

DOI: 10.2298/MUZ1620223L

UDK: 316.7:78

Music as Intersubjectivity – A Problematic for the Sociology of the Arts¹

Mikko Lagerspetz²
Åbo Akademi University

Abstract

Music has the power of establishing a sense of personal closeness and of confirming the existence of a meaningful reality. This is because it creates, or imitates a face-to-face situation in which participants experience the same events during shared time. Face-to-face interaction is the primary means by which humans are able to conduct a “reality check” in the face of chaos, sense of meaninglessness and unreality. However, this interaction is basically “about nothing”; in this sense, it is an instance of “pure sociality”. Musical phenomena are semiotic in nature only insofar as they do not stand for themselves, but for something else. When describing social facts and social practices, we are heavily dependent on words and concepts. At the same time, the arts do, by definition, endeavour to bring about experiences that are untranslatable to any other form of expression. Arts sociologists’ answer to this dilemma has most often been to turn away from the arts themselves and to concentrate instead on the social fields and activities that surround them. This essay suggests a perspective of music as interaction creating an intersubjectively shared experience. At the same time, it is admitted that music, similarly to any other kind of interaction, can also fail in this, or be used deliberately for exclusion. This essay invites discussion on possible uses of this perspective in sociological and cultural research.

Keywords

Music, face-to-face interaction, Schütz, intersubjectivity, Sociology of the Arts

A person with whom I was close once recollected painful experiences and moral dilemmas of his youth. As many other people have done, he had felt confronted by what, as Camus puts it in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, is the only “truly serious philosophical problem” (Camus, 1991 (1942): 3). In a distressed state of mood, it happened that he attended a symphony concert where some of Ludwig van Beethoven’s works were played. After the concert he concluded that as long as it was possible to go and listen to Beethoven’s music, he would never commit suicide.

¹ I thank Andreas Häger and Sabina Hadžibulić for discussions and suggestions at different stages of my work on the essay, and Olli Lagerspetz for advice and engagement throughout the writing process. I also thank the anonymous reviewer of *Musicology/Muzikologija* for insightful comments. The essay is dedicated to the memory of my father, Professor Kari Lagerspetz (1931–2012).

² mlagersp@abo.fi

Camus (Ibid: 6) explains suicide with a sudden, possibly intuitive insight into the ridiculousness and emptiness of the routine we call life; of the lack of meaning of our sufferings and everyday activities. “[I]n a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger.”

What happened at that concert? Or, put in another way, through which means is a musical experience, in this case the experience of listening to Beethoven’s music, able to restore reliance on the existence of a meaningful universe? In the present attempt to find answers, I will discuss performing and listening to music as reality maintenance, as practices that confirm our feeling of being in touch with a reality that has a meaningful structure. Drawing on the insights of phenomenological and constructionist sociology, I will further argue that the reality maintaining function of an experience is due to its embeddedness in social interaction – the intersubjective nature of that experience affirms the individual’s connection with a humanity that shares his own affections, concerns, delights, joys and sorrows. I am certainly not the first to say that, for instance, musical experience can have this quality. Having said that music is a type of social interaction, be it also said that it is of a specific type: It is not carried out with the help of a language, in the sense that it is not dependent on the use of symbols. A musical gesture of course may, but does not need to refer to anything outside the music itself. The existence of interaction and sociality outside the realm of symbols poses a problem both to sociological and other research on arts. A discussion of why it has often been overlooked, and the challenges it implies for the sociology of the arts, will be proposed.

The music I will more specifically refer to in this essay belongs to a tradition I feel confident enough to discuss – Western concert music of the last two or three centuries. This neither implies that other traditions or styles would not deserve attention, nor that I would not think that what I am saying about music does, at least to some extent, apply to them. A question I cannot answer here is in exactly *what ways* the ideas of this essay are applicable to music cultures in which the relationship between the musical event and the participants is radically different from that of the early to late modern Western culture. The latter is the chief point of departure of the present discussion; to explore its wider applicability remains the task of musical anthropology.

1. The Musical Experience as Reality Maintenance

The existential anxiety described by Camus is echoed by the centrality that phenomenological and constructionist sociologists attribute to a strain between our constructions of reality and the chaos of a reality void of inherent meaning. “*All social reality is precarious.*

All societies are constructions in the face of chaos” (Berger & Luckmann 1991 (1966): 21). As I see it, this statement should not be seen as a factual one: Of course, many of the ideas and social relations we cherish are remarkably robust, able to be maintained over long periods of time, through critical situations of various kinds. Instead, it is a methodological statement, intended to highlight the various practices we use in order to secure the mutual predictability of action by people we are in contact with. According to this line of thought, societies, culture and any social interaction are possible because we bestow our environment and actions with meaning, simultaneously convinced that our understanding of it is similar to that of our fellow human beings. In ordinary circumstances, our constructions of reality do not appear problematic. There are, however, situations in which they become radically challenged. We can recall marginal situations created by dreams, artistic experiences, philosophical or religious meditation, or by contacts with death, that call into question the reality and meaning of what we call real.

Faced with challenges of this kind, society responds with what Berger and Luckmann call symbolic universes: meta-level constructions of reality that are able to contain and order all conceivable realities, and to explain or dismiss experiences that divert from the meanings jointly agreed upon. The symbolic universe has the powerful nomic function of putting “everything in its right place” again (Ibid: 116).

In music (and poetry), one of the most masterful and famous examples of a fight between a marginal experience and its interpretation from the point of view of everyday reality is found in Schubert’s (2005 (1821)) Lied of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s poem, *The Alder King*. It depicts a father’s ride through a night landscape with his fever-ridden son. During the ride, the boy hears first the seducing, then the threatening calls of a mythical Alder King, or the King of the Elves. The father repeatedly calms his son, dismissing his visions of the Alder King as the wind through dried leaves, the view of ancient willows, or, as in the example below, a foggy strain. In the end, the father reaches their destination, a farmstead, but the boy is no longer alive. Among the challenges of the singer is to impersonate four characters: The narrator, the father, the son, and the Alder King.

The boy’s cries of anguish grow more and more dissonant and the tonality becomes ambiguous, but the father always – except the last time – gives a reassuring answer while the accompaniment again establishes the main tonality. In measures 44–46 of the example, the tonality progresses from C minor to B \flat minor, but the passage from measures 51 to 53 again could be either in minor or major – until the major third is introduced in measure 54. After that, a perfect cadence in measures 55–58 confirms that we have indeed returned to

the Lied's main tonality. For the composer, the performers, and the listeners, the cadence's progression from and back to the tonic chord through the subdominant and dominant corresponds to the poet's reality of explicable natural phenomena. It is a return to the natural order of things – and to what is beautiful (cf. Wittgenstein 1979: 29).³

Example 1. *The Alder King* (excerpt)

Schubert's Lied *is* tonal, despite the tensions he introduces; consequently, a solution of those tensions by means of a return to the main tonality is what the listener expects. Moreover, this was what Western listeners to any piece of music in Schubert's lifetime would have expected, and what they most often do expect even today. For most of us, a return to the original form of a 12-tone row after a *Krebstang* would not have the same effect.

For the record, I am not claiming any "natural" status for the tonalities preferred by West European professional musicians from the 17th to the early 20th centuries. On the contrary, the tempered scale's equalling of 12 fifths with 7 octaves involves a conscious and

³ "When people find a flower or an animal ugly, they always have the feeling that they are artificial products. 'It looks like...,' they say. This sheds some light on the meaning of the words 'ugly' and 'beautiful'."

carefully calculated deviation from natural harmonics.⁴ However, for those of us socialized within that tonal system, it gives us the reassurance of being situated “in the most real world possible”, much in the same way as any trivial and predictable things in our everyday life (such as weather reports and help-wanted ads in a morning paper) (Berger & Luckmann 1991 (1966): 116).

The feeling of predictability in music is of course supported by numerous other things besides tonality – the dynamics, the length of the phrases, or for an alert and knowledgeable listener, such recognizable structures as the classical sonata form. A skilful composer is able to create a strain between familiar and unexpected elements, first leading us to emotional arousal, suspense and uncertainty by frustrating our expectations, and then to an emotional release by a return to the expected (Meyer 1970 (1956): 28). When performing or listening to such passages, not only do we feel satisfaction when recognizing the final return to familiar domains, we also feel mentally close to the composer when we understand that, Oh yes, this is where he was heading, this was where he wanted to lead us.

What we have been looking at until now is the relationship between a solitary listener and an artefact. Even that can be seen as a social relationship, insofar as it involves even those who have produced the artefact, even if they are not physically present (cf. Elias 1970: 130. And, if we consider a recorded performance, even the musicians’ efforts become part of the artefact). A listener’s relationship with the composer is a sort of indirect encounter, mediated by the music. However, the reality maintaining the function of such indirect social relationships is based on the fact that they are *echoes* or *remembrances* of a more fundamental type of social relationship: The face-to-face encounter.

2. *The Musical Experience as Face-To-Face Interaction*

Our experience of reality being meaningful requires that what we perceive can be ordered within a meaningful context (a symbolic universe, as Berger and Luckmann put it). But in addition to that, we need to know that the contexts and meanings that define our reality are also shared by our fellow men – that they perceive the world substantially in the same way as we do (Schütz 1964 (1953): 137). Don Quixote’s perception of the world in terms of fantastic chivalry novels – of, e.g., windmills as malicious giants in disguise, or a barber’s basin as a knight’s helmet – was coherent with the frame of

⁴ This was also known for Max Weber when he wrote about the sociology of music. Cf. Blaukopf 2012 (1979): 41.

interpretation he knew from his favourite literature. In his story, the comic elements consist of its conflict with other people's perception of reality, and tragedy walks in when he finally recognizes it as a delusion. Alfred Schütz' analysis of the novel serves the purpose of showing the difference between a privately perceived reality and a perception anchored in a shared interpretation communicated in the course of direct social interaction.

In another essay, *The Homecomer*, Schütz (1964 (1945)) shows a more everyday instance of incoherence between an individual's perception of reality and that of his environment. A soldier returning from the front finds himself incapable of communicating his wartime experiences in a meaningful way to those who stayed at home, and vice versa, despite frequent contact by letters written to and from the front.

According to Schütz, the failure was due to the lack of direct, face-to-face interaction during the wartime events. Face-to-face interaction requires, as he explains, that the participants share the same space and time during the interaction; this makes them able to observe each other's bodies, facial expressions, gestures etc., and read the effects of their own actions, as well as each other's reactions to outer stimuli. Through face-to-face interaction, a shared frame for the interpretation of reality is intersubjectively created. Schütz calls it a basic social relationship, from which all other social relationships are derived (Ibid: 109f). This kind of interaction provides participants with the possibility of performing a "reality check" that other, indirect and mediated forms of communication lack. If, on the other hand, we find ourselves incapable of convincing ourselves of the existence of an intersubjective experience of the world,

then the very possibility of establishing communication with any fellow-men is destroyed. In such a crisis situation we become convinced that each of us lives in the impenetrable shell of his solipsistic prison, the Others becoming mere mirages to us, we to the Others, we to ourselves (Schütz 1964 (1953): 143).

This is, indeed, another description of the same experience that Camus referred to: of being an alien, a stranger. And there is something in music that fights that feeling. Listening to music together, possibly at a live concert, and playing (rehearsing or performing) music together are all instances of face-to-face communication (with a varying degree of intensity). Participants share, more or less, the same acoustic space, the same time (divided by the performers by means of rhythm and tone pitch into microstructures much finer than those defined by the musical notes or the performing tradition alone), and each other's reactions to the musical events. Their initial frame

of interpretation – their understanding of the music – is roughly the same, but there are several different artistically acceptable (or should we say: *meaningful*?) ways of performing the same piece of music (Wittgenstein 1979: 155). The notes written by the composer are not reproduced mechanically, like by a music box, but their performance is modified by numerous rules of interpretation (Sundberg & Frydén 1985: 68–71; Mazzola 2011: 143–146).

However, as has been shown by computer simulations, even these rules cannot be applied straightforwardly: They need to be used in just the right proportion, and they frequently interfere with each other. The performers ultimately have to pick up the rules they find useful in the context and at the moment, and follow them to the extent that suits their intentions (Sundberg & Frydén 1985: 71). When playing together, musicians catch and react to each other's intentions; when enjoying music, the listener adopts the performers' intentions and shares their way of structuring time.

3. Interaction Without Words

All Arts, even if they grow from a common root, are strictly divided as to their outgrowth. Where Poetry ends, Music starts. Where the poet finds no more words, the musician shall make appearance with his tones.

Franz Grillparzer (1893 (1821))⁵

It is not unusual to talk about “the language of music”. However, the adequacy of this metaphor can be questioned. In Kant's (1914 (1790): § 53) hierarchy of Beautiful Arts, music has the lowest place because its effect on humans is based on a play with bodily sensations. “The art of tone” speaks without concepts and “does not, like poetry, leave anything over for reflection”. Schopenhauer, when constructing his own hierarchy of the Arts a generation later, gives music the foremost position, but for a similar reason: Music is not a representation of anything else. “Music is [not] like the other arts, the copy of the Ideas, but the *copy of the will itself*, whose objectivity the Ideas are” (Schopenhauer 1909 (1818): § 52). To explain “the meaning” of a piece of music or a musical phrase amounts either to an analysis of its references to other music or to acoustic phenomena outside music, or when this is not possible, to contents of the musical experience. The latter kinds

⁵ A similar dictum is frequently, but without reference, attributed to Grillparzer's contemporary, E. T. A. Hoffmann (“Where human language ends, music starts”). However, I have not been able to trace where, if at all, Hoffmann might have written this.

of explanation tend to remain diffuse or outright platitudes when expressed in words (Wittgenstein 1979: 132–133).⁶ References to other music can be about internal intertextuality (thematic work, the *Leitmotiv* technique) or stylistic pastiches (say, the introduction of ragtime rhythms or baroque polyphony in a post-modernist concert piece). References to acoustic phenomena outside music are, in turn, well-known to everybody who has listened to, for example, some of the polkas of the Strauss Brothers, introducing locomotives, a blacksmith's hammer against the anvil, sleigh bells, etc. We are surprised or amused (and sometimes not) by such effects for the very reason that they add to the music an element that is usually *not* there. And there are of course different combinations of these various kinds of musical reference: The birds (flutes) singing in numerous forests built of French horns and harps in romantic concert pieces; or in films, the attics and cellars filled by ghosts, vampires and post-Wagnerian tonalities; and so on. What is often overlooked by those engaged in musical semiotics is that “musical phenomena are semiotic in nature only insofar as they do not stand for themselves, but for something else” (Mirigliano 1995: 55). In this sense, musical semiotics is not concerned with music, but with what music is not.

The Austrian music sociologist Kurt Blaukopf (2012 (2000): 23) distinguished between semantic and aesthetic information in music. The former means that the sound event is a carrier of meaning, and thus pronounceable and translatable into another language; the latter is not. It is only the former that can be subjected to semiotic analysis. Along with the autonomisation of music as an art form distinct from other social activities, its aesthetic character has become ever more pronounced. So, for example, there is a tendency of modern composers to avoid associations both to non-musical reality and to other music alike. This can, for instance, be seen in the avoidance of programmatic titles, and even of titles that refer to existing musical forms.

When stressing the untranslatable elements in music, I may seem to contradict myself. Did I not, in the musical example I showed above, point at the way in which tonal ambiguity and a confirmation of the main tonality correspond to the dramatics of Goethe's lyrics? However, the tension created and released in this piece of music is not

⁶ Cf. Schönberg's explanation of the contents of a sequence in his Piano Concerto:

“Life was so easy
Suddenly hatred broke out
A grave situation was created
But life goes on.”

(Quoted in Martin 1995: 66. “Even the publishers of Christmas cards look for a bit more sophistication than this in their texts”, Martin comments.)

dependent on its combination with the contents of the poem – it can also be experienced by somebody who does not know the German language. When saying this, I do not deny the close connection there is between music and verbal interaction.

The way in which music can underline a verbal message, or in instrumental passages, imitate verbal interaction, was already well known to composers and musical theorists in the 18th century, and even before then (e.g., Grétry 1978 (1789)). A musical theme can feel like a sentence, and the way in which a musical work proceeds can be compared with rhetoric (as Wittgenstein points out, cf. Hanfling 2004: 153–159). Music has not only been compared with language but, more fittingly, with interaction. The basic features of any social interaction include such “adjacency pairs” as question and answer, greeting and response, invitation or suggestion and acceptance/refusal, statement and agreement/disagreement, and so on. During the interaction, the participants also take the positions of “with-actors” and “counter-actors” vis-à-vis each other, either focusing on the messages sent by their partners, or foregrounding their own agency (Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Stefanović and Kahri 2011). All these features of communication are also reflected and emphasized in ordinary speech by a variation of pitch, loudness and rhythm in the speakers’ voices. Based on an acoustic analysis of everyday speech situations, a study by Stefanović and Kahri (Ibid: 291–295) identifies such signifiers of co- or counter-agency as intensity of voice, tone pitch, pitch range (ambitus) of the spoken phrase, and the contrast or continuation of the melodic line or rhythm of the phrase of the previous speaker.

This is not unlike what Goethe wrote about the string quartet (quoted in Drabkin 2000: 3): “One hears four intelligent people conversing with one another, believes one might learn something from their discourse, and recognize the special characteristics of their instruments”. Music reminds one of the prosody of speech. “Adjacency pairs” and actor roles similar to those in verbal interaction can be discerned by an analysis of the relationships between a vocal or instrumental soloist and the accompaniment, between different soloists and between different musical themes. The acoustic measures used for structuring the interaction are the same as appear in verbal interaction; to those, one can add the closeness to or distance from the prevailing tonality. In order to be experienced as interaction, the music does not need the support of any verbal message. The tension between tonality and tonal ambiguity of the previous musical example from Schubert’s *Alder King* can, but does not need to be, interpreted as representing a tension between a marginal experience and an intersubjective reality, in the same

way as the perpetual motion in the accompaniment can, but does not need to, represent a horse ride. The additional meanings created by song lyrics or a programmatic title are outside, and additional to, the music. It is here that the listeners' extra-musical experiences enter a dialogue with their immediate musical experience. What we find in the music itself is motion (or, rather, the appearance of motion (Scruton 1989: 90) or, maybe more correctly, the sounding result of the musician's physical motion) and harmonic tension – not “symbols” of motion and harmonic tension. *To understand the music is to recognize the gesture it enacts*, as Roger Scruton (Ibid: 95) formulates (again, echoing Wittgenstein – cf. Sharpe 2004: 144 f.). We should add that the enjoyment brought forward by such recognition is explained by the feeling of being in touch with the composer, the musicians, with other human beings.

To sum up the argumentation up to this point: the type of interaction we have been focusing on is of course “staged” to the extent that it is pre-determined by the written notes. This makes it in part an indirect social relationship between the composer and the performer. When rehearsed or performed by several musicians, the freedom they have in their individual interpretation of the musical text makes the playing also a form of face-to-face communication among themselves. The string quartet – “the conversation between four intelligent people” – did in fact historically emerge first as a form of entertainment between the playing musicians themselves, not for audiences (Barrett-Aynes 1974: 71). In concert, also the listeners become involved in the communication, albeit in a more passive way. The music's questions and answers, greetings and responses unite the listeners, performers and composers in an intersubjectively shared meaningful world. What is peculiar about this interaction is that it does not involve communication on anything specific save the communication itself; it is communication on communication, or interaction with the sole purpose of interacting.

We are here dealing with a fundamental, non-reducible form of sociality. It is what remains when we take all possible forms of social interaction and boil them down to what is their common denominator: the interaction itself. It is the “inter-mental” scenery that Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904), one of sociology's side-tracked founding fathers, regarded as the cornerstone of social life. As an example, he considers conversation – or what we might call small talk:

By conversation, I mean every dialogue that involves no direct or foreseeable gain, meaning that one talks mainly for the sake of talking, for the enjoyment, like a game, for courtesy (as quoted by Asplund 1987: 168).

Besides music (or small talk), there are numerous other examples of social interaction that are not essentially dependent on references to anything outside the interaction itself and its basic rules: playing football, eating together, making love, etc.⁷ But also communication referring to any subject external to the communication itself requires that we accept our counterparts' status as communicating agents and are responsive to their actions (cf. Lagerspetz 2015: 122–123). Indeed, a readiness to be engaged in an interaction about “nothing”, or about the mere interaction itself, is a precondition to any interaction at all about “something”. In this sense, the essence of music is the same as the essence of sociality itself.

4. *Exclusion and Non-Interaction*

Saying that music is interaction of a specific type means that it shares basic preconditions and possibilities with other types of interaction. It does not of course mean that they are always there – that musical communication *always* involves inclusion and mutual recognition, or that music *always* creates an intersubjectively shared understanding. This can be said as little of musical, as indeed of any other kind of interaction. Some of the most intriguing sociological real-life experiments known were conducted by Harold L. Garfinkel and his disciples in the 1950s and 60s. A number of them included staging situations where the basic structure of human communication was deliberately violated. For instance, the experimenters came to their parental homes and treated their close family members as if they were strangers. The usual response to these and similar instances of out-of-place behaviour was irritation and confusion (Garfinkel 1964). The demonstrations were done in order to make visible, among other things, the standard, taken-for-granted communicative practices – such as mutual adherence to shared background knowledge and rules of communication. From the point of view of our present discussion, Garfinkel's experiments are illustrative of two issues: first, disturbing the basic structure of communication is fairly easy; and second, such a disturbance is also easily recognized and strongly reacted upon.

The very fact that we expect inclusion from communication means, by default, that every communicative act can also be easily used in order to exclude, and to confront. The history and present practice of musical performances provide ample evidence of both. The introduction of new rhythms and tonalities was consciously used by musical modernists in order to alienate one part of the public and

⁷ The very fact that these activities easily can become attached with many different symbolic meanings indeed proves that they as such, as activities, lack any.

to engage another. The performance of *certain* music for a *certain* public may also make a deliberate statement about the public's *non-inclusion* in a respected tradition, or in an emerging one. A group of jazz musicians playing a dance gig for an uninterested public can often only sneak it into its performance of the other kind of music that it has been hired to play (Becker 2004: 26); this can also become a form of ironic musical joking. A musician or a band may choose *not* to involve the listeners, to ignore, to mock or to challenge them. *But this is also a form of interaction.*

There is still one more, more serious instance of failure of a communicative situation, one in which the communicative act has lost its capacities of both including and excluding. What in normal circumstances constitutes communication is reduced to automatized gestures that neither require nor create any field of intersubjectively shared meaning. A condition resulting from non-voluntary exposure to social interaction is known as burn-out (Asplund 1987: 140, 150). That is, an asocial irresponsivity, the inability of, for example, a social worker, teacher, police officer, psychotherapist or a health care professional to treat his or her clients, students or patients as individual persons – as something more than mere “cases”. If we compare their working conditions with the continuous presence of music in public places (cf. Smiers 2012), how might the latter influence our capability of becoming engaged in the interaction it invites us to? We close our ears and minds. It might not be easy to open them up again, to restore the responsivity that we have been forced to lose.

5. *A Problematic for the Sociology of Arts*

As sociologists, we are seldom able to escape the realm of words. When describing social facts and social practices, we are heavily dependent on verbalized accounts. The sociological practice consists, to a large extent, of interpretation: Unique phenomena are placed within the larger context of social life. When doing that, we have to make use of concepts that refer to something more general. For instance, when analysing everyday life, we can thus make visible its underlying rules, routines and regularities, and relate them to the macro-level of social order (Scott 2009: 5). What might seem banal and uninteresting at first sight has a larger, meaningful context that sociology can reveal with the help of its words.

At the same time, something always gets lost in the process of interpretation. Some of these concerns were addressed by Dorothy E. Smith (Smith 1987) in her seminal book, *The Everyday World As Problematic*. People's actual everyday experiences cannot be

satisfactorily described by means of a sociological discourse that derives its concepts from elsewhere; thus, she proposes a shift in approach (Ibid: 98):

The conception of an everyday life as a sociological problematic presents a basis for a sociology that, like Marx and Engel's [sic] conception of the materialist method, begins not within the discourse but in the actual daily relations between individuals.

For this reason, Smith considers such concepts as “class”, “culture”, or “meaning” misleading, insofar as they refer to something pre-given, subjectlessly present. The main point in her criticism against sociology is that it gives pre-eminence over practice to an allegedly objective discourse. It is, instead, from the practice itself than the concepts should be derived.

However, for the sociology of the Arts, this is just one part of the problem. The arts do, by definition, endeavour to bring about experiences that are untranslatable to any other form of expression; in a way, a sociologist of the arts is trying to perform Baron Münchhausen's trick of lifting oneself up from a swamp by grasping one's own hair (or, pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps). To *analyse* them is, to a certain extent, to *banalise* them.

The arts sociologists' answer to this dilemma has most often been to turn away from the arts themselves and to focus instead on the social fields and activities that surround them. In the footsteps of Bourdieu, they conduct analyses of how art professionals or different segments of the public are located vis-à-vis different artistic forms and practices. When demystifying the artistic experience and revealing the social hierarchies lying behind aesthetic judgment, Bourdieu showed how a specific artefact in some circumstances can become a means of cultural distinction, in some others not. His analyses of the arts tell how and why aesthetic value comes to be conferred on an object, but he does not focus on the other things that an artistic experience is about. However, even his often-subtle discussion on the specific features of an artistic style and possible reasons of its appeal to a certain type of taste (e.g., 1984 (1979): 18–19) is something that his latter-day followers mostly fail to continue. In their analyses, the arts themselves remain strangely invisible. Usually unanswered is, e.g. the question about what there is in the substance of a specific art form or a piece of art that makes it correspond to the aspirations of a certain individual or social group, specifically positioned. In the same way, there is a not insubstantial body of research on subcultures in which a certain type of music is an important marker of identity; at the same time, there is little analysis about what the specific traits in the music are that make it able to serve

such a function. A very real danger is that such analyses remain general and superficial. Could the same function be served by other music: is the music itself here anything more than an empty signifier?

When analysing the arts as forms of interaction, we should also consider exclusion and non-interaction. That is, the ways used to deliberately exclude parts of the public from the interaction; and the effects that constant, unmasked-for exposure to music may have on people's capacity of responsivity to music.

And to conclude with a question from yet one more angle: The power that a joint musical experience has in forging strong emotional ties is shown by the frequency of friendships, amorous relations and even marriages built on such foundations; but how much do we know about them? Are musicians better lovers (or are they perhaps worse)?

The issues I took up here are certainly not the only ones that a view of musical expression and experience as intersubjectivity calls upon, and they are maybe not even the most important ones. But the fact remains that sociology of the arts, in the same way as all forms of sociology, needs to penetrate the phenomenon itself, which lies at the core of the social activities analysed, and not be content with leaving it in a black box.

6. *Coda*

A challenge for the sociology of the arts is to bring the arts themselves back to the analysis that is at present largely concerned with issues *around* them. I suggest that the view presented here of music – and probably the arts in general – as a basic form and expression of sociality could open a hitherto largely unexplored field of inquiry for the sociology of the arts. At the same time one should see, that when I depict music as a form of sociality – of interaction – I do not mean only a sphere of mutual acceptance and affirmation. Interaction has also the potential of belittlement, confrontation, and exclusion. However, when that has been the intention, we are still dealing with genuine interaction.

And what, then, about Beethoven? I have no pretension of being a Beethoven expert. What has been discussed in this essay applies, to a large extent, to Western tonal concert music, and to some extent, even more generally to music of any kind. A precondition to the experience of music as meaningful and as a form of interaction is of course, that the participants recognize a familiar musical idiom as a frame of reference – otherwise, the acoustic phenomena will not be interpreted as music, but as meaningless noise. The better the participants know it and the better they like it, the easier it will be for them to engage in the interaction; in this respect it makes no

difference whether they are friends of Beethoven's or Bob Dylan's music. A tonal system or a recognizable musical style establishes a frame of reference, within which the musical gestures will be experienced as an interaction. Despite being interaction about "nothing", without reference to anything outside the interaction itself and its basic rules, music possesses all the definitive features of an interactive situation. The musical experience includes the perception of a dynamics of interaction between participants in different roles. Everybody involved is engaged in a quest for a shared understanding of the interactive process, either as an active performer or as a listener. Even if the interaction lacks any such specific content that could be reduced to a verbal explanation, it bears within it a profound message: the message about our placement in a shared world, in which interaction between human beings is possible.

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Мико Лаџерсџец

МУЗИКА КАО ИНТЕРСУБЈЕКТИВНОСТ – ПИТАЊА ЗА СОЦИОЛОГИЈУ УМЕТНОСТИ

(Резиме)

Полазна тачка овог огледа јесте опажање да музичко искуство током периода ојађености и трауматичних доживљаја може довести до обнављања човекове вере у вредност живота. То искуство може повратити осећај повезаности с другим људским бићима и потврдити постојање смислене реалности. Објашњење се тражи у начинима на које музика ствара (или пак опонаша – када је посредована партитуром или снимком), ситуацију у којој учесници доживљавају иста искуства током заједнички проведеног времена. С ослонцем на радове Алфреда Шица (Alfred Schütz) и Бергера и Лукмана (Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann), интеракција лицем у лице види се као основно средство преко којег су људи у стању да спроведу „проверу стварности” пред хаосом, осећањем бесмисла и нереалности. Међутим, музика се разликује од већине других облика интеракције у том смислу што она не зависи од ослањања на било коју другу стварност изван саме комуникационе ситуације. Музичке појаве по природи су знаковне само утолико уколико не представљају саме себе, већ нешто друго. У базичном смислу, музичка интеракција „није ни о чему”; у том смислу, она је пример „чисте социјалности”.

Када описујемо друштвене чињенице и друштвене праксе, ми у великој мери зависимо од речи и појмова. У исто време, уметности, по дефиницији, настоје да створе доживљај да су непреводиве у било који други вид израза. Одговор социолога уметности на ову дилему често је био одвраћање од самих уметности и, уместо тога, усредсређивање на друштвена подручја и активности које их окружују. Оглед сугерише поглед на музику као интеракцију која ствара интерсубјективно подељено искуство. У исто време, признаје се да музика, слично свакој другој врсти интеракције, такође може подбацивати у овоме, или пак бити намерно искоришћена за искључење. Бројни су примери ситуација у којима је темељна структура комуникације нарушена. Примерице, неке Гарфинкелове (Harold L. Garfinkel) етнометодолошке студије показују колико се лако такав прекршај може начинити и, истовремено, колико га је једноставно препознати као одступање од стандардног обрасца. Различити начини искључивања и сукобљавања постоје и у музичкој комуникацији; међутим, ово више потврђује него што побија виђење инклузије као њеног подразумеваног облика. С друге стране, недобровољно излагање музици на јавним местима може уназадити нашу способност да доживимо музику као облик интеракције. Овај оглед позива на дискусију о могућним применама ове перспективе у социолошким и културолошким истраживањима.

Submitted March 1, 2016

Accepted for publication May 24, 2016

Original scientific paper