever-inventive and inexhaustible combination, variation and utilisation: they can be mixed together or left alone, they can enter or exit, ascend or descend, leap and bound, tarry or hurry on, turn around, be loud, soft or intense, with ordinary or extraordinary movement, they can appease or delay, be calm and a thousand other things that no circle, no ruler and no yardstick, save the more noble, more inward part of Man, can understand and bear witness to, if he has been taught and tutored by *Nature and Experience*.<sup>35</sup>

Mattheson's arguments here, by rejecting the approach of musical mathematics, rhyme well with those of many other aestheticians of the age of En-

32. Mozart's ultimate freelancing and masonic involvement are the most familiar examples of this quest for social and artistic liberty, cf. Dent (1962:58-69, 132-166).

33. 'Natural world': here in the eighteenth-century sense of an objective reality independent of human action or thought (cf. *The New Collins Concise English Dictionary*, London 1982). Zoltai (1979:179) summarises the idea in the following terms: 'the point of the Enlightenment's affect aesthetics was to make the demythologising concept of nature immediately applicable' [to music]. ('Die Affektenästhetik der Aufklärung ging nu dazu über, die entmythologisierte Naturauffassung unmittelbar geltend zu machen'). By 'theory of affects' we are referring to the sort of *Musikalisch-rhetorische Figuren*: αναβασεις, υποστασεις, κυκλωσεις, επιξενεις *saltus duriusculus, exclamatio* etc, explained by Schmitz (1955) or as set forth in the works of Kircher (1650) and Mattheson (1739).

34. The terms 'imitation' or *Nachahmung* derive from the Aristotlean concept of μιμησις. The most usual German word for such relations between the extrageneric world and the symbols of the symbolic system is *Wiederspiegelung* ('reflection'), see Riethmüller (1976).

lightenment in their separation of the conscious — *Bewußtsein*, science, the 'objective' world — from the self-conscious — *Selbstbewußtsein*, Art, the 'subjective' sphere. Hence, the 'nature' to which Mattheson, as a man of the Enlightenment, argues that music is related, is not the external 'nature' of the material world studied by 'natural' science, but the internal 'human nature' of the individual, more explicitly the emotions or *affects*.<sup>36</sup> This was no anti-rationalist attempt on Mattheson's part to set up a state of opposition between scientific logic and human feelings; on the contrary, Mattheson believed that music, from its total form right down to the tiniest detail, referred unambiguously to varying aspects of human nature (feelings, states of

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35. Mattheson: *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister VI* (1739: 17), quoted by Zoltai *loc. cit.* 'Gemüth: (state of) mind, soul, heart, disposition, nature, temperament, spirit, feeling'. (*Cassell's German Dictionary*, London 1978). The complete Mattheson quote runs: 'Des Herzens Bewegung hat ... ihren Grund, d.i. ihre Ursache, ihren Ursprung nimmermehr in den bloßen Klängen ... wie sie da, an und für sich selbst, abgemessen, eingetheilet, hingesezt und geschrieben werden; sondern in der sehr verschiedenen Begriffen, die das Gemüth, den vielfältigen Umständen nach, mit ihnen verbindet. Wer wird aber wol sagen, daß solche geistige Begriffe mathe matisch sind? Denn die Seele, als ein Geist, wird empfindlich geühet. Wodurch? wahrlich nicht durch die Klänge an und für sich, noch durch ihre Größe, Gestalt und Figur allein; sondern hauptsächlich durch deren geschickte, immer neuersonnene, und unerschöpfliche Zusammenfügung, Abwechslung, Anwendung, Mischung, Eigenschafft, Ab- und Einführung, Erhöhung, Tiefe, Schritte, Sprünge, Verweilung, Beschleunigung, Wendung, Stärke, Schwäche, Hefftigkeit, ordentliche und außerordentliche Bewegung, Besänfftigung, Aufschub, Stille und tausend Dinge mehr, die kein Cirkel, kein Linial, kein Maastab, sondern nur den edlere, innerliche Theil des Menschen begreifen und beurtheilen kann, wenn ihn *Natur und Erfahrung* gerichtet und belehret hat'
36. 'Affect. the emotion associated with an idea or set of ideas'. (*New Collins Concise English Dictionary*, London 1982). 'Affect!...' 'état, disposition, du latin *affectus*,...'. 'Affection' ... '(1) état affectif, état psychique accompagné de plaisir ou de douleur; (2) sentiment tendre qui attache à qqn amitié, attachement, tendresse, amour' (*Le petit Robert*, Paris 1970). The German word *Affekt* and the Italian *affetto*, adapted into French and English as *affect* or *affection*, can be traced back to Latin's *affectus*, past participle of *afficere*, meaning 'to influence, to work upon, to affect' (e.g. 'Litterae tuae sic me adfecerunt ut' ... *Cassell's New Latin-English Dictionary*, London 1959). The past participle passive (*affectus*) seems to have been commonly in use meaning 'affected (by), afflicted (by), influenced (by)'. All these meanings share a common denominator: something or someone brings about a change in state on something or someone else. This sort of non-specified change is not the most usual meaning of the English verb *to affect*, but has been narrowed down in meaning to designate change of a specifically emotional nature in the form of the noun *affection* and the adjective *affective*. Normal usage of the French adjective *affectif* means 'qui concerne les états de plaisir ou de douleur' and the English word *affective* is described as meaning 'of the affections or emotions'. However, *affection* has, in current usage, an even more particular meaning, both in English and French: 'sentiment tendre qui attache à quelqu'un amitié, tendresse, amour', 'goodwill, love' (*loc. cit.*). Due to the particularisation in meaning of the word *affection* from having signified a general change in emotional state — the baroque use of the word as found in Hutcheson's *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1728) (quoted in Lang 1942: 436) — into its present, narrower area of designation, we choose instead to utilise the word *affect* to describe the creation, state and change of any emotion and will therefore be employing the term in a similar way to that found in early Gestalt theory. To simplify matters, this means that affects are felt by humans when their feelings are aroused by an external (physical or psychological) stimulus. The state in which humans thus find themselves is an affective state. Such affect can, but need not, be shown. On the other hand, an emotion, aroused in the same way as an affect, must be shown, i.e. emotions are expressed as potentially or actually communicative behaviour, while affects need not necessarily reach the stage of emotional (communicative) behaviour: they can, at least theoretically remain internal experiences (Tagg, 1979a: 33-34, drawing on Meyer, 1956: 13-22).

mind, i.e. *affects*). It was from such reasoning and in the spirit of the *encyclopédistes* that he constructed a sort of hermeneutic dictionary of musical affects (*Wörterbuchästhetik* — see Zoltai 1970: 181).

Judging from this account it may at first seem hard to understand why late eighteenth-century romantic theorists, prefigured by the 'all-feelings-and-no-intellect' statement of Rameau's fictitious muso nephew should disagree so vehemently with Mattheson's characterisation of music. Obviously, it cannot have been the emancipatory quality of natural science and rationalism in itself that worried Rameau's nephew and other musicians a generation or two after Mattheson. What they do seem to have objected to, however, was what such a rationalist view of the world might bring about if applied to music, irrespective of whether that view was informed by the 'natural science' or 'human nature' side of the dichotomy in rationalist thought. Why, then, did they so strongly refute efforts by rationalists on the humanities side (like Mattheson) to develop a systematic understanding of music?

The newly-won feeling of freedom, fuelled by political and individual emancipation — potential or real — from feudal forms of thought and government and expressed in the 'new' instrumental music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was in other words not threatened by the rationalism that helped make that feeling possible but by the rationalism that seemed to be imprisoning the musical expression of that feeling through explanation and categorisation. This latter aspect of rationalism was in other words interpreted as repressing part of what the former aspect had helped liberate. Ludwig Tieck (1799) expressed the view as follows:

Once music is freed from having to depict 'finite', distinct emotions, it becomes the expression of 'infinite yearning', and this indefinite quality is superior to the exactness of vocal music, rather than inferior, as was believed during the Enlightenment.<sup>37</sup>

Tieck's statement reeks of romanticism, a romanticism born out of the internal contradictions of the Enlightenment — the 'nice' liberating rationalism versus the 'nasty' repressive one, so to speak. These contradictions are, as we shall see, aggravated in bourgeois society and the 'musical autonomism' we discussed in the previous section gains momentum, frequent buzzwords being 'free', 'natural', 'absolute', 'complete', 'utter', 'infinite', 'eternal', 'in-

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37. Ludwig Tieck *Phantasien über die Kunst* (1799). Cited in Dahlhaus (1989: 18). According to Rosen (1990: 83), Constable was delighted when the French 'enlightened' art critics found forms in his landscapes 'which mean nothing': a case for 'absolute painting'? This is of course reminiscent of Fontenelle's famous question 'Sonate, que me veux-tu?' Such fervour for the 'absolute', be it instrumental music or more instant types of gratification, is also reminiscent of left-wing radicalism, as characterised by Engels in his critique of the Blanquist Communards: 'What childish innocence it is to present one's own impatience as a theoretically convincing argument!' (Lenin, 1977: 329). Sometimes the romantic music metaphysicists seem like a flock of school kids on a day out, insisting at all costs on total freedom of the individual 'now!', as if such idealism had no social, historical or political consequences. The epistemological mess resulting from this post-Enlightenment partying is considerable: not only have books like this one (which states the obvious) become necessary, the hallucinations of 'freedom' have also turned into nightmares: the 'American Dream', now includes Vietnam, Watergate, Stephen King, Ronald Reagan, David Lynch, *Twin Peaks*, the Gulf War, *The X-Files*, George Bush, 11 September 2001 etc.

spired', 'sublime' and 'genius'.<sup>38</sup> As pithy illustrations of this tendency we can cite A B Marx's view of the sonata as 'form of free development', Hegel's notion of musical expression as 'complete withdrawal into subjectivity',<sup>39</sup> and Wackenroder's unabashed ideal of aesthetic bliss as 'utter submersion of the spirit in the surging torrent of feelings'.<sup>40</sup> As Dahlhaus (1989: 56) explains:

'Early German romanticism dates back to the 1790s with Wackenroder's and Tieck's metaphysic of instrumental music — a metaphysic that laid the foundations of nineteenth-century music aesthetics and, as passed down by Schopenhauer from Tieck and by Wagner from Schopenhauer, reigned virtually unchallenged even in the decades of fin-de-siècle modernism.'

What we are apparently dealing with is a Romantic aesthetics of music born out of the contradictions of the Enlightenment, more specifically its German version, the *Aufklärung*. To paraphrase Ford (1991: 2-4, 31-37), this intellectual and artistic movement, with its *Empfindsamkeit* ('sensitivity'), its *Sturm und Drang* ('turmoil and longing') etc., differed considerably from the Enlightenment in France or England, not least because the socio-economic base of the German bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, under the rule of a multitude of quasi-absolute mini-potentates, was much weaker than that of the same class living in larger nation states. This relative disempowerment resulted in the need to concentrate much more on the expression of ostensibly private or subjective rather than public or objective aspects of individual liberty. It is from such a perspective that the importance of music by German-speaking composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in germanophone Europe and, indeed, across the world, starts to make some sense. It is basically that same Romantic type of bourgeois German music aesthetics that has tenaciously pervaded much thought about music until this very day. As mentioned earlier, this metaphysical view of 'absolute music' still lives on in some institutions of musical learning.

Having traced a few of the reasons behind its existence, we can now proceed to trace the reasons for the tenacity of autonomous music aesthetics. The first reason is simple: it had a lot going for it from the start — the whole emotive power of the bourgeois revolution, the affective expression of the individual subject emancipated from feudal absolutism etc. Now, any old school of thought will get a lot of historical mileage out of the mere momentum from such a start, but it still doesn't tell us why such a muddle-headed set of ideas was still going strong two hundred years later. To answer that

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38. 'Genius' is a particularly interesting concept since it shifts from its feudal meaning of a model of good work, character etc., i.e. someone you can and should emulate, to signifying, in the romantic era, an artistic (or scientific) demigod, i.e. someone you cannot emulate. However, in one way the meaning is basically the same, because any model in a metaphysical system of thought (feudal times) is automatically invested with some sort of demideity and because such demideity in the context of a basically rationalist system of thought (post-Enlightenment romantic era) will be conceived of as such rather than as a mere model to emulate. Thanks to Ola Stockfelt (15 January 1990) for this observation.

39. The A B Marx view of sonata is cited by Rosen (1990: 83). The original German of the Hegel quote is 'völligen Zurückziehen in die Subjektivität'. Cited in Zoltai (1970: 243) from Hegel's *Ästhetik*, p.806 (Berlin 1955).

40. Cited in Dahlhaus (1989: 16). No primary source given

question we shall need to juxtapose bourgeois notions of individual freedom with the realities of the society in which those notions flourish and to introduce the concept of 'primal fantasy' to help explain the psycho-social and ideological function of metaphysical, romantic views of music.

### **Primal fantasy and social regulation of the sublime**

Let us first recall two recent quotes: (1) Tieck's argument that music, freed from having to depict 'finite', distinct emotions, becomes the expression of 'infinite yearning', and (2) Wackenroder's hyper-romantic 'utter submersion of the spirit in the surging torrent of feelings'. De Lamennais (1840) waxes even more sublime:<sup>41</sup>

[music] ... lifts man above earthly things and imports him to a perpetual upward motion. ... Music's goal is infinite beauty. Consequently it tends to represent the ideal model, the eternal essence of things, rather than things as they are. For, as Rousseau so correctly observed, 'Outside the individual being existing on his own, there is nothing beautiful apart from that which is not'.

Such notions as 'infinite yearning', 'utter submission of the spirit in the surging torrent of feelings', 'perpetual upward motion', 'ideal model', 'eternal essence' and 'that which is not' all share one important common denominator: the euphoria and experience of beauty that (instrumental) music can express is so wonderful that it cannot possibly exist in the real (material) world outside the soul of the individual. This common denominator can be interpreted in terms of Desire and 'primal fantasy', as presented by Olofsson (1987: 17, ff).<sup>42</sup>

From Olofsson's text it is possible to interpret primal fantasy as the existential, anthropologically universal human experience enabling us to imagine ideal states of total bliss — the ultimately Good and Beautiful, heaven, paradise, nirvana, Eden etc.<sup>43</sup> The reason we are able to imagine such states is simple: we have all experienced something similar when we bathed, unaware of the world outside, in the amniotic waters of our mother's womb. Of course, some fetuses may have had a rough time if mother was an alcoholic, taking drugs, smoking profusely, nervous, worried, undernourished or the victim of violence, but this does not contradict the point that we all once lived a life of total irresponsibility as unborn babies, imbibing whatever nourishment was available and discharging excrement at will without causing undue trouble or embarrassment to anyone. It may not have been perfect but memories of that material and subjective reality seem to accompany us

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41. Hughes Félicité Robert de Lamennais *Ésquisse d'une philosophie* (1840), part II, book 8, chapters 1, 2 and Book 9, chapter 1. Cited in Le Huray (1988: 351-355). The Rousseau quote is not translated by Le Huray — and understandably so —, for its meaning is quite obscure: 'Hors le seul être existant par lui même, il n'y a rien de beau que ce qui n'est pas'.

42. 'I partly reformulate Nietzsche's and Freud's way of understanding irrationality. 'Will-to-power'' [Nietzsche] 'becomes in my version 'desire' (*begär*) and 'unconscious sexual wishes'' [Freud] 'becomes what I call 'Primal Fantasy'' (*urfantasî*).

43. Here we should make clear that Baudrillard (1970:59) confuses anthropological generalities with socially specific expressions of primal fantasy regulation that pretend to be anthropological generalities. ('Tout le discours sur les besoins repose sur une anthropologie naïve: celle de la propension naturelle au bonheur')

throughout life at deep levels of the conscious (the foetal stage is obviously both preconscious and preverbal), levels which the adult world of words and work rarely consider explicitly.<sup>44</sup> After birth we lose that state of blissful irresponsibility forever: like paradise or Eden, it can never be regained.<sup>45</sup>

Now, although religious expressions of paradise may use metaphorical language quite similar to that of the musical metaphysicists of the romantic era, it does not follow that our culture expresses all aspects of primal fantasy Desire in immaterial or imaginary terms. Indeed, the difference between material and imaginary expressions of Desire can, as we shall see later, provide us with some useful clues as to why there is so little musicology of the mass media at the end of the twentieth century. But before we can understand this connection, we shall need to explain the rudiments of primal fantasy terminology (Olofsson 1987: 22). Two concepts are of particular importance in this discussion: Desire (*begär*) and 'signifier' (*betecknare*).

It is possible to interpret Olofsson's systematisation of Desire (in the context of primal fantasy) as a two-stage rocket aimed at an unattainable heaven (the referent). As grown-ups we know we cannot return to the womb, although we may unconsciously recall it as a 'Paradise Lost'. After birth, that existence can only be ideal and imaginary, its sole concretion being our experience of its absence. Olofsson calls this ideal existence but real absence the 'referent' (*referenten*) of Desire. Philosophical notions signifying, in the form of words and concepts, the referent ('heaven', 'paradise', 'God', 'bliss', 'happiness', 'the ultimately Good' etc.), rather than experience of the ideal-existence-but-real-absence itself, are called 'signifieds' (*betecknade*). Directly experienceable phenomena, in the form of ecstasy or enjoyment connected with subjectively pleasurable experiences, are termed 'signifiers', since they remind the subject of, or, by being experienced, indicate or symbolise, the ideal existence of an ultimate quality of the 'Good'.<sup>46</sup> According to Olofsson's terminology, Desire creates and covers the chain of references between the individual and the referent.

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44. In the best cases it must have been something like a carefree nine-month vacation in a ten-star hotel, with water bed, swimming pool at body temperature, complete room service – food, drink and all other imaginable services and benefits – laid on free of charge and without having to get out of bed.

45. There is a well-known exchange of words between Christ and Nicodemus that runs as follows. [Jesus]: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. [Nicodemus]: 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' [St. John III: 3-4]. Of course, lovemaking is a popular pursuit involving proximity to the womb and, hopefully, some moments of bliss or 'heaven'. Unfortunately, any all-embracing ecstasy and euphoria will under even the best circumstances be quite fleeting, literally *moments* rather than the months spent by the foetus in the womb, not to mention the *eternity* envisaged by Christians in their 'life to come', if, indeed they are issued with pass cards to the 'kingdom of heaven' which, unlike your partner in bed is, as Jesus put it, 'not of this world'. In fact, Jesus told Nicodemus that 'being born again' and 'seeing the kingdom of heaven' are only possible by 'water' and the 'spirit'. Still, although it seems that the symbolic value of amniotic water may be present in baptismal immersion, Christ talks elsewhere of baptism by fire and spirit, the former suggesting cleansing of another, more gruelling or cathartic type than water. Whatever the case, it is clear that the spirit is not to be viewed as part of the material world. Buddhism suggests a similar strategy, primal fantasy (nirvana) being attainable only by withdrawal from this world into the next or another.

If we regard primal fantasy as an anthropologically universal phenomenon, it cannot constitute an epistemological problem in itself, since — like birth, death, eating or the reproductive processes — it is no more than a 'fact of life', a *conditio sine qua non* of living. And since the world we were thrust out into at birth, with all its social and natural realities, will never measure up to the subjective Eden from which we were banished as babies, we will unconsciously or preconsciously go on desiring or imagining unattainable states of bliss as long as we live. So, really the Desire (to regain paradise) that accompanies primal fantasy should in itself present no problems either: hope is better than despair and most people seem to prefer happiness to misery.<sup>47</sup> The only trouble is there are always 'objects' of Desire, or, as Olofsson (1979: 22) calls them in connection with primal fantasy, 'signifiers', i.e. phenomena that remind you of, or in some way represent or indicate the imaginary or ideal (Platonic) 'Good', which, in its turn, refers to the real but absent and unattainable foetal state.<sup>48</sup> The point is that although those 'signifiers' of Desire obviously vary from one society to another, from one group to another within society and from one person to another within the same group, conflicts of interest between groups and individuals can easily arise when a signifier cannot be shared or when notions or expressions of 'happiness' (i.e. what constitutes a 'signifier') are irreconcilable. This becomes clearer as we continue the task of explaining objective patterns of subjectivity influencing views of music in Europe and North America since the bourgeois revolution, especially in relation to the tenet, written by men of the Enlightenment into the US constitution, stating the individual's right to the 'pursuit of happiness', because some of these pursuits are clearly not only happier than others but also *at the expense of others and of others* (pursuits

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46. Examples of those signifiers might be love, music, food, drink, sport, religious fervour, driving a fast car, having plush furniture or power or lots of money, being wanted, facing danger, seeing the Tories lose the next election, lounging around in jacuzzis, sailing round the world, writing musicology books or whatever else 'turns you on'.

47. Of course, cultural expression of happiness varies considerably. I for one was still unable to interpret Swedish 'happiness' very well, even after 25 years in the country. Some people seemed quite inert, even depressed, but assured me that they were not unhappy (PT). On a more academic note, it should be noted that Olofsson's description of primal fantasy and Desire initially seems to be diametrically opposed to Baudrillard (1970:59-60), who thinks that 'tout le discours sur les besoins repose sur une anthropologie naïve: celle de la propension naturelle au bonheur'. However, as Baudrillard develops his *logique sociale de la consommation*, it becomes clear that he has confused anthropological generalities (like primal fantasy) with historically and culturally specific ways of regulating signifiers for its Desire that *pretend* to be, but which are not, universal.

48. Olofsson uses this Saussurean term on purpose, because the 'object of desire' connected to primal fantasy cannot exist except as a fantasy. It cannot therefore be an object. Olofsson's (1987: 21-22) terminology can be summarised as follows. *Referent*: equivalent of idealist, Platonic notions of the 'Good'. *Signified (betecknade)*: equivalent of philosophical notions of the 'Good', distinguished in their turn from the real encounter with the absence of the *referent*. The *signified* refers to the *referent*. *Signifier (betecknare)*: equivalent to directly experienceable phenomena which can remind you of and indicate the 'Good' in the eternal world of ideas (e.g. Plato's cave metaphor and love of boys). A *signifier* refers to the *signified*. *Signification (beteckning)*: that unity between *signifier* and *signified* which refers to an *absent referent*. This means that signification is a combined double reference in which the *signified* refers to the *signified* and the *signified* to the *referent*. *Desire (begär)*: creates significations referring to an absent referent, which does not mean that the referent is independent of human thought.

of) happiness.<sup>49</sup> This is where the problems start, because the desire embedded in primal fantasy can also seek signifiers in the material world (by irrational projection<sup>50</sup> on to other people, things, money etc.), this implying desire for power over or ownership of those signifiers. Obviously, conflicts can result between groups or individuals 'pursuing happiness' in the form of the same signifier(s), e.g. someone else's territory, property, time, labour or partner. Such conflicts will clearly demand some kind of settlement — just or unjust —, this constituting social regulation and structuring of Desire, usually according to the norms of the dominant class in society.<sup>51</sup>

As suggested earlier, however, we do not need to seek signifiers in the material world. In fact, since the state of desired bliss cannot exist in the material world, the construction of non-material, imaginary and ostensibly irrational signifiers of Desire associated with primal fantasy could be interpreted as a more rational way of dealing with that part of our irrationality.<sup>52</sup> Whatever the case, it should be clear that it is the non-corporeal, spiritual type of Desire signification that meets us in those metaphysically 'sublime', 'transcendent', 'infinite', 'absolute' and 'eternal' states of well-being that our

49. Baudrillard (1970:60-61) is merciless in his criticism of this right, as conceived in consumer society. 'La «Révolution du Bien-Être» est l'héritière, l'exécutrice testamentaire de la Révolution Bourgeoise ou simplement de toute révolution qui érige en principe l'égalité des hommes, sans pouvoir (ou sans vouloir) la réaliser *au fond*. Le principe démocratique est transféré alors d'une égalité réelle, des capacités, des responsabilités, des chances sociales, du bonheur (au sens plein du terme) à une égalité devant l'Objet et autres signes évidents de la réussite sociale et du bonheur. C'est la *démocratie du standing*, la démocratie de la T.V., de la voiture et de la chaîne stéréo, démocratie apparemment concrète, mais tout aussi formelle, qui répond, par-delà les contradictions et inégalités sociales, à la démocratie formelle inscrite dans la Constitution. Toutes deux, l'une servant d'alibi à l'autre, se conjuguent en une idéologie démocratique globale, qui masque la démocratie *absente* et l'égalité introuvable'.

50. Olofsson uses the semiotic term *det betecknade*, ('the signified' of the Saussurean 'signifier/signified' dualism) to signify what, if it had been an object, would be whatever the 'object of desire' ideally represents. However, since the 'object of desire' can also be immaterial as well as unreal or even unimagined, it is impossible to talk of an 'object' of 'desire' in the context of primal fantasy. Using phenomena in the material world as signifiers for the desire of something unattainable in the material world is irrational because that which cannot exist in the material world cannot, rationally speaking, be found there.

51. 'Structuring', 'regulation' and 'ordering' are all translations of the *ordning* in the title of Olofsson's book (*Urfantasin och ordningen*) in which *ordning* really means 'order' as opposed to chaos.

52. This ties in with another aspect, described by Olofsson (1987:249-290) that we have interpreted as follows. If we know, rationally or intuitively, that the primal fantasy's state of complete and everlasting bliss cannot exist in the material world outside ourselves — even the most 'perfect' couple won't live up to that —, then the 'referent' and its signifiers can become expressions of the essential driving force in our subjectivity that make us feel and act upon such feelings as 'hope', 'belief in the future' etc., even though there may be no 'rational' grounds for optimism. Moreover the notions of *Asyle* ('refuge', 'reserve', 'retreat', 'sanctuary') and 'defending a holy territory' bear clear resemblance to religiously confined territories, such as monasteries. This religious parallel can be extended into the realm of idolatry, too, because the alabaster busts of Great Composers as house gods are highly reminiscent of the cult of the Madonna. In this context it is interesting to note that the immaculate conception of the Virgin is a relatively recent invention. It may be possible to see the Madonna of the Catholic cult as referent (socially regulated by Pope Pius IX and the clergy) for primal fantasy Desire in a cultural context of strong Oedipal taboos and patriarchal family structures. The parallels between, on the one hand, music and sexuality and, on the other, the Virgin Mary and male sexuality seem quite feasible in their sanctification of the irrationally blissful and unattainable.

post-Enlightenment aestheticians wrote about with such fervour in reference to Central European instrumental art music; and with all the clearly expressed irrationality of their statements, you might think that such utter subjectivity without material signifiers of Desire would not need much social regulation. However, the very fact that our Romantic music aestheticians wrote about such quintessential subjectivity means that they communicated (or at least tried to) with other individuals, some of whom might agree with what they said and others not. This in itself constitutes a type of social structuring which, at the most simple level, assumed the form of opposition between two groups: those that agreed and those that did not agree with your spiritual notions of music's sublimity. This all means that any population (cultures, subcultures, societies, groups, classes, families, couples etc.) can structure its common properties of subjectivity related to primal fantasy into intersubjectively (and thereby socially) shared patterns of attitude, behaviour and symbolic practices. Such social structuring or regulation of Desire can be expressed in any number of ways — in the norms and ideals of religion, sport, morals, sexual habits, work, art etc.

It is in this context that music and thought about music play an important part, because if central aspects of music's specificity are (a) its quality as humanly organised nonverbal sound and (b) its particular ability to act as vehicle for communicating affective states and processes (be they conceived of as individual or collective) then music is probably that form of publicly presentable social activity to come 'closest to the womb'. This is far less rash a claim than it may seem if you remember that the human brain constantly monitors nonverbal sound from the age of minus five months and that the newborn baby's hearing is infinitely more developed than its sight. It should moreover be borne in mind that prenatal and preverbal experiences of sound are, together with the sense of touch, not only vital elements in each individual's acquisition of a sense of rhythm and time, but also the most important sources of information and contact with social and natural environments both in and outside the womb, i.e. at the most formative stages of our development. Nonverbal sound is in other words vital to sensomotoric and symbolic learning processes at the preverbal stage of development and therefore central to the formation of the basic personality we carry through life.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, the way we structure music can also influence the way we structure (order, regulate) other parts of our 'irrationality' into socially acceptable (or 'unacceptable') forms, while verbal concepts of music's qualities or functions (e.g. this paragraph or 'autonomous' music aesthetics) can be seen as attempts to consciously structure music's structuring of subjectivity on the basis of some relationship — be it positive, negative or a bit of both — to the material (natural, social) world.<sup>54</sup>

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53. Of course we learn much more, both verbally and non-verbally as we grow older. Here we merely wish to underline the central importance of nonverbal sound in the most fundamental formation of personality. For more on music and early child development, see Michel (1975:85), Sundin (1977:55-65), Janson & Ström (1978). For further references, see Tagg (1981:2-3, 16-22) and interview with Tony Gurrin (National Film School) in Tagg (1980:47-49).

With this general idea of reasons for music's inherently affective character and with a better understanding of 'primal fantasy' (*urfantasi*) and 'Desire' (*begär*), with its 'signifiers' (*betecknare*) and 'regulation' (*ordning*), we can now return to the age of Enlightenment, to its dualisms of 'objective v. subjective', 'natural science v. human nature', 'rational v. irrational' etc. and to the role of music and music aesthetics in the midst of that confusion.

As noted earlier, rationalism did not only question (and thereby threaten and eventually help in overthrowing) repressive political dogmas and untenable notions of the material world, it also questioned and threatened the old forms of primal fantasy regulation. In the case of religion, such threat of conceptual deconstruction could lead to agnosticism or even atheism (since God's existence could not be proven materially), or at least to the opinion that God, if he/she/it did exist, needed no longer to be accepted as the ultimate Good. The problem with such rationalism was that, for want of rational theories of 'irrationality' and with the basically irrational conquest of the material world as rational basis for its development,<sup>55</sup> it was not only totally incapable of providing answers to fundamental existential questions, it also aggravated such anxiety by deconstructing myths that had previously offered spiritual solace. In this sense you could say that the Enlightenment was 'asking for it' and that romanticism provided part of the 'answer' with its socially regulated and irrational notions of 'irrationality'. It is in this context that classical instrumental music was particularly important (remember the minus five months), because the sanctity with which it was treated in certain bourgeois circles during the nineteenth century (remember the alabaster busts of composers) clearly expressed the need to mete out and defend a territory of the imaginary sublime (e.g. A B Marx's *Asyle der höheren Künste*) that seemed to have been banished from the world outside the self.<sup>56</sup> In fact it is now time to present a short account of general relations between, on the one hand, 'classical' instrumental music and metaphysical music aesthetics and, on the other, the society in which they existed.

### ***Being bourgeois in a 'better world'***

It is not necessary to agree with Schumann that the bourgeois parlour was 'the true home of Art',<sup>57</sup> but if we want to understand reasons behind the lasting power of 'absolute music' aesthetics, we shall need to delve a little into patterns of bourgeois subjectivity in the early nineteenth century.

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54. Any statement *about* music attempts to relate music to rationalist notions of the material world. For example, a musical absolutist might say 'there is no such relation' — a negative relation but nevertheless a relation. Musical acoustics, as well as the history, sociology, psychology and anthropology of music all concentrate on different aspects of music's relation to the world outside itself.

55. The irrational character of our 'rationalist' conquest of nature is borne out by the fact that most Europeans and North Americans do not seem to view themselves *musically* as part of nature (Tagg 1982a).

56. For more on the 'sanctuary of the higher arts', see, as discussed by Stockfelt (1988), A B Marx *Ludwig van Beethoven. Leben und Schaffen*, Verlag Otto Janke (Berlin 1901).

57. 'Der echte Heimat der Kunst'. *R Schumann Gesammelte schrifte über Musik und Musiker*, 5e Auflage (Leipzig 1914, I: 180), cited from Fellingner 'Die Begriffe Salon und Salonmusik in der Musikanschauung des 19 Jahrhundert', p.135 in Dahlhaus (1967:135-140), as cited and discussed by Stockfelt (1998:92).

The first question to ask here is: how could it have felt to be the urban merchant whose parents or grandparents had come out of European semi-serfdom of third-world proportions? You would surely have to think 'upwards' in terms of 'social mobility', because 'free market' competition with all those other ex-serfs — who, just like you, feared nothing worse than 'downward mobility' into the misery whence they had recently emerged — demanded that you sell better, cheaper and quicker and therefore buy or produce cheaper and quicker than they could. This situation entailed a set of ethical problems. Firstly, those selling or producing the goods or services you (re)sold had to work as hard as possible and you had to pay them as little as possible. Their loss was more often than not your gain, not because you were an intrinsically evil person but because 'free' competition obliged you to amass capital, literally, at the expense of others. It can have been no easy feat of moral acrobatics to succeed in deriving an income, let alone accumulate capital, from a constant stream of situations in which you first try to buy something (labour or goods) as cheaply as possible from one person, by harping exclusively on the commodity's disadvantages, and then try to sell the same commodity, or results of the same labour, as expensively as possible to someone else, while solely extolling the commodity's advantages. Such economically motivated manipulation of the truth must have spelt problems with a big P to the dutifully religious bourgeois vis-a-vis commandments eight, nine and ten.<sup>58</sup> On top of this, the merchant unwilling to lose his grip on the market had to calculate and 'rationally' quantify all values connected with his profession — both his own and other people's time, labour, effort, interest and motivation (or lack of them) — in numerical, monetary terms, thereby reducing human subjects (including himself) to objects and numbers in company ledgers.<sup>59</sup> He had to cut down costs and increase revenue, save and invest, plan and postpone. He had to keep appointments in his diary, meet deadlines for production or sales and generally live by a clock that was (and still is) in contradiction with his biological one.<sup>60</sup>

Little wonder, then, if this merchant felt a strong need to counterbalance the alienating necessity of being a business success with something more human, more dignified, more uplifting, more sensual, more fulfilling, more liberating, more fun. Little wonder, too, if he turned to any combination of sex, sport, religion and the arts, perhaps music in particular, with its inherently affective and 'irrational' character, for solace; or, as Schubert & Schober's highly popular bourgeois parlour classic, *An die Musik*, put the matter:

Thou gracious Art, in my darkest hours, when the savage circle of life ensnares me, thou hast kindled my heart with a deeper love and transported me into a better world.<sup>61</sup>

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58. These three commandments are: (8) Thou shalt not steal. (9) Thou shalt not bear false witness... (10) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house ... nor anything that is his. (Exodus, XX: 15-17).

59. Since these bourgeois merchants were almost exclusively men we use male gender pronominal forms in this part of the text.

60. These processes would be examples of 'reification' according to the Marxian use of the term. For more on musical coding of subjective time sense, see Tagg (1984, 1987). For comparisons between biological and social time, see Young (1988).

Such solace as this, along with Wackenroder's 'utter submersion of the spirit in the surging torrent of feelings', must have been healing balm to battered business subjectivity as alienated and as morally compromised as our hypothetical merchant's. Since he could bring no more than nominal amounts of dignity, honesty and humanity into his work sphere (at least, not if he was to survive as a 'cutting-edge' 'going concern' in a competitive, 'free market' economy), it was imperative to make watertight distinctions between business and pleasure, between work and leisure, between public and private, between money and morals, between natural science and human nature etc. In this light it would be misguided to consider even the most *outré* statements of romantic music metaphysics<sup>62</sup> as the totally muddle-headed mutterings of incorrigible escapists. In their historical context these notions of culture are essential supplies in the conceptual survival kit of bourgeois subjectivity. It is for such reasons hardly surprising that conservative academic institutions in a society still governed by the same mechanisms of capital accumulation (anarchic competition, economic gain, marketing theology, financial greed and the almighty dollar)<sup>63</sup> still maintain conceptual systems validating distinct separation of the subjective, individual, emotional and corporeal from the objective, collective, rational and intellectual. It is also historically logical that this same distinction should affect music, the most inherently affective of symbolic systems, with particular severity.

The discussion so far may not answer our initial question about why a musicology of the mass media has been so slow to develop, but the preceding discussion of primal fantasy and bourgeois subjectivity should at least help explain why the aesthetics of autonomous music have been so resilient. However, we have yet to discuss whether (and if not, why not) a musicology of the mass media has not previously arisen to any large extent *in opposition* to traditional musicology and its absolute music aesthetics.

### ***Proletarian subjectivity: Marx and consumerism***

In order to understand why alternative musicology has been so slow to develop we will need to consider the music that aestheticians of the 'absolute'

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61. 'Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden, | Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt, | Has du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb entzunden, | Hast mich in eine beßre Welt entrückt!' (\*Schubert 1818, Op.88 N°4). See also example 2-xx and the discussion of sighing sixths and sevenths in chapter 2.

62. i.e. Wackenroder's 'utter submersion', Tieck's (and Schopenhauer's and Wagner's) 'infinite yearning', Lamennais' 'above earthly things', 'infinite beauty', 'ideal model', 'eternal essence rather than things as they are', Rousseau's 'il n'y a rien de beau que ce qui n'est pas', Hegel's 'retreat into inner freedom... from content' (matter), 'submission to self' and 'renunciation of narrow-mindedness'

63. In what follows, the reader may find the following description of money's deification quite useful. 'Since it is an individuated, tangible object, money may be randomly searched for, found, stolen, discovered; and thus general wealth may be tangibly brought into the possession of a particular individual. From its servile role, in which it appears as mere medium of circulation, it suddenly changes into the lord and god of commodities. It represents the divine existence of commodities, while they represent its earthly form' ... 'Money is therefore not only *an* object, but is *the* object of greed' ... 'Monetary greed, or mania for wealth, necessarily brings with it the decline and fall of the ancient communities. Hence it is the antithesis to them. It is itself the community, and can tolerate none other standing above it.' (Marx: *Grundrisse* 1973: 221-223)

have called *Trivialmusik*, *U-Musik* etc., music that they have largely avoided and that in English speaking part of the world generally goes under the heading of 'popular'.<sup>64</sup> We shall also need to discuss patterns of subjectivity among those using popular music and to understand changes in that music and in its uses from the time of the Enlightenment until today. This, of course, is the subject of another book as large as this one, so we shall keep the discussion short.

The easiest way of explaining one of the most basic historical differences between bourgeois merchant subjectivity and that of the average wage-earner is to consider the behavioural consequences of the manner in which goods and services are exchanged in our society. Karl Marx's observations on the metamorphosis of commodities (1976: 198-209) in the famous 'C-M-C' model provide a useful starting point.

#### Commodity<sub>1</sub> — Money — Commodity<sub>2</sub>

Here, Marx summarises basic economic transactions from the viewpoint of use value. In simple terms, you have a commodity you want to exchange for another. Money acts as yardstick and currency for the value of the commodities you are trying to sell (commodity<sub>1</sub>) and buy (commodity<sub>2</sub>). The C-M-C model also describes the economic position in which most of us find ourselves as wage-earners. We have a commodity to sell (our labour) in return for which we receive money with which we can (if we are lucky) buy enough commodities (food, drink, clothing, shelter, entertainment, education) to renew our commodity of labour, for which we are paid etc. until death, retirement or winning millions on the lottery do us part from that vicious circle. Capitalists are, however, as Olofsson (1987: 255) points out, in the opposite corner of the same conceptual boxing ring, because their starting point in the transaction process is the money they own and with which they can buy our labour in order to produce commodities which they can then sell at a profit (to us and others), thereby increasing their capital with which they can then buy our labour etc. until they are parted from their circle by death, retirement or the revolution. This contradiction between the positions of capitalists and wage-earners in the basic transaction of commodities can be summarised as follows:

Capitalist:        M - C - M

Wage earner:    C - M - C

What are the subjective or behavioural consequences of these two positions?

In order to survive in the jungle of private enterprise and 'free' competition, capitalists are obliged to amass and increase their capital. Since money is an extremely particular commodity of exchange, they will carry out transactions with an eye to exchange value (money) rather than use value (what you can do with it). Of course, it would be ridiculous to say that capitalists

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64. We use the easy, negative definition of 'popular music', i.e. all that territory of music that has not been claimed to be part of 'art' or 'folk' music.

never treat themselves to fancy cars, plush furniture, exclusive holidays or Bacchanalian conferences, but it is equally absurd to regard the attainment and maintenance of wealth without considering asceticism (saving up, investing and otherwise generally postponing the fulfilment of desires) as an essential subjective strategy (Olofsson 1987: 258-261). For this reason, the officially proclaimed 'signifiers' of Desire in bourgeois subjectivity, at least during the ascendancy of that class, tend to be located in areas of the immaterial, including Protestant notions of heaven (with its concomitants of hell and sin), as well as in Art and 'Art Music' with all its 'sublime geniuses', 'masterpieces', 'eternal values' etc., the latter seen as 'highbrow' in opposition to 'lowbrow' '*Trivialmusik*'. Nevertheless, as Baudrillard (1970: 59-61) points out, the official location of 'bliss' (*Béatitude*) outside the material world is of course a double alibi of high hypocrisy whose first function is to divert attention from the power capitalists exert and from the material wealth they can enjoy *in* the material world. The second part of the double alibi is more complex and demands a short explanation of subjectivity related to the wage-earner's diametrically opposed C-M-C position.

If the capitalist has to think of economic transaction primarily in terms of exchange value, wage-earners tend to concentrate on use value because we have little or no capital to increase, merely labour to offer as a commodity. As wage earners, the money we receive for our labour ought at least to cover what we need to recreate our ability to carry on selling our work skills. This means that we are forced to consider money primarily from that perspective and to that end, i.e. we need to consider the use value of commodities we can buy with what we earn so that we can recreate our own labour, just to survive. The less we earn the more difficult it is to put money aside and the less money we put aside the more difficult it is to defer the realisation of use value because we must spend the little money we earn on physical and mental survival. Another type of subjectivity arises from this C-M-C position, a subjectivity conditioned by economic necessity and characterised far more by the immediate fulfilment of basic needs than with the accumulation of capital. In primal fantasy terms, this means that signifiers will be more material since they will, for the reasons just presented, need to be of more direct use than those chosen by holders of the M-C-M position. This of course means a greater propensity for consumerism and poor prospects of any asceticism actually paying off in the long term (Olofsson 1987: 251-261).

**Table 1. Subjectivity types polarised in terms of primal fantasy theory**

Subj. type	General attitude	typical 'signifiers'	typical 'signifieds'	ultimate 'referent'
M-C-M	exchange value, ascetic	postponable rewards, money, Art	'power', 'knowledge'	The Ultimately 'Good' and 'Beautiful'
C-M-C	use value, consumerist	immediate rewards, commodities, entertainment	'fun', 'pleasure'	

If we polarise differences between C-M-C and M-C-M subjectivity in Olofsson's terminology of primal fantasy, we can visualise the matter as follows. This is of course a drastically polarised view of the C-M-C versus M-C-M dichotomy, reflecting in simplified terms the general picture of the two economically conditioned types of subjectivity during the ascendancy of the bourgeois capitalist system in the nineteenth century. Such simplification is historically necessary because, as we have already seen in the case of conservatories, ideas and practices considered by the ruling class as seminal in the establishment of the new socioeconomic order (in this case the bourgeois revolution and the capitalist system that followed it) are simplified, falsified and reified out of their particular historical contexts. Therefore, if bourgeois dehistoricisation of Central European instrumental music allowed for the perpetuation of a falsified canon of musical practices (in conservatories) and thought about music (in institutes of musicology), the concurrent class division between capital and labour, including the types of subjectivity conditioned by differences in economic position between those classes, would become a logical part of the same ideological package of cultural, as well as economic, hegemony.

Applying these general observations to music, it would therefore follow that works which take a long time to 'get to the point' or whose 'point' is the dramatic contrast, development and reworking of thematic material into longer musical processes along the axis of passing time — i.e. the type of structural complexity that Chester (1970) called *extensional* — would be less accessible to those with more C-M-C than M-C-M subjectivity. By the same token C-M-C subjectivity would find greater resonance in music whose complexity resides in the combination of simultaneous or immediately contiguous structures into repeatable or contrastable batches of 'now sound' — Chester's *intensionality*.<sup>65</sup> Now, even though the above may be a gross generalisation of bourgeois and proletarian subjectivity and of differences in their relation to music, especially in the 1990s rather than in the 1890s or 1930s, the second aspect of Baudrillard's double alibi of high hypocrisy nevertheless applies to the whole age of 'autonomous' music aesthetics, at least if we consider musical taste in its function of signifying social status:

In 'any revolution erecting the principle of equality without being able (or without wanting) to implement it in depth'... 'democratic principles are transferred from real equality'... 'to equality in relation to objects and other obvious signs of social success'... (Baudrillard, 1970: 61).

Evidence behind this indictment of hypocrisy is circumstantial and provided by musical absolutists themselves, for, by proclaiming transcendence ('sublime', 'natural', 'absolute', 'complete', 'utter', 'infinite', 'eternal' etc.) for their favourite music, they socially decontextualise it and advertise it as 'Classical Music' sporting 'Universal Values', so to speak, all this implying that it is accessible to anyone who prefers good music and values to bad ones. Scattered efforts of cultural charity aimed at raising the tastes of the proletariat

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65. For a more detailed explanation of this dualism, including the concept *museme stack*, see Tagg (2000a: 108). For notions of 'present time' in music, see Wellek (1963: 109).

to a higher level (to that of classical instrumental music, of course) through education, music appreciation circles, free concerts etc. provide us with further circumstantial evidence: 'if only they had a little more education they could be raised to our level of culture'. At least this sort of misguided cultural charity admits to one aspect of social inequality — education — but it ignores the socioeconomically induced differences between C-M-C and M-C-M types of subjectivity and the hegemonic patterns of taste resulting from that dichotomy, all of which meant that European classical instrumental music was more accessible to M-C-M than to C-M-C types at important stages in the development of capitalist society. In other words: since there is no real equality in the concrete situation of economic transaction and since subjectivity is affected by that difference (C-M-C v. M-C-M), there can be no real equality of opportunity when it comes to the appreciation or performance of classical music. Moreover, the relative accessibility of musics is determined not only by the C-M-C v. M-C-M dichotomy and by education but also by the following, more down-to-earth factors:

- the less money you have, the less you can afford to pay for music (entrance to concerts, buying equipment or instruments, upkeep of institutions etc.);
- the less leisure time you have, the less likely you are able to try out other musics than those readily accessible to you and the less likely you are to opt for music requiring patient listening or years of institutional training to perform yourself;
- the noisier your work and leisure environments, the less use you have for music inaudible in those environments or for music demanding that you listen or perform in a concentrated fashion without interruption.

In addition to all these expressions of real inequality impeding the imagined equality of art music's 'eternal' or 'universal' values, we should also note that rural 'folk music',<sup>66</sup> which at least national Romantics deemed artistically legitimate, became as inaccessible as classical instrumental music in relation to proletarian subjectivity during the process of industrialisation in Europe.<sup>67</sup> Just as bourgeois merchants lived in fear of sliding back down to whence they had risen, workers saw little reason to idealise their famished rural origins either. Shame of a 'mud-on-your-boots', yokel background is a well-known phenomenon and rural folk music had either to fit in with the new machine age in noisy pubs and streets or die.<sup>68</sup> For if everyday life is largely a question of survival in the new environment (as it certainly was for most of the working class in early industrialism), old music from old times may provide nostalgia, 'roots', perhaps even a sense of continuity, but it won't help you to feel *part* of the new environment, and this feeling is essential in the fight for urban survival. Generally speaking, the incompatibility of rural music traditions with life in industrial cities of the nineteenth century and the

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66. See Harker (1985) for critique of the notion of 'folksong'

67. 'Proletarian' in the sense of earning wages as opposed to owning capital (money and means of production).

68. See for example Haralambos (1974) on why urban blacks abandon blues in favour of gospel, Rochon (1990) on québécois shame of national folklore, Palmer (1974) on running Morris dance yokels out of town, etc. Of course, there are clear exceptions to this tendency, with 'archaic' modes prevailing, partly thanks to a large Irish community, in Tyne-side popular music.

lack of musical recording and dissemination media combined to bring about a steadily waning interest for and to the ultimate demise of 'folk music' in Northern Europe.<sup>69</sup> What took its place were street ballads, low church hymns, music hall tunes, popular airs from opera and operetta, dance tunes, marches and their equivalents: *Gassenhauer*, *Schlager*, *skillingtryck*, *gam-maldans*, *café-conc'* etc.

It was between these forms of popular urban music and the classical tradition that explicit distinctions were drawn, qualifying the former as 'lowbrow', 'trivial' (as in *Trivialmusik*) and 'entertainment' (as in *U[nterhaltungs]-Musik*), the latter as 'highbrow', 'serious' (as in *E[rnste]-Musik*), 'cultivated' (as in *musica colta* or *musique savante*) and Art. In fact, you might say that instead of 'mud on their boots' the proletariat had by 1900 acquired musical 'coal in their faces' and 'oil on their hands'. The low status of their music fitted well with their low status in society and the dichotomy classical-v-popular has played its part in maintaining that status quo in bourgeois society until quite recently. It was, as we have argued, deeply entrenched in patterns of subjectivity influenced by objective positions in class society.

Now, it is easy to raise perfectly valid objections against this account of bourgeois and proletarian subjectivity in relation to music, the most obvious being that it is too categorical, even for nineteenth-century Britain, and that such observations cannot be applied in the same way today.<sup>70</sup> Agreed. It is nevertheless important to state these arguments categorically as an antithesis to the polarisation created by traditional musicology and musical absolutism. That polarisation has been even more categorical and, according to different arguments or no argument at all, has proclaimed musics as 'good' or 'bad', frequently evaluating and judging instead of explaining differences between one set of musical practices and another. Fortunately, European classical instrumental music still survives, while the idealist aesthetics and analysis techniques that falsified it (remember the death of improvisation), canonised it and conserved it in the deep freezes of conservatories and departments of music has already been under attack for several decades.

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69. In the sense of popular music from the old rural society: 'traditional music', as the ICTM (International Council for Traditional Music) has it.

70. One obvious objection to our 'over-generalisation' might be that we haven't included Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital in our discussion. This footnote is here to rectify that. It is not rash to say that we, the authors, are middle-class intellectuals with little, zero or minus by way of economic capital but plenty of the cultural type. Let us say, using Bourdieu's terms that our cultural capital consists of us being able to run discussions like the one in this footnote, of the ability to make and analyse music etc. If we are 'cultural capitalists' (still in Bourdieu's, not Marx's terms) then we can be envisaged as running our lives from an M-C-M perspective as follows: we use our 'cultural capital' to accumulate (or, hopefully, improve) what we already have, the money we earn for what we do being treated as a commodity as means to that end, not as (economic) capital to be increased for its own sake. This can be seen in the fact that large proportions of our income are spent in 'cultural capital reinvestment' (still in Bourdieu's terms) — books, music, records, music instruments, computer software etc., a smaller proportion than average being spent on things like furniture. Thus far the objection holds good. The only trouble is that our 'cultural capital' is at the same time — in the original Marxian sense — the special character of our commodity as labour and that the money we earn selling this particular commodity goes to renew (recreate) that our labour, both in general (food, drink, clothing, housing) and in particular (books, music etc.).

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